

Hermes moving to Miami Design District

By ELAINE WALKER

Efforts to turn the Miami Design District into South Florida's new luxury fashion destination are gaining ground, with Hermes the latest retailer to announce plans to relocate from the Bal Harbour Shops.

Hermes plans to more than double the size of its store when it opens a 10,000-square-foot, two-level flagship store in the Design District in Fall 2013. The retailer's lease expires in Bal Harbour in Dec. 31, 2012. Hermes will open a temporary location in the Design District in late 2012 or by January 2013.

"Hermes' commitment to build a flagship store in the Miami Design District will further solidify the neighborhood's position as an international destination for fashion, art, food and design," said Craig Robins, whose company Dacra owns about 60 percent of the Design District. "This commitment, coupled with the recent announcement by Louis Vuitton, begins to give us the critical mass of the world's most important fashion brands."

Already in the last several months, Louis Vuitton, Cartier and Dior have closed their stores at Bal Harbour. Louis Vuitton has opened at Aventura Mall and announced plans to open in the Design District by 2014. Expected to follow Louis Vuitton's lead are at least some — or possibly all — of the other brands owned by parent-company Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy that currently have stores at the Bal Harbour Shops. Robins is also in lease negotiations with many others.

A Cartier employee answering the former Bal Harbour phone said Thursday the company will be opening a temporary store in the Miami Design District in December. Company officials would not confirm the move Thursday.

"Miami is an important market for Cartier," said Mercedes Abramo, vice president of retail for Cartier North America, in a statement. Abramo said the company will have a "soon to be announced location."

Hermes could not be reached Thursday for comment. The new Hermes store in the Design District will feature an expanded selection of men's and home products. Adjacent to the Hermes store, the company will also open a St. Louis crystal shop, the first of its kind in the U.S.

Robins expects to have between 40 and 50 luxury brands open in the Design District by 2014, as he seeks to create Miami's version of SoHo or the Meat Packing District.

The rise of the Design District is a blow to the dominance of the Bal Harbour Shops, which in 1965 created the concept of luxury retail in South Florida and has consistently ranked as one of top performing malls in the country.