

EXPRESS, INC.
Form 424B7
December 06, 2011
Table of Contents

**Filed Pursuant to Rule 424(b)(7)
Registration No. 333-178347**

The information in this preliminary prospectus supplement is not complete and may be changed. A registration statement relating to the common stock has become effective under the Securities Act of 1933. This preliminary prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus are not an offer to sell these securities and are not soliciting an offer to buy these securities in any jurisdiction where the offer or sale is not permitted.

Subject to Completion,

Preliminary Prospectus Supplement dated December 6, 2011

PROSPECTUS SUPPLEMENT

(To prospectus dated December 6, 2011)

16,000,000 Shares

Express, Inc.

Common Stock

The selling stockholders identified in this prospectus supplement are offering 16,000,000 shares of our common stock. We will not receive any proceeds from the sale of shares offered by the selling stockholders.

Our common stock is traded on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol **EXPR**. On December 5, 2011, the last reported sale price of our common stock on the New York Stock Exchange was \$21.45 per share.

Investing in the common stock involves risks that are described in the Risk Factors section beginning on page S-4 of this prospectus supplement.

	Per Share	Total
Public offering price	\$	\$
Underwriting discount	\$	\$
Proceeds, before expenses, to the selling stockholders	\$	\$

Edgar Filing: EXPRESS, INC. - Form 424B7

The underwriters have the option to purchase up to 2,400,000 additional shares from certain selling stockholders at the public offering price less the underwriting discount for 30 days after the date of this prospectus supplement to cover any overallocments, if any. We will not receive any of the proceeds from the sale of any additional shares by the selling stockholders.

Neither the Securities and Exchange Commission nor any state securities commission has approved or disapproved of these securities or passed upon the accuracy or adequacy of this prospectus supplement and accompanying prospectus. Any representation to the contrary is a criminal offense.

The underwriters expect to deliver the shares on or about _____, 2011.

BofA Merrill Lynch

Morgan Stanley

Barclays Capital

Piper Jaffray

UBS Investment Bank

Stephens Inc.

Stifel Nicolaus Weisel

The date of this prospectus supplement is _____, 2011.

Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Prospectus Supplement

	Page
<u>About this Prospectus Supplement</u>	S-ii
<u>Forward-Looking Statements</u>	S-iii
<u>Summary</u>	S-1
<u>Risk Factors</u>	S-4
<u>Market Price of Our Common Stock</u>	S-19
<u>Dividend Policy</u>	S-20
<u>Use of Proceeds</u>	S-21
<u>Selling Stockholders</u>	S-22
<u>Material U.S. Federal Income Tax Considerations for Non-U.S. Holders</u>	S-24
<u>Underwriting</u>	S-27
<u>Legal Matters</u>	S-32
<u>Experts</u>	S-32

Prospectus

	Page
<u>About this Prospectus</u>	1
<u>Where You Can Find More Information</u>	2
<u>Incorporation by Reference of Certain Documents</u>	3
<u>Forward-Looking Statements</u>	4
<u>Our Company</u>	6
<u>Risk Factors</u>	6
<u>Use of Proceeds</u>	6
<u>Description of Capital Stock</u>	7
<u>Selling Stockholders</u>	10
<u>Legal Matters</u>	11
<u>Experts</u>	11

Table of Contents

ABOUT THIS PROSPECTUS SUPPLEMENT

This document consists of two parts. The first part is this prospectus supplement, which describes the specific terms of this offering. The second part is the accompanying prospectus, which contains more general information, some of which may not apply to this offering. You should read both this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus, together with additional information described in the accompanying prospectus under the headings *Where You Can Find More Information* and *Incorporation by Reference of Certain Documents*.

If the description of the offering varies between this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus or in any document incorporated by reference that was filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission, or SEC, before the date of this prospectus supplement, you should rely on the information in this prospectus supplement. If any statement in one of these documents is inconsistent with a statement in another document having a later date—for example, a document incorporated by reference in the accompanying prospectus—the statement in the document having the later date modifies or supersedes the earlier statement. Any statement so modified or superseded will not be deemed, except as so modified or superseded, to constitute a part of this prospectus supplement.

You should rely only on the information contained in this prospectus supplement, any free writing prospectus we have authorized for use in connection with this offering and the accompanying prospectus and any documents incorporated by reference therein. This prospectus supplement may be used only for the purpose for which it has been prepared. No one is authorized to give information other than that contained in this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus and any free writing prospectus we have authorized for use in connection with this offering and in the documents incorporated by reference in the accompanying prospectus or any such free writing prospectus. We and the selling stockholders have not and the underwriters have not, authorized any other person to provide you with different or additional information. If anyone provides you with different or additional information, you should not rely on it.

Neither we, the selling stockholders, nor the underwriters are making an offer to sell our common stock in any jurisdiction where the offer or sale is not permitted. You should not assume that the information appearing in this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus, any free writing prospectus we have authorized for use in connection with this offering or any document incorporated by reference therein is accurate as of any date other than the date of the applicable document. Our business, financial condition, results of operations, and prospects may have changed since that date. Neither this prospectus supplement nor the accompanying prospectus constitutes an offer, or an invitation on our behalf or on behalf of the underwriters, to subscribe for and purchase any of the securities, and may not be used for or in connection with an offer or solicitation by anyone, in any jurisdiction in which such an offer or solicitation is not authorized or to any person to whom it is unlawful to make such an offer or solicitation.

Table of Contents

FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS

This prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus and the documents incorporated by reference into the accompanying prospectus contain forward-looking statements within the meaning of Section 27A of the Securities Act and Section 21E of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended (the Exchange Act), that are based on current expectations, estimates, forecasts and projections about us, our future performance, our liquidity, the apparel industry, our beliefs and management's assumptions. Words such as anticipate, assume, believe, estimate, expect, intend, plan, seek, project, target, goal and variations of such words and similar expressions are intended to identify such forward-looking statements. All statements in this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus and the documents incorporated by reference in the accompanying prospectus regarding our business strategy, future operations, financial position, cost savings, prospects, plans and objectives, as well as information concerning industry trends and expected actions of third parties, are forward-looking statements. All forward-looking statements speak only as of the date on which they are made. These statements are not guarantees of future performance and involve certain risks, uncertainties and assumptions concerning future events that are difficult to predict. Therefore, actual future events or results may differ materially from these statements. We believe that the factors that could cause our actual results to differ materially include the factors that we describe under the caption Risk Factors. These factors, risks and uncertainties include, but are not limited to, the following:

changes in consumer spending and general economic conditions;

our ability to identify and respond to new and changing fashion trends, customer preferences and other related factors;

fluctuations in our sales and results of operations on a seasonal basis and due to a variety of other factors;

increased competition from other retailers;

the success of the malls and shopping centers in which our stores are located;

our dependence upon independent third parties to manufacture all of our merchandise;

the availability constraints and price volatility of raw materials used to manufacture our products;

interruptions of the flow of our merchandise from international manufacturers causing disruptions in our supply chain;

shortages of inventory, delayed shipments to our online customers and harm to our reputation due to difficulties or shut-downs at our distribution facilities;

our reliance upon independent third-party transportation providers for substantially all of our product shipments;

our dependence upon key executive management;

our growth strategy, including our international expansion plan;

our dependence on a strong brand image;

our leasing substantial amounts of space;

the failure to find store employees who can effectively operate our stores;

our reliance on Limited Brands Inc. (Limited Brands) to provide us with certain key services for our business;

our reliance on information systems and any failure, inadequacy, interruption or security failure of those systems;

claims made against us resulting in litigation;

S-iii

Table of Contents

changes in laws and regulations applicable to our business;

our inability to protect our trademarks or other intellectual property rights;

our substantial indebtedness and lease obligations;

restrictions imposed by our indebtedness on our current and future operations;

fluctuations in energy costs;

changes in taxation requirements or the results of tax audits;

impairment charges on long-lived assets;

our failure to maintain adequate internal controls;

potential conflicts of interest with our principal stockholder; and

substantial costs as a result of being a public company.

These factors should not be construed as exhaustive and should be read in conjunction with the other cautionary statements included in this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus and the documents incorporated by reference in the accompanying prospectus. These risks and uncertainties, as well as other risks of which we are not aware or which we currently do not believe to be material, may cause our actual future results to be materially different than those expressed in our forward-looking statements. We caution you not to place undue reliance on these forward-looking statements. We do not undertake any obligation to make any revisions to these forward-looking statements to reflect events or circumstances after the date made or to reflect the occurrence of unanticipated events, except as required by law, including the securities laws of the United States and rules and regulations of the SEC.

Table of Contents

SUMMARY

This summary highlights material information regarding the offering contained elsewhere in this prospectus supplement, but may not contain all of the information that may be important to you. You should read this entire prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus carefully, including the matters discussed under the caption "Risk Factors" in this prospectus supplement and in our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended January 29, 2011 and the more detailed information and financial statements and related notes appearing in the documents incorporated by reference in the accompanying prospectus. As used herein, the Company, we, Express, us and our refer to Express, Inc.

Company Overview

Express is a nationally recognized specialty apparel and accessory retailer offering both women's and men's merchandise. With over 30 years of experience offering a distinct combination of style and quality at an attractive value, we believe we are a core shopping destination for our customers and that we have developed strong brand awareness and credibility with them. We target an attractive and growing demographic of women and men between 20 and 30 years old. We offer our customers an edited assortment of fashionable apparel and accessories to address fashion needs across multiple aspects of their lifestyles, including work, casual, jeanswear and going-out occasions. Since we became a stand-alone company in 2007, we have completed numerous initiatives to strengthen our business, including consolidating separate women's and men's stores into combined dual-gender stores, re-designing our go-to-market strategy, and launching our e-commerce platform, each of which we believe has improved our operating profits and positioned us well for future growth and profitability.

As of October 29, 2011, we operated 607 stores. Our stores are located primarily in high-traffic shopping malls, lifestyle centers, and street locations across the United States, in Canada, and in Puerto Rico and average approximately 8,700 gross square feet. We also sell our products through our e-commerce website, express.com. Our stores and website are designed to create an exciting shopping environment that reflects the sexy, sophisticated, and social brand image that we seek to project. Our 2010 net sales were comprised of approximately 65% women's merchandise and approximately 35% men's merchandise. Our product assortment is a mix of core styles balanced with the latest fashions, a combination we believe our customers look for and value in our brand.

Summary Risk Factors

We are subject to a number of risks, including risks that may prevent us from achieving our business objectives or may materially and adversely affect our business, financial condition, results of operations, cash flows and prospects. You should carefully consider these risks, including the risks discussed in the section entitled "Risk Factors," before investing in our common stock. Risks related to our business include, among others:

our business is sensitive to consumer spending and general economic conditions, and a continued or further economic slowdown could adversely affect our financial performance;

our business is highly dependent upon our ability to identify and respond to new and changing fashion trends, customer preferences and other related factors;

our sales and results of operations fluctuate on a seasonal basis and are affected by a variety of factors, including fashion trends, changes in our merchandise mix, the effectiveness of our inventory management, actions of competitors or mall anchor tenants, holiday or seasonal periods, changes in general economic conditions and consumer spending patterns, the timing of promotional events and weather conditions; and

Table of Contents

the clothing retail market in the United States is highly competitive, and we face substantial competition from numerous retailers, including major specialty retailers, department stores, regional retail chains, web-based retail stores and other direct retailers.

Corporate Information

We are a Delaware corporation. Our corporate headquarters is located at 1 Express Drive, Columbus, Ohio 43230. Our telephone number is (614) 474-4001. Our website address is express.com. The information on our website is not deemed to be part of this prospectus supplement.

S-2

Table of Contents

The Offering

Common stock offered by the selling stockholders	16,000,000 shares (or 18,400,000 shares if the underwriters' over-allotment option is exercised in full)
Selling stockholders	The selling stockholders in this transaction are certain investment funds managed by Golden Gate Private Equity, Inc. ("Golden Gate"), certain members of management and related trusts. See "Selling Stockholders."
Common stock outstanding	88,908,602 shares
Option to purchase additional shares	The underwriters have the option to purchase up to 2,400,000 additional shares of common stock from certain selling stockholders to cover over-allotments, if any. The underwriters can exercise this option at any time within 30 days from the date of this prospectus supplement.
Use of proceeds	We will not receive any proceeds from this offering. See "Use of Proceeds."
Dividend policy	We have paid special dividends in the past, and we may pay dividends in the future. Any determination to pay dividends in the future will be at the discretion of our board of directors. In addition, because we are a holding company, our ability to pay dividends on our common stock is limited by restrictions on the ability of our subsidiaries to pay dividends or make distributions to us, including restrictions under the terms of the agreements governing our indebtedness.
Risk factors	Investing in our common stock involves a high degree of risk. See "Risk Factors" beginning on page S-4 of this prospectus supplement for a discussion of factors you should carefully consider before deciding to invest in our common stock.
New York Stock Exchange symbol	EXPR
Unless otherwise indicated, all information in this prospectus supplement excludes:	

2,742,875 shares of our common stock issuable upon the exercise of currently outstanding options;

743,312 shares of common stock subject to currently outstanding restricted stock units; and

13,055,835 shares of our common stock reserved for future issuance under our 2010 Incentive Compensation Plan.

Unless otherwise indicated, all information in this prospectus supplement assumes no exercise by the underwriters of their option to purchase additional shares of common stock from certain selling stockholders to cover over-allotments, if any.

Table of Contents

RISK FACTORS

This offering and an investment in our common stock involve a high degree of risk. You should carefully consider the risks described below, together with the financial and other information contained in this prospectus supplement, the accompanying prospectus and documents incorporated by reference in the accompanying prospectus, before you decide to purchase shares of our common stock. Along with the risks and uncertainties listed below, you should carefully consider the risks, uncertainties and assumptions discussed under the caption "Risk Factors" in our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended January 29, 2011, as updated by our quarterly reports on Form 10-Q, current reports on Form 8-K and other filings we make with the SEC. If any of the following risks actually occurs, our business, financial condition, results of operations, cash flows and prospects could be materially and adversely affected. As a result, the trading price of our common stock could decline and you could lose all or part of your investment in our common stock.

