

BUSINESS

Rosedale debuts prayer room for Muslim shoppers

Eid al-Fitr ranks second for shopping sales behind Black Friday, official says.

By Erin Adler (<https://www.startribune.com/erin-adler/6370491/>) Star Tribune |

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Rosedale Mall has debuted a prayer room for Muslim shoppers in time for Eid al-Fitr, in what may become a permanent feature at the Roseville shopping center.

Eid al-Fitr, a religious holiday that marks the end of the month of Ramadan, can be celebrated for up to three days, though "the big prayer time" is the morning after Ramadan ends, said Rammy Mohamed, a local fashion designer.

"I'm the girl behind the idea," she said of the Rosedale prayer room, which she said is the first of its kind at a metro-area mall. "I said, 'You know what would be cool? Having a nice place to pray.'"

The room in a vacant store on the mall's second level offers burgundy prayer rugs concealed behind black curtains. The space is divided into separate areas for men and women to pray. The mall also designated a nearby family restroom as a site for the ritual washing before prayer, and commissioned a colorful backdrop — yellow with purple lanterns — so Muslims could take selfies and family pictures while shopping.

As Ramadan draws to an end, Muslims shop for new clothing and other items to prepare for Eid, Mohamed said — but often, when prayer time comes, they have to pray in corners or fitting rooms.

Sagal Muse, who was carrying Macy's and J.C. Penney bags on Wednesday afternoon, said having a prayer room at the mall would be helpful.

"My community, they need [to do] a lot of shopping," Muse said. "If I come to shop and I need to pray, if they already provided [a room], that would be great."

Sarah Fossen, marketing director for Rosedale Mall, said they got the idea from the Muslim community and then worked with community members to make it happen. Mall officials enlisted Muslim social media influencers and models to promote the effort.

"What we have found is over the last few years ... is Eid was second only to Black Friday in terms of shopping sales for some stores," Fossen said.

The prayer room will run up to five days past Eid, Fossen said, and mall officials are considering creating a designated prayer room after that.

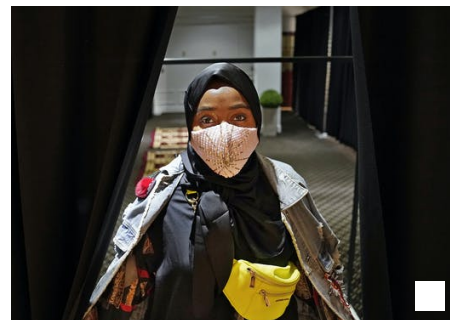
On Wednesday afternoon, the mall was fairly quiet, as was the prayer room. Though many Muslim shoppers said they hadn't heard about the room, they expressed support for the idea.

"It's amazing," said Fay Ali, who heard about the prayer room on social media. "We're getting noticed, so that's really nice."

Roble Ahmed, who was eating with his two children at Dairy Queen, said he hadn't been aware of the prayer room but would use it if it was available year-round.

"The Muslim is a part of the community," he said. "We shop a lot, we come here to eat."

Mohamed said Rosedale's efforts are an acknowledgment of Muslims themselves — and their buying power. Since this is the first year, she said, everyone is learning as they go. "I hope this will catch on like a wildfire," Mohamed said. "That would be my dream."



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Rammy Mohamed, a fashion designer from St. Paul, said she came up with the idea of a prayer room for Muslims at Rosedale.

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