

BrickPatch

No Plans For Upscale Supermarkets to Come to Brick

Experts say former Foodtown site not suitable; too much local competition

By [Joseph Hyer](#) | May 17, 2011

Grocery stores: Everybody needs them, but yet, it seems like competition to break into the Brick market is very low.

The former site of the Route 70 Foodtown sat vacant for nearly a decade before coming down in September 2009. Since then, no grocery chains have publicly expressed interest in the site.

Matt Casey of Matthew P. Casey & Associates, a Clark-based consulting firm, studies the local market, offering advice to retailers in the pharmacy and supermarket industries, and speculates that most grocers will likely avoid the site altogether.

"That's such a tough intersection. There are some real accessibility and traffic issues right there. There's a really bad ingress/egress situation there, and that's a huge factor," he told Brick Patch. "The competitors have gotten a lot stronger since the Foodtown closed, so it'd be tough to decide to enter that site again where Foodtown already failed."

Brick is home to a Shoprite, A&P, Pathmark, Stop & Shop, as well as a Costco Wholesale. Yet the town lacks high-end grocers like Whole Foods, Trader Joe's and Wegman's.

Whole Foods spokesman Michael Sinatra said his company gets requests for new stores all the time, but Brick may not be on their radar just yet.

"We grow slowly. In the New Jersey-New York-Connecticut area we only open two to four stores a year, but we are coming further south slowly," he said. "We are always accepting location requests, but we try to really customize our stores to the community. Our new Marlboro store came partially as a result of a lot of customer requests."

Wegman's is in a similar position, according to spokeswoman Jo Natale.

"We are not currently planning to open a store in Brick, NJ, and I'm not aware that we have ever considered a site there," she wrote in an email. "We build just two or three new stores each year. The number of locations/sites we



In this May 3, 2011 photo, shoppers depart a Whole Foods Market store location in Providence, R.I. Whole Foods Market Inc. reports quarterly financial earnings Wednesday, May 4, 2011, after the market close.

AP Photo/Steven Senne

explore is limited by our measured pace of growth."

But why won't these big name grocers come to Brick? Casey believes it is because big chain grocers have little incentive to open new stores in town.

"There's already strong competitors in the community. Shoprite, Costco and Stop & Shop really have a lock on the share of the grocery dollars in town, and there's only so much to go around," he said.

And a lack of real estate could play huge a role in their decisions according to Casey.

"There really isn't an A-list location left for a retailer to explore. Sure there are a lot of middle-block locations left, but you need to be at an A-list intersection in this market because of the strong competition. Frankly, there just aren't any of those locations left," he said.

As for the current market of stores, one is left to wonder about Brick's A&P and Pathmark as the company restructures from bankruptcy issues. A&P filed for bankruptcy protection late last year. The company cited assets of \$2.5 billion and debts totaling \$3.2 billion, and closed Barnegat's A&P store last month.

Spokesman Eric Andrus wrote in an email that the company will continue to analyze their store portfolio, but no decisions have been made.

"The Brick Pathmark will continue to operate normally with fully stocked shelves and the excellent service A&P customers expect," he wrote.

Casey said the Brick Pathmark store should remain open for at least a few more years.

"In 2006 it was one of the top 10 highest grossing stores for the entire chain. It has fallen a bit, but it still has to be profitable," he said.