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Twin Department Stores Make Some Malls See Double

Macy's Occupies Two Anchor Positions at Fair Oaks Mall

By [Ylan Q. Mui](#)

Washington Post Staff Writer
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Faiza Maher of [Centreville](#) found the deal of the season at [Macy's](#) in Fair Oaks Mall over the holidays: a long brown [Calvin Klein](#) coat marked down to \$75 from \$270. When she realized the store was out of her size, she didn't fret. Maher simply walked across the mall to the other Macy's.

"It's almost the same," she said the other day while browsing the department store, her hands inside the pockets of her bargain coat.

For more than a year, Macy's has occupied two anchor positions at [Fair Oaks](#). The quirk stems from the 2005 merger of Macy's parent company with the former [May Department Stores](#), which turned the mall's Hecht's into a Macy's, joining an existing Macy's in the mall.

Fair Oaks general manager Chris Poletto said both locations are performing well, and that customers frequently shop both stores during the same visit. Still, experts said the duplication presents several retailing and marketing challenges.

"One of the things you're trying to do is have a diversity of offerings for your customers," said Peter Framson, principal of Green Light Retail Real Estate Services. "In general, it cannot be good for a mall to have the same big tenant having two stores in the same shopping center."

Though duplicate stores are not ideal, they are not uncommon in this age of retail consolidation. Fewer department store chains means fewer options for developers when searching for tenants. Shopping centers prefer having two of the same store over allowing an anchor position to go dark, experts said. Retailers, meanwhile, would rather operate the space themselves than cede it to a rival.

"Very few people in retailing, when talking about competition privately, welcome competition," Mark Lilien, a management consultant for Retail [Technology Group](#).

Fair Oaks is one of about 85 malls across the country seeing double. When Macy's parent company merged with May Department Stores, it closed dozens of stores, including three former Hecht's in the Washington area. The approximately 400 May stores that remained open were remodeled and renamed Macy's in September 2006. The company now operates more than 800 Macy's stores and about 40 [Bloomingdale's](#) stores.

At some malls, the rebranding meant that two Macy's would be operating at the same time under the same roof: one original store and one converted store. Retail real estate experts said the reasons for the duplications could vary at each mall, depending on who owns the store site, the terms of any leases and the market.

Macy's declined to talk about the stores specifically. Spokesman Jim Sluzewski said the company has operated duplicate stores at some malls for decades, resulting from previous

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Fair Oaks Mall says both Macy's are performing well, and that customers frequently shop both stores during the same visit. (By Richard A. Lipski -- The Washington Post)

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acquisitions. It has no plans to change that strategy, he said.

At Fair Oaks, Macy's owns both store sites, Poletto said. The mall, which also has a [Sears](#), [J.C. Penney](#) and Lord & Taylor, has attracted several new tenants recently, including restaurant Texas de [Brazil](#) and the soon-to-open store 21 Forever. Its anchor positions are considered desirable, but Macy's may not want to sell or lease the land because of restrictions in its agreements with the mall or simply because it wants both locations to showcase its merchandise.

"Sometimes the department store feels they'll actually make more money if they have two stores in the same mall or the same market," Lilien said.

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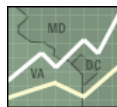
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Having identical stores also raises several practical issues, such as how to post directions without confusing customers and how to distinguish between the names of the two stores. Customers who ask are directed to "the Macy's near Foot Locker" -- the former Hecht's - or "the Macy's near Zales Jewelers," Poletto said.

The differences between the two stores are mostly subtle -- flooring, fixtures and signs vary slightly, for example.

The original Macy's is on the south side of the mall, tucked between J.C. Penney and Sears. It has three floors and about 215,000 square feet.

Mazhar said she felt it carried a wider variety of merchandise and had more bargains. On a visit to the store during the holiday season, one of its most expensive coats was a Calvin Klein in cashmere for \$525. The fitting rooms are small and a little dingy.

The converted Macy's is on the east end of the shopping center, on the other side of J.C. Penney. It spans 229,000 square feet across two floors and sells furniture and bedding, holdovers from Hecht's successful business. One of its most expensive coats during the holiday season was a \$450 [Ralph Lauren](#). Its fitting rooms were recently renovated and are more spacious.

Mary Showa of [Chantilly](#) said she is careful to specify which Macy's when meeting friends at the mall. On a recent morning, she stopped at [Starbucks](#) after browsing both locations.

Showa parked in the covered deck near the original Macy's on that snowy morning and picked up an \$8.55 jogging jacket as she walked through the store and into the mall. But typically, she said she prefers to shop at the converted Macy's. The merchandise there is better displayed and the store is brighter and neater, she said.

Macy's had hoped to strengthen its national presence through the merger, focusing on its private label brands such as INC and Charter Club, and partnerships with designers such as [Martha Stewart](#) in home furnishings. So far, however, performance has been rocky. November and December sales at stores open at least a year fell by 1.1 percent. In addition, the company announced last month it would close nine stores in [Ohio](#), [Texas](#), [Indiana](#), [Louisiana](#), [Oklahoma](#) and [Utah](#).

Still, Macy's plans to open five stores this year, and an additional six to eight locations in 2009.

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