

SHOPPING MALL SMACKDOWN

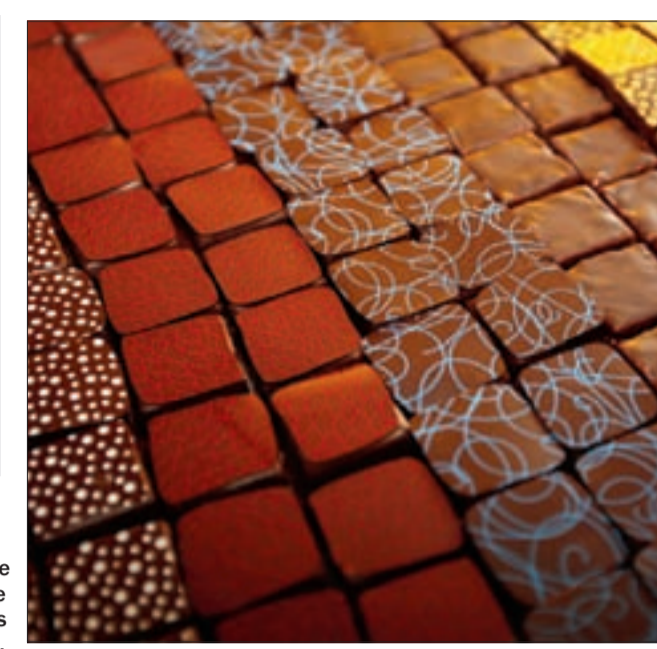
The recent LRT extension expanded our potential territory for retail therapy. What's your pick?



JOHN LUCAS, THE JOURNAL

MARTA GOLD and JENNIFER FONG
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Pushing, shoving, a few clothesline moves — it's a smackdown of epic proportions, made possible by the presence of the new south LRT line. Hold up, Rey Mysterio fans. We're not talking WWE; we're talking shopping. Shoppers all over central, south and northeast Edmonton are thanking transit officials for their thoughtful linking of two of the city's key shopping districts — downtown and Southgate — with regular LRT service. The new hookup means devoted shoppers, especially those without wheels, and from as far north as Clareview, can travel seamlessly in either direction, to shop at City Centre downtown, or at the recently renovated and expanded Southgate Centre at the south end of the line. In the interest of sociological research, two committed LifeStyle writers took to transit, one travelling south, the other north, to compare, contrast and comment on the two shopping experiences. Here's what they found:



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If you want to feel high-powered, this is the place to be. City Centre is throbbing with fast-walking suits during the lunch rush. Mondays to Fridays and strollers are rarely seen.

Burger-lovers will soon be able to get their Fatburger fix without the trek to South Edmonton Common. The popular burger chain is opening its second Edmonton location this summer at City Centre. Marketing manager Greg Burns also adds that shoe store Feet First will be expanding into a bigger location under a new name, Local.

The best part about City Centre Mall is that it's connected by pedway to Manulife Place and Commerce Place. Coming here is like getting three malls in one, and where we're from, that's called a deal. Manulife and Commerce may sound terribly corporate but they are home to some of the most popular stores in town, including Holt Renfrew, Alligator Pie and Blu's. Together, they widely expand the scope of shopping and dining experiences in the area. While we'll focus on City Centre, we'll mention Manulife and Commerce highlights where appropriate.



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Three, plus an underground concourse. The top floor has doctors' offices and academies in the east wing; Empire Theatres in the west.

785,000 sq. ft. of retail space

170

956,000 sq. ft. of retail space

165

When it opened in 1970, it was the largest mall in Edmonton at the time, with 65 stores. Expanded in 1982, 1999 and again in 2009.

A large, main level plus a smaller, upper level housing Blu's, Eveline Charles Spa, Flower Affairs and offices. A small basement level is home to Dollarama.

There's a little bit of everything here, from the Dollarama in the basement to Blu's on the top floor. There are plenty of mall standards, plus a few more interesting spots you won't find anywhere else but West Edmonton Mall, such as Zara, Coach and a new Apple store. There are also a good number of stores exclusive to Southgate, but more on those later.

One food court, but it's a winner — heavy on the ethnic, light on the burgers and fries. It's got Indian, Thai, Korean and our personal fast-food fave for lip-smaki souvlaki, Opa. No sit-down restos here though, and sadly, no place for a drink, unless you count Orange Julius, or the Starbucks in Coles. If you really want to get back to basics for lunch, there's Safeway, too.

The Bay, Sears, Safeway



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Might be the only mall with a "concierge" desk in the food court, an offshoot of the larger, customer service desk elsewhere in the mall. Also check out Southgate's fabulous Style Coach, like a rent-a-BFF who will shop with you for two hours and tell you the truth, all for a \$20 donation to Suit Yourself charity, which outfits low-income women who are entering the workforce. We also like the electronic directory at each mall entrance and its cyber-lady guide whose footsteps will walk you on the map to any store you choose.



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SUPPLIED

Nice couches, attractive benches and plenty of them (in 11 separate areas) for tired shoppers and dragged-along grandpas, dads, huddies and boyfriends. A few too many plastic plants, but you take the bad with the good.



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Heavy on the aforementioned tots during the week, ranging from baby-sized to large preschoolers. Lots of shopping for them — Gap Kids, Please Mum and Gymboree. The mall even offers a kids club with free, planned events like crafts, storytelling and games. Or you can push them around in one of the cute, car-like Kiddie Karz the mall offers for free.

Just after stores open at 10 a.m. or the last hour before they close at 9 p.m. are the best times to shop if you're looking to skip the crowds. Busiest times are Friday evenings and Saturdays.

Michael Kors, Aeropostale, Studio Nails, Flight Centre, David's Tea

CITY CENTRE

SOUTHGATE CENTRE

Location

LRT Ride

Hours

Built

Size

Storeys

Stores

Range

Anchor

Unique stores

Food

Chocolate factor

Parking

Special services

Accessibility

Washrooms

Rest areas

Atmosphere/crowd

Kid factor

Best time to go/avoid

Coming soon

15 minutes from Clareview, 15 minutes from Southgate

City Centre East was built in 1974, and expanded to include City Centre West in 1999. The centre underwent a major redevelopment in 2002.

MONDAY TO WEDNESDAY 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
THURSDAY, FRIDAY 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.
SATURDAY 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
SUNDAY Noon to 5 p.m.

15 minutes from downtown, 30 minutes from Clareview

Suburban shopping has its benefits, and one of them is extended hours.
MONDAY TO FRIDAY 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.
SATURDAY 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.
SUNDAY, HOLIDAYS 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

11100 51st Ave.