Risks Related to Our Business

Our business is sensitive to consumer spending and general economic conditions, and a continued or further economic slowdown could adversely affect our financial performance.

Consumer purchases of discretionary retail items, including our products, generally decline during recessionary periods and other periods where disposable income is adversely affected. Our performance is subject to factors that affect domestic and worldwide economic conditions, including employment, consumer debt, reductions in net worth, residential real estate and mortgage markets, taxation, fuel and energy prices, interest rates, consumer confidence, value of the United States dollar versus foreign currencies and other macroeconomic factors. A deterioration in economic conditions or increasing unemployment levels may reduce the level of consumer spending and inhibit consumers' use of credit, which may adversely affect our revenues and profits. In recessionary periods, we may have to increase the number of promotional sales or otherwise dispose of inventory for which we have previously paid to manufacture, which could adversely affect our profitability. Our financial performance is particularly susceptible to economic and other conditions in regions or states where we have a significant number of stores. A deterioration of economic conditions or slowdown in the economy could adversely affect shopping center traffic and new shopping center development and could materially adversely affect us.

In addition, recessionary periods may exacerbate some of the risks noted below, including consumer demand, strain on available resources, store growth, interruption of the flow of merchandise from key vendors and foreign exchange rate fluctuations. The risks could be exacerbated individually or collectively.

Our business is highly dependent upon our ability to identify and respond to new and changing fashion trends, customer preferences and other related factors, and our inability to identify and respond to these new trends may lead to inventory markdowns and write-offs, which could adversely affect us and our brand image.

Our focus on fashion-conscious young women and men means that we have a target market of customers whose preferences cannot be predicted with certainty and are subject to change. Our success depends in large part upon our ability to effectively identify and respond to changing fashion trends and consumer demands, and to translate market trends into appropriate, saleable product offerings. Our failure to identify and react appropriately to new and changing fashion trends or tastes or to accurately forecast demand for certain product offerings could lead to, among other things, excess inventories, markdowns and write-offs, which could materially adversely affect our business and our brand image. Because our success depends significantly on our brand image, damage to our brand image as a result of our failure to respond to changing fashion trends could have a negative impact on us.

We often enter into agreements for the manufacture and purchase of merchandise well ahead of the season in which that merchandise will be sold. Therefore, we are vulnerable to changes in consumer preference and

Table of Contents

demand between the time we design and order our merchandise and the season in which this merchandise will be sold. There can be no assurance that our new product offerings will have the same level of acceptance as our product offerings in the past or that we will be able to adequately and timely respond to the preferences of our customers. The failure of any new product offerings to appeal to our customers could have a material adverse effect on our business, results of operations and financial condition.

Our sales and profitability fluctuate on a seasonal basis and are affected by a variety of other factors.

Our sales and results of operations are affected by a variety of factors, including fashion trends, changes in our merchandise mix, the effectiveness of our inventory management, actions of competitors or mall anchor tenants, holiday or seasonal periods, changes in general economic conditions and consumer spending patterns, the timing of promotional events and weather conditions. As a result, our results of operations fluctuate on a quarterly basis and relative to corresponding periods in prior years, and any of these factors could adversely affect our business and could cause our results of operations to decline. For example, our third and fourth quarter net sales are impacted by early Fall shopping trends and the holiday season. Likewise, we typically experience lower net sales in the first and second quarter relative to other quarters. Any significant decrease in net sales during the early Fall selling period or the holiday season would have a material adverse effect on us. In addition, in order to prepare for these seasons, we must order and keep in stock significantly more merchandise than we carry during other parts of the year. This inventory build-up may require us to expend cash faster than we generate it by our operations during this period. Any unanticipated decrease in demand for our products during these peak shopping seasons could require us to sell excess inventory at a substantial markdown, which could have a material adverse effect on our business, profitability, ability to repay indebtedness and our brand image with customers.

We could face increased competition from other retailers that could adversely affect our ability to generate higher net sales and our ability to obtain favorable store locations.

We face substantial competition in the specialty retail apparel and accessory industry. We compete on the basis of a combination of factors, including, among others, price, breadth, quality and style of merchandise offered, in-store experience, level of customer service, ability to identify and offer new and emerging fashion trends and brand image. We compete with a wide variety of large and small retailers for customers, vendors, suitable store locations and personnel. We face competition from major specialty retailers that offer their own private label assortment, department stores, regional retail chains, web-based retail stores and other direct retailers that engage in the retail sale of apparel, accessories, footwear and similar merchandise to fashion-conscious young women and men.

Some of our competitors have greater financial, marketing and other resources available. In many cases, our competitors sell their products in stores that are located in the same shopping malls or lifestyle centers as our stores. In addition to competing for sales, we compete for favorable site locations and lease terms in shopping malls and lifestyle centers and our competitors may be able to secure more favorable locations than us as a result of their relationships with, or appeal to, landlords. Our competitors may also sell substantially similar products at reduced prices through the Internet or through outlet centers or discount stores, increasing the competitive pricing pressure for those products. We cannot assure you that we will continue to be able to compete successfully against existing or future competitors. Our expansion into markets served by our competitors and entry of new competitors or expansion of existing competitors into our markets could have a material adverse effect on us.

Our ability to attract customers to our stores that are located in malls or other shopping centers depends heavily on the success of these malls and shopping centers, and any decrease in customer traffic in these malls or shopping centers could cause our net sales to be less than expected.

A significant number of our stores are located in malls and other shopping centers. Sales at these stores are dependent, to a significant degree, upon the volume of traffic in those shopping centers and the surrounding area. Our stores benefit from the ability of a shopping center's other tenants, particularly anchor stores, such as

Table of Contents

department stores, to generate consumer traffic in the vicinity of our stores and the continuing popularity of the shopping center as a shopping destination. Our sales volume and traffic generally may be adversely affected by, among other things, a decrease in popularity of malls or other shopping centers in which our stores are located, the closing of anchor stores important to our business, a decline in popularity of other stores in the malls or other shopping centers in which our stores are located or a deterioration in the financial condition of shopping center operators or developers which could, for example, limit their ability to finance tenant improvements for us and other retailers. A reduction in consumer traffic as a result of these or any other factors, or our inability to obtain or maintain favorable store locations within malls or other shopping centers, could have a material adverse effect on us.

We do not own or operate any manufacturing facilities and therefore depend upon independent third parties for the manufacture of all of our merchandise, and any inability of a manufacturer to ship goods to our specifications or to operate in compliance with applicable laws could negatively impact our business.

We do not own or operate any manufacturing facilities. As a result, we are dependent upon our timely receipt of quality merchandise from third-party manufacturers. A manufacturer's inability to ship orders to us in a timely manner or meet our quality standards could cause delays in responding to consumer demands and negatively affect consumer confidence in the quality and value of our brand or negatively impact our competitive position, all of which could have a material adverse effect on our financial condition or results of operations. Furthermore, we are susceptible to increases in sourcing costs, which we may not be able to pass on to customers, and changes in payment terms from manufacturers, which could adversely affect our financial condition or results of operations.

Failure by our manufacturers to comply with our guidelines also exposes us to various risks, including with respect to use of acceptable labor practices and compliance with applicable laws. We do not independently investigate whether our vendors and manufacturers use acceptable labor practices and comply with applicable laws, such as child labor and other labor laws, and instead rely on audits performed by several third-party auditors. Our business may be negatively impacted should any of our manufacturers experience an interruption in operations, including due to labor disputes and failure to comply with laws, and our business may suffer from negative publicity for using manufacturers that do not engage in acceptable labor practices and comply with applicable laws. Any of these results could harm our brand image and have a material adverse effect on our business and growth.

The raw materials used to manufacture our products and our distribution and labor costs are subject to availability constraints and price volatility, which could result in increased costs.

The raw materials used to manufacture our merchandise are subject to availability constraints and price volatility caused by high demand for cotton, high demand for petroleum-based synthetic and other fabrics, weather conditions, supply conditions, government regulations, economic climate and other unpredictable factors.

In addition, our transportation and labor costs are subject to price volatility caused by the price of oil, supply of labor, governmental regulations, economic climate and other unpredictable factors. Increases in the demand for, or the price of, raw materials used to manufacture our merchandise and increases in transportation and labor costs could each have a material adverse effect on our cost of sales or our ability to meet our customers' needs. We may not be able to pass all or a material portion of such higher raw material costs on to our customers, which could negatively impact our profitability. Any material costs that are passed on to customers may result in a reduction in our net sales.

The interruption of the flow of merchandise from international manufacturers could disrupt our supply chain.

We purchase the majority of our merchandise outside of the United States through arrangements with approximately 90 vendors, utilizing approximately 325 foreign manufacturing facilities located throughout the

Table of Contents

world, primarily in Asia and Central and South America. Political, social or economic instability in Asia, Central or South America, or in other regions in which our manufacturers are located, could cause disruptions in trade, including exports to the United States. Other events that could also cause disruptions to exports to the United States include:

the imposition of additional trade law provisions or regulations;

the imposition of additional duties, tariffs and other charges on imports and exports;

quotas imposed by bilateral textile agreements;

foreign currency fluctuations;

natural disasters;

restrictions on the transfer of funds;

the financial instability or bankruptcy of manufacturers; and

significant labor disputes, such as dock strikes.

We cannot predict whether the countries in which our merchandise is manufactured, or may be manufactured in the future, will be subject to new or additional trade restrictions imposed by the United States or other foreign governments, including the likelihood, type or effect of any such restrictions. Trade restrictions, including new or increased tariffs or quotas, embargos, safeguards and customs restrictions against apparel items, as well as United States or foreign labor strikes and work stoppages or boycotts, could increase the cost or reduce the supply of apparel available to us and adversely affect our business, financial condition or results of operations.

If we encounter difficulties associated with distribution facilities or if they were to shut down for any reason, we could face shortages of inventory, delayed shipments to our online customers and harm to our reputation. Any of these issues could have a material adverse effect on our business operations.

Our distribution facilities are operated by third parties. Our Columbus, Ohio facility operates as our central distribution facility and supports our entire domestic business, as all of our merchandise is shipped to the central distribution facility from our vendors, and is then packaged and shipped to our stores or the e-commerce distribution facility in Groveport, Ohio for further distribution to our online customers. The success of our stores and the satisfaction of our online customers depend on their timely receipt of merchandise. The efficient flow of our merchandise requires that the third parties who operate the distribution facilities have adequate capacity in both distribution facilities to support our current level of operations, and any anticipated increased levels that may follow from the growth of our business. If we encounter difficulties with the distribution facilities or in our relationships with the third parties who operate the facilities or if either facility were to shut down for any reason, including as a result of fire or other natural disaster, we could face shortages of inventory, resulting in out of stock conditions in our stores, incur significantly higher costs and longer lead times associated with distributing our products to both our stores and online customers and experience dissatisfaction from our customers. Any of these issues could have a material adverse effect on our business and harm our reputation.

We rely upon independent third-party transportation providers for substantially all of our product shipments and are subject to increased shipping costs as well as the potential inability of our third-party transportation providers to deliver on a timely basis.

We currently rely upon independent third-party transportation providers for substantially all of our product shipments, including shipments to and from all of our stores. Our utilization of these delivery services for shipments is subject to risks, including increases in fuel prices, which

Edgar Filing: EXPRESS, INC. - Form 424B7

would increase our shipping costs, and employee strikes and inclement weather, which may impact a shipping company's ability to provide delivery services that adequately meet our shipping needs. If we change the shipping companies we use, we could face

S-7

Table of Contents

logistical difficulties that could adversely affect deliveries and we would incur costs and expend resources in connection with such change. Moreover, we may not be able to obtain terms as favorable as those received from our current independent third-party transportation providers which in turn would increase our costs.

We depend on key executive management and may not be able to retain or replace these individuals or recruit additional personnel, which could harm our business.

We depend on the leadership and experience of our key executive management. The loss of the services of any of our executive management members could have a material adverse effect on our business and prospects, as we may not be able to find suitable individuals to replace such personnel on a timely basis or without incurring increased costs, or at all. We believe that our future success will depend greatly on our continued ability to attract and retain highly skilled and qualified personnel. There is a high level of competition for experienced, successful personnel in the retail industry. Our inability to meet our staffing requirements in the future could impair our growth and harm our business.

Our growth strategy, including our international expansion plan, is dependent on a number of factors, any of which could strain our resources or delay or prevent the successful penetration into new markets.

Our growth strategy is partially dependent on opening new stores across North America, remodeling existing stores in a timely manner and operating them profitably. Additional factors required for the successful implementation of our growth strategy include, but are not limited to, obtaining desirable store locations, negotiating acceptable leases, completing projects on budget, supplying proper levels of merchandise and successfully hiring and training store managers and sales associates. In order to optimize profitability for new stores, we must secure desirable retail lease space when opening stores in new and existing markets. We must choose store sites, execute favorable real estate transactions on terms that are acceptable to us, hire competent personnel and effectively open and operate these new stores. We historically have received landlord allowances for store build outs, which offset certain capital expenditures we must make to open a new store. If landlord allowances cease to be available to us in the future or are decreased, opening new stores would require more capital outlay, which could adversely affect our ability to continue opening new stores.

To the extent we open new stores in markets where we have existing stores, our existing stores in those markets may experience reduced net sales. Our planned growth will also require additional infrastructure for the development, maintenance and monitoring of those stores. In addition, if our current management systems and information systems are insufficient to support this expansion, our ability to open new stores and to manage our existing stores would be adversely affected. If we fail to continue to improve our infrastructure, we may be unable to implement our growth strategy or maintain current levels of operating performance in our existing stores.

