

# Maplewood Mall plans a makeover

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By Scott Carlson



The Simon Property Group is planning a major renovation at Maplewood Mall that will redo, among other things, the shopping center

The Simon Property Group said Tuesday it is undertaking a major renovation of Maplewood Mall this year, a makeover that industry followers estimate could cost several million dollars.

The renovation of Maplewood Mall will be its first since 1988 as the regional shopping center, in suburban St. Paul, joins a growing number of major Twin Cities' retail hubs undergoing major upgrades.

Jennifer Lewis, the general manager at Maplewood Mall, said the renovations will include new interior and exterior features and amenities like additional soft seating, updated restrooms, family restrooms, redesigned mall entrances, landscaping, flooring and lighting. Of particular note are a redesign of the 20,000-square-foot food court and the installation of 135,000 square feet of new tile and carpet. The renovation is scheduled to start in April and finish by early 2012.

Maplewood Mall's upgrade will make it a more comfortable and family-friendly place for consumers, Lewis said, as well as hopefully "attracting more and new shoppers to our property." She declined to say how much Simon Property is spending on the renovation, saying only "it is a significant investment."

However, one industry follower, Twin Cities retail academic Dave Brennan, estimated that the renovation of Maplewood Mall will probably be in the range of \$1 million to \$5 million. "Their decision is to move ahead with improving the look, feel and functionality" of the shopping center, said Brennan, co-director of the Institute for Retailing Excellence at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul.

As the nation's economy continues to rebound, Brennan expects more regional malls and other shopping centers to initiate renovation plans. Burnsville Center, the Mall of America and Southdale Center are among major retail centers that are carrying out or planning renovations.

At Burnsville Center, the general manager, Robbin Hahn, said Tuesday that her mall plans to redo its floors this month – roughly a \$3 million project that will involve resurfacing about 110,000 to 115,000 square feet of walkways. Burnsville Center will recarpet its upper level and replace its lower-level carpet with tile, she said.

"It is minor renovation, but I think it will be a major change in the appearance and feel of the mall," Hahn said. "It will brighten it up and make it more contemporary in feel."

Southdale Center, also owned by the Simon Property Group, said last month its officials had signed a letter of intent with Bon-Ton Stores Inc. for the Pennsylvania-based retailing company to bring a Herberger's department store to the Edina regional shopping mall as an anchor tenant. Southdale officials also said their mall will be installing a new food court on the second level that is scheduled to open later this year.

At the Mall of America, officials are starting a \$5 million to \$10 million project this month in the east wing. The work is expected to be finished in September, the second phase of a four-year makeover of public spaces in the mall.

The MOA's east wing project will encompass about 120,000 square feet spanning four floors as that side of the entertainment-retail complex gets new tile floors, LED lighting, a splash of back-lit color from ceiling panels and digital signs, mall officials said.

Last year, the mall spent about \$5 million to renovate the first and second floors of its south wing, altogether about a 60,000-square-foot project.

As for the Maplewood Mall, Brennan said the upgrades will give the retail center a new lift. Typically, malls and shopping centers need to freshen their look at least every 10 years.

"As some centers do it (renovation), it forces others to take a look and see 'if we are old and stodgy or do we

need to update our facilities to make them more functional and contemporary?," Brennan said.

Opened in 1974, Maplewood Mall has 911,879 square feet and has not had a major upgrade in more than 20 years. It has more than 140 retailers and restaurants, including anchor tenants JCPenney, Kohl's, Macy's and Sears.

Lewis, the general manager, said one objective of the renovation is to make the shopping center more family-friendly. That is a major reason, for example, that the mall is replacing wooden benches with soft seating throughout its public concourses, she said. Lewis said there will also be new tables and chairs in the food court and a fireplace.

The general contractor on the project will be Pepper Construction of Indianapolis. Lewis said she expects Pepper to hire local subcontractors.

Additional details about the renovation, including the timetable, color renderings and samples of new mall amenities and finish materials, will be announced soon, she said.

### **By the numbers:**

#### **20,000 square feet**

Size of Maplewood Mall's food court area

*Source: Maplewood Mall*