



Blu Dot furniture to open its first outlet store

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Blu Dot, the Minneapolis-based manufacturer of modern furniture, is dropping its popular warehouse sales and replacing them with an outlet store.

The new store, Blu Dot's first outlet, is expected to open in early July, Blu Dot Vice President Medora Danz said Friday.

The store will sell closeouts, samples and scratch-and-dent merchandise at a discount, including sofas, sectionals, chairs and dining room and bedroom sets.

"As our needs for warehouse space grew, there wasn't enough capacity for warehouse sales anymore," Danz said. With limited storage space for warehouse items and a big hassle factor in holding the sale, Danz said an outlet was the obvious alternative.

The new store will be located at the current location of the company offices at 1323 Tyler St. NE. in Minneapolis and open weekends only. The offices will move next door in April. The warehouse in Rogers, where the sales were held before, will move to Otsego.

Blu Dot designs all of its furniture in Minnesota, but some of it is manufactured overseas. It's known by designers and customers for its clean modern design at prices significantly lower than European designs.

Stores that carry the line are scarce, with Roam in Uptown being the only retailer in Minnesota. The company has made some products for Target under the TOO brand name.

John Stedman, who owns Roam, thinks it's a smart move. "It's similar to what Room & Board has been doing for years," he said. Room & Board has an outlet open only on weekends in Golden Valley, where people are routinely lined up before the doors open.

Stedman, who's carried the Blu Dot line for eight years, said it's difficult when a supplier becomes a competitor, but it's a good way for them to get rid of excess or blemished inventory. "They have a significant amount of product that is returned from their online sales that must be dealt with," he said.

Part of the 10,000-square-foot outlet will be a dedicated showroom to highlight many of the hundreds of products Blu Dot sells. All will be available for sale at full price for instant pickup or shipment.

No word on whether coffee and pastries will be served, as Blu Dot employees did for the hordes who waited in line for the doors to open at the warehouse sales. The last warehouse sale was in 2013 in Rogers.

Job postings for outlet employees and a store manager will be posted next week.

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Blu Dot's Strut table and Real Good Chair, shown in a 2012 file photo.

Paul Wagtowitz, Star Tribune

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