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Business

Town Has Few Options for Vacant Stop & Shop Building

Stop & Shop holds the lease until 2014
 By **Bree Shirvell** | [Email the author](#) | January 19, 2012

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Stonington town officials and residents have a long list of businesses they would like to see go into the vacant Stop & Shop building at 37 S Broad St., in Pawcatuck.

A Trader Joe's, a cheese company, perhaps even a gym were just a few of the visions [locals have for the empty spot](#). Unfortunately, they may also have a long time to wait before any of those ideas become a reality.

The old Stop & Shop building has sat empty ever since the company relocated its Pawcatuck location to [91 Voluntown Rd.](#), almost three years ago. The building could be empty for another two years.

"We have a lease obligation until 2014 and we are continuing to market the space," said Stop & Shop New England Division spokesperson Suzi Robinson.

Robinson refused to comment on the details of the lease or the marketing of the space.

According to [First Selectman Edward Haberek Jr.](#), part of the terms of the lease include a non-compete clause for any sublease. Basically, this means that Stop & Shop has the right and most likely would refuse to sublease the spot to any business with more than 30 percent of food sales as Stop & Shop would see that as competition to their Voluntown Road location.

"My preference would be for a Trader Joe's or some sort of natural, organic food store," Haberek said, adding he wanted a new business in that spot that would provide services to the immediate residents.

Many residents seem to share Haberek's preference. Of the nearly 35 comments that responded to Stonington-Mystic Patch's request for ideas for the spot, 14 of them wanted a Trader Joe's.

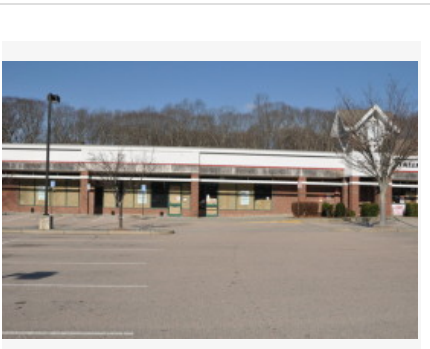
Trader Joe's said they do not have any confirmed plans for a location in the area.

Haberek said Trader Joe's, however, is actively looking for new locations around the country, and it is his understanding that Stonington's population of college graduates not only meets their standards but impressed the company.

The First Selectman said he has consulted with the state attorney general's office on Stop & Shop's history of what he calls predatory leases. In Rhode Island there is [speculation that Stop & Shop's leasing practices were at least in part responsible for the closure of Warwick's Rhode Island Mall](#).

While Haberek said the town and the state attorney general's office are continuing to monitor the old Stop & Shop building he also said that according to the attorney general's office, Stop & Shop is not in any legal violation.

So, if not a food store could one of the ideas such as fitness center work?
 Haberek said there have been a number of inquires into the spot including by Marshalls and a fitness



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company. The problem becomes that most businesses want to sign a 20-year lease and Stop & Shop can only offer a two-year sublease. After those two-years, Haberek said the business would have to renegotiate and probably pay more, which seems to be dissuading some businesses from taking the risk.

In all likelihood it's looking like the town and residents will have at least another two years to speculate on what business should go into the old Stop & Shop building.

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Kristin W.

8:12 am on Thursday, January 19, 2012

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I would like to think that a giant company like Stop & Shop would be less ruthless and more town-friendly. There is no real competition for their store! As for their two year sublease, there must be a way for Stop & Shop and the building owner to work this out. If there is an interested business and the 20 year lease is the issue, are you telling me that the building owner wouldn't allow the transfer of the Stop & Shop lease to the new company? It would be so much more beneficial to them. Sounds more like Stop & Shop wants to hold the cards as long as they can and they are not playing fair (or nice) with a small town with so few commercial spaces like this one!

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ML Adams

8:34 am on Thursday, January 19, 2012

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I had heard this right from the beginning... this world is filled with "big threats" from other business...how selfish...

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Melody

9:07 am on Thursday, January 19, 2012

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My family would love to have a Trader Joes or Whole Foods here! We are a Paleo lifestyle family. McQuades has the most to offer for us, but we would love to have ONE place to go to for all of our needs.

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Linda Jabren

10:00 am on Thursday, January 19, 2012

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Leave it empty for 2 more years, then put a trader joes in.

Log in to reply



Stephen Bessette

11:20 am on Thursday, January 19, 2012

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Interesting that the site is overlooked by many stores like Trader Joes. My guess is in 2015 you will see a similar store to the Dollar Tree in there.

Maybe the town should lease it and move the School Admin & other offices there and sell off the Old Mystic building.

While not official Trader Joes' stores need the following ingredients for locating a site:

Ingredient 1: Highway Accessibility in or near Urban Areas (Route 1 in Pawcatuck is not near the highway)

Ingredient 2: Zip Code Populations > 6000 people (06379 is not > 6000)

Ingredient 3: Population Density > 700 people / square mile (we have some dense people but not that kind)

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Ingredient 4: Median Income Zones between \$30K and \$150K (ok, we have one here)
Ingredient 5: Top 40% of Income Quintiles (need to call my Econ Professor for this one.)

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Virginia McCormack

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3:37 pm on Thursday, January 19, 2012

I would be delighted with ANY business that sells a few basic grocery items, such as milk, whole wheat bread, frozen veggies, meat. Sunrise Farms would work for me. From what I've heard, Trader Joes isn't interested.

We need to let Stop N' Shop know that they are hurting their Pawcatuck store by insisting that a small grocery store cannot lease that space. I invite Stop N' Shop to review my purchases from 2000-2011. They'll see that I don't shop there often these days. There's a reason for that.

[Log in to reply](#)

Monica Mandeville

[Flag as inappropriate](#)

9:24 am on Saturday, January 21, 2012

What makes me sad is that the vacant space has likely left neighboring businesses with lagging sales and less traffic through their plaza.

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