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The New York Times

TUESDAY, JANUARY 5, 2010

City Room



'Disneyfication' Finds a New Base in Times Sq.

By PATRICK MCGEEHAN

It truly is the Disneyfication of Times Square.

If all goes as planned in the Magic Kingdom, shoppers in Manhattan will have a new place to buy a \$114 set of Princess and the Frog snow globes, or other movie-themed knickknacks, before the end of the year.

Disney Store North America announced on Tuesday that it plans to open one of its new-concept stores in part of the space in Times Square that previously housed a Virgin Records store. The 25,000-square-foot store would fill a void for Disney lovers being created by the imminent shutting of the company's emporium on Fifth Avenue.

Most of the space in the multilevel Virgin location, on Broadway between 45th and 46th Streets, will be occupied by a Forever 21 clothing store. Disney is taking much of the rest, on the ground floor and the second level, said Eileen Mitchell, an executive vice president with RCS Real Estate Advisors, a Manhattan firm that manages Disney's retail properties. She declined to say how much rent Disney will pay.

The Disney Store on Fifth Avenue has been operated by the company's theme parks division. But the Times Square store will be run, like Disney's outlets in shopping malls, by the retailing division of the company, which is revamping its stores to be more entertaining and to draw customers back frequently.

The Times Square store "will be that design on steroids, basically," Ms. Mitchell said. "Can you think of a better place in Manhattan where one should be? It's the epicenter of Times Square. It's perfect because Disney is an American brand. It's all the things that the tourists want."

The recent banning of automobiles from that stretch of Broadway did not cool Disney's ardor for the location, but did it enhance the appeal? Ms. Mitchell said that she could not speak for Disney on that matter, but her opinion about the new pedestrian plaza was unequivocal.

"From the looks of it, it seems to be the right thing to have done," she said. "The final verdict is not in. But I vote for keeping it."