

Corner is a vortex for healthy living

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More merchants are catering to the demands of increasingly health-conscious customers.

One corner that epitomizes that trend is the northwestern corner of East Shea Boulevard and North Tatum Boulevard in Paradise Valley Marketplace.

At least five stores there are targeting shoppers who want to lead healthful lifestyles:

- Whole Foods, an organic grocer.
- Trader Joe's, a grocer that emphasizes more wholesome foods.
- Soma Café, a café and restaurant that serves healthful cuisine.
- Bombay Spice, an Indian restaurant that prepares food without using fat, butter, cream, or heavy oil.
- Platinum Cleaners, a dry cleaner that uses a non-toxic solvent.

Brad Wick, an assistant vice president for the shopping center's owner, Inland Western Retail Real Estate Trust, says that the type of stores sprouting up there are responding to evolving preferences among consumers, both in northeast Phoenix and beyond.

"You're seeing a continuation of a movement where people are trying to do better for themselves in terms of health," he said.

While Whole Foods, Platinum Cleaners, and Soma Café have been operating since the 6 1/2-year-old center's early years, Bombay Spice and Trader Joe's opened just within the past three months. Phoenix resident Linda Tapscott, who shops at Whole Foods for its health products and fresh produce, says that the opening of Trader Joe's will bring her to the area more frequently.

"There are more choices for different healthy alternatives," Tapscott said.

Two years ago, Phoenix residents Nick Longo and girlfriend Alex Baldree began driving out of their way to shop at what Baldree calls "a health-oriented shopping center." Both were drawn initially to Soma Café and Whole Foods, but are now glad that other stores promoting healthful lifestyles have opened in the center.

"There are no other shopping centers with such an emphasis on health," Longo said.



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For customers such as Tapscott, Longo and Baldree, there are additional options in the immediate vicinity of Paradise Valley Marketplace. An adjacent shopping center features the Vitamin Shoppe and Regency Med Spa. Directly across the street on the northeastern corner of Shea and Tatum, the Paradise Village Gateway shopping center is home to Paradise Juice, Hi -Health and Paradise Bakery and Café.

Bo Kellar, director of operations for Bombay Spice, says that the restaurant was deliberate in choosing a location near a population that makes its dietary choices carefully. He believes that the area is at the vanguard of a growing trend.

"Obviously there was a market in that area for people who are health-conscious," Kellar said. " I believe that everybody nowadays is becoming more educated and conscious about what they eat and put in their bodies. We see that entire area as taking the initiative in tapping into that."

Wick says that the demographics of the neighborhoods surrounding Paradise Valley Marketplace facilitate a clustering of lifestyle stores. He says that within a 5-mile radius of the center, the average salary approaches six figures. Health supplements, spa treatments, and organic food and cleaning are not cheap.

Wick cites the example of Wal-Mart now stocking organic produce as a sign that in the future a green lifestyle will not be the sole domain of those with lots of green in their wallets. He says that as demand for healthier products grows, retail centers providing them will less frequently have to be designed for affluent clientele.

"I think that's becoming less of a requirement," Wick said. "I think the population in general is moving in that direction. The popularity of these products and services will grow over time."