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## Dior Ups Vegas Presence

Christian Dior believes in the retailing power of Las Vegas. The French luxury brand has opened its fourth store in the city, a 4,000-square-foot men's and women's boutique at the Crystals at CityCenter.

"Las Vegas is the shopping capital of the U.S.," said Pamela Baxter, president and chief executive officer of Christian Dior Couture USA. She pointed to the acclaimed architects Daniel Libeskind, Sir Norman Foster and David Rockwell among them who were involved in the \$8.5 billion CityCenter megadevelopment, describing it as a "bold move for Las Vegas, which is not known for its modern architecture."

CityCenter opened in December and features 500,000 square feet of upscale stores, restaurants and entertainment, along with hotels, a casino and condominiums, on the Las Vegas Strip. Other retailers include Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Prada, HermA[umlaut]s, Tiffany & Co., Roberto Cavalli, Tom Ford, Ermenegildo Zegna, Kiton and Versace.

Baxter said Dior was attracted to the project because of its exclusive assortment of luxury brands. "It's not a mix of mass and class," she said. Dior, which operates 19 freestanding stores in the U.S., has Las Vegas boutiques at the Bellagio, the Wynn and The Forum Shops at Caesars Palace.

Vegas is "completely different" from other cities, Baxter said, noting the visitors stay, on average, two to three days and tend to stay within their hotels. As a result, "we have very little crossover there. We think we will get a completely different customer at CityCenter." Las Vegas has struggled during the economic downturn. Tourism and gaming revenues have declined and retail vacancies, home foreclosure and unemployment rates have risen. Although the company declined to provide a projected volume figure for the new store, Baxter said Dior's Vegas boutiques have rebounded after a "difficult" 2009. As for the newest unit, she said: "We think it will be special."

The mix will be 70 percent women's and 30 percent men's, but the genders will have separate entrances, leading Dior to view this as its third Dior Homme unit. The others are on 57th Street in Manhattan and Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills. "They're connected," Baxter said, "but have separate ambiance. You can enter either men's or women's and there's a change in facade."

The store has a floor-to-ceiling, double-layer, backlit glass facade. The interior of the women's section mirrors the Peter Marino design used at the company's flagship on Avenue Montaigne in Paris and combines traditional and contemporary materials and finishes. A black granite floor complements the white carpet and polished marble floors of the women's sections. The Dior Homme section uses midnight black and white as the color scheme and includes classically inspired Dior plissA[c] moldings set against modern lacquered walls. Hang bars are suspended from the ceiling.

Dior carries men's in the Wynn store and the collection does well there. "It's a vacation shopping experience," Baxter said. Now in the new store, "we can entertain him while she's shopping."