Additionally, we plan to expand outside of North America through development agreements with third parties and these plans could be negatively impacted by a variety of factors. We may be unable to find acceptable partners with whom we can enter into joint development agreements, negotiate acceptable terms for franchise and development agreements and gain acceptance from consumers outside of North America. Our planned usage of development agreements outside of North America also creates the inherent risk as to whether such third parties are able to both effectively operate the businesses and appropriately project our brand image in their respective markets. Ineffective or inappropriate operation of our partners' businesses or projection of our brand image could create difficulties in the execution of our international expansion plan.

Our domestic growth and international expansion plans will place increased demands on our financial, operational, managerial and administrative resources. These increased demands may cause us to operate our business less efficiently, which in turn could cause deterioration in the performance of our existing stores. Furthermore, relating to our international expansion, our ability to conduct business in international markets may be affected by legal, regulatory, political and economic risks, including our unfamiliarity with local business and

Table of Contents

legal environments in other areas of the world. Our international expansion strategy and success could also be adversely impacted by the global economy, as well as by fluctuations in the value of the dollar against foreign currencies.

Our business depends in part on a strong brand image, and if we are not able to maintain and enhance our brand, particularly in new markets where we have limited brand recognition, we may be unable to attract sufficient numbers of customers to our stores or sell sufficient quantities of our products.

Our ability to maintain our reputation is critical to our brand image. Our reputation could be jeopardized if we fail to maintain high standards for merchandise quality and integrity. Any negative publicity about these types of concerns may reduce demand for our merchandise. Failure to maintain high ethical, social and environmental standards for all of our operations and activities or adverse publicity regarding our responses to these concerns could also jeopardize our reputation. Failure to comply with local laws and regulations, to maintain an effective system of internal controls or to provide accurate and timely financial statement information could also hurt our reputation. Damage to our reputation or loss of consumer confidence for any of these reasons could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations, as well as require additional resources to rebuild our reputation.

We are subject to risks associated with leasing substantial amounts of space, including future increases in occupancy costs.

We lease all of our store locations, our corporate headquarters and our central distribution facility. We typically occupy our stores under operating leases with terms of ten years, with options to renew for additional multi-year periods thereafter. In the future, we may not be able to negotiate favorable lease terms. Our inability to do so may cause our occupancy costs to be higher in future years or may force us to close stores in desirable locations.

Some of our leases have early cancellation clauses, which permit the lease to be terminated by us or the landlord if certain sales levels are not met in specific periods or if the center does not meet specified occupancy standards. In addition to future minimum lease payments, some of our store leases provide for additional rental payments based on a percentage of net sales, or percentage rent, if sales at the respective stores exceed specified levels, as well as the payment of common area maintenance charges, real property insurance and real estate taxes. Many of our lease agreements have defined escalating rent provisions over the initial term and any extensions. As we expand our store base, our lease expense and our cash outlays for rent under the lease terms will increase.

We depend on cash flow from operations to pay our lease expenses. If our business does not generate sufficient cash flow from operating activities to fund these expenses, we may not be able to service our lease expenses, which could materially harm our business.

If an existing or future store is not profitable, and we decide to close it, we may nonetheless be committed to perform our obligations under the applicable lease including, among other things, paying the base rent for the balance of the lease term. Moreover, even if a lease has an early cancellation clause, we may not satisfy the contractual requirements for early cancellation under that lease. Our inability to enter into new leases or renew existing leases on terms acceptable to us or be released from our obligations under leases for stores that we close could materially adversely affect us.

Our failure to find store employees who can effectively operate our stores could adversely affect our business.

Our success depends in part upon our ability to attract, motivate and retain a sufficient number of store employees, including store managers, who understand and appreciate our corporate culture and customers, and are able to adequately and effectively represent this culture and establish credibility with our customers. The

Table of Contents

store employee turnover rate in the retail industry is generally high. Excessive store employee turnover will result in higher employee costs associated with finding, hiring and training new store employees. If we are unable to hire and retain store personnel capable of consistently providing a high level of customer service, as demonstrated by their enthusiasm for our culture, understanding of our customers and knowledge of the merchandise we offer, our ability to open new stores may be impaired, the performance of our existing and new stores could be materially adversely affected and our brand image may be negatively impacted. Competition for such qualified individuals could require us to pay higher wages to attract a sufficient number of employees. Additionally, our labor costs are subject to many external factors, including unemployment levels, prevailing wage rates, minimum wage laws, potential collective bargaining arrangements, health insurance costs and other insurance costs and changes in employment and labor legislation or other workplace regulation (including changes in entitlement programs such as health insurance and paid leave programs). Any increase in labor costs may adversely impact our profitability, or, if we fail to pay such higher wages, we could suffer increased employee turnover.

We are also dependent upon temporary personnel to adequately staff our stores and distribution facilities, with heightened dependence during busy periods such as the holiday season and when multiple new stores are opening. There can be no assurance that we will receive adequate assistance from our temporary personnel, or that there will be sufficient sources of suitable temporary personnel to meet our demand. Any such failure to meet our staffing needs or any material increases in employee turnover rates could have a material adverse effect on our business or results of operations.

We work with Limited Brands to provide us with certain key services for our business. If Limited Brands fails to perform its obligations to us or if we do not find appropriate replacement services, we may be unable to provide these services or implement substitute arrangements on a timely and cost-effective basis on terms favorable to us.

Limited Brands, our former parent, provides certain services to us under various agreements and arrangements. Mast Global Logistics, an affiliate of Limited Brands (Mast), currently provides us with certain support services relating to our product production and sourcing. Under a logistics services agreement with Limited Brands that was entered into on October 5, 2009 and took effect in February 2010, Mast also provides certain inbound and outbound transportation and delivery services, distribution services, customs and brokerage services and rental of warehouse/distribution space. The logistics services agreement ends on April 30, 2016. The agreement will continue thereafter unless it is terminated by either party on no less than 24 months prior notice. Notwithstanding the foregoing, we have the right to terminate the agreement on 24 months prior notice. In no event may the termination of the agreement occur between October 1 of any calendar year and the last day of February of the next calendar year. If Limited Brands or Mast fails to perform its obligations under either the logistics services agreement or other agreements we may be unable to obtain substitute arrangements in a timely and cost-effective manner. In addition, we may be unable to obtain replacement services for these arrangements, or may be required to incur additional costs and may experience delays or business interruptions as a result of our transition to other service providers, which could have a material adverse effect on our business.

We rely significantly on information systems and any failure, inadequacy, interruption or security failure of those systems could harm our ability to effectively operate our business, harm our net sales, increase our expenses and harm our reputation.

Our ability to effectively manage and maintain our inventory, and to ship products to our stores and our customers on a timely basis, depends significantly on our information systems. To manage the growth of our operations, personnel and real estate portfolio, we will need to continue to improve and expand our operational and financial systems, real estate management systems, transaction processing, internal controls and business processes; in doing so, we could encounter implementation issues and incur substantial additional expenses. The failure of our information systems to operate effectively, problems with transitioning to upgraded or replacement systems or expanding them into new stores, or a breach in security of these systems could adversely impact the

Table of Contents

promptness and accuracy of our merchandise distribution, transaction processing, financial accounting and reporting, the efficiency of our operations and our ability to properly forecast earnings and cash requirements. We could be required to make significant additional expenditures to remediate any such failure, problem or breach. Such events may have a material adverse effect on us.

We sell merchandise over the Internet through our website, express.com. Our Internet operations may be affected by our reliance on third-party hardware and software providers, technology changes, risks related to the failure of computer systems that operate the Internet business, telecommunications failures, electronic break-ins and similar disruptions. Furthermore, our ability to conduct business on the Internet may be affected by liability for online content, patent infringement and state and federal privacy laws.

In addition, we may now and in the future implement new systems to increase efficiencies and profitability. To manage growth of our operations and personnel, we will need to continue to improve and expand our operational and financial systems, transaction processing, internal controls and business processes. When implementing new or changing existing processes, we may encounter transitional issues and incur substantial additional expenses.

Experienced computer programmers and hackers, or even internal users, may be able to penetrate our network security and misappropriate our confidential information or that of third parties, including our customers, create system disruptions or cause shutdowns. In addition, employee error, malfeasance or other errors in the storage, use or transmission of any such information could result in a disclosure to third parties outside of our network. As a result, we could incur significant expenses addressing problems created by any such inadvertent disclosure or any security breaches of our network. This risk is heightened because we collect and store customer information, including credit card information, and use certain customer information for marketing purposes. Any compromise of customer information could subject us to customer or government litigation and harm our reputation, which could adversely affect our business and growth.

There are claims made against us from time to time that can result in litigation or regulatory proceedings which could distract management from our business activities and result in significant liability.

We face the risk of litigation and other claims against us. Litigation and other claims arise in the ordinary course of our business and include commercial disputes, intellectual property issues, consumer protection and privacy matters, product-oriented allegations and slip and fall claims. In addition, we could face a wide variety of employee claims against us, including general discrimination, privacy, labor and employment, ERISA and disability claims. For example, Express, LLC is named as a defendant in purported class action lawsuits alleging various federal and state labor law violations. Any claims could result in litigation against us and could also result in regulatory proceedings being brought against us by various federal and state agencies that regulate our business, including the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Often these cases raise complex factual and legal issues, which are subject to risks and uncertainties and which could require significant management time. Litigation and other claims and regulatory proceedings against us could result in unexpected expenses and liability, and could also materially adversely affect our operations and our reputation.

In addition, we may be subject to liability if we infringe the trademarks, patents or other intellectual property rights of third parties. If we were to be found liable for any such infringement, we could be required to pay substantial damages and could be subject to injunctions preventing further infringement. Such infringement claims could subject us to boycotts by our customers and harm to our brand image. In addition, any payments we are required to make and any injunctions we are required to comply with as a result of such infringement actions could adversely affect our financial results.

Table of Contents

Changes in laws, including employment laws and laws related to our merchandise, could make conducting our business more expensive or otherwise change the way we do business.

We are subject to numerous regulations, including labor and employment, customs, truth-in-advertising, consumer protection, privacy and zoning and occupancy laws and ordinances that regulate retailers generally and/or govern the importation, promotion and sale of merchandise and the operation of stores and warehouse facilities. If these regulations were to change or were violated by our management, employees, vendors, buying agents or trading companies, the costs of certain goods could increase, or we could experience delays in shipments of our goods, be subject to fines or penalties, or suffer reputational harm, which could reduce demand for our merchandise and hurt our business and results of operations.

In addition to increased regulatory compliance requirements, changes in laws could make ordinary conduct of our business more expensive or require us to change the way we do business. For example, changes in federal and state minimum wage laws could raise the wage requirements for certain of our employees. Other laws related to employee benefits and treatment of employees, including laws related to limitations on employee hours, supervisory status, leaves of absence, mandated health benefits or overtime pay, could also negatively impact us, such as by increasing compensation and benefits costs for overtime and medical expenses.

Moreover, changes in product safety or other consumer protection laws could lead to increased costs to us for certain merchandise, or additional costs associated with readying merchandise for sale. It is often difficult for us to plan and prepare for potential changes to applicable laws and future actions or payments related to such changes could be material to us.

We may be unable to protect our trademarks or other intellectual property rights, which could harm our business.

We rely on certain trademark registrations and common law trademark rights to protect the distinctiveness of our brand. However, there can be no assurance that the actions we have taken to establish and protect our trademarks will be adequate to prevent imitation of our trademarks by others or to prevent others from claiming that sales of our products infringe, dilute or otherwise violate third-party trademarks or other proprietary rights in order to block sales of our products.

The laws of certain foreign countries may not protect the use of unregistered trademarks to the same extent as do the laws of the United States. As a result, international protection of our brand image may be limited and our right to use our trademarks outside the United States could be impaired. Other persons or entities may have rights to trademarks that contain portions of our marks or may have registered similar or competing marks for apparel and/or accessories in foreign countries in which our vendors source our merchandise. There may also be other prior registrations of trademarks identical or similar to our trademarks in other foreign countries. Accordingly, it may be possible for others to prevent the manufacture of our branded goods in certain foreign countries, the sale of our branded goods into foreign countries or the exportation of our branded goods from certain foreign countries to the United States. Our inability to register our trademarks or purchase or license the right to use the relevant trademarks or logos in these jurisdictions could limit our ability to obtain supplies from such markets or penetrate new markets in jurisdictions outside the United States.

Litigation may be necessary to protect our trademarks and other intellectual property rights, to enforce these rights or to defend against claims by third parties alleging that we infringe, dilute or otherwise violate third-party trademark, patent or other intellectual property rights. Any litigation or claims brought by or against us, whether with or without merit, or whether successful or not, could result in substantial costs and diversion of our resources, which could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition, results of operations or cash flows. Any intellectual property litigation or claims against us could result in the loss or compromise of our intellectual property rights, could subject us to significant liabilities, require us to seek licenses on unfavorable terms, if available at all, prevent us from manufacturing or selling certain products and/or require us to redesign or re-label our products or rename our brand, any of which could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition, results of operations or cash flows.

Table of Contents

Our substantial indebtedness and lease obligations could adversely affect our financial flexibility and our competitive position.

We have, and we will continue to have, a significant amount of indebtedness. As of October 29, 2011, we had \$318.2 million of outstanding indebtedness (net of unamortized original issue discounts of \$2.4 million). As of October 29, 2011, we had no borrowings outstanding and \$198.2 million available under our \$200.0 million secured asset-based loan credit facility (the Opco revolving credit facility). Our substantial level of indebtedness increases the risk that we may be unable to generate cash sufficient to pay amounts due in respect of our indebtedness. We also have, and will continue to have, significant lease obligations. As of January 29, 2011, our minimum annual rental obligations under long-term operating leases for 2011 and 2012 were \$164.4 million and \$139.3 million, respectively. Our substantial indebtedness and lease obligations could have other important consequences to you and significant effects on our business. For example, they could:

increase our vulnerability to adverse changes in general economic, industry and competitive conditions;

require us to dedicate a substantial portion of our cash flow from operations to make payments on our indebtedness and leases, thereby reducing the availability of our cash flow to fund working capital, capital expenditures and other general corporate purposes;

limit our flexibility in planning for, or reacting to, changes in our business and the industry in which we operate;

restrict us from exploiting business opportunities;

make it more difficult to satisfy our financial obligations, including payments on our indebtedness;

place us at a disadvantage compared to our competitors that have less debt and lease obligations; and

limit our ability to borrow additional funds for working capital, capital expenditures, acquisitions, debt service requirements, execution of our business strategy or other general corporate purposes.

