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## Eastland, Westland Macy's among 68 to be closed

JC Reindl and Georgeta Kovanis , Published 4:55 p.m. ET Jan. 4, 2017



*(Photo: Getty Images file)*

Macy's stores at Eastland Center in Harper Woods and Westland Shopping Center will close later this year as the struggling department store chain continues to cope with the migration of shoppers to the Internet and away from many traditional malls.

Stores at Lansing Mall and at Lakeview Square Mall in Battle Creek are also scheduled to close, bringing to 68 the number of Macy's stores to be shuttered sometime in early spring. There are 19 Macy's in Michigan and 730 stores in total.

The closures are yet another challenge to the long-term health of shopping malls, which have long relied on department stores like Macy's as anchors to draw traffic. But retail experts say the era of

the large department store is winding down as shoppers embrace Amazon.com and other websites and come to prefer smaller, specialty boutiques for their real-life shopping.

"It's like two paradigms are ending — bricks and mortar and anchors," said Ken Dalto, a Bingham Farms-based retail analyst and management consultant.

The last Michigan Macy's to close was in Northland Center in Southfield; it proved the death knell for what was the nation's first regional mall. Within weeks of the early 2015 news that Macy's was leaving, the mall announced that it would completely close.

"It's going to be very hurtful for both of them," Dalto said of the post-Macy's Eastland and Westland. "They are not going to get another anchor that easily of that importance."

When it comes to drawing traffic, "malls and department stores are symbiotic. Like ham and eggs, they have to be together," said Jim Bieri, a Detroit-based retail consultant.

Retail experts say the future of Eastland mall is especially dire. The chances of finding an anchor to replace that Macy's are slim because the mall is deteriorating. These days, shoppers who still visit malls seek not only merchandise, but also a more complete experience with one-of-a-kind stores, great service and interesting restaurants, which Eastland simply hasn't been able to provide.

In addition, the Macy's space is huge, spanning 443,000 square feet. Filling up that space will be difficult.

Westland Shopping Center in Westland probably has a better chance of survival than Eastland and is gaining a new H&M store.

"I think that Westland probably has a shot with a Dick's (Sporting Goods) or some types of uses than can chop up the department store space," said Ken Nisch, chairman at JGA Associates in Southfield, a retail design and branding firm.

Westland Mayor Bill Wild said development officials have been bracing for the potential loss of the Macy's and considering ideas for how to fill the massive four-story department store space

"I think Westland mall is still very viable and the Westland shop-and-dine district just came off a record shopping season," Wild said.

The Macy's corporation revealed the closures Wednesday afternoon as part of its ongoing effort to save money by focusing resources on its best-performing locations.

The company announced in August that it would close 100 stores, but didn't identify all of the locations until Wednesday.

"Nearly all of the stores to be closed are cash-flow positive today, but their volume and profitability, in most cases, have been declining steadily in recent years," Macy's President Jeff Gennette said at the time.

Macy's said in its release Wednesday that it's making "changes to the way stores are operated and reducing field infrastructure given the reduced store sales and evolving customer behavior."

The company expects to close another 30 or so Macy's locations in the next few years, as leases expire.