

WWD WEDNESDAY

Sportswear



www.com

Growth Market

Another expansion is in the works at FIG.

By Rusty Williamson

DALLAS — Fashion Industry Gallery is charging ahead with another expansion. The boutique fashion mart in downtown Dallas, which accents designer, contemporary, bridge and accessories categories, has tentative plans to convert all or part of the basement in the FIG building, at 1807 Ross Avenue, to wholesale space sometime in 2007, though officials aren't sure yet how much square footage the expansion will encompass.

"We're looking at the possibility of adding another floor to FIG downstairs in the basement. We're pretty much fully leased now," said Elyse Wasserman, acting director of FIG.

The mart has more than 75,000 square feet of wholesale show space on two floors, more than 50 permanent showrooms and a juried fashion show called Shop that typically attracts at least 100 vendors per market.

"This could be one of the last frontiers for FIG as far as expansion, though, because we don't want to get too big," Wasserman said. "We're small for a reason. One of the charms of FIG has always been its edited collections that allow the buyers to stay focused on our key categories. We want to keep it small and

"We want to keep it small and niche-oriented with specific lines for specific lifestyles."

— Elyse Wasserman, FIG

niche-oriented with specific lines for specific lifestyles."

Wasserman said FIG continues to register traffic gains at each market and that attendance at the June show was 20 percent ahead of last year's.

"June is known to be notoriously slow, and we're really proud to have that kind of increase. We saw several stores from new geography that hadn't shopped FIG before, including retailers from the Chicago and Wisconsin areas, along with the Southeast and Florida. We had done a concerted marketing program to those retailers, and many of them showed up for the market," she said.

FIG kicked off a new buyer outreach program this spring that includes a focused telemarketing, Internet and direct-mail campaign, as well as going on the road to visit stores and tell them about FIG.

The campaigns are simple, said Wasserman. "What's our pitch to new stores? We ask them if they've heard about FIG and tell them what we have to offer, including the lines we carry, our distinct fashion focus, and the ease of reaching us and navigating the showrooms once they arrive. I describe it as an upscale urban shopping experience."

Upcoming markets at FIG are scheduled for Aug. 17-19 and Oct. 26-29.



FIG in Dallas hosts outdoor events in the adjacent park.



Shop attracts 100 or more vendors per market.