



## Len Druskin will rebrand, close 4 stores and open 4 new ones



Len Druskin apparel is closing stores, re-branding, and opening 4 new ones.

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**Len Druskin**, the upscale retail store with multiple concepts, is simplifying its brand. According to a long letter posted by Michael Druskin, the son of founder Len Druskin, the retailer will move "toward one brand, one identity, and one vision--the new premium 'Len.' "



Two of the three stores in Gaviidae closed earlier this month and the Len Druskin Man store will close in February. One of two stores in City Center closed late last year. President Michael Druskin wrote in his letter that the restructuring means the company will be "more consistent... and less confusing."

Amen. The retailer had at least five separate concept stores, maybe more-- LD Len Druskin for women's professional and dress apparel, LD Blues, the the women's upscale casual store (both in Gaviidae and now closed), LD Men (closing in Feb. in Gaviidae), LEN fast fashion lower-priced stores in Southdale, City Center, Rosedale, Ridgedale and MOA), the higher-end flagship in the Galleria and the outlet store in a few doors down from the LEN store in City Center (now closed). And that's not counting the Illinois store that opened late 2013.

Retail analyst Mary Van Note of **Ginger in Minneapolis** said the number of types of stores was confusing. "They got overextended and the naming strategy didn't make it clear where to go for

what," she said.

I had trouble figuring out how the now closed outlet store was different from the other City Center store and the Dale stores, but store reps tell me that the closed outlet was higher-end merchandise from the Galleria. Apparently, the Dale stores and remaining City Center stores are selling lower-priced fast fashion at 50 percent off every day. But it's not an outlet.

Although closing four stores may look like an abandonment of downtown Minneapolis, Druskin's letter indicates that it will bring the higher-end premium brand back downtown in 2015. I am unclear if that means opening a new store and keeping the City Center Len store. (Michael Druskin is out of town and did not respond to an email.)

An employee at the City Center Len location said that it will continue to stock fast fashion at a lower price but will introduce the higher-end stuff too. I'm guessing the existing store will get a makeover too. It's difficult to sell non-discounted, high-end designers under lights so harsh they could induce criminal confessions.

Van Note sees the higher-end trend as a good one for LD. "Value and super premium concepts both do well and the middle is losing out," she said.

Meanwhile, store reps are saying that the new name will be LEN for all stores, including the Galleria. By the end of February a new store at MOA will replace the temporary location by Macys 3rd floor. Two additional stores will be completed by fall of this year and two more in 2015, wrote Druskin on the store site.

All stores are currently in 50 percent off mode. Not everything is half off in the Galleria or the LD men stores. Selected items are not discounted at all, but the majority of the store is half off for men's and women's stuff.

Best of luck in the transition, Len Druskin.

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