

Weaver's Ace Hardware expanding to South Heidelberg

The company's third location will be on the site of the former Spayd's Greenhouse and Floral Shop.

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These buildings were demolished to make way for the new location of a Weaver's Ace Hardware Store on the site of the former Spayd's Nursery in South Heidelberg Township.

While big-box stores are prominent on Berks County's retail landscape, at least one locally owned hardware store has an expansion in the works.

Weaver's Ace Hardware is planning to open a location on the site of the former Spayd's Greenhouse and Floral Shop and the former Green Valley Nursery and Gifts along Penn Avenue in South Heidelberg Township.

Ed Shenk, of Lancaster, owner of Weaver's, has embarked on a \$2.5 million to \$3 million project to develop a third retail location.

The other two Weaver's Hardware stores are in Richmond Township and Douglassville.

Shenk, 57, purchased the approximately 1.8-acre tract from Charles Lavigna on Aug. 1 for \$650,000, according to Berks County records.

Lavigna had operated Green Valley nursery and Gifts for 39 years, when in 2014 he decided to lease the property to Spayd's Greenhouse and Floral Shop, Alsace Township.

In January, Spayd's closed that location in what co-owner Missy Spayd Kauffman said was an effort to focus all of the service aspects of the business back to the Pricetown Road store.

Lavigna continued to operate Lavigna & Sons Philadelphia Hoagies Shop at the site, until it closed its doors in July.

Destination experience

Now, the entire complex is under the ownership of Shenk, who plans to create a destination shopping experience.

"I am well aware of the history of Green Valley at this site and my goal is to honor that retail history in our new store," Shenk said.

Shenk said he had been looking for a suitable site to develop a third location when the opportunity to purchase the Penn Avenue property came up.

Shenk, who has owned the hardware stores since 1994, said competition with the Lowes and Home Depot locations in Berks County has never been an issue.

“Our good customer service creates value, and our customers really respond to that,” he said. “Our employees take care of the customers in a way they want to be treated.”

Shenk said that simple philosophy works to build up business.

“People have a good experience with us,” Shenk said. “Customers like that and always end up coming back and bringing others with them.”

Shenk said there are four pillars that uphold the company and set it apart from the big box retailers:

Be helpful to everyone because it matters.

Have the right products at the right time and the right price.

Provide a good work/life balance.

Support and invest in our team associates.

Shenk said his employees are paid about 35 percent above the market rate for those working in retail.

“We really focus on people and that creates a very good staff,” he added.

Shenk also said that it helps to get to know your customers.

“Loyal customers who shop here are known by our employees,” Shenk said. “They are not just another transaction.”

Small business support

Supporting small business is obviously important to Shenk.

For that reason, he contracted with Martin Construction Co., Richmond Township, to undertake the construction project for the 12,900-squarefoot store.

Shenk said the proposed building — which will also include offices and a small warehouse — will be constructed on the footprint of the former buildings.

“We looked at trying to use the buildings that were here, but they were at different grade levels and elevations and would not have made it convenient for customers,” Shenk said.

Shenk is hopeful the new store will be ready for the spring of 2019.

“We do a lot of business in the spring; those are our busiest months,” Shenk said.

Shenk said the planning for the project went very smoothly with South Heidelberg Township officials.

Both the township planning commission and the board of supervisors endorsed preliminary and final plans in May.

Shenk said the approval of the plans was a condition of the sales agreement.

“The land development plans had to be part of the agreement, because we had to make sure this project was doable,” Shenk said.

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