

More Giant steps into Bucks County

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More Giant steps into Bucks County By Crissa Shoemaker DeBree, staff writer

BUSINESS - Giant Food Stores continued its expansion in Bucks County last week, opening in a former Genuardi's store on Street Road in Lower Southampton.

By the end of the month, the western Pennsylvania-based chain will have 18 stores in Bucks County. Its newest, on Easton Road in Warrington, opens March 30. Giant has more than a dozen stores in Montgomery County, as well, where expansion plans include building a gas station near its superstore in Upper Moreland.

"We're always looking for (growth) opportunities," said Giant spokesman Christopher Brand. "Our Bucks County customers are very good to us."

Giant has long looked at the Philadelphia suburbs - and particularly Bucks County - as growth areas, said Robert Gorland. He's vice president of Matthew P. Casey & Associates, a consultancy that specializes in supermarket real estate research.

"It's been an ongoing situation, going back over 20 years," Gorland said. "Some of the sites are just becoming available."

Northampton, for instance, has been a target for quite some time, Gorland said. Giant's proposal to build a new store at the former Davis Pontiac site in the Richboro section has met fierce resistance from residents who are concerned the new store will drive away business from Superfresh and Shop n Bag, longtime stores that are less than a half mile away.

Gorland said Giant is one of the strongest conventional supermarket chains in the Greater Philadelphia area, where they've found success competing through low prices and strong promotions. ShopRite and Redners are also strong. Other players, like Acme, Genuardi's, Superfresh and Pathmark have struggled, he said.

The Warrington and Lower Southampton stores were both purchased from Genuardi's.

In Upper Moreland, the proposed gas station would include a 1,000-square-foot kiosk that carries convenience food items, Brand said. That's similar to, but separate from, Giant's new To Go convenience stores, which focus on fresh take-home meal choices, meats, produce and frozen items. The pilot store opened two years ago in Manheim Township, Lancaster County. The second, also in Lancaster, will open next month. Brand said the concept may expand elsewhere, depending on how they're received by customers.

"We're always looking for opportunities," Brand said. "But as part of our growth strategy, we are interested in responding to the feedback from our customers. We are certainly always aggressive about our plans for growing. That is the way we approach things."

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Matt Stanley Samantha Engel(left) bags groceries for Michele McAleer(center) of Feasterville as cashier Dominique Riddick rings up the sale at the Giant supermarket on Bustleton Pike in Feasterville after its grand opening on Wednesday. - Matt Stanley/Staff Photographer