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## CITYCENTER OPENING: Bigger, Bolder Luxury

### MGM Mirage wants Crystals to be retail 'epicenter' of West

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Crystals, the 500,000-square-foot luxury retail and entertainment district at CityCenter, opens today pretty much how MGM Mirage officials envisioned five years ago: big, bold and energy efficient.

"We wanted to move the epicenter in the Western United States of these large, luxury retailers from Los Angeles to Las Vegas," MGM Mirage Retail President Frank Visconti explained. "Almost every one of the tenants is larger here than it is in L.A. We never wavered from that."

Crystals will open at 5 p.m. with 23 shops and restaurants, including Tiffany & Co., Louis Vuitton, Cartier, Porsche Design and Beso and Eva Longoria Parker's restaurant.

About 15 of the tenants will be making their Las Vegas debuts at Crystals, while others -- such as the 2 1/2-story Louis Vuitton, Cartier and Versace -- will have large flagship shops at Crystals.

The mix of new retailers and those already in town was part of the challenge in signing luxury tenants for Crystals.

MGM Mirage executives decided early on that they wanted many retailers who were already in the market but would offer them the opportunity to have a larger presence on the Strip.

"Let's do something special," Visconti said he told retailers. "Let's do something special in terms of size. Louis Vuitton can have satellites in town, but let's make this the flagship in this shopping center."

While Crystals' opening is happening largely as MGM Mirage envisioned, not everything is going according to plan.

The indoor center, which fronts the Strip, will be less than half occupied when it opens, largely because of the economy.

Only 40 percent of the available space is occupied, although nine more tenants will open when MGM Mirage's hotel-casino Aria opens in two weeks. And MGM Mirage expects Crystals to be fully occupied with nearly 60 tenants by the summer.

Originally, MGM Mirage had wanted all of the shops to open at once, Visconti said, but the economy forced some retailers to delay their openings or to back out completely.

MGM Mirage Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Jim Murren and CityCenter CEO Bobby Baldwin, however, backed Visconti's plans to have Crystals be a luxury retail center even when the economy turned bleak a year ago.

"I told them this is temporary, this will pass," Visconti said. "Let's not change the business model, but we'll only open with half the tenants."

The staggered openings also has provided an opportunity for some tenants to grab bigger spaces and try something different.

Christian Dior, for instance, won't open until this summer but was able to grab a larger space closer to Las Vegas Boulevard. The retailer will use the space to a "very, very special (storefront) design that is spectacular" that the company also uses in Japan now, Visconti said.

Crystals is the second part of the \$8.5 billion development to open this week. The 1,500-room nongaming Vdara hotel opened Tuesday. The 392-room Madarin Oriental opens to customers Saturday and Aria, the 4,004-room hotel-casino, opens Dec. 16.

Crystals' tenant list is definitely focused on luxury shoppers. An ad campaign is being run in Southern California aimed at luring cash-flush shoppers from Beverly Hills, Palms Springs and Orange County.

But Crystals' retailers are also hoping that it will become a premier shopping destination for Las Vegas locals.

"We look at it from the standpoint that we're part of the community here in Las Vegas," Peter Sinibaldi, group director Las Vegas for Tiffany & Co., said. "This obviously is going to be a draw that will bring many more visitors here as well. But, we're also here for the local customer. My focus is to make sure we're servicing our local clientele as well."

Crystals' designers wanted more than a nice looking building to house luxury retailers, though.

Art and its synergy with public spaces were important components, Visconti said.

Crystals' exteriors were designed by New York City-based Studio Daniel Libeskind, the master plan architect for the World Trade Center.

Inside, New York City-based David Rockwell and the Rockwell Group designed a 21st century park to celebrate nature and the seasons, with hanging gardens and flower carpets.

Two water displays designed by WET, creators of the Bellagio fountains, are inside Crystals.

Crystals is also the largest retail center to receive the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Gold Certification from the U.S. Green Building Council.

MGM Mirage fully owns Crystal, a different model from many large resort malls along the Strip owned by third parties.

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