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Business

Zoning change sought for supermarket in West Vincent

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By Eric S. Smith, Journal Register News Service

WEST VINCENT — A developer urged township supervisors Monday for a zoning change to allow for a 55,000-square-foot supermarket in a new shopping center.

Current zoning allows for a 15,000-square-foot building in the proposed Promenade at Chester Springs off Route 100 and Birchrun Road.

Ludwig's Square Limited Partnership said Monday it wants a large grocery store to be the shopping center's cornerstone. The developers said attracting tenants would be at a standstill unless the zoning is changed to allow a large supermarket, which in turn will attract other businesses to the Promenade.

Supermarket feasibility consultant Bob Gorland also told township officials that major grocery chains are no longer building 15,000-square-foot, or even 30,000-square-foot, supermarkets.

"No potential supermarket is considering anything less than 55,000 square feet," Gorland said.

The proposed development would include a supermarket as an anchor store at one end of the property and a series of other stores, including niche shops, along a streetscape.

"I know many people feel like a streetscape is a bad thing, but that's what we really want," said Supervisors' Vice Chairwoman Clare Quinn.

Gorland said 85 percent of a grocery store's business comes from its predetermined trade area. The trade area around West Vincent has 29,000 people but only one grocery, the Acme along Route 100 in Upper Uwchlan, and 10 other groceries just outside this trade area, he said.

Gorland said the average size of these 11 stores is 62,000 square feet and their average weekly sales are about \$370,000. He said a new store within this area could generate about \$1.4 million in annual sales.

Supervisors' Chairman Kenneth Miller noted the Hankin Group is also proposing a supermarket on a property across Birchrun Road from the Promenade.

The developers said that if the Hankin Group started construction first, they likely would not want the large grocery store.

Quinn said she has heard rumors that Giant would be the interested store, although it already has many area locations.

Gorland said Giant may want to take some of its own business from two other locations to have three strong stores in the area, but he said no company has signed on yet.

Quinn said a grocery store chain is an inappropriate tenant for that location and its design would prevent people from

easily walking to other stores in the development.

Quinn said she had interest in attracting a Trader Joe's to the property and spoke with someone at the niche grocery store company who said they plan to be building in the area again soon.

But Gorland said West Vincent lacks sufficient traffic to support what Trader Joe's typically seeks from its new locations.

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