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It all officially started in 1962 with the opening of the first Kmart store in Garden City.

But its ancestry traces back 102 years to the dime store concept of the S.S. Kresge Co. in Detroit. Descendants like Kmart Super Centers with one-stop shopping, including clothing, housewares, garden supplies and groceries have followed over the years.

Now the retail giant, headquartered in Troy, totters financially, having filed for bankruptcy and protection from creditors while attempting to reorganize and survive.

"We're looking at possibly closing stores, but locations haven't been decided yet," said Stephen Pagnani, media relations manager for Kmart. "We're formulating a plan and expect to make and announce decisions soon."

Arrangements have been made to fund employee salaries and benefits with the bankruptcy filing, Pagnani added.

Analysts here differ on Kmart's future.

Bankruptcy doesn't mean certain death with massive job losses and vacant buildings, said Frederick Marx, partner and retail analyst with Marx Layne in Farmington Hills.

"A lot of retailers, Macy's, Bloomingdale's and Toys-R-Us, have gone through the process and come out successful," Marx said. "Without question, I think Kmart will go forward."

And Marx suspects metro Detroiters, whom he said often support the underdog, will rally to this longtime, hometown business.

Band to host Valentine dinner dance

The annual Valentine Dinner Dance, sponsored by the Farmington Community Band, will be held Friday, Feb. 8, at Glen Oaks Country Club in Farmington Hills.

The evening begins at 6:30 p.m. with a cash bar cocktail hour followed by a buffet dinner at 7:30 p.m. After dinner, the FCB Dance Band will play until midnight for guests to listen and dance to.

Ticket prices are \$42 per person for dinner and dancing, with special pricing available if purchased prior to Jan. 18. Tables of eight may also be reserved. Last year's dance was a sell-out, so early reservations are suggested.

To purchase tickets or obtain additional information, call (734) 261-2202 or (248) 489-3412 or visit the FCB web site at www.fcbbmusic.org.

Glen Oaks Country Club is located on 13 Mile between Middlebelt and Orchard Lake in Farmington Hills.

in trouble.

"People here understand how important Kmart is in this community and I think they will support them more," Marx said. "I see an outpouring of customers. Even customers who've abandoned the company for whatever reason, I think, will come back and give Kmart another chance."

Marx doesn't see many store closings or job losses here with bankruptcy.

"They have outstanding real estate ... strategic locations ... in metro Detroit," Marx said. "That's their ace in the deck. By and large, their stores in metro Detroit are among their best stores."

And if Kmart stores were to close here, they would be highly

desirable and probably not vacant for long, Marx added. "All are on one floor and there's lots of parking."

James V. McTevia, chairman of McTevia & Associates, a firm that specializes in bankruptcies and business turnarounds, has a less optimistic view of Kmart's future.

"There's no doubt in my mind they will come out of Chapter 11 (bankruptcy) ... but in the next five, 10 or 15 years, there won't be a Kmart," he said.

McTevia's assessment for the short term: "A number of stores will have to be closed, downsized, a lot of people will lose jobs." Both here and around the country, he added.

Also, the publicly-owned compa-

ny has lost the confidence of its investors, who have seen the value of their stock plummet, McTevia said.

"What a lot of people can't understand is everything in the world has a lifespan," McTevia said. "No one lives forever. No company lives forever."

In essence, what bankruptcy gives Kmart is time, McTevia said. "Kmart has approximately 500 stores that are

unprofitable and it (bankruptcy) gives Kmart the opportunity to get out of every one of those leases."

"It cleans up the balance sheet and gives the opportunity to pay creditors less than 100 cents on the dollar," he added.

What will it take for Kmart to survive?

"They probably will have to do some retrenching," Marx said. "Stores have to have stock they

advertise and staff to get people through lines quickly. It's back to basics."

"Certainly in terms of providing absolutely the best customer service is essential and that's something every associate can do," said Tom Scott, spokesman for the Michigan Retailers Association.

"Go the extra mile to make sure the shopping experience is pleasant and worthwhile," he added. "Not getting a defeatist attitude."

Livonia, Plymouth, Canton, Farmington, Westland and Garden City all have Kmart stores within their boundaries. Two others, in Detroit and Southfield, are just outside Redford.



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