In addition, our existing credit agreements and the indenture governing the 8³/₄% senior notes due 2018 co-issued by Express, LLC and Express Finance Corp. (the Senior Notes) contain, and the agreements evidencing or governing other future indebtedness may contain, restrictive covenants that will limit our ability to engage in activities that may be in our long-term best interests. Our failure to comply with those covenants could result in an event of default which, if not cured or waived, could result in the acceleration of all of our indebtedness.

Our indebtedness may restrict our current and future operations, which could adversely affect our ability to respond to changes in our business and to manage our operations.

Our existing credit agreements and the indenture governing the Senior Notes contain financial restrictions on us and our restricted subsidiaries, including restrictions on our or our restricted subsidiaries' ability to, among other things:

place liens on our or our restricted subsidiaries' assets;

make investments other than permitted investments;

incur additional indebtedness;

prepay or redeem certain indebtedness;

merge, consolidate or dissolve;

S-13

Table of Contents

sell assets;

engage in transactions with affiliates;

change the nature of our business;

change our or our subsidiaries' fiscal year or organizational documents; and

make restricted payments (including certain equity issuances).

In addition, we are required to maintain compliance with various financial ratios in the agreements governing our credit facilities, including:

pursuant to our Opco revolving credit facility, a fixed charge coverage ratio of 1.00 to 1.00, if excess availability plus eligible cash collateral is less than 10% of the borrowing base for 15 consecutive days; and

pursuant to our \$125.0 million secured term loan entered into by Express Holding and Express, LLC on July 6, 2007 (the "Opco term loan"), a leverage ratio of not more than 1.75 to 1.00.

A failure by us or our subsidiaries to comply with the covenants or to maintain the required financial ratios contained in the agreements governing our indebtedness could result in an event of default under such indebtedness, which could adversely affect our ability to respond to changes in our business and manage our operations. Additionally, a default by us under one agreement covering our indebtedness may trigger cross-defaults under other agreements covering our indebtedness. Upon the occurrence of an event of default or cross-default under any of the agreements governing our indebtedness, the lenders could elect to declare all amounts outstanding to be due and payable and exercise other remedies as set forth in the agreements. If any of our indebtedness were to be accelerated, there can be no assurance that our assets would be sufficient to repay this indebtedness in full, which could have a material adverse effect on our ability to continue to operate as a going concern.

Our results may be adversely affected by fluctuations in energy costs.

Energy costs have fluctuated dramatically in the past. These fluctuations may result in an increase in our transportation costs for distribution, utility costs for our retail stores and costs to purchase product from our manufacturers. A rise in energy costs could adversely affect consumer spending and demand for our products and increase our operating costs, both of which could have a material adverse effect on our financial condition and results of operations.

Changes in taxation requirements or the results of tax audits could adversely affect our financial results.

In connection with the Reorganization, we elected to be treated as a corporation under Subchapter C of Chapter 1 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (the "Code"), effective May 2, 2010 for tax purposes which subjects us to additional taxes and risks, including tax on our income. As a result of the Reorganization, we recorded a net deferred tax asset and a one-time non-cash tax benefit of \$31.8 million in the second quarter of 2010. In addition, we may be subject to periodic audits by the Internal Revenue Service and other taxing authorities. These audits may challenge certain of our tax positions, such as the timing and amount of deductions and allocations of taxable income to the various jurisdictions. These additional taxes and the results of any tax audits could adversely affect our financial results.

In addition, we are subject to income tax in numerous jurisdictions, and in the future as a result of our expansion we may be subject to income tax in additional jurisdictions, including international and domestic locations. Our products are subject to import and excise duties and/or sales or value-added taxes in many jurisdictions. Fluctuations in tax rates and duties could have a material adverse effect on our financial condition, results of operations or cash flows.

Table of Contents

We may recognize impairment on long-lived assets.

Our long-lived assets, primarily stores and intangible assets, are subject to periodic testing for impairment. Store assets are reviewed using factors including, but not limited to, our future operating plans and projected future cash flows. Failure to achieve our future operating plans or generate sufficient levels of cash flow at our stores could result in impairment charges on long-lived assets, which could have a material adverse effect on our financial condition or results of operations.

If we fail to establish and maintain adequate internal controls over financial reporting, we may not be able to report our financial results in a timely and reliable manner, which could harm our business and impact the value of our securities.

We depend on our ability to produce accurate and timely financial statements in order to run our business. If we fail to do so, our business could be negatively affected and our independent registered public accounting firm may be unable to attest to the accuracy of our financial statements and effectiveness of our internal controls.

We restated our financial statements for the July 7, 2007 to February 2, 2008 period and 2008 after certain accounting errors were identified that we determined to be material. Management identified the following material weaknesses in its internal controls: (1) we did not have the appropriate resources and controls to properly account for our deferred taxes and (2) we did not have adequate oversight and controls related to the accounting for complex agreements arising from transactions unrelated to our core business operations, which resulted in accounting errors.

While we believe that the material weaknesses have been remediated, if we fail to maintain effective internal controls in the future, it could result in a material misstatement of our financial statements that would not be prevented or detected on a timely basis, which could cause investors to lose confidence in our financial information or cause our stock price to decline.

Risks Related to Ownership of Our Common Stock

A large percentage of our voting stock is controlled by one stockholder and the interests of this stockholder may conflict with those of our other stockholders.

Golden Gate, our largest stockholder, beneficially owned approximately 24.3% of our common stock as of December 5, 2011, and upon completion of this offering, Golden Gate will beneficially own approximately 6.9% of our common stock. As a result of this ownership, Golden Gate will continue to have a substantial influence on our affairs and its voting power will constitute a large percentage of any quorum of our stockholders voting on any matter requiring the approval of our stockholders. Such matters include the election of directors, the adoption of amendments to our certificate of incorporation and bylaws and approval of mergers or sales of substantially all of our assets. This concentration of ownership may also have the effect of delaying or preventing a change in control of our company or discouraging others from making tender offers for our shares, which could prevent stockholders from receiving a premium for their shares. In addition, two of our seven directors are managing directors of Golden Gate. Golden Gate may cause corporate actions to be taken even if the interests of Golden Gate conflict with the interests of our other stockholders. See Selling Stockholders.

Our stock price may be volatile or may decline regardless of our operating performance, and you may not be able to resell your shares at or above the offering price.

The market price for our common stock is likely to be volatile, in part because our shares have a short history of being traded publicly. In addition, the market price of our common stock may fluctuate significantly in response to a number of factors, many of which we cannot control, including:

quarterly variations in our operating results compared to market expectations;

changes in preferences of our customers;

Table of Contents

announcements of new products or significant price reductions by us or our competitors;

size of the public float;

stock price performance of our competitors;

fluctuations in stock market prices and volumes;

default on our indebtedness or foreclosure of our properties;

actions by competitors or other shopping center tenants;

changes in senior management or key personnel;

changes in financial estimates by securities analysts;

negative earnings or other announcements by us or other retail apparel companies;

downgrades in our credit ratings or the credit ratings of our competitors;

issuances of capital stock;

global economic, legal and regulatory factors unrelated to our performance; and

failure to publish research or the publishing of inaccurate or unfavorable research by analysts.

Numerous factors affect our business and cause variations in our operating results and affect our net sales and comparable sales, including consumer preferences, buying trends and overall economic trends; our ability to identify and respond effectively to fashion trends and customer preferences; actions by competitors and other shopping center tenants; changes in our merchandise mix; pricing; the timing of our releases of new merchandise and promotional events; the level of customer service that we provide in our stores; changes in sales mix among sales channels; our ability to source and distribute products effectively; inventory shrinkage; weather conditions, particularly during the holiday season; and the number of stores we open, close and convert in any period.

The offering price of our common stock will be determined by the price at which our stock is selling on the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE). Volatility in the market price of our common stock may prevent investors from being able to sell their common stock at or above the offering price. As a result, you may suffer a loss on your investment.

In addition, stock markets have experienced extreme price and volume fluctuations that have affected and continue to affect the market prices of equity securities of many retail companies. In the past, stockholders have instituted securities class action litigation following periods of market volatility. If we were to be involved in securities litigation, we would incur substantial costs and our resources and the attention of management would be diverted from our business.

Future sales of our common stock, or the perception in the public markets that these sales may occur, may depress our stock price.

Sales of substantial amounts of our common stock in the public market after this offering, or the perception that these sales could occur, could adversely affect the price of our common stock and could impair our ability to raise capital through the sale of additional shares. As of November 30, 2011, we had 88,908,602 shares of common stock outstanding. The shares of common stock offered in this offering will be, and the shares sold in our initial public offering of common stock, which was consummated on May 18, 2010 (the IPO); our secondary offering of common stock, which was consummated on December 15, 2010 (the 2010 secondary offering); and our secondary offering of common stock, which was consummated on April 12, 2011 (the April 2011 secondary offering) are, freely tradable without restriction under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended (the Securities Act), except for any shares of our common stock held by our directors, executive officers and other affiliates, as that term is defined in the Securities Act, which will be restricted securities under the Securities Act. Restricted securities may not be sold in the public market unless the sale is registered under the Securities Act or an exemption from registration is available.

Table of Contents

We, each of our officers and directors and the selling stockholders have agreed with the underwriters, subject to certain exceptions, not to dispose of or hedge any of the shares of common stock or securities convertible into or exchangeable for, or that represent the right to receive, shares of common stock during the period from the date of this prospectus supplement continuing through the date that is 90 days after the date of this prospectus supplement, subject to extension in certain circumstances, except with the prior written consent of Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith Incorporated.

Pursuant to the Registration Agreement entered into in connection with the IPO (the Registration Rights Agreement), Golden Gate has the right to request three long-form demand registrations and an unlimited number of demand registrations on Form S-3 subject to the terms and conditions set forth in the Registration Rights Agreement and the lock-up agreements. In addition, Golden Gate and certain management stockholders have piggyback registration rights in connection with offerings initiated by us or Golden Gate. Also, subject to compliance with the federal securities laws, all of our outstanding shares may be sold on the open market following the expiration of the lock-up period. By exercising their registration rights or otherwise selling a large number of shares on the open market, these holders could cause the price of our common stock to decline. See Selling Stockholders and Underwriting.

In addition, in the future, we may issue additional securities if we need to raise capital in connection with an acquisition or another capital raise. The amount of shares of our common stock issued in connection with a capital raise or acquisition could constitute a material portion of our then-outstanding shares of common stock and thus materially dilute our stockholders.

Antitakeover provisions in our charter documents and Delaware law might discourage or delay acquisition attempts for us that you might consider favorable.

Our certificate of incorporation and bylaws contain provisions that may make the acquisition of our company more difficult without the approval of our board of directors. These provisions:

establish a classified board of directors so that not all members of our board of directors are elected at one time;

authorize the issuance of undesignated preferred stock, the terms of which may be established and the shares of which may be issued without stockholder approval, and which may include super voting, special approval, dividend, or other rights or preferences superior to the rights of the holders of common stock;

prohibit stockholder action by written consent, which requires all stockholder actions to be taken at a meeting of our stockholders; and

establish advance notice requirements for nominations for elections to our board or for proposing matters that can be acted upon by stockholders at stockholder meetings.

Our certificate of incorporation also contains a provision that provides us with protections similar to Section 203 of the Delaware General Corporate Law, that will prevent us from engaging in a business combination with a person who acquires at least 15% of our common stock for a period of three years from the date such person acquired such common stock, except for Golden Gate and, in certain instances, persons who purchase common stock from Golden Gate unless board or stockholder approval is obtained prior to the acquisition. These antitakeover provisions and other provisions under Delaware law could discourage, delay or prevent a transaction involving a change in control of our company, even if doing so would benefit our stockholders. These provisions could also discourage proxy contests and make it more difficult for you and other stockholders to elect directors of your choosing and to cause us to take other corporate actions you desire.

Table of Contents

Our ability to pay dividends is subject to restrictions in our existing credit arrangements, results of operations and capital requirements.

Any determination to pay dividends in the future will be at the discretion of our board of directors and will depend upon results of operations, financial condition, contractual restrictions, restrictions imposed by applicable law and other factors our board of directors deems relevant. Our ability to pay dividends on our common stock is limited by our existing credit agreements, and may be further restricted by the terms of any of our future debt or preferred securities. Additionally, because we are a holding company, our ability to pay dividends on our common stock is limited by restrictions on the ability of our subsidiaries to pay dividends or make distributions to us, including restrictions under the terms of the agreements governing our indebtedness.

We incur substantial costs as a result of being a public company.

As a public company, we incur significant legal, accounting, insurance and other expenses, including costs associated with public company reporting requirements. We incur costs associated with complying with the requirements of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 and related rules implemented by the SEC and the NYSE. The expenses incurred by public companies generally for reporting and corporate governance purposes have been increasing. We expect these laws and regulations to increase our legal and financial compliance costs and to make some activities more time-consuming and costly, although we are currently unable to estimate these costs with any degree of certainty. These laws and regulations could also make it more difficult or costly for us to obtain certain types of insurance, including director and officer liability insurance, and we may be forced to accept reduced policy limits and coverage or incur substantially higher costs to obtain the same or similar coverage. These laws and regulations could also make it more difficult for us to attract and retain qualified persons to serve on our board of directors, our board committees or as our executive officers. Furthermore, if we are unable to satisfy our obligations as a public company, we could be subject to delisting of our common stock, fines, sanctions and other regulatory action and potentially civil litigation.

