

Piggly Wiggly coming to Spartanburg's Southside

TUESDAY, AUGUST 24

New grocery store to open in former S Church St. Sav-a-lot location early next year



It's been two years since the S Church St. Sav-a-lot—the lone nearby full-service grocery store on our city's Southside—closed its doors, and last night the public got to hear the name of the new store that will replace it. A new Piggly Wiggly grocery store will fill the space, bringing the kinds of budget items offered in the space before but also stocking name brand and premium items, as well as some local selections as well according to the team behind the new store, Timothy Parrott, manager of business development with C&S Wholesale Grocers and Randy Burton, head of Community Grocers, LLC.

The announcement comes after City Council voted unanimously in April to approve a measure granting \$300,000 to the City of Spartanburg Development Corporation to be loaned to the grocery operation as well as backing a \$600,000 loan by the Mary Black Foundation.

At that meeting, City Manager Chris Story laid out some features future grocery shoppers can expect, including an in-store hot and cold prepared food deli, a branded in-store coffee shop, branded in-store made-to-order pizza, and the potential inclusion of pharmacy services if a pharmacy operator can be identified. Story also added that the store's operator is a well-experienced grocery industry professional and that store ownership will meet regularly with a Community Advisory Committee composed of Southside residents.

The City Manager explained that while a worst case scenario would leave the City on the hook for all \$900,000, he considers that outcome extremely unlikely, adding that the City and its partners expect strong performance for the store which would allow the project to transition to conventional financing in five years.

Also at Monday's meeting, City Council voted 4-3 to continue the closure of W Main Street in front of Morgan Square for 12 months, during which time the City will engage in a community-led planning process to consider a permanent reconfiguration of the space. Council members Jamie Fulmer, Rob Rain, and Erica Brown voted against, favoring a proposal that would've opened the street during the winter months and closed it again in March of next year.

The move comes after Council heard an overview of downtown data collected by city staff last week. City Manager Chris Story presented Council with an assortment of data showing increased City Hospitality Tax revenue, increased pedestrian activity, and cell phone carrier data showing increased downtown visits this spring and summer over the same time period in 2019, signs which point to a Downtown Spartanburg economy resurgent after weathering worst of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

According to the City Manager, mobile phone location data provided through a subscription to placer.ai shows 13.1 percent more visits to Downtown Spartanburg during May and June of this year than during the same time period in 2019. Coupled with that, pedestrian counters installed along sidewalks downtown outside the Morgan Square area also showed counts 17.25 percent higher May-July 2021 than the same time period in 2019.

Additionally, Story also shared Hospitality Tax data with Council showing a drastic increase in sales of 21.5 percent for downtown restaurants outside the Morgan Square area in April-June 2021 over April-June 2019. That growth is especially striking as it is nearly three times the Hospitality Tax growth seen throughout the rest of the city, 7.4 percent.

Along with sales and visitor data, Council also heard an overview of the City's recently released Morgan Square expanded outdoor dining public survey. Among the survey's 3,444 respondents, 55.24% favor keeping W Main Street closed to vehicle traffic indefinitely for expanded pedestrian use, 24.28% favor keeping W Main Street closed to vehicle traffic in front of the square on weekends (Friday-Sunday) for expanded pedestrian use and open to vehicle traffic on weekdays (Monday-Thursday), and 18.25% favor opening W Main Street in front of the square to vehicle traffic.