Microsoft to open stores in Arizona, California

JESSICA MINTZ, AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- Microsoft Corp. said Tuesday it is planning to open its first two retail stores in Arizona and California this fall.

The software maker said Tuesday it signed leases at shopping centers in Mission Viejo, Calif. and Scottsdale, Ariz. The Shops at Mission Viejo is already home to an Apple store. The other location, Scottsdale Fashion Square, does not have a competing Apple Inc. shop.

The software maker confirmed details reported earlier by CNET News.

Microsoft maker picked those areas because they're "hot markets," with the right demographics, said Kim Stocks, a corporate communications director at the company.

She said the stores will sell laptops in addition to Microsoft and third-party software, Zunes, and Xbox 360 games and consoles.

Last week, a document surfaced online showing concept sketches for a Microsoft store where people can order personalized laptops, take classes and get help from experts. Microsoft said the sketches were early ideas and that the company hasn't finalized its designs.

Redmond-based Microsoft's stores are a way for the company to introduce consumers to its products in person, but they are not meant as a product showcase or a replacement for big electronics stores, Stocks said. However, Microsoft does want the stores to turn a profit, she said.

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Stocks would not say exactly when the stores will open, whether other locations are planned to open at the same time, or how many stores Microsoft is planning in all.

In February, Microsoft hired David Porter, a 25-year Wal-Mart veteran to run its retail effort, but has released few details since.

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