

Shoppers Food & Pharmacy Sets Fast Conversion Schedule for Ellicott City Superfresh Site

The re-opening scheduled for July 17; pharmacy will remain open during conversion,

By [Bruce Vail](#) | [Email the author](#) | June 21, 2011

Officials of the Shoppers Food & Pharmacy chain announced Tuesday that they had finalized purchase of the Ellicott City Superfresh site and will re-open the store under new management on July 17.

The main grocery store is expected to be closed for conversion work for about 10 days, but the pharmacy will remain open during that time to insure customers have uninterrupted access to needed medications, the company announced.

“We are excited to become part of the Ellicott City community. We’re looking forward to serving our new neighbors and friends with a special local focus that can come only from a neighborhood grocer,” stated Tim Lowe, president of Bowie-based Shoppe



Superfresh – a unit of the regional Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Co, or A&P, grocery chain – confirmed last week that the Ellicott City store and most other Superfresh locations in Maryland will close by mid July.

The closings by A&P are part of a reorganization and downsizing plan by the bankrupt company. A&P, which operates more than 300 stores in the mid-Atlantic region, entered bankruptcy court in late 2010, citing heavy debts and high labor costs.

Since then, A&P has been closing or selling stores in several states, including the closings of 25 Superfresh markets in Maryland, Delaware and the District of Columbia.

Precisely 83 employees at the Ellicott City store received notices in early May that their jobs would be terminated by Superfresh, according to the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (DLLR).

The Ellicott City workers are among 1,477 Superfresh employees statewide that had been notified that their jobs are to be eliminated, according to DLLR spokesman Mike Raia.

Shoppers Food, however, has said that it will attempt to employ as many of the displaced Ellicott City workers as possible,

“The company also plans to offer employment opportunities to existing Superfresh employees based on terms and conditions that Shoppers established,” according to a statement from Shoppers.

“The grocer has a working relationship with the union that represents the existing employees and has been in contact with the local to determine the next steps in the event recognition is legally required,” the company stated.

The union representing the employees at Superfresh is United Food & Commercial Workers Local 27, based in Towson. Local 27 has collective bargaining agreements with many of the leading grocery chains in Maryland, including Superfresh, Giant Foods, Safeway, Shoppers Food, and others.

One food retailing expert commented that Shoppers Food is entering a very competitive market.

“They will have to be very service oriented and price competitive due to local competition from Giant, Safeway and Mars, and also from a big international food store right across Route 40,” said Robert Gorland, vice president of consulting firm Matthew P. Casey & Associates.

“There is also a WalMart nearby that is going to provide competition for a lot of food items and in the pharmacy department,” Gorland said.

Shoppers Food & Pharmacy currently operates 55 stores in Maryland and northern Virginia. It is a subsidiary of Minneapolis-based Supervalu Inc., one of the largest owners of grocery chains nationwide.