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« DOWNTOWN GROCERY STORE to close after nearly 60 years

Safeway says goodbye

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A CUSTOMER WALKS BY the Safeway, 1122 11th Ave., on Wednesday in Greeley. Safeway officials announced they plan to close this location next month.

By SHARON DUNN
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After nearly 60 years in downtown Greeley, the Safeway grocery store will close its doors later this month, leaving a city-block hole in Greeley's core.

The store at 1122 11th Ave. will close June 21 and city officials already are looking to fill the gap.

While Safeway is wrapped up in a pending merger with Albertson's, company officials ultimately determined this particular store wasn't benefiting its portfolio — though they say the move had nothing to do with the merger.

"This was a difficult decision made after long and careful deliberation," Safeway spokeswoman Kris Staaf said in a prepared statement. "For more than a year we evaluated the store extensively and looked at options to improve its performance. Ultimately, our business analysis indicated that we needed to cease operations at that location."

Safeway officials informed employees of the move last week, promising to try to squeeze them into other Safeway stores. The downtown Safeway had 48 employees, however, which would be hard for any local grocery to absorb.

Greeley's downtown Safeway is one of the oldest stores in Greeley, opening in 1957. It predated Jerry's Market, 513 14th Ave., which came to Greeley in 1964, and Toddy's, which operated in Greeley for roughly 27 years before closing in 2004.

While the Safeway store often seemed to have long lines and steady business, the unorthodox move of closing the only major supermarket to serve downtown didn't surprise many public officials.

"They've done so little to update the store," said Becky Safarik, assistant city manager, who had been working with Safeway officials for years to spruce up the aging lot.

The company did in recent years resurface the parking lot, and talks in 2010 centered around a $2 million remodeling project but nothing came of it.

"They added a small pharmacy, but they haven't done anything to modernize the inventory," Safarik said. "So I'm not surprised. That was the very thing that got us talking with Safeway a few years ago. Having a neighborhood grocery store is critical to the health and well-being of the area."

> This was a difficult decision made after long and careful deliberation.
> — **KRIS STAAF,** Safeway spokeswoman

Safeway since has added a new store at Centerplace with more specialty offerings.

Pam Bricker, Greeley's downtown development director, said the writing was on the wall when active talks for redevelopment of the downtown store suddenly ended.

"There was some really great attempts made with city and the DDA, and boom, everything just sort of stopped. At that point in, it was a sign. If you don't invest in your property and keep up with times, it will eventually affect the sales and offerings you have," Bricker said. "I know a lot of people who shop there frequently, but it was more of a pick-up store and that's probably financially difficult."

Safeway is working on a merger with Albertson's grocery chain, which should be complete later this year. Both chains had been struggling financially.

"The decision is not related to the merger announcement," Staaf said. "It's something we looked at for a long time. These decisions are never easy. They take lot of deliberation and, ultimately, it was what we decided to do."

Safarik and Bricker already are reaching out to Safeway officials and touching base with interested parties who may look to fill the hole.

"It's a need in the community," Bricker said of the grocery, which serves many downtown residents lacking transportation. "It's a key block, and whether it happens there or somewhere else, we do need to provide a grocery. … There is room for someone else to make even a better solution for the residents for this area. That's what we're looking for. It will become my priority for us as we move forward."

Bricker said first she needs to learn Safeway's intentions. In the past, she said, the store has put up a noncompete clause on some of its property sales. If that's the case, a grocery store couldn't replace it. But she said that would severely limit Safeway's chances to unload the property.

She said this is an opportunity to find something new and better.

Bricker said her thoughts now go to the staff, many of whom had been working at the store for several years.

"It's one thing to be inconvenienced because we don't have a grocery store, but it's also a tragedy to lose jobs for people who have worked there for a very long time," Bricker said. "I'm hoping they can be absorbed at other grocery stores in town, but that's kind of tough."

Residents upset at the news of store's closing

Greeleyites hope void of closure will be filled soon

By **Whitney Phillips**
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Greeley resident Paul Villa relies on Safeway's 11th Avenue location for groceries and, with the store set to close next month, he's worried about losing the food selection the store provides to that part of the city.

"I'm 80 years old," Villa said. "I have to go to the closest store. This winter, I don't know what I'm going to do."

Villa said he lives about a mile away from the Safeway store now and, with his eyesight and overall health deteriorating due to diabetes, he's worried about having to go farther for food.

Others in the community are concerned about people like Villa, especially the elderly residents who have to walk to buy food.

"They can't afford to drive some place or take a taxi some place," said Ann Ratcliffe, who lives downtown and frequents that Safeway.

A manager at the Safeway store said she could not comment on the store closing nor could other employees.

On Wednesday, as customers asked workers about the store shutting down, employees said they don't know the specifics, and they're hopeful the company will help them find other positions.

Sam Jojola, a lifelong Greeley resident, said driving farther for groceries will be less convenient for him, and he's sad to see the store, which was the first Safeway in Greeley, close down.

Debbie Pinter said she has relied solely on that Safeway location for the four years she's lived in Greeley. She said since she has a vehicle, she has the ability to drive to other locations. But many don't.

"It's really the only grocery store here," she said. "It's really a bad deal. I'm really sad."

Safeway shoppers like Villa said they don't see an agreeable alternative within walking distance. They say businesses like Rite Aid at 1013 11th St., Family Dollar at 430 8th Ave., and Jerry's Market, a specialized store at 513 14th Ave., won't offer the same products they could get at Safeway.

Steve Mize, who has run Jerry's Market for his parents for the last 20 years, said it's sad to see a landmark like the Safeway, let alone any business, shut down.

He's not yet thought about stocking more milk and eggs, as the news is still so fresh.

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A6: Safeway

SECESSION

Voters in California mull new state idea

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, CALIF. — Residents of California's largely rural, agrarian and politically conservative far northern counties long ago got used to feeling ignored in the state Capitol and out of sync with major urban areas.

The idea of forming their own state has been a topic among local secession dreamers for more than a century. Residents in two counties will have a chance to voice that sentiment next week.

Voters in Del Norte and Tehama, with a combined population of about 91,000, will decide June 3 on an advisory measure that asks each county's board of supervisors to join a wider effort to form a 51st state named Jefferson.

Elected officials in Glenn, Modoc, Siskiyou and Yuba counties already voted to join the movement. Supervisors in Butte County will vote June 10, while local bodies in other northern counties are awaiting the June 3 ballot results before deciding what to do.

A similar but unrelated question on the primary ballot in Siskiyou County asks voters to rename that county the Republic of Jefferson.

"We have 11 counties up here that share one state senator," compared to 20 for the greater Los Angeles area and 10 for the San

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A6: Secession

POLITICS

Kirkmeyer: I'm most in step with the district

By **T.M. Fasano**
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The Greeley Tribune asked a series of questions of each candidate in the race for the Republican nomination in the 4th Congressional District. Today's answers are from Barbara Kirkmeyer:

QUESTION — Why do you feel you are the best candidate?

ANSWER — I am the one candidate who most closely matches the district, both in terms of experience and in terms of philosophy. In this district that is heavily reliant on agriculture, I am the one candidate who was raised on a dairy farm, who raised my kids on a dairy farm and who works every day to defend family farmers from

» 4th C.D. GOP primary election profiles
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- » Ken Buck: Tuesday
- » Steve Laffey: Wednesday
- » **Barbara Kirkmeyer: Today**

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