

Partridge Creek loses Nordstrom, its 2nd major anchor to leave

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The Mall at Partridge Creek is losing a second anchor with Nordstrom closing in September.

The Seattle-based luxury department store chain said Wednesday it is focusing its efforts on customers at its six other stores in Southeast Michigan and online. Meanwhile, the Clinton Township shopping center will have to face a major decision about how it will define its future, experts said.



The Nordstrom department store at The Mall at Partridge Creek will close in September. It is second anchor to leave the Clinton Township mall in more than a year. (Photo: Elizabeth Conley, The Detroit News)

The 11-year-old mall in Clinton Township still features more than 90 stores and restaurants and annually draws 11.5 million visitors. But after positioning itself as a competitor to Somerset Collection in Troy and Twelve Oaks Mall in Novi, the outdoor mall will now lack a major magnet to

draw customers from dozens of miles away, said Kenneth Dalto, president of Dalto Consulting Inc. in Bingham Farms.

"Their survival is at stake," Dalto said. "People are going to wonder, was Partridge Creek not the mall it was cracked up to be? It doesn't look good. It's going to affect the mall's finances."

Nordstrom will close after Sept 13. The store's 105 employees were notified Wednesday, though the company is working with each to determine next steps and if there are other roles available for them, Nordstrom spokeswoman Emily Sterken said in an email.

"We keep a close eye on the long-term performance of our stores, real estate agreements and the future needs of our business," Nordstrom said in a statement. "We look at our business market-by-market to understand where we have opportunities to grow while also being as efficient as possible in serving our customers."

"Looking at our needs in the Detroit market, we decided it made the most sense to close this store and focus on serving customers at our six other Nordstrom and Nordstrom Rack stores, as well as online. Our stores remain an essential part of our business and they give us the opportunity to build meaningful relationships with our customers and employees."

There will be no closing sale, Sterken added. Remaining merchandise will go to other locations. There are Nordstrom stores in Somerset and Twelve Oaks. Its discount stores called Nordstrom Rack also are in Ann Arbor, Grand Rapids, Orion Township, Novi and Troy

Nordstrom's announcement follows the closure of department store Carson's last summer at the opposite end of the outdoor mall when that retailer went bankrupt. That spot still is yet to be filled.

The mall experienced a nearly 5% decline year-over-year in revenue to more than \$105 million in 2018 when its occupancy was at 92%, according to a report from commercial real estate data firm Trepp LLC.

Despite the empty big-box anchors, the mall's owner, Chicago-based Starwood Retail Partners, said it is optimistic.

"The Nordstrom closure will not impact the vibrancy of Partridge Creek," the company said in a statement. "We are continually evaluating new merchants and features for Partridge Creek and look forward to this opportunity to evolve our platform, as we continue to provide shoppers, diners and visitors at Partridge Creek with an engaging, active and compelling experience."

The Macomb County mall promotes its Live 360 degrees programming that also features community activities such as summer concerts and fitness and cooking classes. But it will need time to replace the anchor store tenants, analyst Dalto said.

"It could take two to three years to fill those anchors — that's assuming they want to keep the affluent market demographic approach," he said. "They could reposition the mall for discounters like a Target, stores with low, everyday prices, but that's a whole different marketing approach."

Even a different approach could be a challenge to execute with other retailers such as Abercrombie & Fitch, Dressbarn, J.Crew and Lord & Taylor closing locations nationwide. The mall may have to break up the large anchor box spaces to move in several smaller businesses, Dalto said.

Still, he said Partridge Creek's management remains strong and expects the mall to weather the storm.

"They're going to have to think out of the box," Dalto said. "I think they're going to sustain themselves."

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