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## Hmart opening brings international flavor to Golden Mile

By Ryan Marshall [rmarshall@newspost.com](mailto:rmarshall@newspost.com) May 24, 2017



Staff photo by Bill Green

Hmart customer service manager Susan Conley with a selection of kimchi, a spicy fermented cabbage. The store on West Patrick Street opens Friday morning.

Frederick's Golden Mile has a diverse range of dining options, and the area will add another on Friday with the long-awaited opening of the Hmart international grocery store.

The store's grand opening is scheduled for Friday at 10 a.m., with Maryland first lady Yumi Hogan and other officials expected to attend.

The store will offer more than 55,000 square feet of Asian and other international food, a bakery, prepared foods, and a food court with various styles of cuisine.

On Wednesday, workers hurried to make final preparations for the opening, stocking shelves and refrigerated cases with kimchi and other items, and chopping salmon to make sushi. Nearby, water gurgled in a tank holding live lobsters.

The store in the Westridge Square Shopping Center will employ about 70 people, spokeswoman Janet Huang said in an email.

Since beginning in New York in 1982, Hmart has more than 90 stores in 13 states, including locations in Catonsville, Ellicott City, Gaithersburg and Wheaton.

In a big shopping center, a grocery store is often the key anchor, said Richard Griffin, the city of Frederick's director of economic development.

The Golden Mile area is one of the largest concentrations of retail space in the county, and has traditionally been one of the most commercially successful, he said.

He expects that Hmart's presence will make a huge difference for other tenants in the center.

The store was originally a Giant supermarket, then was the ethnic grocery Gmart, but the location has been vacant for several years, Griffin said.

Gmart opened in September 2013 and closed in November 2014.

Any shopping center needs a solid anchor, and Westridge hasn't really had one since Giant left in 2011, said Steve Chung, the owner of Westridge Liquors, which is also in the shopping center.

He hopes that Hmart will bring in more foot traffic, but said he'll wait and see.

Deb Reynolds, president of the Golden Mile Alliance, said she thinks Hmart is the largest business to open on the Golden Mile in several years.

The site can draw a lot of foot traffic from the neighborhoods around the shopping center, she said.

Hmart's selection can serve the diverse population that lives in the communities along the Golden Mile, and is a great chance to draw more market share to the area, Griffin said.

People from Frederick have had to go to Montgomery County to get some types of food, and the Hmart store provides a chance to keep that money in Frederick County, he said.

Reynolds agreed that the Hmart may serve a clientele that hasn't had many options in Frederick.

"I just think this brings maybe a twist to the traditional grocery store," she said.

Elizabeth Chung, executive director of the Asian American Center of Frederick, said the county's Asian community is looking forward to the store's arrival.

Chung goes to the Hmart store in Gaithersburg several times a month for fresh seafood, and for spices and other things that can be difficult to find in traditional supermarkets.

Food and cooking are important parts of Chinese and other Asian cultures, Chung said, and an authentic ethnic grocery store can be a great comfort to people who miss their native country.

"Just the fact that you feel like home is very important," she said.

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