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BUSINESS - SPIESS

Spiess leaving Spring Hill

■ **Competition too tough:**
Mall's anchor store could
close as soon as Monday

By Nick Petersen
BUSINESS EDITOR

Elgin-based Joseph Spiess Co., which drove a dagger through the heart of the city's downtown when it fled to Spring Hill Mall in 1984, is closing its store at

that location.

The store, one of five anchor department stores at the mall at Illinois 31 and 72 in West Dundee and Carpentersville, will close to the public possibly as early as Monday, company officials announced Thursday.

The closing comes 10 years and a bankruptcy after Spiess moved its retail operation from Elgin to the mall.

Spiess Department Stores, now a division of Maurice L. Rothschild & Co., eventually will move its

Spring Hill inventory to a new store location in Highland, Ind., Spiess president John F. Lincheck said.

The company will retain its stores in St. Charles and Crystal Lake, which Lincheck described as profitable locations.

Closing the 50,000-square-foot Spring Hill anchor store "was a tough decision," Lincheck said. "But it wasn't a viable location."

He said the recent area opening of discount stores like Target Greatland and Wal-Mart "is hurting the

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JIM KUTINA / THE COURIER-NEWS

The Spiess department store at Spring Hill Mall could close its doors for good as soon as Monday.

Spiess

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mall. There's less (customer) traffic."

The 20 full-time and 30 part-time sales associates at the mall store will be offered positions at the Crystal Lake or St. Charles stores, Lincheck said.

The move of Spiess' retail operation out of Elgin came after millions of dollars in public and private money was spent creating Fountain Square Plaza — on Spiess'

front door — to prop up the city's flagging downtown business district.

It was the death knell for the once-thriving retail center, which soon will undergo another transformation.

The new Spiess store in Highland, Ind., will have a customer base similar to those at the two surviving Fox Valley stores, Lincheck said.

Spiess will lease space recently vacated by a local department store, he said. The new store expects to open June 1.