

Residents unhappy with closing of 2 Krogers

By Joanne Malazawski
staff writer

Jamestown Apartments resident Elva Vogel will have to depend on friends for her grocery shopping.

Eighty-year-old Mary Cunco moved to the same apartment complex on Grand River, east of Halsted, because she could walk to the Kroger supermarket next door in the Grand River-Halsted shopping center.

Three-year Jamestown resident Lester London is concerned for his friends in the complex who don't, or can't drive, now that their longtime next door Kroger has closed.

"They closed two stores to open one," London said. "There are a lot of older people here — Jamestown, Chatham Hills and Independence Green (apartments) — who don't drive. They have no where to shop. How they will get groceries, I don't know."

The Jamestown residents are upset because the Kroger Co. closed their longtime supermarket Saturday on Grand River to open a new 43,000 square-foot supermarket several miles away in the Halsted Village Shopping Center, 37550 12 Mile, at Halsted. The new store opened Sunday.

But the Jamestown residents aren't alone. Homeowners in the 13 Mile-Orchard Lake Road area are equally upset with the closure of their nearby Kroger store on the corner of 13 Mile and Orchard Lake.

GREAT SCOTT used to be their grocery store on that corner until the Kroger Co. bought the supermarket chain earlier this year and reopened it as a Kroger's.

"I was happy to see Kroger's go in there," said 10-year Westbrooke subdivision resident Jan Ricco. "It was more convenient. Now, there's a lot more traffic to get to 14 Mile and Farmington (another Kroger store) or 12 Mile and Halsted (the new store)."

Her neighbor Margaret Prucha agrees. "We're upset. I really think it's crappy what they've done to the neighborhood. This leaves us without a store in the area."

Residents in both areas of Farmington Hills feel left in the lurch.

But what really bugs them is the talk that the Kroger Co., which holds

leases on the two former stores, won't sell their leases so other stores, particularly grocery stores, can come in.

"I showed the store I was unhappy," Vogel said. "They still have a lease and they won't release it because they don't want competition."

But Kroger spokesman Mike Layne denies the talk. "We have no control over what goes in there. We don't know what it will be. Several people have looked at the buildings."

Representatives of the Standard Construction Co., which owns Jamestown Apartments and the Grand River-Halsted shopping center, could not be reached to comment on the possibilities of another grocery store taking the lease.

"They (Standard Construction) said they were willing to buy the lease back," Jamestown resident London said. "Kroger will not sell it."

CUNEO OF Jamestown Apartments considered a boycott and another resident tried a petition. "She didn't get anywhere with it," Cunco said.

Layne said he has received some complaints from Farmington Hills residents concerned about the store closings.

"It's a 1-2 mile drive to the new store. People are creatures of habit. Some people may not be as close (to the stores). But they will be able to shop in a market that offers more."

The new Kroger is considered a "state-of-the-art" supermarket. "It is a very well thought-out effort to provide more selection and more service. If we didn't do this, we would have been left behind. We feel this is a real growth area."

That's why the 12 Mile-Halsted site was chosen. It's in the western area of Farmington Hills that continues to grow and can draw shoppers from developing Novi and other nearby growth communities, Layne confirmed.

In the highly competitive food market industry, Layne said, supermarket companies must open larger, more full-service — such as banking services, gourmet products, prescription — stores. The new Kroger, he added, employs more than 250 people, including employees from the closed stores.



photos by SHARON LAMIEUX/staff photographer

The Kroger Co. opened its new 43,000 square-foot "state-of-the-art" supermarket Sunday in the Halsted Village Shopping Center.

ter at 12 Mile and Halsted roads in Farmington Hills. Two other Farmington Hills Kroger stores were closed.

"This was not to take away from people," Layne said, referring to customers who feel abandoned. "We value every customer. We opened the new store Sunday. We were mobbed. Generally, we're getting favorable responses."

BUT THAT isn't making some residents feel any better.

"We should have complained a long time ago. They had a big sign in the store they were closing," said Westbrooke resident Ricco.

"The 13 Mile-Orchard Lake store was good for people who were coming off the expressway (I-96) and needed to shop on their way home. I know a lot of people are unhappy," Ricco said.

Jamestown resident Vogel is at least thankful there's a drug store in the Grand River-Halsted shopping center. "At least I can get milk and bread."

Her neighbor Virginia Lavigne is sure of one thing: "I won't be shopping at Kroger's. As far as I'm concerned, they are off my list."



Farmington Hills resident Joyce Hepke and her son Alex walk to their car with a basketful of groceries from the new Kroger supermarket at

12 Mile and Halsted. Hepke said she drove past the new store Sunday, the day it opened, and the parking lot was full.

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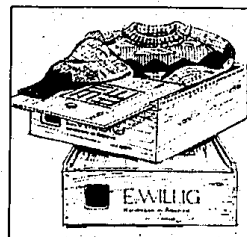
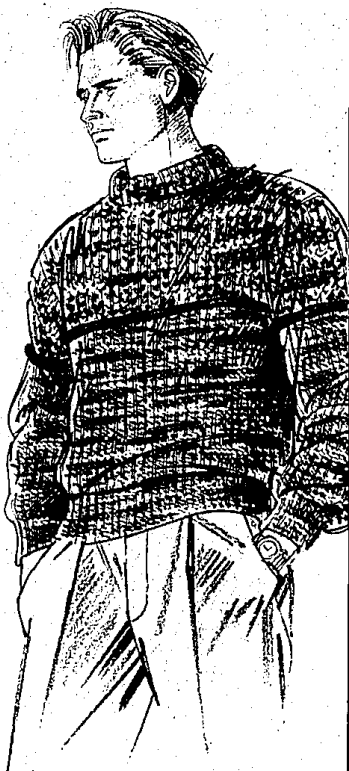
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