



## The Oregonian

### Area's look of success adds The North Face

The company, which opens an outlet today in the Brewery Blocks, joins other popular stores in the Portland retail hot spot

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The North Face Inc. likes to tempt outdoor enthusiasts with flashy stores in some of retail's hottest locales.

Michigan Avenue in Chicago. Broadway & 73rd in New York. Newbury Street in Boston.

And, as of today, Northwest Davis Street in Portland's Brewery Blocks.

The store, North Face's ninth, is one of the newest tenants in an increasingly popular shopping area in the southwest corner of the city's Pearl District. There, North Face is surrounded in a few-block radius not only by a handful of other sports-related retailers, such as Patagonia, Lucy and Recreational Equipment Inc., but also by several sought-after national stores setting up shop in Oregon for the first time.

"Portland was traditionally a third-tier market," said Jon Kellogg, a retail specialist for HSM Pacific Realty. Working with Brewery Blocks developer Gerding/Edlen Development Co., Kellogg has filled all but one storefront in the development. "Now, many national tenants are looking at Portland at the same time they look at Seattle."

Born in planning documents submitted in 2000 and realized through renovation and new construction over the past three years, the Brewery Blocks offers a combination of retail, living and office space. Most traditional malls are unveiled with all stores open at once. But with the Brewery Blocks, developers moved slowly in a domino game that sprinkled the openings of a few popular retailers -- some new to Portland -- who would attract customers and, in turn, more stores.

Whole Foods Market, for example, opened its first Oregon grocery store in the area in 2002. That, along with the strength of longtime neighbor Powell's Books, helped attract kitchen gear retailer Sur La Table. And that caught the eye of Williams-Sonoma Inc., which opened one of its new modern furniture and design stores, West Elm, here in May.

"The more newness, the more interesting an area is, the more of an attraction it is for retailers, and they all kind of feed on one another," said Jennifer Black, a Lake Oswego retail analyst who follows retail chains including Chico's and Ann Taylor.

Brewery Blocks developers wanted a strong apparel presence to draw foot traffic, especially from the fashion conscious who call the area home. Developers quickly enticed Anthropologie and Diesel, two clothing stores new to Oregon. Soon, a number of other new-to-town retailers signed on, including Adidas Originals, Sole, Lucy and The North Face.

At The North Face, which planned to open its doors this morning, images of skiers, hikers and extreme athletes hang alongside tents on the walls. Headquartered in San Leandro, Calif., The North Face chose Portland because of the city's focus on outdoor activities, its tourism and its demographics, said Lindsay Rice, the company's vice president of retail.

The company eyed other available spots around town, Rice said, but loved the Brewery Blocks' soaring 23-foot ceilings.

Aside from planting a flag in the backyard of local competitors Columbia Sportswear and Nike, North Face also settled a few blocks from fellow sports and outdoor retailers REI, Lucy, Patagonia and Title Nine Sports.

So far, the neighbors say they welcome the not-so-fierce competition.

"The cool thing for us -- and we didn't know it would turn out this way -- is that we all enjoy having one another here," said Hannah Bryant, a "team captain" at Title Nine, a women's sports apparel store that opened its first Oregon outlet in July near the Brewery Blocks.

"We refer people to Patagonia and REI all the time.," she said. "And REI has had employees escort people over here if they think we have something they don't carry. It's a really cool community."

REI has four Oregon stores but moved from its longtime Jantzen Beach location to a similarly sized space on Northwest Johnson last year. Sales have increased by 30 percent to 40 percent for the year compared with sales at the old location, said REI spokesman Mike Foley.

"It's textbook, " he said. "It's a clear example of seeing the difference when you move to an exciting new area."

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