

Mall in Spain lets shoppers ski, dance and spend

By Emma Daly

Arroyomolinos, Spain—Madrid's version of Xanadu, which shares the name of the stately pleasure dome decreed by Kubla Khan and imagined by the English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, is a vast shopping mall under construction by America's Mills Corporation and Spanish partners that aims to seduce shoppers into spending money on fun as well as consumer goods.

The main attraction of Madrid Xanadu, a shopping and leisure complex due to open in May, will be the 17-story Snow Dome, with an 820-foot ski run decorated with more than 100 fake pine trees. Europe's largest covered slopes will offer skiing and snowboarding all year round in subzero but fog-free temperatures on artificial snow. Bars, restaurants, discothèques, cinemas, indoor go-karting and children's playgrounds are intended to complement more than 100 stores in the 85-acre development to persuade customers to stay longer and spend more.

At 1.4 million square feet, according to Mills documents, the \$440 million center will be the largest mall in Spain. As Spaniards and other Europeans move out of city centers and into new suburban housing, the demand for out-of-town shopping and leisure centers is rising fast.

Mills, believing that the United States is "overmalled", is investigating sites in Valencia, Barcelona and Seville? And planning centers in Milan and Rome, Mr Siegel said. "Europe just looked like a terrific place to invest."

His company, a real estate investment trust, has become known in the United States for what the company calls "shoppertainment", blending retail and leisure activities at vast centers. They attract millions of visitors who tend to spend, Mr Siegel said, three times as much as the average mall shopper.

Mills boasts that its centers are the leading tourist attractions in all but one of the American States where the complexes operate. That one is Florida, where Walt Disney World has the advantage. Mr Siegel said "people come for long periods, because they bring the whole family. The ability to do that is just going to make the retail stores unbelievably successful because when people stay longer they spend more money."

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