



## Former Boscov's store remains key to Harrisburg Mall's resurgence

BY JASON SCOTT

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**S**ubtle changes in and around the Harrisburg Mall — with more significant pieces in the works — could rewrite some history and include new chapters for the area's largest mall.

Maryland developers St. John Properties Inc. and Petrie Ross Ventures bought the mall last June, promising to be the stabilizing rudder that guides what many viewed as a sinking retail ship back to prominence (see "Ownership and tenant recap," page 8).

So far, they have spent a few million dollars on improvements — mostly exterior through signage, a more accessible main entrance and demolition of an unfinished space left by the previous owners — while attracting a few new tenants, including 2nd & Charles.

A bolstered security presence inside, along with some new common-area lighting, also has helped breathe new life into the mall.

"We're now on a lot of national retailers'



Harrisburg Mall has had a few million dollars in improvements, including a more-accessible main entrance. One of the mall's new tenants is 2nd & Charles.

PHOTOS/SUBMITTED

radar," said Bill Russell, the mall's director.

Harrisburg Mall still is only 75 percent occupied, but much of the remaining space pertains to the 188,000-square-foot anchor spot formerly occupied by Boscov's Inc.

Boscov's declared bankruptcy in 2008 and pulled out of the mall after four years as an anchor with Bass Pro Shops and Macy's.

The new owners are very cognizant of

that large hole and continue to hold out some hope of landing a large retailer that could fill the entire footprint. However, it's now more likely the space will be subdivided to include a handful of tenant spaces, Russell said.

Baltimore-based JP2 Architects this summer presented a full interior mall plan to the ownership group. That plan includes new seating areas around the mall, additional

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—Bill Russell,  
Harrisburg Mall

lighting upgrades and improved food court access near the Boscov’s space.

Russell said the on-grade access of the anchor space could be transformed to include new restaurant options different from the fast-food variety in the food court, as well as family entertainment venues and other small retail.

The owners are looking for complementary pieces to the movie theater and current retailers that could keep visitors in the mall longer. That could mean a blend



**Paxton Street Commons has attracted two national tenants in Cycle Gear and Qdoba Mexican Grill.**  
PHOTO/KATHRYN MORTON

of local and national companies, Russell said, also citing potential for more of a storefront approach on the back side of the mall.

“You have to have a draw,” he said.

Given its location off major interstates, the Swatara Township mall currently attracts about 4 million visitors annually. A quarter of that is for Bass Pro Shops.

Outside the mall near Macy’s, three pad sites are available. The owners are marketing those through Lancaster County-based LMS Commercial Real Estate,

Russell said, with a goal of landing another casual dining option, a fast-food operation and possibly a full-service bank branch.

The mall’s future success could mean more traffic, which benefits surrounding commercial real estate. Within minutes of the mall, a new hotel is going up, and residential development has been strong up on the hill, including Lower Paxton Township-based Triple Crown Corp.’s Ivy Ridge project.

“Our mission is to return the Harrisburg Mall to the popular

retail community shopping center it once was,” Russell said.

## OTHER PAXTON PIECES

Similar progress is taking place across Paxton Street. Scottsdale Plaza is slated for exterior improvements this fall, while nearby Paxton Street Commons has attracted two national tenants in Cycle Gear and Qdoba Mexican Grill.

That could drive other retail synergies in that part of Swatara Township, also home to the TecPort Business Center.

Scottsdale owner Brickbox Enterprises Ltd. expects to complete paving, signage and other façade work by the end of the year, said owner Dan Deitchman, who is looking for more service and retail business to fill up the center.

“Mutual synergy is definitely felt by all,” he said. “More traffic drives (tenant) inquiries.”

Both Cycle Gear and Qdoba

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**In The Shops at TecPort, available units range between 1,300 and 1,400 square feet.**  
PHOTO/KATHRYN MORTON

## Anchor options

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were looking in the market and were attracted to Paxton Street because of the high traffic volume, the presence of a regional mall and strong daytime employment at TecPort, said Blake Gross, a sales and leasing consultant for LMS.

“The mall being redone had somewhat of an effect,” he said.

Over at The Shops at TecPort, a “convenience center” in the business center, traffic is a lot lighter than Paxton Street. Gary Gilbert II, president of York-based

Apple Retail Properties, isn’t expecting to attract national chains to his available units, which range between 1,300 and 1,400 square feet.

Apple’s most recent additions include the Tomato Pie Cafe and Papa Joe’s Pizza & Subs.

Because it is more of a destination, Gilbert said, he’s hoping to attract office and medical tenants, such as insurance or financial firms and a medical laboratory. Other uses, including hair stylists and eateries, are likely to be drawn to that strip of spaces, he said. ■