Compliance with Section 404 of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 will require significant expenditures and effort by management, and if our independent registered public accounting firm is unable to provide an unqualified attestation report on our internal controls, our stock price could be adversely affected.

Pursuant to Section 404 of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 and related rules and regulations and beginning with our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ending January 28, 2012, our management will be required to report on, and our independent registered public accounting firm to attest to, the effectiveness of our internal control over financial reporting. The rules governing the standards that must be met for management to assess our internal control over financial reporting are complex and require significant documentation, testing and possible remediation. We are currently in the process of reviewing, documenting and testing our internal control over financial reporting. We may encounter problems or delays in completing the implementation of any changes necessary to make a favorable assessment of our internal control over financial reporting. In addition, in connection with the attestation process by our independent registered public accounting firm, we may encounter problems or delays in completing the implementation of any requested improvements and receiving a favorable attestation. If we cannot favorably assess the effectiveness of our internal control over financial reporting, or if our independent registered public accounting firm is unable to provide an unqualified attestation report on our internal controls, investors could lose confidence in our financial information and our stock price could decline.

Table of Contents**MARKET PRICE OF OUR COMMON STOCK**

Our common stock began trading on the NYSE on May 13, 2010 under the symbol **EXPR** in connection with the IPO. Prior to that date, there was no public market for our common stock. As of October 29, 2011, there were approximately 70 holders of record of our common stock. The number of holders of record is based upon the actual number of holders registered at such date and does not include holders of shares in street names or persons, partnerships, associates, corporations, or other entities identified in security position listings maintained by depositories.

The table below sets forth for the periods indicated the high and low sales prices per share of our common stock reported on the NYSE since the IPO.

	Common Stock Price Range	
	High	Low
Fiscal Year 2010		
Second Quarter (beginning May 13, 2010)	\$ 19.10	\$ 12.89
Third Quarter	\$ 18.00	\$ 12.90
Fourth Quarter	\$ 19.00	\$ 13.65
Fiscal Year 2011		
First Quarter	\$ 21.97	\$ 16.83
Second Quarter	\$ 24.02	\$ 18.93
Third Quarter	\$ 23.67	\$ 16.12
Fourth Quarter (through December 5, 2011)	\$ 23.52	\$ 19.91

The last reported sale price of our common stock on the NYSE on December 5, 2011 was \$21.45 per share.

Table of Contents

DIVIDEND POLICY

We have paid special dividends in the past, and we may pay dividends in the future. Any determination to pay dividends in the future will be at the discretion of our board of directors and will depend upon our results of operations, financial condition, capital requirements, contractual restrictions, compliance with current and future agreements governing our indebtedness, restrictions imposed by applicable law and other factors our board of directors deems relevant. Because we are a holding company, our ability to pay dividends on our common stock is limited by restrictions on the ability of our subsidiaries to pay dividends or make distributions to us, including restrictions under the terms of the agreements governing our indebtedness.

Prior to the IPO, pursuant to the LLC Agreement of Express Parent LLC, our predecessor company, we paid cash distributions to our equity holders to fund their tax obligations in respect of their equity interests on December 22, 2009, January 26, 2010 and May 4, 2010 in aggregate amounts of \$15.0 million, \$18.0 million and \$31.0 million, respectively. In addition, in March 2010, in connection with the issuance of the Senior Notes, we made a distribution to our equity holders in an aggregate amount of approximately \$230.0 million. As of May 4, 2010, Golden Gate had been paid an aggregate of \$577.8 million in connection with these distributions, including distributions for taxes. On December 23, 2010, we paid a special dividend of \$0.56 per share of our common stock, for a total special dividend of \$49.5 million, of which Golden Gate was paid its pro rata share.

S-20

Table of Contents

USE OF PROCEEDS

All shares of our common stock offered by this prospectus supplement and the accompanying prospectus will be sold by the selling stockholders. We will not receive any proceeds from this offering. We will pay transaction expenses, other than the underwriting discounts and commissions, associated with the sale of shares of common stock by the selling stockholders estimated at \$0.6 million.

S-21

Table of Contents**SELLING STOCKHOLDERS**

Unless otherwise noted, the following table sets forth the beneficial ownership of our common stock immediately prior to this offering and the anticipated beneficial ownership of our common stock following this offering by each selling stockholder.

Beneficial ownership for the purposes of the following table is determined in accordance with the rules and regulations of the SEC. These rules generally provide that a person is the beneficial owner of securities if such person has or shares the power to vote or direct the voting thereof, or to dispose or direct the disposition thereof, or has the right to acquire such powers within 60 days. Common stock subject to options that are currently exercisable or exercisable within 60 days of the date of this prospectus supplement and restricted stock units that vest within 60 days of the date of this prospectus supplement are deemed to be outstanding and beneficially owned by the person holding the options and restricted stock units for the purposes of computing the percentage ownership of that person and any group of which that person is a member. These shares, however, are not deemed outstanding for the purposes of computing the percentage ownership of any other person. Percentage of beneficial ownership is based on 88,908,602 shares of common stock outstanding as of November 30, 2011 for stockholders other than our executive officers and directors. Percentage of beneficial ownership of our executive officers and directors is based on 88,908,602 shares of common stock outstanding as of November 30, 2011 plus options exercisable within 60 days and restricted stock units that vest within 60 days of the date of this prospectus supplement by any executive officer or director included in the group for which percentage ownership has been calculated. Except as disclosed in the footnotes to this table and subject to applicable community property laws, we believe that each stockholder identified in the table possesses sole voting and investment power over all shares of common stock shown as beneficially owned by the stockholder. Unless otherwise indicated in the table or footnotes below, the address for each beneficial owner is c/o Express, Inc., 1 Express Drive, Columbus, Ohio 43230.

Name	Shares Beneficially Owned Prior to This Offering		Shares To Be Sold in This Offering Assuming No Exercise of the Option to Purchase Additional Shares	Shares To Be Sold in This Offering Assuming Full Exercise of the Option to Purchase Additional Shares	Shares Beneficially Owned After This Offering Assuming No Exercise of the Option to Purchase Additional Shares		Shares Beneficially Owned After This Offering Assuming Full Exercise of the Option to Purchase Additional Shares	
	Number	Percent	Number	Number	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
5% Stockholders:								
Funds managed by Golden Gate Private Equity, Inc.(1)	21,641,349	24.3%	15,534,000	17,934,000	6,107,349	6.9%	3,707,349	4.2%
Executive Officers:								
John J. Rafferty	389,188	*	50,000	50,000	339,188	*	339,188	*
Jeanne L. St. Pierre	359,142	*	65,000	65,000	294,142	*	294,142	*
Matthew C. Moellering	328,342	*	30,000	30,000	298,342	*	298,342	*
David G. Kornberg	310,746	*	60,000	60,000	250,746	*	250,746	*
Elliot R. Tobias	213,098	*	35,000	35,000	178,098	*	178,098	*
Lisa A. Gavales	328,477	*	45,000	45,000	283,477	*	283,477	*
Douglas H. Tilson	213,426	*	10,000	10,000	203,426	*	203,426	*
Other Selling Stockholders:								
Weiss Descendents 2008 Irrevocable Trust dated March 13, 2008(2)	368,690	*	73,000	73,000	295,690	*	295,690	*
Weiss Family 2008 Irrevocable Trust Alpha dated March 13, 2008(2)	245,793	*	49,000	49,000	196,793	*	196,793	*
Weiss Family 2008 Irrevocable Trust Beta dated March 13, 2008(2)	245,793	*	49,000	49,000	196,793	*	196,793	*

Table of Contents

- * Represents beneficial ownership of less than one percent (1%) of our outstanding common stock.
- (1) Includes shares of common stock that are held directly by Multi-Channel Retail Holdings LLC Series G, a Delaware limited liability company, and shares of common stock held indirectly (through their respective ownership in Multi-Channel Retail Holdings LLC) by (a) Golden Gate Capital Investment Fund II, L.P., (b) Golden Gate Capital Investment Fund II-A, L.P., (c) Golden Gate Capital Investment Annex Fund II, L.P., (d) Golden Gate Capital Investment Fund II (AI), L.P., (e) Golden Gate Capital Investment Fund II-A (AI), L.P., (f) Golden Gate Capital Investment Annex Fund II (AI), L.P., (g) Golden Gate Capital Associates II-QP, L.L.C., (h) Golden Gate Capital Associates II-AI, L.L.C., (i) CCG AV, L.L.C. Series C, (j) CCG AV, L.L.C. Series I and (k) CCG AV, L.L.C. Series L (the entities listed in clauses (a) through (k) above, the Golden Gate Entities), each of which are funds managed by Golden Gate. Golden Gate may be deemed to be the beneficial owner of the shares owned by Multi-Channel Retail Holdings LLC and the Golden Gate Entities, but disclaims beneficial ownership pursuant to the rules under the Exchange Act. David Dominik and Joshua Olshansky, each on the board of directors of Express, are Managing Directors of Golden Gate and may be deemed to be the beneficial owner of shares owned by Multi-Channel Retail Holdings LLC and the Golden Gate Entities. Each of Messrs. Dominik and Olshansky disclaims beneficial ownership of any securities owned by Multi-Channel Retail Holdings LLC or the Golden Gate Entities, except, in each case, to the extent of his pecuniary interest therein. The address for Golden Gate, Multi-Channel Retail Holdings LLC, the Golden Gate Entities and Messrs. Dominik and Olshansky is c/o Golden Gate Private Equity, Inc., One Embarcadero Center, 39th Floor, San Francisco, California 94111.
- (2) The beneficiaries of the Weiss Descendants 2008 Irrevocable Trust dated March 13, 2008, the Weiss Family 2008 Irrevocable Trust Alpha dated March 13, 2008 and the Weiss Family 2008 Irrevocable Trust Beta dated March 13, 2008 are descendants of Mr. Weiss. Mr. Weiss is neither a beneficiary nor a trustee of these trusts. Accordingly, Mr. Weiss disclaims any beneficial ownership of any securities owned by these trusts. The address for these trusts are c/o J.P. Morgan Securities, LLC, 100 E. Broad Street, 9th Floor, Columbus, OH 43215.

Table of Contents

MATERIAL U.S. FEDERAL INCOME TAX CONSIDERATIONS FOR NON-U.S. HOLDERS

The following is a summary of material U.S. federal income tax consequences of the purchase, ownership and disposition of our common stock to a non-U.S. holder that purchases shares of our common stock in this offering. For purposes of this summary, a non-U.S. holder means a beneficial owner of our common stock that is, for U.S. federal income tax purposes:

a nonresident alien individual;

a foreign corporation (or entity treated as a foreign corporation for U.S. federal income tax purposes); or

a foreign estate or foreign trust.

In the case of a holder that is classified as a partnership for U.S. federal income tax purposes, the tax treatment of a partner in such partnership generally will depend upon the status of the partner and the activities of the partner and the partnership. If you are a partner in a partnership holding our common stock, then you should consult your own tax advisor.

This summary is based upon the provisions of the Code, the Treasury regulations promulgated thereunder and administrative and judicial interpretations thereof, all as of the date hereof. Those authorities may be changed, perhaps retroactively, so as to result in U.S. federal income tax consequences different from those summarized below. We cannot assure you that a change in law, possibly with retroactive application, will not alter significantly the tax considerations that we describe in this summary. We have not sought and do not plan to seek any ruling from the U.S. Internal Revenue Service (the IRS), with respect to statements made and the conclusions reached in the following summary, and there can be no assurance that the IRS or a court will agree with our statements and conclusions.

This summary does not address all aspects of U.S. federal income taxes that may be relevant to non-U.S. holders in light of their personal circumstances, and does not deal with federal taxes other than the U.S. federal income tax or with non-U.S., state or local tax considerations. Special rules, not discussed here, may apply to certain non-U.S. holders, including:

U.S. expatriates;

controlled foreign corporations;

passive foreign investment companies; and

investors in pass-through entities that are subject to special treatment under the Code.

Such non-U.S. holders should consult their own tax advisors to determine the U.S. federal, state, local and other tax consequences that may be relevant to them.

This summary applies only to a non-U.S. holder that holds our common stock as a capital asset (within the meaning of Section 1221 of the Code).

If you are considering the purchase of our common stock, you should consult your own tax advisor concerning the particular U.S. federal income tax consequences to you of the purchase, ownership and disposition of our common stock, as well as the consequences to you arising under U.S. tax laws other than the federal income tax law or under the laws of any other taxing jurisdiction.

Dividends

Edgar Filing: EXPRESS, INC. - Form 424B7

In the event that we make a distribution of cash or property (other than certain stock distributions) with respect to our common stock (or certain redemptions that are treated as distributions with respect to common

S-24

Table of Contents

stock), any such distributions will be treated as a dividend for U.S. federal income tax purposes to the extent paid from our current or accumulated earnings and profits (as determined under U.S. federal income tax principles). Dividends paid to you generally will be subject to withholding of U.S. federal income tax at a 30% rate or such lower rate as may be specified by an applicable income tax treaty. However, dividends that are effectively connected with the conduct of a trade or business by you within the United States and, where a tax treaty applies, are generally attributable to a United States permanent establishment, are not subject to the withholding tax, but instead are subject to United States federal income tax on a net income basis at applicable graduated individual or corporate rates. Certain certification and disclosure requirements including delivery of a properly executed IRS Form W-8ECI must be satisfied for effectively connected income to be exempt from withholding. Any such effectively connected dividends received by a foreign corporation may be subject to an additional branch profits tax at a 30% rate or such lower rate as may be specified by an applicable income tax treaty.

If the amount of a distribution paid on our common stock exceeds our current and accumulated earnings and profits, such excess will be allocated ratably among each share of common stock with respect to which the distribution is paid and treated first as a tax-free return of capital to the extent of your adjusted tax basis in each such share, and thereafter as capital gain from a sale or other disposition of such share of common stock that is taxed to you as described below under the heading **Gain on Disposition of Common Stock**. Your adjusted tax basis is generally the purchase price of such shares, reduced by the amount of any such tax-free returns of capital.

