

Mapleton Centre still growing

■ **Wicker Emporium celebrates opening on Saturday; second wave of businesses expected in spring**

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Wicker Emporium is the latest business to open at Mapleton Centre, Moncton's newest shopping hub located off Mapleton Road near Costco.

The business, located at 78 Wyse St., is open now and will celebrate that fact on Saturday with special discounts, product giveaways and refreshments.

Meanwhile, Patrick Gillespie of Mapleton Centre's developer Ashford Properties said there is still plenty to come in the area already active with several businesses. "Everyone who is open is doing extremely well," he

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Wicker Emporium celebrates its grand opening in the new Mapleton Centre on Saturday.

Retailers opening at Centre

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said, adding that the businesses' expectations have been exceeded.

Open are Golf Town, Cleves Source for Sports, Ocean Trail Source for Adventure, Carter's/OshKosh, Bombay and Wicker Emporium. Opening in December is Bed, Bath & Beyond and Pet Smart, and opening in spring is Tag, a clothing retailer for men, women and children.

Gillespie said a second group of retailers will move in early next year, but each of them asked that he not reveal who they are.

"There won't be a whole lot (of space) left once the second group comes through in spring," he said.

One space remains ready for a 38,000 square foot (3,530 square metre) store, and while Gillespie said Ashford is talking to a few companies about taking that spot, nothing is confirmed.

While work on the Ashford site began a few years back, it quickly stalled when the North American economy went into a recession in 2008. Stores planning to move to Moncton backed out of the project, such as Linens N' Things which filed for bankruptcy but later reemerged as an online retailer.

Eventually, as the economy began to recover, work on the Ashford property resumed.

"Now, (the economy) is doing better, but it's a lot more cautious," Gillespie said.

"Unfortunately for Moncton, while it's a very good market, it's a small market, so we have to wait a

bit (for retailers to come this way)."

Nevertheless, Gillespie said his company is "very happy" with their development and the number of patrons pouring in and out each day.

The new Wicker Emporium — the company's third Metro Moncton store — will serve as a template for future locations, the company explained in a statement released this week. It will feature better lighting, easier maneuverability and designated sections for different categories of products.

"Our customers seek high quality, solid wood products at fair prices, especially in today's economy," said Raj Kapahi, the company's chief operating officer. "We're able to provide these products through sourcing directly from the manufacturers in Asia."

The family-owned and operated business was started 40 years ago in neighbouring Nova Scotia. From the roots of its original location in Halifax, the still family-run company has grown to 26 locations, stretching as far west as Ontario.

Wicker Emporium's most recent openings include Bedford and a second shop on Prince Edward Island.

The company's other local stores are on Mountain Road in Moncton and Paul Street in Dieppe.

Speculation that major electronics retailer Best Buy Canada might be interested in the Moncton market — specifically the Mapleton area — remains unconfirmed. The company did not return a request for comment this week.



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Several retailers have opened at Mapleton Centre and there are still more to come.