

RETAIL

Saks Fifth Avenue advances diversity, equity, inclusion efforts

June 2, 2021



Kimberly Goldson is a Brooklyn-based Black-owned fashion label available at Saks. Image credit: Kimberly Goldson

By LUXURY DAILY NEWS SERVICE

Department store Saks Fifth Avenue has unveiled new goals to advance diversity, equity and inclusion in an effort to drive positive change and foster a more inclusive environment.

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The new roadmap for change outlines measurable commitments to be achieved by 2023, such as growing BIPOC leadership, building community resilience and investing in Black designers. The retailer has also introduced the Saks Emerging Designer Accelerator Program, which is focused on leveraging its brand and luxury fashion expertise to develop high-potential independent brands.

"Over the last year, the intensifying conversation around equality and social justice has made it clear there is more work to be done to improve representation, including within the fashion industry," said Marc Metrick, CEO of Saks, in a statement. "We've taken the time to listen and learn, so that our plans can have a meaningful and lasting impact for our customers, employees, partners and communities."

"Sharing this roadmap is a pivotal milestone in our efforts and we remain committed to making Saks Fifth Avenue an inclusive experience for everyone."

Road to a better future

Saks Fifth Avenue is committed to hiring, advancing and promoting BIPOC talent into 40 percent of roles at the manager level and above by ensuring its practices mitigate bias and drive for inclusivity in the process.

It will also direct 60 percent of grants annually from the Saks Fifth Avenue Foundation to support underserved communities and mobilize employees to donate time within their local communities by instituting a corporate volunteer program, Saks Serves.



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A post shared by Saks Fifth Avenue (@saks)

The retailer also plans to increase total sales of Black-owned, -designed or -led brands by approximately \$100 million by strategically expanding its merchandise assortment and support the growth of emerging brands, including the establishment of the Saks Emerging Designer Program.

The program will emphasize BIPOC talent, ensuring that, each year, 50 percent of the participants will be BIPOC-owned.

This year, eight brands have been selected to participate in the inaugural year-long program, including:

Ashya, BruceGlen, Busayo, Kimberly Goldson, LaQuan Smith, Reese Cooper, Alejandra Alonso Rojas and A.W.A.K.E. Mode.

The program will offer an onboarding bootcamp, mentorship and entrepreneurial workshops to provide the skills and insights needed to scale their businesses at Saks Fifth Avenue and beyond. Additionally, each brand will be eligible to receive a grant to support their business operations and growth, as well as dedicated marketing support from Saks Fifth Avenue.

As the presenting sponsor of the Saks Emerging Designer Accelerator Program, Mastercard will provide participating brands access to its [Digital Doors](#) program, including exclusive resources and tools aimed to help small businesses further grow and digitally enhance their online presence.

Last month, to shed light on mental health awareness, Saks Fifth Avenue shared mental health resources and related activities in-store and online, and raised funds for non-profit organization working on mental health through the Saks Foundation ([see story](#)).

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