

MALL WONDER

Eric Villency's luxe Long Island shopping center

By JENNIFER GOULD KEIL

ON the surface, there is something mild-mannered, even bland, about furniture heir Eric Villency's conventional good looks, impeccable taste and easy-going ways.

But underneath the charming "nice guy" surface is a passion for design and development.

Villency has created an upscale shopping center in Roslyn, Long Island, named @250 (after its address, 250 South Service Road). The space had been built in 1962 and used as a warehouse to store his grandfather Maurice Villency's furniture creations in one of America's wealthiest communities.

And like his grandfather, Eric Villency is a designer as well as a businessman.

As CEO of Villency Design Group, he's involved in interior and architectural design, as well as product design and development that goes well beyond furniture. He's the brains behind the bikes that cult-classic SoulCycle uses and the bottles that you drink from at Organic Avenue.

And Villency may very well be the first and only developer and designer who can boast that his clients are also his tenants at @250.

"It is an unusual relationship arc," Villency said. "Having worked on so many commercial projects — from hotels to the club level at Citi Field and the Delta Miami terminal — it was a great opportunity to be the builder and developer."

The 42,000-square-foot mall, which opened in phases starting in May 2012, has a welcoming hip, urban feel.

"I wanted to do a boutique development that featured deconstructed 'West Coast' architecture more commonly found in LA," Villency said. "It was designed to not appear uniform like a typical mall. The mix of materials

breaks apart the facade so it looks more like a city streetscape, which lets each individual tenant project their own identity."

The boutique luxury mall also boasts a theme: wellness.

"Through VDG, I've seen the explosive growth of wellness," Villency said. "Unlike traditional retailers who struggle with economic cycles, the wellness sector has expanded despite challenging economic conditions."

On a recent tour, the shopping center was bustling. Outside, Bentleys and Mercedes packed the parking lot. Inside, the mall was humming with impossibly trim moms, boasting perfectly groomed eyebrows and highlighted hair, clad in their SoulCycle outfits and a version of the kickaround \$750

Stuart Weitzman over-the-knee low-heeled boots or a similar

Jimmy Choo motorcycle version.

Villency has designed a mall to keep these women inside, with their credit cards out, all day — and night.

The women drop off their kids at Kidville — an upscale pre-school and play space — pick up juice at Organic

Avenue and head to SoulCycle, which is already expanding.

Next comes the shopping — along with a little nip/tuck. Truth + Beauty sells real and costume jewelry (one of the lines it carries is that of Caroline Fare, Villency's Swedish fiancée), cosmetics and accessories — plus it boasts a medical spa for Botox injections, liposuction, laser hair removal and other cosmetic fixes.

Thea is a gift store which sells old typewriters, new coffee books, pricey candles and children's gifts.

There's Dry Bar, a hair salon slated to open early March, and a restaurant, Down Dog Alimentari, built by Villency, who is

in "advanced talks" with celebrity chef John DeLucie to be both partner and chef. A wine bar, Down Dog Wine, is slated to open in April — Villency is in talks with DeLucie about that, as well. In addition, a boutique medical office will open in the mall's lower level.

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