

Casa Grande mall may keep shoppers at home

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The first regional mall in Casa Grande celebrated the grand opening of its second phase last month.

The Promenade at Casa Grande just east of Interstate 10 on Arizona 287 is drawing shoppers from throughout Pinal County who otherwise would head to Chandler Fashion Center or SanTan Village in Gilbert.

The open-air mall covers more than 130 acres and includes more than 1 million square feet of shopping space. It is anchored by Target, Dillard's and JCPenney. Tenants include Victoria's Secret, Sports Authority, Best Buy, Kohl's and ULTA.

A handful of restaurants about the mall's Harkin's Theatres, which is visible from I-10.

The mall's first phase opened in November and its second phase was finished in early May.

The Promenade's developer said it's not so much that the new Casa Grande mall will bleed business from San Tan Village and Chandler Fashion Center as it means that shoppers in Casa Grande, Florence and other parts of Pinal County will no longer have to drive 45 minutes to Chandler or Gilbert to shop at department stores or specialty retailers.

"Pinal County is such a large trade area. This project

alone in Casa Grande could easily survive on its own, but it's drawing from the whole Pinal County area," said Todd Chester, project manager for The Promenade at Casa Grande and a partner in the Phoenix-based real estate investment company WDP Partners.

The \$153 million development is a joint project of WDP Partners, Westcor and The Pederson Group.

"This is the retail hub of Pinal County," Chester said. "Residents come to Casa Grande to do a lot of their shopping.

"And if they were going to go to a Dillard's or a Target or a Claire's, then yes, they would have driven to Tucson or to Chandler or to Gilbert.

"So the leakage that the city of Casa Grande was seeing was from their residents going to Tucson and Gilbert and Chandler."

Even though competing malls in Chandler and Gilbert no longer draw as much business from Pinal County, Westcor isn't losing out on revenue because it owns those malls.

"We are fortunate to be in a market where we have explosive growth compared to the rest of the country," said Sheila Hunter, senior property manager for SanTan Village.

"Casa Grande has grown enough to support its own

shopping center, so I don't think it's a pull from one shopping center to another. It's more of a reason to come to the center for a specific reason."

The weather also plays a factor for shoppers. SanTan Village and The Promenade at Casa Grande are both open-air shopping centers that operate like gussied-up strip shopping centers.

Chandler Fashion Center is a traditional indoor mall anchored by four major department stores: Nordstrom's, Macy's, Dillard's and Sears.

Christina Lanoue, senior property manager of Chandler Fashion Center, said Westcor expects a 14 percent growth in the number households in the next four years.

Chandler opened "with explosive growth" and eight department stores vied for the four anchor spaces available.

That wouldn't be the case in today's recessionary market, said Chester, of WDP Partners.

"There's always a number of tenants that we're still chasing, but today, we have signed deals for 93 percent of the center. So it's very well leased, very well occupied. "Two years ago, if this would have happened, we probably would have had to put off the project."

The Promenade mall

Some of the retailers at The Promenade at Casa Grande:

- Dillard's
- Harkins Theatres
- Bath & Body Works
- Cost Plus World Market
- Eyemasters
- JC Penney
- Kohl's
- PetSmart
- Ross Dress for Less
- Shoe Pavilion
- Sports Authority
- Target
- Victoria's Secret
- Zumiez

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