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Giant Food to close Frederick location

82 employees affected; West Patrick Street site was 'underperforming'

by Chris Huntemann | Staff Writer

Giant Food of Landover, one of the region's top grocers, announced Wednesday that it will close its store in the Westridge Square Center on West Patrick Street in Frederick on May 12.

The roughly 55,000-square-foot store opened in 1986, said company spokesman Jamie Miller. The decision to close the store was a "business decision — the store had been underperforming for quite some time," he said.

Giant, owned by Royal Ahold of the Netherlands, has 82 full- and part-time employees at the store; they will be given the opportunity to transfer to other Giant locations, company officials said in a statement.

Giant has another Frederick location at 1700 Kingfisher Drive, which is undergoing a renovation that is running in the "millions" of dollars, Miller said, declining to disclose specific figures.

Among the new amenities at the Kingfisher Drive location will be new shelves and lights, plus a new section for natural and organic foods, according to Miller.

Giant also plans to close a standalone pharmacy in Washington, D.C., next month and the company constantly reviews its stores' performance, Miller said.

"But we have no current announcements about the closing of any other stores," he said.

Other supermarkets such as Giant Eagle and Aldi are nearby on West Patrick Street.

Trent Rine, a commercial property manager with Hekemian & Co. in Frederick, which owns the Westridge Square Center, said in an email to The Gazette that his company is "disappointed to see Giant leave the center" and added that "no plans have been made yet" to fill the soon-to-be vacated space.

Richard G. Griffin, director of economic development for the City of Frederick, said Thursday that "anytime a business closes in the city, we're concerned and want to find out the root cause."

Griffin acknowledged Giant's claim that the Westridge Square Center store was underperforming but noted that a 2007 retail study by city officials found that groceries was one of the few areas that was close to fully saturated, which meant that money being spent on groceries in Frederick was spent at local stores.

"There is a lot of competition in that sector," Griffin said. "I don't think it's a reflection of the Golden Mile."

City officials have held workshops and discussions recently on how to redevelop the Golden Mile, and Griffin doesn't expect the closing of the Giant store to affect those plans.

"There's no shopping center that doesn't have a tenant periodically leave a space," Griffin said.

Laurie M. Boyer, executive director of the Frederick County Office of Economic Development, said it

was "unfortunate to hear" about the store's closing.

"We hate to see that happening — it's a little surprising with the residential base in that area," she said.

"We're sorry to see that and we're hopeful that we can get another user in that space and try to help fill any vacancies that show up in the Golden Mile," Boyer said.

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