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Kmart West is Closing; Mall Owner Says Redevelopment Plan Will Provide 'First Rate Center'

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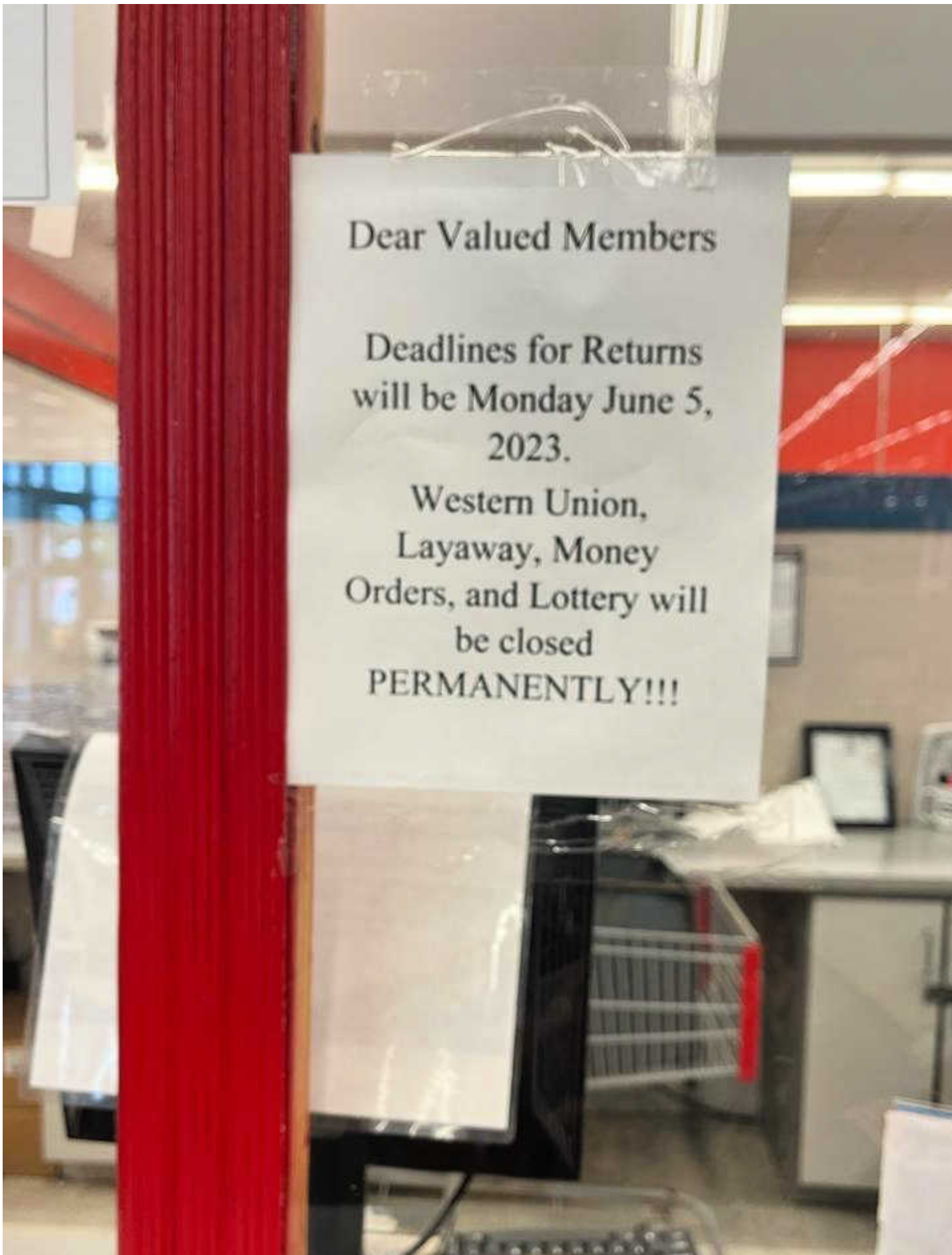


Kmart West. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

First, there were rumors that employees of Kmart West on St. Croix had been given retirement packages. Days later, posters began popping up inside the store reminding customers that June 5 was the deadline for returns. "Western Union, Layaway, Money Orders and Lottery will be closed PERMANENTLY!!!" the poster read.

Soon after, a large banner appeared atop the entrance of the mall: "Store Closing," it reads succinctly.

The store's closing was listed on the [website](#) of SB360 Capital Partners, a consulting firm, along with five other Sears stores on the mainland that are shutting down. SB360 has been behind the store-closing sales of retailers Kmart Corp., Sears Holdings Corp., Charlotte Russe Holding Inc., Modell's Sporting Goods Inc., Fred's Inc., Old Time Pottery and Olympia Sports, according to the Wall Street Journal.



A poster inside Kmart in Frederiksted.

Sunshine Mall owner Hatim Yusuf told the Consortium on Wednesday that it was disheartening to see the store close. Kmart was one of Sunshine Mall's longstanding tenants; it opened on St. Croix June 30, 1993 — approximately 30 years ago. Back then, the mall was one of two highly trafficked locations on St. Croix along with the Sunny Isle Shopping Center. At the time, the entire shopping facility was occupied with tenants.

"After 30 years at this location, we are saddened to confirm the closing of the Kmart store," Yusuf said. "We are making every effort to find a suitable replacement as soon as possible."

Yusuf said management plans to revive the low-trafficked shopping center. "Ownership and management are committed to a redevelopment plan to provide a first rate center for everyone to enjoy," he said.

The Kmart in Sunny Isle will remain open.

Kmart was founded in 1899 as SS Kresge Corporation and transitioned to the Kmart name in 1977. Like Sears, Kmart was once a giant in retail, known for their "blue light specials" and selling a variety of goods at low prices.

However, Kmart also began to face fierce competition from other discount retailers and declared bankruptcy in 2002. This led to the closing of many Kmart stores. In 2005, Kmart merged with Sears, creating Sears Holdings Corporation.

Despite the merger, both Sears and Kmart continued to struggle financially. Sears Holdings filed for bankruptcy in 2018, leading to another wave of store closures. Following the bankruptcy, a new entity, Transformco, controlled by the former CEO of Sears Holdings, Eddie Lampert, bought the remaining assets of Sears and Kmart.

Despite the efforts to save the two brands, their decline continued. Between 2018 and 2021, hundreds more Sears and Kmart stores closed across the United States.