If you wish to claim the benefit of an applicable treaty rate to avoid or reduce withholding of U.S. federal income tax for dividends, then you must (a) provide the withholding agent with a properly completed IRS Form W-8BEN (or other applicable form) and certify under penalties of perjury that you are not a U.S. person and are eligible for treaty benefits, or (b) if our common stock is held through certain foreign intermediaries, satisfy the relevant certification requirements of applicable U.S. Treasury regulations. Special certification and other requirements apply to certain non-U.S. holders that act as intermediaries (including partnerships).

If you are eligible for a reduced rate of U.S. federal income tax pursuant to an income tax treaty, then you may obtain a refund or credit of any excess amounts withheld by filing timely an appropriate claim with the IRS.

Gain on Disposition of Common Stock

You generally will not be subject to U.S. federal income tax with respect to gain realized on the sale or other taxable disposition of our common stock, unless:

the gain is effectively connected with a trade or business you conduct in the United States, and, in cases in which certain tax treaties apply, is attributable to a United States permanent establishment;

if you are an individual, you are present in the United States for 183 days or more in the taxable year of the sale or other taxable disposition, and you have a tax home (as defined in the Code) in the United States; or

we are or have been during a specified testing period a U.S. real property holding corporation for U.S. federal income tax purposes, and certain other conditions are met.

We believe that we have not been and are not, and we do not anticipate becoming, a U.S. real property holding corporation for U.S. federal income tax purposes. If you are an individual described in the first bullet point above, you will be subject to tax on the net gain derived from the sale under regular graduated United States federal income tax rates. If you are an individual described in the second bullet point above, you will be subject to a flat 30% tax on the gain derived from the sale, which may be offset by United States source capital losses (even though you are not considered a resident of the United States) but may not be offset by any capital loss carryovers. If you are a foreign corporation described in the first bullet point above, you will be subject to tax on your gain under regular graduated United States federal income tax rates and, in addition, may be subject to the branch profits tax equal to 30% of your effectively connected earnings and profits or at such lower rate as may be specified by an applicable income tax treaty.

Table of Contents

Information Reporting and Backup Withholding Tax

We must report annually to the IRS and to you the amount of dividends paid to you and the amount of tax, if any, withheld with respect to such dividends. The IRS may make this information available to the tax authorities in the country in which you are resident.

In addition, you may be subject to information reporting requirements and backup withholding tax with respect to dividends paid on, and the proceeds of disposition of, shares of our common stock, unless, generally, you certify under penalties of perjury (usually on IRS Form W-8BEN) that you are not a U.S. person or you otherwise establish an exemption. Additional rules relating to information reporting requirements and backup withholding tax with respect to payments of the proceeds from the disposition of shares of our common stock are as follows:

If the proceeds are paid to or through the U.S. office of a broker, the proceeds generally will be subject to backup withholding tax and information reporting, unless you certify under penalties of perjury (usually on IRS Form W-8BEN) that you are not a U.S. person or you otherwise establish an exemption.

If the proceeds are paid to or through a non-U.S. office of a broker that is not a U.S. person and is not a foreign person with certain specified U.S. connections (a U.S.-related person), information reporting and backup withholding tax generally will not apply.

If the proceeds are paid to or through a non-U.S. office of a broker that is a U.S. person or a U.S.-related person, the proceeds generally will be subject to information reporting (but not to backup withholding tax), unless you certify under penalties of perjury (usually on IRS Form W-8BEN) that you are not a U.S. person or you otherwise establish an exemption.

Any amounts withheld under the backup withholding tax rules may be allowed as a refund or a credit against your U.S. federal income tax liability, provided the required information is timely furnished by you to the IRS.

Legislation Affecting Taxation of Common Stock Held By or Through Foreign Entities

Legislation enacted March 18, 2010 generally will impose a withholding tax of 30 percent on dividend income from our common stock and the gross proceeds of a disposition of our common stock paid to a foreign financial institution, unless such institution enters into an agreement with the United States government to collect and provide to the United States tax authorities substantial information regarding United States account holders of such institution (which would include certain equity and debt holders of such institution, as well as certain account holders that are foreign entities with United States owners). Absent any applicable exception, this legislation also generally will impose a withholding tax of 30 percent on dividend income from our common stock and the gross proceeds of a disposition of our common stock paid to a foreign entity that is not a foreign financial institution unless such entity provides the withholding agent with a certification identifying the substantial United States owners of the entity, which generally includes any United States person who directly or indirectly own more than 10 percent of the entity. Under certain circumstances, a non-United States holder of our common stock might be eligible for refunds or credits of such taxes, and a non-United States holder might be required to file a United States federal income tax return to claim such refunds or credits. This legislation generally is effective for dividend payments made after December 31, 2013, and for payments made in respect of gross proceeds from sales or other dispositions after December 31, 2014. Investors are encouraged to consult with their own tax advisors regarding the implications of this legislation on their investment in our common stock.

THE SUMMARY OF MATERIAL U.S. FEDERAL INCOME TAX CONSEQUENCES ABOVE IS INCLUDED FOR GENERAL INFORMATION PURPOSES ONLY. POTENTIAL PURCHASERS OF OUR COMMON STOCK ARE URGED TO CONSULT THEIR OWN TAX ADVISORS TO DETERMINE THE U.S. FEDERAL, STATE, LOCAL AND NON-U.S. TAX CONSIDERATIONS OF PURCHASING, OWNING AND DISPOSING OF OUR COMMON STOCK.

Table of Contents**UNDERWRITING**

Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith Incorporated is acting as representative of each of the underwriters named below. Subject to the terms and conditions set forth in an underwriting agreement among us, the selling stockholders and the underwriters, the selling stockholders have agreed to sell to the underwriters, and each of the underwriters has agreed, severally and not jointly, to purchase from the selling stockholders, the number of shares of common stock set forth opposite its name below.

Underwriter	Number of Shares
Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith Incorporated	
Barclays Capital Inc.	
Morgan Stanley & Co. LLC	
Piper Jaffray & Co.	
UBS Securities LLC	
Stephens Inc.	
Stifel, Nicolaus & Company, Incorporated	
Total	16,000,000

Subject to the terms and conditions set forth in the underwriting agreement, the underwriters have agreed, severally and not jointly, to purchase all of the shares sold under the underwriting agreement if any of these shares are purchased. If an underwriter defaults, the underwriting agreement provides that the purchase commitments of the nondefaulting underwriters may be increased or the underwriting agreement may be terminated.

We and the selling stockholders have agreed to indemnify the underwriters against certain liabilities, including liabilities under the Securities Act, or to contribute to payments the underwriters may be required to make in respect of those liabilities.

The underwriters are offering the shares, subject to prior sale, when, as and if issued to and accepted by them, subject to approval of legal matters by their counsel, including the validity of the shares, and other conditions contained in the underwriting agreement, such as the receipt by the underwriters of officer's certificates and legal opinions. The underwriters reserve the right to withdraw, cancel or modify offers to the public and to reject orders in whole or in part.

Commissions and Discounts

The representative has advised us and the selling stockholders that the underwriters propose initially to offer the shares to the public at the public offering price set forth on the cover page of this prospectus and to dealers at that price less a concession not in excess of \$ per share. The underwriters may allow, and the dealers may reallow, a discount not in excess of \$ per share to other dealers. After the initial offering, the public offering price, concession or any other term of the offering may be changed.

The following table shows the public offering price, underwriting discount and proceeds before expenses to the selling stockholders. The information assumes either no exercise or full exercise by the underwriters of their overallotment option.

	Per Share	Without Option	With Option
Public offering price	\$	\$	\$
Underwriting discount	\$	\$	\$
Proceeds, before expenses, to the selling stockholders	\$	\$	\$

The expenses of the offering, not including the underwriting discount, are estimated at \$0.6 million and are payable by us.

Table of Contents

Overallotment Option

Certain selling stockholders have granted an option to the underwriters, exercisable for 30 days after the date of this prospectus, to purchase up to 2,400,000 additional shares at the public offering price, less the underwriting discount. The underwriters may exercise this option solely to cover any overallotments. If the underwriters exercise this option, each will be obligated, subject to conditions contained in the underwriting agreement, to purchase a number of additional shares proportionate to that underwriter's initial amount reflected in the above table.

No Sales of Similar Securities

We and the selling stockholders, our executive officers and directors have agreed not to sell or transfer any common stock or securities convertible into, exchangeable for, exercisable for, or repayable with common stock, for 90 days after the date of this prospectus without first obtaining the written consent of Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith Incorporated. Specifically, we and these other persons have agreed, with certain limited exceptions, not to directly or indirectly

offer, pledge, sell or contract to sell any common stock,

sell any option or contract to purchase any common stock,

purchase any option or contract to sell any common stock,

grant any option, right or warrant for the sale of any common stock,

lend or otherwise dispose of or transfer any common stock,

request or demand that we file a registration statement related to the common stock, or

enter into any swap or other agreement that transfers, in whole or in part, the economic consequence of ownership of any common stock whether any such swap or transaction is to be settled by delivery of shares or other securities, in cash or otherwise.

This lock-up provision applies to common stock and to securities convertible into or exchangeable or exercisable for or repayable with common stock. It also applies to common stock owned now or acquired later by the person executing the agreement or for which the person executing the agreement later acquires the power of disposition. In the event that either (x) during the last 17 days of the lock-up period referred to above, we issue an earnings release or material news or a material event relating to us occurs or (y) prior to the expiration of the lock-up period, we announce that we will release earnings results or become aware that material news or a material event will occur during the 16-day period beginning on the last day of the lock-up period, the restrictions described above shall continue to apply until the expiration of the 18-day period beginning on the issuance of the earnings release or the occurrence of the material news or material event.

New York Stock Exchange

The shares are listed on the NYSE under the symbol `EXPR`.

Price Stabilization, Short Positions

Until the distribution of the shares is completed, SEC rules may limit underwriters and selling group members from bidding for and purchasing our common stock. However, the representative may engage in transactions that stabilize the price of the common stock, such as bids or purchases to peg, fix or maintain that price.

Edgar Filing: EXPRESS, INC. - Form 424B7

In connection with the offering, the underwriters may purchase and sell our common stock in the open market. These transactions may include short sales, purchases on the open market to cover positions created by

S-28

Table of Contents

short sales and stabilizing transactions. Short sales involve the sale by the underwriters of a greater number of shares than they are required to purchase in the offering. Covered short sales are sales made in an amount not greater than the underwriters' over-allotment option described above. The underwriters may close out any covered short position by either exercising their over-allotment option or purchasing shares in the open market. In determining the source of shares to close out the covered short position, the underwriters will consider, among other things, the price of shares available for purchase in the open market as compared to the price at which they may purchase shares through the over-allotment option. Naked short sales are sales in excess of the over-allotment option. The underwriters must close out any naked short position by purchasing shares in the open market. A naked short position is more likely to be created if the underwriters are concerned that there may be downward pressure on the price of our common stock in the open market after pricing that could adversely affect investors who purchase in the offering. Stabilizing transactions consist of various bids for or purchases of shares of common stock made by the underwriters in the open market prior to the completion of the offering.

Similar to other purchase transactions, the underwriters' purchases to cover the syndicate short sales may have the effect of raising or maintaining the market price of our common stock or preventing or retarding a decline in the market price of our common stock. As a result, the price of our common stock may be higher than the price that might otherwise exist in the open market. The underwriters may conduct these transactions on the New York Stock Exchange, in the over-the-counter market or otherwise.

Neither we nor any of the underwriters make any representation or prediction as to the direction or magnitude of any effect that the transactions described above may have on the price of our common stock. In addition, neither we nor any of the underwriters make any representation that the representative will engage in these transactions or that these transactions, once commenced, will not be discontinued without notice.

Electronic Distribution

In connection with the offering, certain of the underwriters or securities dealers may distribute prospectuses by electronic means, such as e-mail.

Other Relationships

The underwriters and their affiliates are full service financial institutions engaged in various activities, which may include securities trading, commercial and investment banking, financial advisory, investment management, principal investment, hedging, financing and brokerage activities. Some of the underwriters and their affiliates have engaged in, and may in the future engage in, investment banking and other commercial dealings in the ordinary course of business with us or our affiliates. They have received, or may in the future receive, customary fees and commissions for these transactions. In particular, affiliates of Morgan Stanley & Co. LLC act as administrative agent and collateral agent under our Opco term loan facility, for which services we have paid, and will continue to pay, customary fees.

In addition, in the ordinary course of their business activities, the underwriters and their affiliates may make or hold a broad array of investments and actively trade debt and equity securities (or related derivative securities) and financial instruments (including bank loans) for their own account and for the accounts of their customers. Such investments and securities activities may involve securities and/or instruments of ours or our affiliates. The underwriters and their affiliates may also make investment recommendations and/or publish or express independent research views in respect of such securities or financial instruments and may hold, or recommend to clients that they acquire, long and/or short positions in such securities and instruments.

Golden Gate has agreed to pay Peter J. Solomon Securities Company, LLC a financial advisory fee of approximately \$500,000 in connection with this offering.

Table of Contents

Notice to Prospective Investors in the European Economic Area

In relation to each Member State of the European Economic Area which has implemented the Prospectus Directive (each, a Relevant Member State), with effect from and including the date on which the Prospectus Directive is implemented in that Relevant Member State (the Relevant Implementation Date), no offer of shares may be made to the public in that Relevant Member State other than:

- A. to any legal entity which is a qualified investor as defined in the Prospectus Directive;
- B. to fewer than 100 or, if the Relevant Member State has implemented the relevant provision of the 2010 PD Amending Directive, 150, natural or legal persons (other than qualified investors as defined in the Prospectus Directive), as permitted under the Prospectus Directive, subject to obtaining the prior consent of the representative; or
- C. in any other circumstances falling within Article 3(2) of the Prospectus Directive, provided that no such offer of shares shall require the Company or the representative to publish a prospectus pursuant to Article 3 of the Prospectus Directive or supplement a prospectus pursuant to Article 16 of the Prospectus Directive.

