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## Almost empty Kingston shopping center has been sold

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The long-dormant Kingston Plaza shopping center on Third Avenue could be in store for some new tenants, and new landlords.

According to a tenant, the shopping plaza has been sold, but to whom remains a mystery. Jim Gallagher, the manager of Dollar General, confirmed Friday his store has a new landlord, but he was not immediately sure who the new landlord was.

The sale reportedly closed Thursday, but as of late Friday a deed had not been filed with the Recorder of Deeds Office.

The shopping plaza's previous owners, the Lightstone Group of Lakewood, N.J., said on its Web site the property was for sale, but company executives did not return calls seeking comment Friday.

The plaza has been nearly vacant since anchor tenant Price Chopper moved out in 2002. The grocer left to open a superstore in neighboring Edwardsville, but opted to continue paying rent instead of subletting the space or terminating the lease.

Price Chopper's lease expires at the end of this year, and company spokeswoman Mona Golub confirmed Friday the renewal option will not be exercised.

"We do not have plans to renew our lease," she said.

Golub did not elaborate on why that decision was made, but said neither a pending sale nor ongoing litigation had anything to do with it.

Citing breach of contract, Attorney Bill Vinsko filed a lawsuit on behalf of other businesses in the plaza, many of which have since closed.

All that remains at Kingston Plaza is the Dollar General store, a tanning salon and a state liquor store which is closing at the end of the year, when its lease expires.

"A major factor in the decision not to renew the Kingston lease is that the store is in a shopping plaza which, as you noted, has been without an anchor store for some time and has been losing business volume for several years," Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board spokeswoman Francesca Chapman said in a prepared statement.

Chapman also cited the overwhelming success of the state store in Wilkes-Barre Township Marketplace. That store, which opened in 2004, is doing exceptionally well, she said.

As far as the lawsuit is concerned, Vinsko still plans to move the case forward. He would not comment further on the litigation, which has been ongoing since 2003.