



On the inside ... looking out

By JACKIE KLEIN

SOUTHFIELD—Northland, the granddaddy of shopping malls, was once called a 20th century bazaar with wiggling wire giraffes, fluttering copper peacocks, flower-filled courtyards and non-stop music.

That was in 1954 when the nation's first large suburban shopping center was featured in *Life Magazine*.

Life referred to the \$25 million center, planted in Southfield farmland 12 miles north of downtown Detroit, as "a fantastic combination of modern efficiency, fine architecture and pure gaiety."

Northland transformed the old strip center into a mile-and-a-quarter circle of stores connected by walkways to parking areas for more than 7,500 cars.

An average of 46,000 shoppers and browsers visited the center each day, and sales for the first year promised to reach \$50 million. From the beginning, Northland was a retailer's dream, and its 95 stores grossed \$70 million in 1954.

By 1972, with 138 stores, the volume was a record \$183 million.

THE GIANT MALL, began to show its age as it celebrated its 20th birthday. Some said Northland was being eclipsed by a new generation of climate-controlled malls featuring a cluster of department stores.

In February 1974 Dayton Hudson Properties Inc. announced a \$25 million enclosure and expansion at Northland.

Sales, after completion in spring 1975, are estimated at \$200 million, 25 per cent above the 1973 total, said Gary Jackson, vice-president of Dayton Hudson Properties eastern region.

This will make Northland the highest producing shopping center in the country, he said.

The leaseable area will increase from 1.3 million to 1.7 million square feet. This includes 22 new stores, expansion of existing stores and the three-level, 330,000 square foot J.C. Penney store. There will be parking for 9,175 cars.

THE ENCLOSURE is already generating more traffic and better sales figures than last year, said Victor Gamez, center promotion manager. On the Saturday before Easter, 100,000 persons passed through the mall, he said.

"The economy is unpredictable and business can be fantastic or dreadful," he said. "But Northland is getting a good share of the buying."

Updating the center is a huge undertaking and the dirt and mud from construction hurt us at first. But we're coming back strong again."

Northland no longer has the appearance of a 20th century bazaar. But the Garden and Great Lakes courts will be integrated into the rejuvenated center with realistic sculptures of beaten copper and benches for people watchers.

J.C. Penney's Northland store will be its largest branch. The full-line department store will be healthy competition for J. L. Hudson's, said manager Chester Alumbaugh. Penney's is set for completion May 21 and is al-

ready being stocked with merchandise.

PENNEY'S HAS BEEN known as a soft goods operation, Alumbaugh said. "The Northland store will have a restaurant, beauty salon, paint, hardware, sporting goods, appliances, toys, clothing for the whole family at moderate prices, needlework, gifts, a lawn garden shop and just about anything you can mention."

"We'll carry furniture, television sets and stereos, and we'll even decorate your house." We expect that Hudson's and Penney's will complement each other and shoppers will frequent both stores. We may not feature 800 nightgowns or food items, but we hope to provide everything else.

Alumbaugh expects to open with 700 employees. The enclosure will cut down shoplifting and attract customers to the second anchor store, he believes.

Gamez maintains it will be easier to monitor the center and people tend to behave more discreetly in an enclosed carpeted mall.



Staff photos by Gary Friedman