Each person in a Relevant Member State (other than a Relevant Member State where there is a Permitted Public Offer) who initially acquires any shares or to whom any offer is made will be deemed to have represented, acknowledged and agreed that (A) it is a qualified investor within the meaning of the law in that Relevant Member State implementing Article 2(1)(e) of the Prospectus Directive, and (B) in the case of any shares acquired by it as a financial intermediary, as that term is used in Article 3(2) of the Prospectus Directive, the shares acquired by it in the offering have not been acquired on behalf of, nor have they been acquired with a view to their offer or resale to, persons in any Relevant Member State other than qualified investors as defined in the Prospectus Directive, or in circumstances in which the prior consent of the Subscribers has been given to the offer or resale. In the case of any shares being offered to a financial intermediary as that term is used in Article 3(2) of the Prospectus Directive, each such financial intermediary will be deemed to have represented, acknowledged and agreed that the shares acquired by it in the offer have not been acquired on a non-discretionary basis on behalf of, nor have they been acquired with a view to their offer or resale to, persons in circumstances which may give rise to an offer of any shares to the public other than their offer or resale in a Relevant Member State to qualified investors as so defined or in circumstances in which the prior consent of the representative has been obtained to each such proposed offer or resale.

The Company, the representative and their affiliates will rely upon the truth and accuracy of the foregoing representation, acknowledgement and agreement.

This prospectus supplement has been prepared on the basis that any offer of shares in any Relevant Member State will be made pursuant to an exemption under the Prospectus Directive from the requirement to publish a prospectus for offers of shares. Accordingly any person making or intending to make an offer in that Relevant Member State of shares which are the subject of the offering contemplated in this prospectus supplement may only do so in circumstances in which no obligation arises for the Company or any of the underwriters to publish a prospectus pursuant to Article 3 of the Prospectus Directive in relation to such offer. Neither the Company nor the underwriters have authorized, nor do they authorize, the making of any offer of shares in circumstances in which an obligation arises for the Company or the underwriters to publish a prospectus for such offer.

For the purpose of the above provisions, the expression an offer to the public in relation to any shares in any Relevant Member State means the communication in any form and by any means of sufficient information on the terms of the offer and the shares to be offered so as to enable an investor to decide to purchase or subscribe the shares, as the same may be varied in the Relevant Member State by any measure implementing the

Table of Contents

Prospectus Directive in the Relevant Member State and the expression Prospectus Directive means Directive 2003/71/EC (including the 2010 PD Amending Directive, to the extent implemented in the Relevant Member States) and includes any relevant implementing measure in the Relevant Member State and the expression 2010 PD Amending Directive means Directive 2010/73/EU.

Notice to Prospective Investors in the United Kingdom

In addition, in the United Kingdom, this prospectus supplement is being distributed only to, and is directed only at, and any offer subsequently made may only be directed at persons who are qualified investors (as defined in the Prospectus Directive) (i) who have professional experience in matters relating to investments falling within Article 19 (5) of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 (Financial Promotion) Order 2005, as amended (the Order) and/or (ii) who are high net worth companies (or persons to whom it may otherwise be lawfully communicated) falling within Article 49(2)(a) to (d) of the Order (all such persons together being referred to as relevant persons). This prospectus supplement must not be acted on or relied on in the United Kingdom by persons who are not relevant persons. In the United Kingdom, any investment or investment activity to which this prospectus supplement relates is only available to, and will be engaged in with, relevant persons.

Notice to Prospective Investors in Switzerland

The shares may not be publicly offered in Switzerland and will not be listed on the SIX Swiss Exchange (SIX) or on any other stock exchange or regulated trading facility in Switzerland. This prospectus supplement has been prepared without regard to the disclosure standards for issuance prospectuses under art. 652a or art. 1156 of the Swiss Code of Obligations or the disclosure standards for listing prospectuses under art. 27 ff. of the SIX Listing Rules or the listing rules of any other stock exchange or regulated trading facility in Switzerland. Neither this prospectus supplement nor any other offering or marketing material relating to the shares or the offering may be publicly distributed or otherwise made publicly available in Switzerland.

Neither this prospectus supplement nor any other offering or marketing material relating to the offering, the Company, the shares have been or will be filed with or approved by any Swiss regulatory authority. In particular, this prospectus supplement will not be filed with, and the offer of shares will not be supervised by, the Swiss Financial Market Supervisory Authority FINMA (FINMA), and the offer of shares has not been and will not be authorized under the Swiss Federal Act on Collective Investment Schemes (CISA). The investor protection afforded to acquirers of interests in collective investment schemes under the CISA does not extend to acquirers of shares.

Notice to Prospective Investors in the Dubai International Financial Centre

This prospectus supplement relates to an Exempt Offer in accordance with the Offered Securities Rules of the Dubai Financial Services Authority (DFSA). This prospectus supplement is intended for distribution only to persons of a type specified in the Offered Securities Rules of the DFSA. It must not be delivered to, or relied on by, any other person. The DFSA has no responsibility for reviewing or verifying any documents in connection with Exempt Offers. The DFSA has not approved this prospectus supplement nor taken steps to verify the information set forth herein and has no responsibility for the prospectus supplement. The shares to which this prospectus supplement relates may be illiquid and/or subject to restrictions on their resale. Prospective purchasers of the shares offered should conduct their own due diligence on the shares. If you do not understand the contents of this prospectus supplement you should consult an authorized financial advisor.

Table of Contents

LEGAL MATTERS

The validity of the common stock offered hereby will be passed upon for us by Kirkland & Ellis LLP, Chicago, Illinois. Certain partners of Kirkland & Ellis LLP are members of a limited partnership that is an investor in one or more investment funds affiliated with Golden Gate. Kirkland & Ellis LLP represents entities affiliated with Golden Gate in connection with legal matters. Certain legal matters will be passed upon for the underwriters by Latham & Watkins LLP, New York, New York.

EXPERTS

The financial statements of Express, Inc. as of January 29, 2011 and January 30, 2010 and for the fiscal years ended January 29, 2011, January 30, 2010 and January 31, 2009 incorporated by reference in the accompanying prospectus have been so included in reliance on the report of PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, an independent registered public accounting firm, given on the authority of said firm as experts in auditing and accounting.

S-32

Table of Contents

PROSPECTUS

Express, Inc.

Common Stock

Selling stockholders to be named in a prospectus supplement may offer and sell shares of our common stock from time to time, in amounts, at prices and on terms that will be determined at the time of the offering. We will not receive any proceeds from the sale of shares offered by any selling stockholders. Each time common stock is offered, we will describe the specific manner in which we will offer the common stock in a supplement to this prospectus. The prospectus supplement may also supplement, update or amend information contained in this prospectus.

You should read this prospectus and the applicable prospectus supplement, as well as the documents incorporated by reference herein or therein, carefully before you invest in our common stock.

Our common stock is traded on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol **EXPR**.

Investing in the common stock involves risks that are described in the Risk Factors section beginning on page 6 of this prospectus.

Neither the Securities and Exchange Commission nor any state securities commission has approved or disapproved of these securities or passed upon the accuracy or adequacy of this prospectus. Any representation to the contrary is a criminal offense.

The date of this prospectus is December 6, 2011.

Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS

As permitted under the rules of the Securities and Exchange Commission, this prospectus incorporates important information about Express, Inc. that is contained in documents that we file with the Securities and Exchange Commission but that are not included in or delivered with this prospectus. You may obtain copies of these documents, without charge, from the website maintained by the Securities and Exchange Commission at <http://www.sec.gov>, as well as other sources. See **Where You Can Find More Information**.

You should rely only on the information incorporated by reference or provided in this prospectus and any applicable prospectus supplement. We have not authorized anyone else to provide you with different information. These securities are not being offered in any state where the offer is not permitted. You should not assume that the information in this prospectus, any applicable prospectus supplement or the documents incorporated by reference is accurate as of any date other than the date on the front of such documents.

	Page
<u>About this Prospectus</u>	1
<u>Where You Can Find More Information</u>	2
<u>Incorporation by Reference of Certain Documents</u>	3
<u>Forward-Looking Statements</u>	4
<u>Our Company</u>	6
<u>Risk Factors</u>	6
<u>Use of Proceeds</u>	6
<u>Description of Capital Stock</u>	7
<u>Selling Stockholders</u>	10
<u>Legal Matters</u>	11
<u>Experts</u>	11

Table of Contents

ABOUT THIS PROSPECTUS

This prospectus is part of a shelf registration statement that we filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission (the SEC). By using a shelf registration statement, we may, at any time and from time to time, in one or more offerings, sell the common stock described in this prospectus.

To understand the terms of our common stock, you should carefully read this prospectus and the applicable prospectus supplement. Together they give the specific terms of the common stock we are offering. You should also read the documents we have referred you to under *Where You Can Find More Information* and *Incorporation by Reference of Certain Documents* below for information about us. The shelf registration statement, including the exhibits thereto, can be read at the SEC's website or at the SEC's Public Reference Room as described under *Where You Can Find More Information*. You should also carefully consider, among other things, the matters discussed in the section entitled *Risk Factors*.

This prospectus includes or incorporates by reference our trademarks, service marks and trade names such as *Express*, which are protected under applicable intellectual property laws and are the property of Express, Inc. or its subsidiaries. Solely for convenience, trademarks, service marks and trade names referred to or incorporated by reference in this prospectus may appear without the ® or ™ symbols, but such references are not intended to indicate, in any way, that we will not assert, to the fullest extent under applicable law, our rights to our trademarks, service marks and trade names. In addition, this prospectus contains or incorporates by reference trademarks, service marks, and trade names, of other companies, which are the property of their respective owners.

Table of Contents

WHERE YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION

We have filed with the SEC a registration statement on Form S-3 under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended (the Securities Act), with respect to the common stock offered by this prospectus. This prospectus, which is a part of the registration statement, does not contain all of the information set forth in the registration statement or the exhibits and schedules filed therewith. For further information with respect to us and the common stock offered by this prospectus, please see the registration statement and the exhibits filed with the registration statement. Statements contained in this prospectus regarding the contents of any contract or any other document that is filed as an exhibit to the registration statement are not necessarily complete, and each such statement is qualified in all respects by reference to the full text of such contract or other document filed as an exhibit to the registration statement. A copy of the registration statement and the exhibits filed with the registration statement may be inspected without charge at the Public Reference Room maintained by the SEC, located at 100 F Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20549. Please call the SEC at 1-800-SEC-0330 for more information about the operation of the Public Reference Room. The SEC also maintains an Internet website that contains reports, proxy and information statements and other information regarding registrants that file electronically with the SEC. The address of the website is <http://www.sec.gov>.

We are subject to the information and periodic reporting requirements of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended (the Exchange Act), and, in accordance therewith, we file periodic reports, proxy statements and other information with the SEC. Such periodic reports, proxy statements and other information are available for inspection and copying at the Public Reference Room and website of the SEC referred to above. We maintain a website at <http://www.express.com>. You may access our Annual Reports on Form 10-K, Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q, Current Reports on Form 8-K and amendments to those reports filed pursuant to Sections 13(a) or 15(d) of the Exchange Act with the SEC free of charge at our website as soon as reasonably practicable after such material is electronically filed with, or furnished to, the SEC. Our website and the information contained on that site, or connected to that site, are not incorporated into and are not a part of this prospectus, and you should not consider the contents of our website in making an investment decision with respect to our common stock.

Table of Contents

INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE OF CERTAIN DOCUMENTS

We are incorporating by reference specified documents that we file with the SEC, which means that we can disclose important information to you by referring you to those documents that are considered part of this prospectus. Later information that we file with the SEC will automatically update and supersede this information. We incorporate by reference into this prospectus the documents listed below and any future filings (other than pursuant to Items 2.02 and 7.01 of Form 8-K) made with the SEC (other than any portion of such filings that are furnished under applicable SEC rules rather than filed) under Sections 13(a), 13(c), 14, or 15(d) of the Exchange Act, including filings made on or after the date hereof:

our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the fiscal year ended January 29, 2011;

our Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q for the fiscal quarters ended April 30, July 30 and October 29, 2011;

our Current Reports on Form 8-K filed on March 22 (only with respect to Item 8.01), April 11, April 26, June 9, June 27, August 4, September 6, September 23, October 17, October 31 and November 7, 2011; and

our Registration Statement on Form 8-A filed on May 12, 2010.

Any statement contained in a document incorporated or deemed to be incorporated by reference into this prospectus will be deemed to be modified or superseded for purposes of this prospectus to the extent that a statement contained in this prospectus or any other subsequently filed document that is deemed to be incorporated by reference into this prospectus modifies or supersedes the statement. Any statement so modified or superseded will not be deemed, except as so modified or superseded, to constitute a part of this prospectus. Our Commission File Number is 001-34742.

Our filings with the SEC, including our Annual Report on Form 10-K, Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q, Current Reports on Form 8-K and amendments to those reports, are available free of charge on our website at <http://www.express.com> as soon as reasonably practicable after they are filed with, or furnished to, the SEC. Our website and the information contained on that site, or connected to that site, are not incorporated into and are not a part of this prospectus. You may also obtain a copy of these filings at no cost by writing or telephoning us at the office of our Corporate Secretary, Express, Inc., 1 Express Drive, Columbus, Ohio 43230.

