

Cedar Lanes demolition set, Walmart taking over

By Bethany Clough - The Fresno Bee

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The shuttered Cedar Lanes Bowling Center in central Fresno will be knocked down to make way for a Walmart Neighborhood Market.

The 40,000-square-foot store, Walmart's version of a small grocery, is scheduled to open in early 2015 and will employ about 65 people.

Cedar Lanes closed last June after 53 years in business following the sale of the shopping center at Shields and Cedar avenues. The closure saddened many Fresnoans who have nostalgic memories of the bowling alley.

Walmart bought the bowling alley site, but does not own the rest of the center.

The Walmart Neighborhood Market sells fresh produce, has a meat department and pharmacy, and also carries frozen food, dry goods, some household products and pet supplies.

The retail giant has been opening neighborhood markets across the country. One recently opened in Visalia at Demaree Street and Goshen Avenue. Another is scheduled to open later this month at the southwest corner of Herndon and Willow avenues in the same shopping center as Walgreens.

The Cedar Avenue store will have environmentally friendly features, including LED lighting in its exterior sign and refrigeration cases, an energy-efficient heating and air-conditioning system, and drought-tolerant plants.

Walmart spokeswoman Delia Garcia said the company is aware of the "rich history" and "sentimental value" that Cedar Lanes has had in the community. It is planning a display to commemorate the bowling alley, she said. Walmart is working with McLane High School and the city of Fresno to rescue and donate mementos before the bowling alley is demolished.

The display "will be located in store and it will be prominent, so the community will always know there is a connection to that history," Garcia said.

The bowling alley will be demolished in the coming weeks.

Walmart's announcement of its new store inspired grumbling Friday among some social media users who said they didn't welcome the retail giant.

It "will crush small business in the area," said Vance Kincaid of Fresno. Kincaid said he is anti-Walmart and opposed to "wasteful consumerism."

However, others welcomed Walmart to the area.

"We're going to miss Cedar Lanes ... but we have to move on," said Jimmy Bosquez. He owns Jimmy's Sports World, a sports memorabilia shop that was near Cedar Lanes but moved to another location within the shopping center after the sale.

Bosquez said he welcomes the revitalization in the neighborhood, which has a closed Fresh & Easy store at the same intersection. Walmart will draw shoppers who will then discover other businesses at the corner, he said.

"I'm looking forward to it," Bosquez said. "I think it's going to help all of us in the area."

<http://www.fresnobee.com/2013/05/11/3295508/cedar-lanes-demolition-set-walmart.html>