

# Markville centre undergoing good-news changes: official

BY KATHLEEN GRIFFIN  
Staff Writer

**B**ig changes are under way at Markville Shopping Centre—but some of them are still secret.

Shoppers may have noticed boards up around the old Eatons, or that the Famous Players movie theatres have closed. The old Ultramart still stands empty, as it has since last April.

But the news is good, said the centre's general manager Michelle Walker.

"We're pretty excited here," she said. "We have more retailers than we have space. Effectively all the space is leased."

Markham children will be thrilled to learn Toys R Us is coming back to town after the Denison Street store closed more than two years ago.

It will lease half of the upper Eaton's space, Walker said.

The other half will soon be home to an Old Navy location, which has been described as an inexpensive Gap, featuring men's and women's clothing.

Both are scheduled to open April 1.

But Walker won't reveal what's in store for the grocery store space or Eaton's ground floor.

"These companies are public and they must get approval from their boards of directors before going public," she explained.

"Once that happens, things will move

very quickly. We should have an announcement within about a month."

She said retailers have gained more confidence in the local market, especially over the last five years with Markham's fast-paced growth.

"The retailers now appreciate this trade area, this demographic—before that the market was a bit thin and that's been part of the problem in strategizing what customers want," Walker said.

"There's a tremendous amount of activity and we'll meet with our tenants first to share the good news," she added.

The only exception is Famous Players, whose lease is still in effect, Walker added.

"We're clearly not in a position to make changes there, they are still in possession of the property."

Famous Players spokesperson Barry Patterson said, while the company is still meeting its financial obligations to the landlord, the theatres will not re-open.

"It doesn't fit with our overall business plan," Patterson said.

"We're now building entertainment destinations, larger screens, stadium seating. We have built new theatres in that area and that's where our focus is."

He would not say when the lease runs out or how long the space might stand empty.

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