Table of Contents

FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS

This prospectus, any applicable prospectus supplement and the documents incorporated by reference herein contain forward-looking statements within the meaning of Section 27A of the Securities Act and Section 21E of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended (the Exchange Act), that are based on current expectations, estimates, forecasts and projections about us, our future performance, our liquidity, the apparel industry, our beliefs and management's assumptions. Words such as anticipate, assume, believe, estimate, expect, intend, plan, seek, target, goal and variations of such words and similar expressions are intended to identify such forward-looking statements. All statements in this prospectus, any applicable prospectus supplement and the documents incorporated by reference herein regarding our business strategy, future operations, financial position, cost savings, prospects, plans and objectives, as well as information concerning industry trends and expected actions of third parties, are forward-looking statements. All forward-looking statements speak only as of the date on which they are made. These statements are not guarantees of future performance and involve certain risks, uncertainties and assumptions concerning future events that are difficult to predict. Therefore, actual future events or results may differ materially from these statements. We believe that the factors that could cause our actual results to differ materially include the factors that we describe under the caption Risk Factors in our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the fiscal year ended January 29, 2011, which is incorporated by reference. These factors, risks and uncertainties include, but are not limited to, the following:

changes in consumer spending and general economic conditions;

our ability to identify and respond to new and changing fashion trends, customer preferences and other related factors;

fluctuations in our sales and results of operations on a seasonal basis and due to a variety of other factors;

increased competition from other retailers;

the success of the malls and shopping centers in which our stores are located;

our dependence upon independent third parties to manufacture all of our merchandise;

the availability constraints and price volatility of raw materials used to manufacture our products;

interruptions of the flow of our merchandise from international manufacturers causing disruptions in our supply chain;

shortages of inventory, delayed shipments to our online customers and harm to our reputation due to difficulties or shut-downs at our distribution facilities;

our reliance upon independent third-party transportation providers for substantially all of our product shipments;

our dependence upon key executive management;

our growth strategy, including our international expansion plan;

our dependence on a strong brand image;

our leasing substantial amounts of space;

the failure to find store employees who can effectively operate our stores;

our reliance on Limited Brands Inc. to provide us with certain key services for our business;

our reliance on information systems and any failure, inadequacy, interruption or security failure of those systems;

claims made against us resulting in litigation;

changes in laws and regulations applicable to our business;

Table of Contents

- our inability to protect our trademarks or other intellectual property rights;
- our substantial indebtedness and lease obligations;
- restrictions imposed by our indebtedness on our current and future operations;
- fluctuations in energy costs;
- changes in taxation requirements or the results of tax audits;
- impairment charges on long-lived assets;
- our failure to maintain adequate internal controls;
- potential conflicts of interest with our principal stockholder; and

substantial costs as a result of being a public company.

These factors should not be construed as exhaustive and should be read in conjunction with the other cautionary statements included in this prospectus, any applicable prospectus supplement and the documents incorporated by reference herein. These risks and uncertainties, as well as other risks of which we are not aware or which we currently do not believe to be material, may cause our actual future results to be materially different than those expressed in our forward-looking statements. We caution you not to place undue reliance on these forward-looking statements. We do not undertake any obligation to make any revisions to these forward-looking statements to reflect events or circumstances after the date made or to reflect the occurrence of unanticipated events, except as required by law, including the securities laws of the United States and rules and regulations of the SEC.

Table of Contents

OUR COMPANY

Express is a nationally recognized specialty apparel and accessory retailer offering both women's and men's merchandise. With over 30 years of experience offering a distinct combination of style and quality at an attractive value, we believe we are a core shopping destination for our customers and that we have developed strong brand awareness and credibility with them. We target an attractive and growing demographic of women and men between 20 and 30 years old. We offer our customers an edited assortment of fashionable apparel and accessories to address fashion needs across multiple aspects of their lifestyles, including work, casual, jeanswear and going-out occasions. Since we became a stand-alone company in 2007, we have completed numerous initiatives to strengthen our business, including consolidating separate women's and men's stores into combined dual-gender stores, re-designing our go-to-market strategy, and launching our e-commerce platform, each of which we believe has improved our operating profits and positioned us well for future growth and profitability.

RISK FACTORS

You should consider carefully all of the information set forth in this prospectus and the documents incorporated by reference herein, unless expressly provided otherwise, and, in particular, the risk factors described in our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended January 29, 2011, as updated by our Quarterly reports on Form 10-Q, Current Reports on Form 8-K and other filings we make with the SEC. The risks described in any document incorporated by reference herein are not the only ones we face, but are considered to be the most material. There may be other unknown or unpredictable economic, business, competitive, regulatory or other factors that could have material adverse effects on our future results. Past financial performance may not be a reliable indicator of future performance and historical trends should not be used to anticipate results or trends in future periods.

USE OF PROCEEDS

We will not receive any proceeds from the sale of shares of common stock offered by the selling stockholders.

Table of Contents

DESCRIPTION OF CAPITAL STOCK

The following summary is qualified in its entirety by the provisions of our certificate of incorporation and bylaws, which are filed as exhibits to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part, and to the applicable provisions of the Delaware General Corporation Law (the DGCL).

Authorized Capitalization

Our authorized capital stock consists of 500.0 million shares of common stock, par value \$0.01 per share, and 10.0 million shares of preferred stock, par value \$0.01 per share.

Common Stock

Voting Rights

Each share of common stock entitles the holder to one vote with respect to each matter presented to our stockholders on which the holders of common stock are entitled to vote. Subject to any rights that may be applicable to any then outstanding preferred stock, our common stock votes as a single class on all matters relating to the election and removal of directors on our board of directors and as provided by law. Holders of our common stock will not have cumulative voting rights. Except in respect of matters relating to the election and removal of directors on our board of directors and as otherwise provided in our certificate of incorporation or required by law, all matters to be voted on by our stockholders must be approved by a majority of the shares present in person or by proxy at the meeting and entitled to vote on the subject matter. In the case of election of directors, all matters to be voted on by our stockholders must be approved by a plurality of the votes entitled to be cast by all shares of common stock.

Dividend Rights

Subject to preferences that may be applicable to any then outstanding preferred stock, the holders of our outstanding shares of common stock are entitled to receive dividends, if any, as may be declared from time to time by our board of directors out of legally available funds. Because we are a holding company, our ability to pay dividends on our common stock is limited by restrictions on the ability of our subsidiaries to pay dividends or make distributions to us, including restrictions under the terms of the agreements governing our indebtedness.

Liquidation Rights

In the event of any voluntary or involuntary liquidation, dissolution or winding up of our affairs, holders of our common stock would be entitled to share ratably in our assets that are legally available for distribution to stockholders after payment of our debts and other liabilities. If we have any preferred stock outstanding at such time, holders of the preferred stock may be entitled to distribution and/or liquidation preferences. In either such case, we must pay the applicable distribution to the holders of our preferred stock before we may pay distributions to the holders of our common stock.

Other Rights

Our stockholders have no preemptive, conversion or other rights to subscribe for additional shares. All outstanding shares are, and all shares offered by this prospectus will be, when sold, validly issued, fully paid and nonassessable. The rights, preferences and privileges of the holders of our common stock are subject to, and may be adversely affected by, the rights of the holders of shares of any series of our preferred stock that we may designate and issue in the future.

Listing

Our common stock is listed on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol EXPR.

Transfer Agent and Registrar

The transfer agent and registrar for our common stock is Computershare Trust Company, N.A.

Table of Contents

Preferred Stock

Our certificate of incorporation authorizes our board of directors to provide for the issuance of shares of preferred stock in one or more series and to fix the preferences, powers and relative, participating, optional or other special rights, and qualifications, limitations or restrictions thereof, including the dividend rate, conversion rights, voting rights, redemption rights and liquidation preference and to fix the number of shares to be included in any such series without any further vote or action by our stockholders. Any preferred stock so issued may rank senior to our common stock with respect to the payment of dividends or amounts upon liquidation, dissolution or winding up, or both. The issuance of preferred stock may have the effect of delaying, deferring or preventing a change in control of our company without further action by the stockholders and may adversely affect the voting and other rights of the holders of common stock. The issuance of preferred stock with voting and conversion rights may adversely affect the voting power of the holders of common stock, including the loss of voting control to others. At present, we have no plans to issue any preferred stock.

Corporate Opportunity

As permitted under the DGCL, in our certificate of incorporation, we renounce any interest or expectancy in, or any offer of an opportunity to participate in, specified business opportunities that are presented to us or one or more of our officers, directors or stockholders. In recognition that directors, officers and/or employees of Golden Gate may serve as directors and/or officers of ours, and Golden Gate and its affiliates, not including us (the Golden Gate Entities), may engage in similar activities or lines of business that we do, our certificate of incorporation provides for the allocation of certain corporate opportunities between us and the Golden Gate Entities. Specifically, none of the Golden Gate Entities have any duty to refrain from engaging directly or indirectly in the same or similar business activities or lines of business that we do. In the event that a director or officer of Golden Gate who is also a director or officer of ours acquires knowledge of a potential transaction or matter which may be a corporate opportunity for any of the Golden Gate Entities and us, we will not have any expectancy in such corporate opportunity, and the director or officer will not have any duty to present such corporate opportunity to us and may pursue or acquire such corporate opportunity for itself or direct such opportunity to another person. A corporate opportunity that an officer or director of ours who is also a director or officer of any of the Golden Gate Entities acquires knowledge of will not belong to us unless the corporate opportunity at issue is expressly offered in writing to such person solely in his or her capacity as a director or officer of ours. In addition, even if a business opportunity is presented to an officer or director of any of the Golden Gate Entities in his or her capacity as an officer or director of ours, the following corporate opportunities will not belong to us: (1) those we are not financially able, contractually permitted or legally able to undertake; (2) those not in our line of business; (3) those of no practical advantage to us; and (4) those in which we have no interest or reasonable expectancy. Except with respect to our directors and/or officers who are also directors and/or officers of any of the Golden Gate Entities, the corporate opportunity doctrine applies as construed pursuant to applicable Delaware laws, without limitation.

Antitakeover Effects of Delaware Law and Our Certificate of Incorporation and Bylaws

Our certificate of incorporation and bylaws also contain provisions that may delay, defer or discourage another party from acquiring control of us. We expect that these provisions, which are summarized below, will discourage coercive takeover practices or inadequate takeover bids. These provisions are also designed to encourage persons seeking to acquire control of us to first negotiate with our board of directors, which we believe may result in an improvement of the terms of any such acquisition in favor of our stockholders. However, they also give our board of directors the power to discourage acquisitions that some stockholders may favor.

Undesignated Preferred Stock

The ability to authorize undesignated preferred stock will make it possible for our board of directors to issue preferred stock with super voting, special approval, dividend or other rights or preferences on a discriminatory basis that could impede the success of any attempt to acquire us. These and other provisions may have the effect of deferring, delaying or discouraging hostile takeovers, or changes in control or management of our company.

Table of Contents

Classified Board of Directors

Our certificate of incorporation provides that our board of directors will be divided into three classes, with each class serving three-year staggered terms. In addition, our certificate of incorporation provides that directors may only be removed from the board of directors with cause and by an affirmative vote of 66 ²/₃% of our common stock. These provisions may have the effect of deferring, delaying or discouraging hostile takeovers, or changes in control or management of our company.

Requirements for Advance Notification of Stockholder Meetings, Nominations and Proposals

Our certificate of incorporation provides that special meetings of the stockholders may be called only by a resolution adopted by the affirmative vote of the majority of the directors then in office. Our bylaws prohibit the conduct of any business at a special meeting other than as specified in the notice for such meeting. In addition, any stockholder who wishes to bring business before an annual meeting or nominate directors must comply with the requirements set forth in our bylaws. These provisions may have the effect of deferring, delaying or discouraging hostile takeovers, or changes in control or management of our company.

Stockholder Action by Written Consent

Pursuant to Section 228 of the DGCL, any action required to be taken at any annual or special meeting of the stockholders may be taken without a meeting, without prior notice and without a vote if a consent or consents in writing, setting forth the action so taken, is signed by the holders of outstanding stock having not less than the minimum number of votes that would be necessary to authorize or take such action at a meeting at which all shares of stock entitled to vote thereon were present and voted, unless the company's certificate of incorporation provides otherwise. Our certificate of incorporation provides that any action required or permitted to be taken by our stockholders may be effected at a duly called annual or special meeting of our stockholders and may not be effected by consent in writing by such stockholders.

Business Combinations with Interested Stockholders

We have elected in our certificate of incorporation not to be subject to Section 203 of the DGCL, an antitakeover law. In general, Section 203 prohibits a publicly held Delaware corporation from engaging in a business combination, such as a merger, with a person or group owning 15% or more of the corporation's voting stock for a period of three years following the date the person became an interested stockholder, unless (with certain exceptions) the business combination or the transaction in which the person became an interested stockholder is approved in a prescribed manner. Accordingly, we are not subject to any antitakeover effects of Section 203. However, our certificate of incorporation contains provisions that have the same effect as Section 203, except that they provide that Golden Gate and any persons to whom Golden Gate sells their common stock will be deemed to have been approved by our board of directors, and thereby not subject to the restrictions set forth in Section 203.

Amendments

Any amendments to the foregoing provisions of our certificate of incorporation (except related to preferred stock) and any amendments to our bylaws require the affirmative vote of at least 66 ²/₃% of the voting power of all shares of our common stock then outstanding.

Table of Contents

SELLING STOCKHOLDERS

Information about selling stockholders, if any, including their identities and the common stock to be registered on their behalf, will be set forth in a prospectus supplement, in a post-effective amendment or in filings we make with the SEC under the Exchange Act that are incorporated by reference into this prospectus.

Table of Contents

LEGAL MATTERS

The validity of the common stock offered hereby will be passed upon for us by Kirkland & Ellis LLP, Chicago, Illinois. Certain partners of Kirkland & Ellis LLP are members of a limited partnership that is an investor in one or more investment funds affiliated with Golden Gate. Kirkland & Ellis LLP represents entities affiliated with Golden Gate in connection with legal matters.

EXPERTS

The financial statements incorporated in this Prospectus by reference to the Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended January 29, 2011 have been so incorporated in reliance on the report of PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, an independent registered public accounting firm, given on the authority of said firm as experts in auditing and accounting.

Table of Contents

16,000,000 Shares

Express, Inc.

Common Stock

PROSPECTUS SUPPLEMENT

BofA Merrill Lynch

Barclays Capital

Morgan Stanley

Piper Jaffray

UBS Investment Bank

Stephens Inc.

Stifel Nicolaus Weisel

, 2011