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FEATURED

Gwinnett Place Hhgregg location among 88 set to close amid cutbacks

By Curt Yeomans

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The Hhgregg location near Gwinnett Place Mall in Duluth is one of 88 stores that the company plans to close by mid-April

The Gwinnett Place Mall area is losing another one of its national retail chains after appliance retailer Hhgregg announced Thursday that its Duluth store is one of 88 locations across the country slated for closure this spring.

The company said the store, which is located in the Mall Corners shopping center on Pleasant Hill Road, is expected to be closed by mid-April. The closure comes amid nationwide efforts to turn Hhgregg around. Company officials said they will “reallocate resources to align more closely with its strategic goals to improve liquidity and return to profitability.”

In addition to the 88 stores, which also include locations in Morrow, Buckhead and Lithonia, the company will also close distribution centers in Maryland, Florida and Pennsylvania. In all, 1,500 positions across the company will be cut.

“We are strategically exiting markets and stores that are not financially profitable for us,” Hhgregg President and CEO Robert J. Riesbeck said in a statement. “This is a proactive decision to streamline our store footprint in the markets where we have been, and will continue to be, important to our customers, vendor partners and communities.”

The news is especially hard for the Gwinnett Place area, however, because it came a week after Family Christian Bookstores announced it would close all of its stores across the country. Family Christian was also next to the mall, and had a location on U.S. Highway 78 near Snellville.

Although new businesses are coming into the area, stores that Gwinnett Place Community Improvement District Executive Director Joe Allen refers to as “legacy companies,” such as JCPenney, Circuit City and Hhgregg, are struggling. As a results, they’ve closed some stores or, in some cases, gone out of business all together.

Sports Authority closed its store in the CID last year as the entire company went out of business.

“We are the poster child of that suburban development of big box store, a sea of parking type of thing,” Allen said. “In the short term, we’ll continue to struggle.”

Mall Corners is located in the heart of the CID, as well as the Venture Drive Redevelopment Overlay District that county officials created last year to spur an overhaul of the area.

The district is designed to encourage mixed-use redevelopment, potentially with high rise buildings that have a mixture of office, retail and residential uses. It was created last fall, and quickly expanded to include the Gwinnett Prado site, which is slated for just such a mixed-use redevelopment.



Allen said the closure of Hhgregg and Family Christian Bookstore showed why redevelopment is needed.

“This is part of the changing retail environment that we’re living through, and that’s why transforming that area and doing things different is so important,” Allen said. “We cannot rely on the area remaining successful 100 percent on retail. We need to transform the area into that mixed-use, urban, dense, walkable type of environment.

“To me, this just continues to put pressure on us to move more rapidly than we are.”

Although Hhgregg is closing its Duluth location, it’s not totally leaving Gwinnett County. Its locations in Snellville and at the Mall of Georgia will remain open.

“We feel strongly that the markets we will remain in are the right ones for our customers and our business model,” Riesbeck said. “Our team is dedicated to moving forward and being a profitable 132 store, multi-regional chain where we will continue to be a dominant force in appliances, electronics and home furnishings.”

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