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Springing forward

DOWNTOWN DISNEY WILL TRANSFORM INTO DISNEY SPRINGS

By Will Pollock

THE EXPANSION OF DISNEY Springs, in Lake Buena Vista, Fla., promises to make a dramatic economic impact on Central Florida. An estimated 1,200 construction jobs will in turn give way to about 4,000 operational positions, according to sources involved with the project. With completion set for sometime in 2016, Disney Springs – as this section of Walt Disney World has been renamed – will double the number of its shops, restaurants and other venues to about 150.

The expanded project will measure some 1.1 million square feet – roughly 350,000 square feet more than at present. The company is in talks with several global brands to come in as tenants. Downtown Disney, which was originally called the Lake Buena Vista Marketplace, opened in 1975 and underwent expansion in 1989 and again in 1997.

“While we are expanding several Disney retail locations, such as World of Disney, as part of this project, the primary focus of our growth will be with third-party retailers,” said Keith Bradford, vice president of Downtown Disney. “We are actively talking with leading national and international retailers and brands that will help us provide diverse and high-quality experiences that complement our brand. The response has been extremely positive.”

The company declined to name any tenant candidates, but many of the existing ones will continue to operate during construction, including the AMC cinema, Cirque du Soleil, House of Blues and the LEGO Imagination Center.

“Collaborating with several talented design groups, including Elkus Manfredi Archi-



DISNEY ENTERPRISES, INC.

texts, we’re planning a dynamic, world-class destination with Disney Springs,” Bradford said. “It will be a different kind of shopping, dining and entertainment experience brought to life with the same focus on storytelling and attention to detail that goes into our theme parks, resorts and cruise ships.”

The idea is for the project to reflect Florida’s waterfront towns and natural beauty, says Bradford. “Disney Springs will include four outdoor neighborhoods interconnected by a flowing spring and vibrant lakefront.” These will consist of The Town Center, containing a mix of dining and shopping along a promenade; The Landing, resembling a waterfront commercial district with more dining and retail; the Marketplace, with an over-the-water pedestrian causeway; and the West Side, an entertainment venue that visitors will be able to view from elevated walkways.

“We knew we had an opportunity to reimagine and reinvent this corner of Walt Disney World Resort,” Bradford said. “We are challenged in taking a property that’s already doing exceptionally well and making it even better by offering truly extraordinary experiences.”

The Center Stage article in August misstated the title of Francis Scire, who is vice president of leasing at Simon Property Group.