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Cabela's Set to Join Denver Retail Alongside H&M, Trader Joe's

Metropolitan areas measure their maturity and vitality in many ways – how many major league professional sports teams call the place home, for instance, or how sophisticated and adventurous the region's cultural offerings are.

But for many people, it's all about shopping, and the Denver metro area is less than a month away from scoring one of the most sought-after retailers in the country – times two. With trendy H&M expanding here, and the promise of Trader Joe's stores in Denver and in Boulder, the arrival of outfitter Cabela's is good news for the millions of Coloradans and their neighbors who revel in the concept of a place that is devoted to the gear that suits up many of the state's outdoor lifestyle enthusiasts.

GH Phipps Construction Companies' work on the 110,000-square-foot Lone Tree Cabela's is winding down, with the opening set for 11 a.m. on Thursday, Aug. 15, following a short ceremony. A second Cabela's, containing 90,000 square feet, is set to debut at the same time in Thornton, at Interstate 25 and 144th Avenue. Together, the Cabela's stores will employ some 400 people.

The \$11 million store awarded to GH Phipps last year serves as the anchor of RidgeGate Commons. GH



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Phipps also has performed the infrastructure work for Coventry Development Corp. – Colorado for the new development, which has been sculpted from the rolling hills to the west of Interstate 25 at RidgeGate Parkway.

It is a project that reintroduced GH Phipps to Cabela's. The construction company was chosen several years ago to build a store in Wheat Ridge that generated a lot of excitement, but that did not make it out of drawings – a combination of changing retail strategy and economic conditions. For Phipps, it's been a pleasure to work with

the highly respected firm, which has developed a strong consumer following.

The Lone Tree store sits perched on a ridge off the highway, part of a pair of "bookend" stores opening at the same time to serve the Front Range – and beyond. No longer will avid outdoors men and women in the region need to make a long trek west to Grand Junction or north to Sidney, Nebraska; thumb through a catalog, or order online.

In a 2012 release announcing Cabela's plans to build two metro area stores, CEO Tommy Miller called it "double-barreled good news."

Cabela's was founded in 1961 by members of the Cabela family; according to a company history, the firm got its start around the family's kitchen table, as Dick and Mary Cabela began a mail order business dealing in outdoor gear. The response was so great that the operation moved into more a more traditional setting, beginning the expansion to more than 40 stores today.

The new Front Range stores also aim to create a more contemporary environment – not just an interior – with what the firm calls a next-generation store layout and merchandise presentation. This experiential sensibility begins outside the Lone Tree store, which is backed by a sculpted concrete retaining

wall that appears to melt into the nearby ridge. The exterior displays the familiar Cabela's lodge aesthetic, with stone walls and wavy wood siding that mix rustic with reality. The store was designed by Holland Basham Architects, of Omaha, Neb.

The interior ambiance, however, goes to the heart of the matter. On a recent tour, much of the interior was complete, a clubby place that is all about bringing the outdoors inside – a waterfall, aquarium, ducks suspended from a vaulted sky lit ceiling, and hosts of mounted animals that appeared to have just awakened from a nap atop a "mountain" path that stretches around the store's interior walls. A hand-painted mural, two mezzanine areas, polished concrete floors, and a walnut-paneled gun library add distinctive touches.

Cabela's remained on schedule despite a major challenge this past spring. That is, what should have been spring, but instead remained winter – as any builder, driver or gardener can attest.

"The weather was brutal," said project manager Joel Sebald. "There were consecutive weeks where it snowed once a week – into early May."

That meant mud, lots of mud, on the site. But the parking lot has been paved, and the lines