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ShopRite Poised to Expand in Maryland with Superfresh Purchases

The grocery chain plans to buy 10 Superfresh stores.

By [Bruce Vail](#) May 21, 2011

Photo Credit [Rachel Roman](#)



The ShopRite grocery chain signaled a major move into Maryland this week when it emerged as the winning bidder to buy 10 food stores—including supermarkets in [Parkville](#), [Lutherville](#) and [North Baltimore](#)—being sold off by the bankrupt owners of Superfresh.

Superfresh stores in [Perry Hall](#), [Towson](#), [Arbutus](#), Elkridge, Frederick and Glen Burnie had no winning bidder in the process.

[ShopRite](#) spokeswoman Santina Stankevich said it was too early for the New Jersey-based company to comment directly on its plans, but that ShopRite “is always interested in expansion opportunities, and Maryland is certainly an area that is interesting.” ShopRite currently operates eight stores in Maryland, according to its website.

A clearer signal came from Superfresh’s parent company, [Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Co.](#), or A&P.

A&P spokesman Scot Hoffman said that a joint venture involving ShopRite was the winning bidder this week in an auction sale of nine stores in Maryland and one store in Washington, D.C.

Among the stores to be purchased are the existing Superfresh locations in Parkville, Lutherville and North Baltimore (41st St. and Hickory), Hoffman said.

Another result of the auction was a winning bid by Supervalu, parent company of Shoppers Food & Pharmacy, to purchase the Superfresh store in Ellicott City, according to Hoffman.

All of these sales are subject to the approval of a federal bankruptcy court in White Plains, NY, where A&P filed a Chapter 11 reorganization petition in late 2010, Hoffman said. A&P expects to submit the recent auction sales for approval at a hearing scheduled for June 14, he said.

Still undecided are the fates of a number of other Maryland Superfresh stores that were offered for sale in the auction, but where no winning bidder was identified by A&P. Included among those are Superfresh stores in Arbutus, Elkridge, Frederick, Glen Burnie, Perry Hall, Towson and others.

Hoffman said he was unable to comment on the disposition of those individual stores but confirmed that employees there have been notified that their jobs may be eliminated as early as July 6.

In all, some 1,477 Maryland Superfresh workers have been notified that their jobs will be eliminated, added spokesman Mike Raia of the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation. The state labor department is acting to assist those workers in transitioning to new employment, Raia said.

The transition of workers from Superfresh to ShopRite should be made easier because both chains have a long association with the United Food & Commercial Workers union, said Robert Gorland, vice president of the consulting firm Matthew P. Casey & Associates.

"I don't have any direct knowledge of the arrangements in this case, but it is pretty common that when a unionized company takes over another unionized company, then there are protections in place for the workers' wages and benefits," Gorland said.

UFCW Local 27 president George Murphy Jr. was not immediately available for comment on the proposed sale to ShopRite, or Supervalu/Shoppers Food.

In an interview with Patch earlier this month, Murphy said one of his goals was to assist union-contracted grocery companies in acquiring Superfresh stores as a way of avoiding the loss of union jobs.