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### Partridge Creek draws business from nearby Lakeside Mall

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Bill Biga, 65, and Bob Greenwood, 70, both Chrysler retirees, walk Lakeside Mall in Sterling Heights every morning.

In addition to exercising, the Sterling Heights men are in the habit of counting vacant stores at the 34-year-old enclosed mall. They figure there are 32 vacancies at the mall, which is competing with the newer, open-air Mall at Partridge Creek just down Hall Road in Clinton Township.

"Partridge Creek hurt them, no doubt, and the economy in general," Greenwood said of Lakeside Mall.



Shoppers like the Hamilton sisters -- Shontel of Sterling Heights, right, and Sharrell of Warren -- contribute to this year's sales increases at the Mall at Partridge Creek in Clinton Township. Nearby, Lakeside Mall in Sterling Heights has shown signs of struggling. (Nov. 18 photos by ROB WIDDIS/Special to the Free P)



Shoppers say they like Partridge Creek's ambiance, but for deals, Lakeside can't be beat. "Some stores (at Partridge Creek) are not as reasonably priced," Shontel Hamilton said.

Partridge Creek also has a handful of vacancies, some that are filled with temporary tenants such as a Borders Express pop-up store and See's Candies. It's become one of the best performing malls in owner Taubman Centers' portfolio, with double-digit sales increases this year. That kind of market share growth comes at the expense of competitors, said Bill Taubman, chief operating officer of the Bloomfield Hills-based real estate investment trust.

"It is really coming into its own. Obviously, we are taking market share from other places. I don't think it's just one place," Taubman said. "People are shifting their shopping from other venues, and I think it runs the gamut."

Partridge Creek brought an upscale mix of stores when it opened in 2007, something that was missing from the predominantly big-box offerings along Hall Road. Stores such as Nordstrom, Parisian and Apple are popular draws. At 612,000 square feet, it's less than half the size of Lakeside's 1.5 million square feet.

Shoppers interviewed at both malls said they visit stores and spend money at each, though all concurred that pricing was lower at Lakeside Mall.



"Some stores here are not as reasonably priced as other malls. It all depends on what you want to spend," Shontel Hamilton, 23, of Sterling Heights, said while shopping at Partridge Creek. Hamilton said she also shops at Lakeside Mall, Oakland Mall and Great Lakes Crossing Outlets.

"Lakeside is the only mall where I can hit all the stores I like. It is a one-stop shop," she said. Hamilton likes the New York & Co., JC Penney, Bebe and Baker's stores at Lakeside. At Partridge Creek, she likes Parisian, Forever 21 and the Apple store.

Lakeside has been hurt by its parent company's bankruptcy, analysts said. General Growth Properties of Chicago emerged from Chapter 11 this month.

"Lakeside suffers from a lack of capital," said Ken Dalto, a Farmington Hills-based turnaround expert. It needs to freshen common areas, secure some better stores and define its demographic better, he said.

"Partridge Creek has what I call 'the dazzle effect.' You go in there and become turned on," he said. "The dazzle effect has lasted. The price points are much higher at Partridge Creek, but they can obviously sustain it."

Lakeside's senior general manager Ed Kubes said in an e-mailed statement that the mall is looking at the vacancies as an opportunity.

"Just as retailers look for new and creative concepts, we also look for new and creative uses for space," the statement said. "We're in talks with retailers on a daily basis."

Kubes noted that a number of new stores and restaurants have opened at the mall, including MJ Diamonds, Zumiez, Taco Bell, Mastercuts, Boukies Grill, Pretty Eyes, Little Tokyo, Tapper's Gold and Vanity. Victoria's Secret recently remodeled its store.

The mall is anchored by JC Penney, Lord & Taylor, Macy's and Sears. It lost Gap and Banana Republic stores to Partridge Creek.

In contrast, Partridge Creek utilizes its open-air design to offer an outdoor fireplace, a bocce ball court, play areas and fountains. Pets are allowed to shop along with their owners in many stores.

The ability to shop with their dogs draws many shoppers, including Donald Hartop, 75, of Harrison Township, who recently shopped at Partridge Creek with his weimaraner, the Duke of Hunt.

He said he shops the mall every couple of weeks. The Duke loves to ride the escalator at Parisian and makes frequent stops at the Three Dog Bakery.

"I'm not a mall person, but I like it here," Hartop said. "I can be outside even in the winter. The sidewalks are heated, so there's no snow and ice."

But the dog policy is a turnoff to others such as Biga.

"I don't like the dogs. I can't imagine why people bring big dogs," he said.

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