

Buyers laud new products, smooth shopping in Vegas

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Aggressive pricing also pleases retailers at summer market

LAS VEGAS — Retailers who shopped the furniture market here last week were impressed by new products and deals, and the [World Market Center's](#) efforts to make their shopping experience smooth and enjoyable.

Houston-based [Gallery Furniture](#) has been shopping here for some time, but it was the first visit for owner Jim McIngvale, who was wowed by a venue he called "dynamic."

"I think it's great," he said. "It's easy to shop. It's new. It's fresh. It's terrific."

And McIngvale found what he was looking for — contemporary furniture from [Diamond Sofa](#) and others to appeal to young, urban-oriented consumers gravitating to the loft living lifestyle in and around downtown Houston.

"We shopped a lot of vendors that are out of the mainstream," he said. "One of our mantras is to not be a commodity furniture store. We're not strong in that (contemporary) category, but we're going to be."

Howard Freed, owner of [Freed's Home Furnishings](#) in metro Dallas, said he found "tons of new stuff here," noting that one of the keys to this market is the manageable size of the showrooms and how vendors tend to show only their introductions and best sellers.

Among the bright spots for Freed's: [AICO](#) and its new Essex Manor collection, and the newest [Kathy Ireland Home by Standard](#) product.

Freed also applauded the market for its work to make the shopping experience better, particularly a much-improved shuttle service from his hotel to the main buildings. He suggested his days of visiting High Point may be numbered.

"There are too many markets," he said, adding that once WMC opens its third building next July, he may skip the larger North Carolina market.

"The problem here has been limited upholstery," Freed said, "but it's improved. The market is getting bigger, and I think those vendors (not here already) are just going to have to bite the bullet and pay the price."

For Fort Lauderdale, Fla.-based [City Furniture](#), the amount of new product offered here depended on the supplier. Those particularly strong out West had a lot of new product, while others remain more High Pointed-oriented with only a few new things here.

"But Las Vegas continues to rise," said City President Keith Koenig, pointing to the construction work on Building C. "With this new building, it's going to attract more and more."

Like Freed, Koenig has complained about too many markets, and said it continues to be an issue for his merchandising team, which is shopping more overseas markets.

"Where we spend the most time will be where we can see the most new product and utilize our time effectively," he said.

Joel Huseby, vice president of merchandising at [Becker Furniture World Home Center](#) in Becker, Minn., had a different take on the current market schedules, saying he wants to see fresh looks every three months, in High Point and Las Vegas. That means he can make changes year-round without overhauling a large part of his lineup at one time.

And it hasn't meant extra time because Huseby has shaved time off his High Point trips — from eight days a few years ago to three-to-four days now.

Huseby was among those pleased with the aggressive pricing they saw here from manufacturers trying to drum up business in a tough business climate.

He cited an ultra-soft leather sofa at Leather Italia Becker can sell at \$1,199, as well as the resource's \$999 retail price points on other new frames. He also liked the new motion sectional program at Catnapper, and looked closely at its bonded leather offerings.

"It's nice on our side," said Huseby, whose business is benefiting from the excitement of its re-opening as whole-home home center.

"It was worth it to be here," Huseby said. "It was hot, but it's hot in Minneapolis too."