



The architect's rendering of Epic Shoos, which opens on Main Street in November.

The Sneaker Gallery

A resident shoe buff picks the Arts District as the place to showcase the latest styles as well as his idea of an urban shopping experience

story by
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For many people, new shoes are a kind of religion. Shopping for them includes worshipping at the altar of modern consumption and confessing our sins of sloth, gluttony, greed and more than a little bit of envy. And until now, urban Las Vegas hasn't provided for that type of avarice.

But the November opening of Epic Shoos is about to change all of that. Because if Todd Burden has his way, Downtown will be a place for walking and shopping, and everyone doing it will be wearing sneakers they bought from him. His "Sneaker Gallery" brings limited-edition and premium

kicks to the Arts District within a discreet, urban façade that promises a new kind of retail experience.

"Retail is more than just shopping," he says. "I'm creating a great overall experience. One, people are going to see the investment in the store and my investment in Downtown. Two, I hope that they'll appreciate the concept. Three, they're going to find exciting product and enjoy the shopping experience."

In the space that had housed one of those second-rate furniture stores on Main Street, shoppers will find the type of store associated with Los Angeles' Robertson Boulevard or Hayes Valley in San Francisco.

In Las Vegas, Epic Shoos will fill a few different gaps in the market. As the owner of Still at the Fashion Show, a store focusing on men's and women's denim and sportswear, Burden is often asked where to find the latest sneakers. While happy to point them toward his friends at Suite 160 in the western 'burbs, he also realized that there was room in the market for more than one exclusive sneaker store. Tour-

marketplace

ists want the kind of stores they were used to in larger cities; people in town for conventions such as MAGIC and the World Shoe Association seek local retailers to make deals with; and locals simply hunger for a more hip brand of shopping.

And at Epic Shoos, hip is the name of the game. Visitors will find a modern, minimalist interior designed by Akar Studios of Santa Monica that allows the shoes to act as art on exhibit. In this stylish environment, shoppers are also treated to old-school refreshments such as bottled Orange Crush chilled in a custom, refrigerated cash wrap.

Most product lines are familiar, but they come in hard-to-find styles, like Converse Varvados and Vans designed by Marc Jacobs. Other brands slated for arrival include Billionaire Boys Club (BBC) and Feit, making its retail debut in Las Vegas. Additionally, Epic Shoos will supply dead stock and discontinued styles.

Shoppers will also find one-of-a-kind offerings. "Because we're in the Arts District," Burden says, "it makes sense to work with local artists." And "since a white sneaker is the equivalent of a canvas," those artists will create hand-painted masterpieces on the spot during First Friday, the monthly arts festival.

This gallery effect is part of the reason he opened Epic in the Arts District instead of out in suburbia. That and the fact that, as a Downtown loft resident with a growing number of neighbors, Burden knew that more shopping options were needed. "The demand was there," he says. "It was just about people taking a risk."

And since his two-year-old investment in Still was paying off, he decided he was the person to take that risk. So Burden signed a lease and unveiled a glimpse of what a Las Vegas urban shopping district might be like. His vision includes several blocks of retail fashion, specialty stores, galleries and dining, with foot traffic from all of the people moving in.

While excited about department stores like Barneys and Fred Segal joining the local market, mostly Burden wants his fellow retail entrepreneurs to join him in embracing Downtown. "I welcome more stores in the pool. I want to see other stores do well. The city is about living and fashion." ❖

EPIC SHOOS

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Hours:
11 a.m.-7 p.m.
Monday-Saturday;
noon-6 p.m. Sunday

Website:
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