

Much More than a Mall

Have you wondered what's happening in King of Prussia? The answer is, quite a lot.

Written by Laurel Anderson

What was once the primary local destination for an afternoon of casual browsing, weekend of frenzied holiday shopping an occasion for communing with commerce, King of Prussia has expanded its realm.

There are events, plans and attractions galore. October's Beerfest Royale drew crowds to the fifth celebration of brews, while summer's Yoga with Happy Hour brought multiple highs, and March KofP Restaurant Week was a hit with 20 choices. Plans for a mass transit connection, through the Norristown High Speed line, are about 10 years off. Plus Valley Forge Casino nearby, with newly revived Valley Forge Music Fair, attracts over a million visitors who are feeling lucky.

And, just a few minutes away and currently marked by construction cranes, is another ambitious project—the King of Prussia Town Center, a mixed-use “upscale outdoor lifestyle center” combining residences with dining and even more retail.

Want a closer look?

Mall Facts

You may know that just 25 miles from Philadelphia sits the nation's largest enclosed mall—in terms of leasable space and number of retailers. Take that, Mall of America.

Boasting 2.9 million square feet of spaces, 8 department stores, 20 eateries, 400 specialty stores and 11 ATMs, the King of Prussia Mall is a modern marvel attracting 25 million visitors a year, 20 percent of whom are tourists—yes, folks, it's also a tourist destination.

With sales equaling about \$975 per square foot—and total sales expected to be \$2.8 billion a year—our mall is in the top 10 percent of U.S. malls. Always good to be in the top 10 percent.

Some may remember the modest open-air promenade of The Court that opened in 1963 with anchor stores J.C. Penney and ACME. That unassuming start later evolved with the addition of The Plaza, anchored by Bloomingdale's and Abraham & Strauss in the 1980s. Around 2000, Lord & Taylor and Neiman Marcus were added.

Things have changed since the 1960s. And continue to.

With the involvement of the Simon Property Group in 2011, plans were afoot for the next big expansion: a \$250-million plan connecting The Court and The Plaza, adding a 1,300-space parking deck with speed ramps and escalators for quick shopping forays, and an amazing array of upscale shops, plus more dining options.

Though it took over 50 years, plus 5,000 tons of steel supporting the 250,000-square-foot latest addition, the two parts of the fully enclosed mall are now finally indeed connected—by more than a pedestrian bridge. The event was marked with, not a ribbon cutting, but a *ribbon joining ceremony* in August 2016.

New Stores at the Mall

Stores, stores, stores. From fast fashion (H&M, Primark, Forever 21) to designer (Kate Spade, Tory Burch, Carolina Herrera, plus the likes of Fendi, Gucci, Hermès). You'll also find local favorites (Anthropologie, Free People), New York cool (Rag & Bone, Jimmy Choo) and the classics (Brooks Brothers, Coach, J. Crew).

It's the kind of place where you can pick up a wedding gift at Tiffany & Co., get your pen repaired at the Mont Blanc store and re-envision your home décor at Restoration Hardware before finding your next car at Tesla Motors.

Yes, options span the spending spectrum.

Mall Food Becomes Cuisine

If you need sustenance for all the shopping choices, just visit Savor King of Prussia, the new food plaza with a concierge and WiFi. Head for The Fat Ham, from Philly-local Kevin Sbraga, who brings pork-centered, Southern-style cooking with barrel-aged bourbon and whiskey. Or choose Manhattan-based Melt Shop, boasting artisanal comfort food with gourmet grilled cheese sandwiches and specialty shakes.

Craving a burger? There's a second Shake Shack location here for classic burgers, shakes and their signature "concretes" (dense frozen custard with specialty mix-ins). And if pizza is calling you, head for Nicoletta Pizzeria, a New York-based Italian eatery specializing in homemade pizzas, pastas and gelatos from chef Michael White, owner of two Michelin stars.

More options? Hai Street Kitchen, with locations in University City and Center City, serves up casual Japanese food plus inventive sushi burritos, bowls and specialty sauces, made in-house daily with fresh, all-natural ingredients. For another healthy choice, try sweetgreen, DC-based and spreading fast, offering seasonal locally sourced health food, warm bowls and inventive salads.

King of Prussia Town Center

For a live-work-play environment with plans for plenty of shopping and dining, keep your eye on the development adjacent to the KofP Wegmans, just a four-minute drive from the mall.

Starting construction in May 2015, the KofP Town Center already has major retail anchor stores, restaurants and plans for holiday fun this December, plus a target date for a grand opening party in spring 2017.

Planned around a kind of Main Street, with a central square sporting both a water fountain and a 60-foot fire feature, the Town Center promises open air shopping and dining and strolling on sidewalks rather than being inside a climate-controlled mall. For Main Liners, think Suburban Square. But for the 21st century.

Though not lucky enough to score a location in the triangle below Canal Street (Tribeca) or south of Houston Street (SoHo), Town Center has a prime location surrounded by Routes 202, 422, 76 and the PA Turnpike. The Town Center is part of a larger plan called the Village at Valley Forge, with five developments including apartments, townhouses and an active adult community. These residences will provide some of the shoppers and diners who will enjoy this local town center.

At press-time, Nordstrom Rack celebrated its move to the Town Center, relocating from the beltway around the King of Prussia Mall. It joined Ulta Beauty, REI, Road Runner Sports and LA Fitness—just the start of

the mix of retailers to come. Service providers—banks, salons, plus medical providers and offices—will add to what's planned for the development.

You can already tuck into tasty dining options. Brazilian churrascaria steakhouse, Fogo de Chão, has been open since before the summer Olympics in Rio. Another Latin-flavored, soon-to-be-fave is Paladar Latin Kitchen & Rum Bar, where every word in the name should make you salivate. Let me repeat: Latin Kitchen Rum Bar.

Naf Naf Grill offers Middle Eastern magic—falafels, shawarmas, pitas and the like—at the first location outside its Mid-West home. And b.good, an East Coast chain with another location in Wynnewood, serves up naturally good fast food with plenty of kale and sustainably sourced seasonal ingredients.

What's to come? Davio's Northern Italian Steakhouse (Boston-based, with a Philly location) along with Davio's Galleria Café are more highlights. Plus honeygrow (Philly-based, fast-casual wholesome, farm-to-table), City Works (one of the largest beer bars/restaurants in the U.S.), Mission BBQ (guess what they serve) and Founding Farmers (North Dakota Farmers Union-owned restaurant serving sustainable, quality food and drink).

And of course, a Starbucks.

Head out to King of Prussia and discover your own reason to make it a destination.