



By: **Paula Gardner**
Business Director

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Weingartz expanding into Ann Arbor market after buying ex-Harley Davidson store on Jackson Road



The former Harley-Davidson dealership on Jackson Road will become a Weingartz store by early April.

Angela Cesere | AnnArbor.com

A Michigan-based outdoor power equipment retailer will move into the [former Harley Davidson dealership](#) on Jackson Road.

Weingartz bought the building at [5436 Jackson](#), east of Zeeb Road, in late February and now plans to open its fifth store on April 4.

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"We love the location," said **Dan Weingartz**, president of the company.

Weingartz had sought a location in the Ann Arbor area for about 4 years, with a few deals falling through for various reasons.

The former Harley dealership came onto the market last fall, after the cycle shop consolidated into an [outlet near Brighton](#).

"There was a lot of interest, a lot of calls, a number of showings," said listing agent **Tony Caprese** of [Swisher Commercial](#) in Ann Arbor. "There was a diversity of different potential users, but many (of them) ... couldn't use the whole building."

The largest Weingartz store is 70,000 square feet, but the ideal store's size is now in the 20,000-30,000 square foot range, Weingartz said. That made the Jackson Road property a perfect fit at about 22,000 square feet, Weingartz said.

The building also suits the power equipment dealer, since Weingartz offers repair service for its lawnmowers, tractors, snowblowers and other products - much like the former occupant did for its products.

"They had a great service department," Weingartz said of the Harley operation. "We're going to use it pretty much the way it is."

Other aspects of the building will be changed before the opening: Some walls will be moved to add showroom space, and the retail parts area will be doubled.

After the early spring opening, some exterior changes will be done when the weather allows. A new façade and rejuvenated landscaping top Weingartz' list.

The company has wanted to open in Ann Arbor because "the demographics are fantastic," Weingartz

said.

The typical customer, he said, "is a little bit upscale and it's right where people with larger lots need our kind of equipment."

It also makes a sound geographic strategy for expansion, he said. Other Weingartz locations include stores in Utica, Farmington Hills, Clarkston and Cedar Springs.

Staff will total about 15 at opening, reaching about 20 employees at the peak of the summer season. About half will move from existing stores, with about 8 full-time positions open.

Opening by spring is an important goal for the store, Caprarese said, so the deal came together within a matter of months.

The building and its 3.5-acre lot were listed for \$2.68 million, and the selling price was \$1.86 million. **Jim Porth** of the Thomas A. Duke Co. represented Weingartz.

The other locations in the area that Weingartz had considered focused on the east side of Ann Arbor, where there's less competition for similar products, he said.

However, the economic downturn - and the way it cooled retail demand and lending availability across the region - ended up benefitting the equipment dealer, which ended up able to buy at the hot retail corner.

"When we first started looking, it wasn't in our budget to be looking at Jackson and Zeeb," Weingartz said.

Caprarese described it as "one of the premiere spots along the Jackson corridor."

He added that it'll be good for the area for the building to be occupied again in a matter of weeks.

"They're a nice addition to the commercial mix of retail businesses out there," he said.

Paula Gardner is Business News Director of AnnArbor.com. Contact her at 734-623-2586 or by [email](#). Sign up for the weekly Business Review newsletter, distributed every Thursday, [here](#).

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