

On a roll: Rite Rug plans expansion

By MIRIAM SEGALOFF
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A new Polaris-area store and a 20,000-square-foot expansion to the Northland-area store are the latest chapters in more than a year of changes at Rite Rug.

According to Rite Rug vice president Larry Noel, the ink is still wet on a deal to purchase about two acres of land on the west side of state Route 23 to the north of Polaris Parkway. Ground will be broken for the chain's newest, 15,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art flooring store within the next 45 days, Noel said. A fall opening is planned.

"It's an exciting market to be in," Noel said. "So many folks have asked us when we are coming. There's a tremendous amount of homes from Powell, Westerville, Worthington and Lewis Center that need the service."

The nearest store to the site, Noel added, is about 13 miles away on Sawmill Road.

Rite Rug operates six locations in the Columbus area with an average store size in excess of the industry average of 5,000 square feet. The company has a total of 13 stores and three Carpet City Outlet stores.

The chain's largest store, located at 2165 Morse Road, weighs in at 38,000 square feet. A 20,000-square-foot addition is planned, making it the second largest flooring retail store in the country, Noel said. Renovations are scheduled to begin in April and are expected to be complete in June.

Unlike many of the store's neighbors, Noel said the company remains committed to Northland.

"We've made a big investment in that area," he said. "We're not going anywhere."

That is not the only investment the



By Chris Parker/Villager

Rite Rug vice president of sales Larry Noel stands in the Sawmill Road store. company has made in its stores.

Rite Rug wrapped up a year-long, company-wide renovation project worth more than \$1 million in December. The efforts were designed not only to increase the amount of product that could be displayed at each store but to revive sales.

"We had to change our image," Noel said. "It's not that there was something wrong with it, it just needed to be refreshed. Our products were dated and in some ways our company was dated. Columbus has changed tremendously over the last 10 years. We too, as a fixture in this community, had to change as well."

Rite Rug, based on Columbus' west side, was founded 67 years ago by the Goldberg family. It is still family-owned and in its second generation, run by chief executive officer Michael Goldberg.

Changes to the stores' look has only been the beginning, Noel said.

Paramount among the others is the hiring of a new management team over the last 12 to 18 months, including Noel.

Each of the company's new leaders was recruited from one of the nation's leading carpet manufacturers. For example, Noel hails from Shaw Industries while company president Don Penrod came from Mohawk. A chemist from DuPont was hired to run the company's new cleaning and maintenance programs.

Noel said the company has also extended its reach with the addition of a high-end retail store and builders' design center in the Gahanna area.

Michael David opened at the corner of Morse and Cherry Bottom roads about three years ago to serve, among others, the mushrooming New Albany market.

Last fall, the Michael David Design Center opened at the same location.

According to Noel, the design center is currently working with about 100 clients of area custom builders. Customers can use the service to select exterior finishes, paint, plumbing fixtures, lighting and any other design option, Noel said.

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