

When entering Pleasant Ridge Town Center, it's like a breath of fresh air. The open-air shopping center with spacious sidewalks, trees, and fountains differs greatly from enclosed, crowded malls that many customers are used to. The appealing design and landscaping, which is paired with a long list of both locally-owned and well-known national businesses, including restaurants, fashion boutiques, a grocery store, department store, art gallery and much more, is why Pleasant Ridge Town Center was voted one of the best shopping centers in central Arkansas by the readers of the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette.

"You can come here and shop, eat, get your nails done, go grocery shopping – all at once," said Lou Schickel, owner of Schickel Development and developer of Pleasant Ridge Town Center. In addition to shopping or dining, people can often be found strolling, exercising or simply taking in the pleasant atmosphere at the center.

The shopping center, which opened about two years ago, was derived from Schickel's vision to provide Little Rock with a neighborhood-friendly place that would blend in with the surrounding area. It is located near a post office, dry cleaners, many banks and churches, and a gym, which means the town center is truly in the center of a community, Schickel said.

Plus, with an ideal location that is ten minutes from downtown Little Rock and close to continuing developing areas such as Chenal Valley, the Heights, Hillcrest, Pleasant Valley, and Maumelle, it is both convenient for residents and profitable for the tenants.

Schickel admitted his hobby has always been to go to various cities and look at unique shopping centers, and it was from these visits that he got the inspiration for Pleasant Ridge Town Center. The center has a nice mixture of both local and national stores.

A few of the national stores include Fresh Market, Belk, Bonefish Grill, which was voted as the Best New Restaurant by readers of the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, and Cheeburger Cheeburger, a family-friendly restaurant that was voted as a finalist for Best Hamburger by readers of the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette.

The newly opened Panera Bread is drawing hundreds of hungry customers daily for its great pastries, sandwiches and soups.

And, over the last two years, Pleasant Ridge has become the center for the best high-end, local retailers in the city, Schickel said. Boutiques such as Scarlet, Vesta's, Solemates, Beyond Cotton, Powder and Smoke, Minx and Glo Limited have moved to the center and are providing women with all they need from fashion to shoes to skin care. In fact, Glo Limited was voted a finalist in Best Skin Care by readers of the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette.