

Kroger from page 11A

and into the existing mall and displace several businesses or remodel the inside of the store to add space.

Kroger expects to make a decision in the next two months, said Prueter. But in the meantime, the store has not renewed the leases of several stores that have either already moved or will move by June 30, when their lease expires.

"Many of the stores had left because they weren't doing well," Prueter said. "We've been working with the others to move them elsewhere in the mall or to another location."

But that doesn't do Johnston much good. He had worked with Kroger to help them get the zoning variances that would have allowed them to build into the parking lot.

He thought that his lease would be renewed and sold his barbershop, the Men's Quarters, to a couple contingent on the new lease. Now he and they are stuck.

"I went ahead and sold," he said. "Then I found out Jan. 10 that the lease would not be extended."

Like it or not, most of the stores have accepted their fate.

"They've pretty much thrown in the towel," Johnston said.

"I have no choice," said Sam Jaghab, owner of Ardmore Shoe Repair, who was in the process of moving to a location on Grand River and Nine Mile. "I don't know how it will go there. It's a shot in the dark."

Bill Seaki, owner of Eyes Right, said he has some new locations in

mind and will decide where to move soon.

When rumors of a possible expansion into the mall surfaced in late 1992, Ken Sparlock, vice president of merchandising for The Kroger Company, had assured that the store would not displace tenants.

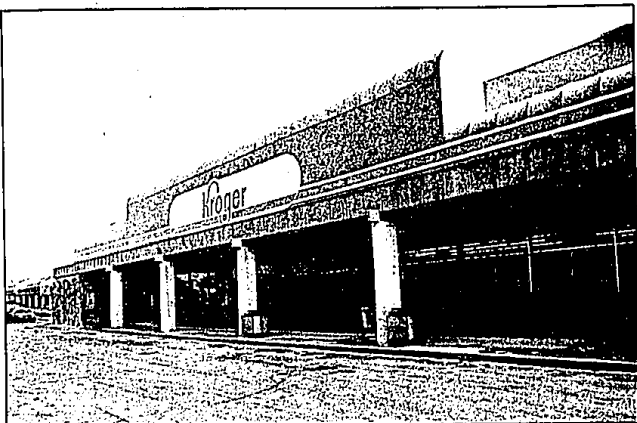
Prueter said that when that plan proved too costly and several of the tenants had already left the mall, the idea of expanding within it became a possibility. But if it were to expand inside the mall, it could not renew the existing leases.

"At this point I don't know (about expanding within the mall)," Prueter said. "Nothing has been decided."

But for most mall tenants, it doesn't matter since their leases are up.

Johnston said he will consider suing Kroger, but admitted that could be a struggle.

"They can play the waiting game," he said.



SHARON LEMIEUX/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

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