



The Patriot-News

GROCERY STORE OPENING

Shopping in the city

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BY DAN MILLER

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Gloria Watson is pretty happy about the Eagle Supermarket that just opened a few blocks from her home in uptown Harrisburg.

The store is clean and the aisles are wide and bright. There's a variety of fresh meats, produce and deli items that Watson said she can't find in smaller stores within walking distance.

"It's a beautiful store," she said. "We need something like this in the neighborhood."

The store's opening Friday was announced with a sign posted in one of the front windows, along the 2300 block of North Third Street.

It isn't always easy to lure supermarkets into a city. Philadelphia and New York, among others, have struggled to attract grocery stores, according to the Food Trust, a nonprofit group.

City officials said they are happy to see a new supermarket in Harrisburg.

"The need for a high-quality supermarket in the midtown and uptown areas is significant and is a welcome addition to the area," said Matthew Coulter, a spokesman for the city. "We are delighted by the opening of the new store and believe the owners will have great success in that region of the city."

Store owner In Suk Pak called it a "soft" opening before everything is 100 percent complete. Power tools could be heard whirring in the back.

Pak has more features to add, including a seafood counter and Western Union. He plans to have all this done in time for the grand opening within a month. The store will have about 30 employees by then, Pak said.

Emerald Grocery used to operate at the same location. It closed two years ago, and neighbors said the new store is much nicer.

Gina Clark, who lives around the corner on Seneca Street, said the old store had no heat. The cashiers had to wear coats to stay warm in the winter. The ceiling leaked so badly that shoppers had to walk around buckets on the floor.

"It's 100 percent better," Clark said.

Pak spent \$2 million to buy the property and has done extensive renovations. He installed a drop ceiling and heating and cooling, added a spacious entrance area and redid 32,000 square feet of off-street parking.

The store has 18,000 square feet and carries about 30,000 items.

The store carries Shurfine products but is independently owned, Pak said. Robesonia-based Shurfine Markets is a group of locally owned independent supermarket retailers throughout central Pennsylvania and northern Maryland.

Pak said PeoplesBank provided most financing for the project. He also obtained a \$175,000 grant from

TRF, a Philadelphia fund specializing in neighborhood revitalization.

One TRF program, the Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative, has committed \$41.8 million in grants and loans to 58 stores in underserved communities statewide as of July, according to TRF's Web site.

This isn't the first time Pak has invested in a grocery store in an underserved part of the city. He and his wife, Young Pak, were the catalyst for Mount Pleasant Plaza, a \$2 million project at 13th and Derry streets in Allison Hill.

In 2002, the Paks received the Small Business Recognition award from the Community Action Commission for their work on that project.

"He is an extremely hardworking businessman, both he and his wife," said Linda Figueroa, the commission's executive director. "They work around the clock."

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