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WELCOMING WALGREENS

Flagship will sell wine, upscale beauty products

By **DONNA GOODISON**

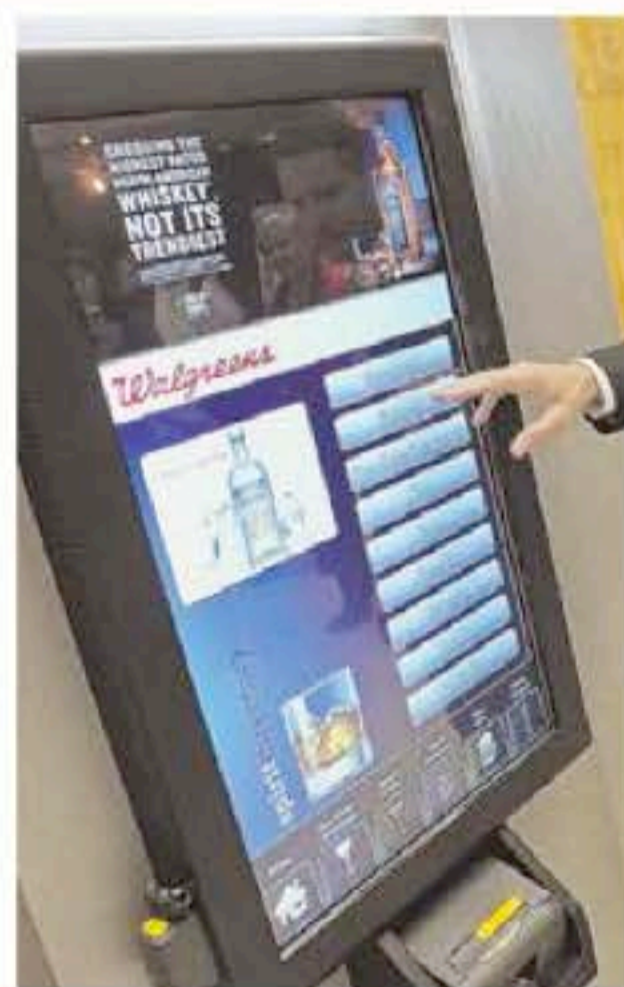
Walgreens' new megastore that's set to open in Boston's Downtown Crossing next spring will take the drugstore chain's health, beauty and convenience strategy to the next level.

The 25,000-square-foot flagship store has been dubbed the "gourmet Walgreens" by city officials who see it as key to the shopping district's revival. The retailer replaces a departed Borders bookstore in a structure that once housed a bank.

"We're taking buildings like this and trying to bring them back to what they originally were like ... and incorporating our concepts," Walgreens executive Dave White said during a walk-through yesterday.

A touch-screen "Beverage Wizard," serving as a sommelier/mixologist, will help customers pick the right alcohol for a party of 10. Other features will include sushi and a juice-and-smoothie bar, a high-end beauty boutique offering skin analysis and virtual makeovers, and manicures at a mini nail salon.

The first-floor fresh food and grocery section and mezzanine "adult beverage" section will be modern and high-tech. The pharmacy/beauty area in back will recall an early 1900s bank,



STAFF PHOTOS BY MATT STONE

GOING 'GOURMET': Walgreens' Michael DeFazio, above, says the new Walgreens under construction in Downtown Crossing, left, will feature local foods as well as a 'Beverage Wizard,' far left, and Look Boutique, below.



RETAIL

with decorative brass doorways, ornate plaster ceilings, marble and limestone walls, and porcelain floor.

The "UpMarket" will feature prepared foods produced daily and a cafe staffed by a barista. Frozen foods, groceries and dairy items also will be located on the lower level. The company will tap food vendors from the region.

"We've had a lot of success with 'we go local,'" said Michael DeFazio, senior director of store concepts.

The pharmacist will sit out front to interact with customers, who also will be able to fill prescriptions

and pay at an express kiosk. A monitor will show how long they have to wait.

Customers will be able to sit outside, at the corner of Washington and School streets, at tables requested by the city to encourage shoppers to hang out in Downtown Crossing.

The pharmacy and beauty area — which includes a Look Boutique, Walgreens' entree into premium beauty products — will be restored to the early days of former tenant Boston Five Cents Savings Bank.

Even the old vault will be put to use, with the former bank president's office relocated there and outfitted with a pharmacist's mortar and pestle along with historic Walgreens products.

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Designers to take Downtown Crossing on new path

By **GREG TURNER**



REAL ESTATE & DEVELOPMENT

Crossing" with recommendations for improvements to the 34-block downtown Business Improvement District's roads, sidewalks, wayfinding signs, retail vendors, traffic and public places.

"We think it's an incredible time to be embarking on this project," said Kaki Martin, a partner in the Boston landscape design firm. "It's a diverse district. There are lots of nooks and crannies to be discovered."

Early ideas include a "nondirectional" paving pattern for the natural gath-

ering space between Macy's and the old Filene's building, a pedestrian-only stretch of Summer Street. "So you'd have a surface that connects and lays out as sort of a big carpet," Martin said.

Klopfer Martin has assembled a team of urban designers, civil engineers and vending experts to

give Downtown Crossing its first major makeover since the 1970s. They will upgrade pedestrian navigation, highlight destinations, and set standards for street and sidewalk materials.

"So when you're walking in the district, you'll know you're in the district," said Randi Lathrop, deputy di-

rector of community planning for the Boston Redevelopment Authority.

Rosemarie Sansone, president of the Downtown Boston BID group, expects a plan "to reframe spaces with programming that encourages use through all four seasons."

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