

RETAIL

## Bloomingdale's opening first scaled-down concept store in bricks-and-mortar pivot

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Exterior rendering of the new Bloomie's concept store in Virginia. Image courtesy of Bloomingdale's

By NORA HOWE

U.S. department store chain Bloomingdale's is bringing its product offerings and services to a smaller, highly-curated store concept, as luxury retailers experiment with their physical footprints in a post-pandemic era.

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Located in the Mosaic District shopping center in Fairfax, Virginia, the 22,000 square-foot Bloomie's store will be a style and service destination featuring new experience and design concepts and a unique assortment of contemporary and luxury brands across women's and men's fashion and beauty. To celebrate the new store, Bloomie's will host pre-opening activations at Mosaic throughout the month of August, and invites the community to enjoy a variety of festivities during the week of its grand opening.

"We have two powerful existing Bloomingdale's stores in the D.C. area and a vibrant online business, so Bloomie's enters a market where customers know our brand," said Charles Anderson, director of stores at **Bloomingdale's**, New York. "The assortment and experience have been built to complement the market, not only to reach new customers but also to engage our existing loyal customers.

"We expect our Bloomingdale's customers will also enjoy the shopping experience at Bloomie's, which offers the fun and services they already love, in a smaller, even more convenient location."

### New retail experience

Like the retailer's full-scale department store model, Bloomie's blends a mix of top designers and emerging labels. It also features a tech-enabled stylist service model and a restaurant experience.

Bloomie's customers can discover men's and women's apparel including contemporary and advanced ready-to-wear, denim, active, intimates, as well as shoes, handbags, beauty, accessories including eyewear and fine jewelry. With fresh deliveries multiple times per week, and rotating carts with unique offerings, customers may discover something new with each visit.

"The multi-format push is all about bringing the right offering to the right audience in the right location," said Ethan Chernofsky, vice president of marketing at analytics platform **Placer.ai**, Los Altos, CA. "By scaling down the full

concept, Bloomingdale's has another element to its offering that could enable it to reach its audience.

"Even more, being differentiated creates a lot more flexibility, allowing the brand to deploy the right concept to each specific market."



*The Returns Dropbox and click-and-collect services are centralized at The Front Desk. Image courtesy of Bloomingdale's*

Some of the brands at the new concept store include: Ganni, Staud, Maje, Rag & Bone, Cult Gaia, Jonathan Simkhai Standard, LoveShackFancy, Moussy, Mother, Frame, Re/Done and Aqua.

The store will also feature women's shoes from Stella McCartney, Jimmy Choo and Golden Goose, as well as handbags from Marc Jacobs and accessories from Gucci, Dior, Saint Laurent and Prada.

Bloomie's will also offer a new beauty experience, with elevated skincare, makeup and fragrance offerings from La Mer, Dior, Maison Francis Kurkdjian and more.

In addition to style, service and convenience are top priorities at the new Bloomie's store. Its location within the Mosaic District, a local hub for shopping, dining and entertainment, is a central destination for customers, whether they want to drop in while running errands or spend the day browsing new arrivals.

Bloomie's will continue offering the services customers are familiar with at full-scale Bloomingdale's stores, such as easy returns at the Returns Dropbox and buy online for in-store or curbside pickup.

Stylists will be at the core of the Bloomie's service-driven experience, delivering personalized guidance to shoppers across all categories, empowered by technology. Each stylist is equipped with digital selling capabilities, allowing them to access special finds for customers outside of Bloomie's, from nearby Bloomingdale's stores to the 59th Street flagship in New York City, and enable them to work with Bloomingdales.com customers digitally.

The tech-enabled experience continues in the fitting rooms, where customers can request assistance with the push of a button.

The Bloomie's store experience interprets the Bloomingdale's aesthetic in a fresh way through innovative new design concepts. The layout and flow of the store drive customer discovery, where Bloomie's will curate rotating trends, highlight must-have items and host activations.

A new color palette brings the story of Bloomie's to life, as large windows bring light into the space and connect the experience to the vibrant Mosaic District outside. Bloomie's fitting rooms will feature monochromatic pale blush coloration and color block stripes.



*Retailers have been scaling down stores for the last several years, offering a more curated selection of products. Image courtesy of Bloomingdale's*

In terms of lifestyle experience, Bloomie's will feature the newest location of D.C.-based Caribbean restaurant [Colada Shop](#), which pays homage to the Caribbean way of socializing. Colada Shop will serve its full menu of signature cocktails, finely roasted coffee and Cuban bites, and visitors may enjoy their meals inside the restaurant or in the outdoor patio seating area.

"Bloomingdale's is clearly embracing a push to diversify and it means looking at different types of formats but also different types of locations," Mr. Chernofsky said. "The ability to test these concepts and understand which audiences react best to each, and which products perform better will give Bloomingdale's the capacity to better sharpen its approach to different markets."

#### Scaling down retail

In recent years, retailers have been experimenting with the small-scale retail model, opening new concept branches of their larger locations.

In 2017, U.S. retailer Nordstrom opened a new take on the department store model by focusing more on services and less on products. Dubbed Nordstrom Local, the store has a dedicated inventory of products, but focuses on personal services such as manicures, tailoring and personal styling.

The smaller, more bespoke experience is meant to be a more exclusive version of the traditional Nordstrom shopping procedure. The first Nordstrom Local opened in West Hollywood, California in a mere 3,000-square foot space ([see story](#)).

In the same year, LVMH-owned beauty retailer Sephora highlighted some of its advanced retail innovations on a small scale with the opening of its smallest, but most feature-rich, storefront on Newbury Street in Boston.

Sephora Studio features a small, intimate setting, but with a major focus on providing above-average consumer tools to find the products cosmetic lovers want ([see story](#)).

In light of COVID-19, retailers realize they are able to be successful online and shift their strategies and are reducing or adapting their physical footprints. Some brands may also move away from the traditional flagship model as consumers leave cities for suburban communities or, as is the case with Bloomingdale's, pivoting to a new in-store environment ([see story](#)).

"The classic, full-size department store isn't going anywhere," Placer.ai's Mr. Chernofsky said. "We've seen strong recoveries for classic department locations, and there is clearly a strong demand."

"We should expect to see more brands looking for their right mix of formats with an emphasis on diversification in order to help optimize their presence in each market," he said. "Ultimately, a multi-format, market-by-market perspective is likely the way forward and that starts with having an array of offerings to deploy."