

# Property Lines



## Peppy Grill closes for renovations

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[4 Comments \(https://www.ibj.com/blogs/19-property-lines/post/71792-fountain-squares-peppy-grill-undergoing-major-renovations#disqus\\_thread\)](https://www.ibj.com/blogs/19-property-lines/post/71792-fountain-squares-peppy-grill-undergoing-major-renovations#disqus_thread)

Peppy Grill, a longtime Fountain Square eatery at 1004 Virginia Ave., is closed for major renovations aimed at upgrading the restaurant while retaining its old-school diner atmosphere.

And, after it reopens early next year, the business has plans to expand by adding locations—one or two next year, with others to follow.

Peppy Grill closed late last month and expects to reopen in March after several hundred thousand dollars' worth of renovations that will include new subflooring and flooring, a new ceiling, new seating and new kitchen appliances. An annex on the north side of the building—a former outdoor deck that was later enclosed—will be demolished and replaced with an indoor/outdoor seating area.

The landmark sign advertising “hamburgs” will remain.

The 24-hour restaurant has been a part of Fountain Square for about 67 years, and has long touted its reputation

(<https://www.ibj.com/articles/25993-fountain-square-staple-peppy-grill-thrives-on-independence>) as a greasy spoon. But in recent years the establishment has slipped.

“We haven’t really had anyone, until now, who wanted to put the money into it,” said Joe Wilkins, who has been Peppy Grill’s manager for 25 years.

Current owner Hai Duong bought Peppy Grill three years ago from Mary Wyman, who had owned the establishment since the 1970s.

According to an IBJ story from 2011, Wyman and her then-husband originally purchased 12 Peppy Grills from the son of the original owner. After Wyman was diagnosed with cancer, the family sold off most of the other locations to pay her medical bills.

The Wymans kept the Fountain Square location because they owned the building—and because that Peppy's was their most profitable.

But business has declined over the past two years, Wilkins said, likely for a couple of different reasons.

One factor, Wilkins said, is Fountain Square's emergence as a hot spot for a diverse array of restaurants.

"Now, we have a lot more competition than we had before," Wilkins said. "There's a lot of different foods, and places to go get that food."

The physical condition of the restaurant was likely another factor, Wilkins said.

The facility was small, cramped and outdated, Wilkins said, and on a regular basis he saw potential customers step inside, look around, then immediately leave. "With certain clientele, it's not up to their standards. It's not like any other place in the area."

Peppy Grill has also dealt with numerous health code violations, according to the Marion County Health Department.

An inspector found live and dead cockroaches and mouse droppings in July 2017, prompting the health department to order a shutdown while the restaurant addressed the issue. The restaurant reopened four days later.

And in August of this year, the health department ordered

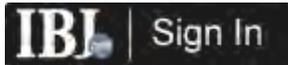
([https://www.ibj.com/articles/69994-well-known-fountain-square-restaurant-shut-down-for-health-code-violations?utm\\_source=ibj&utm\\_medium=related-articles&utm\\_campaign=leftail](https://www.ibj.com/articles/69994-well-known-fountain-square-restaurant-shut-down-for-health-code-violations?utm_source=ibj&utm_medium=related-articles&utm_campaign=leftail))

Peppy Grill to shut down because its refrigerators were not keeping food at the required 41 degrees or less. The restaurant reopened three days later.

The Fountain Square establishment is not affiliated with Burt's Peppy Grill, which is located at 3401 E 10th St.

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Jim

8 days ago



Good for them...I hope the sausage gravy will retain it's pinkish hue...not sure if that was the actual color of the gravy or a lighting effect but whatever...hope they keep their somewhat surly attitude, Non PC signage (on the interior) and colorful extensive late-night clientele also...no place quite like it...

1 ^ v Reply



James → Jim

8 days ago



I am just hoping this upgrade results in less food poisoning....

and health inspection shut downs...

Love the food, hate the following morning :)

^ v Reply



Jim → James

8 days ago



Been a while since I actually ate there, as I don't keep late nights as much as I used to, and the music venue I frequented closed, still go there now and then but don't stay as late and usually eat before at La Margarita. Never experienced any of the things you have with regard to food poisoning, although even the owner admits that it's a greasy spoon, and they are cooking gut bombs for the most part, something that works at 2 am when you are starving after a night of partying...I did read about the shut down...the complaint was definitely grounds for such...I would tell you that many people I have encountered in there in the past had consumed enough alcohol that if they got sick after eating there it wouldn't have been fair to argue that the food was what made them

sick...nevertheless, don't make people sick and keep it reasonably clean would be a minimum standard to meet, and hopefully the remodel will do that...a landmark greasy spoon, and an homage to at time when the Fountain Square wasn't everyone's trendy hangout...

^ v Reply



**James** → Jim

8 days ago



Completely agree. I think the article summarized it well when it said that it had gone downhill in the recent few years, so I think this remodel will bring it back to its prime and it will continue to serve FS for many years to come.

1 ^ v Reply