

# Walmart, Tire Kingdom give new life to The Shoppes of Forest Hill

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PALM SPRINGS — Amy Kimball has worked at the hair salon Supercuts in the shopping plaza on Forest Hill Boulevard and Military Trail for 16 years.

For decades, Syms, the defunct discount clothing retailer that filed for bankruptcy in 2011, was the anchor tenant at The Shoppes of Forest Hill, drawing all sorts of traffic to the site. But when Syms closed, the plaza suffered and was on life support. “It was just wasting away,” Kimball said. “If it wasn’t for us, I don’t know if the center would’ve survived. The whole neighborhood knows us.”

Over the past two years, Trinity Place Holdings, the New York-based real estate company that now owns the 112,000-square-foot site, has invested several million dollars into the plaza to make sure it not only survives, but thrives.

“The center has pretty good bones,” said Matthew Messinger, president and CEO of Trinity Place Holdings. “A lot of what was needed was some TLC, cosmetic and beautification changes.”

The company painted the facade, upgraded the landscaping, installed new roofs, lighting, re-striped the parking lot, added more signs. Messinger wouldn’t give the exact amount the company spent. “It was more than \$2 million and less than \$5 million,” he said. “This site had been a little neglected. It became a place where people would drive by and wonder what was going on.”

In June, two brand name tenants moved in — a Walmart Neighborhood Market, the company’s grocery store format, and Tire Kingdom. They joined Boston Market, Taco Bell, Wells Fargo and Rent-A-Center, tenants for several years.

“Walmart and Tire Kingdom appeal to all sorts of people,” Messinger said. “They’ll draw traffic to the center and it should be a cascading effect.” The 42,000-square-foot Walmart market is the eighth to open in Palm Beach County, according to Adriana Perdira-Reyes, the company’s director of public affairs and governmental relations in Florida. “We try to go into area that are underserved and needs revitalization,” Perdira-Reyes said. “By putting a store in that area, we can contribute to the neighborhood’s improvement.”

The company said it wanted to open a grocery store in Palm Springs because it’s a high traffic area, 80,000 residents live within 2 miles of the store and there are limited shopping alternatives in the area.

The store features a drive-thru pharmacy and a custom gourmet pizza station that allows customers to make pizzas on site.

Messinger said the plaza has 18 tenants. There’s still about 30,000-square-feet of vacant space. Messinger said he hopes to fill those empty spaces with medical companies and service firms, which can range from a nail salon to a nutrition place.

“The priority is to get the larger spaces rented,” Messinger said.

Kimball said she likes what’s happening at the plaza, an eyesore for too long. “It’s much prettier when I come to work now,” she said. “There’s new life in the plaza. Just look at all the cars in the parking lot.”