

Mobil is getting a makeover

■ Dale and Jay Hinkelman are in the process of turning the old Mobil station on Lewis Ave. into a classic car shop and used car dealership.

By CURTIS ZIMMERMANN
Bedford Now

The old Mobil station on Lewis Ave. in downtown Temperance will be getting a facelift.

After many setbacks, Cora Loga, the property's longtime owner, can breathe a huge sigh of relief.

Dale Hinkelman of Temperance recently purchased the property where he plans to open a classic car shop and used car dealership.

Business owners in downtown are hopeful this change will have a positive impact on the area.

"Any business is a plus here," said Pam Norton, owner of H&S Sports on Lewis Ave. "That will be very nice."

Department of Environmental Quality.

The property also has a zoning dilemma. It is zoned C-1, which in Bedford Township is designated for local commercial uses such as retail businesses, service businesses, banks, publicly-owned buildings, child care facilities and offices.

The station operated under a legal nonconforming use status, which is defined as a lawfully occupied building that can be used for something other than what is specified for its zoning.

The problem was 40 years in the making.

When the township first instituted major zoning changes in 1962, service stations could operate in C-1 with special permission. C-3 wasn't even a designation at that time.

In 1977, when the township created a master plan, service stations were put into C-3 zoning, but since the Mobil station already was operational, it was given legal nonconforming status.

“I think downtown Temperance is really going to change face in the next five to 10 years.”

— Dale Hinkelman,
Bedford Auto Source owner

Supervisor LaMar Frederick confirmed this.

"I would suspect that the board would not rezone it to C-3 because that is the most intense zoning district, not compatible with the adjacent properties," he said.

After the last prospective buyer failed to get financing, Loga agreed to sell it to Hinkelman in cash for \$75,000, 32 percent less than the original asking price of \$109,000.

While both Lennex and Loga were a bit disappointed that they weren't able to get the asking price, they were happy to finally sell the property. Both expressed enthusiasm for Hinkelman's project.

A new plan

Jay Hinkelman.

As they've been working, numerous people have pulled up to the gas station to inquire about their plans.

While cleaning out the furnace room, the two found a copy of the plans for the current building, which was built in 1953.

Over the next few months, the two plan to refurbish the entire place to match those original specifications, right down to the blue and white paint on the exterior.

Since the two are doing most of the work themselves, Dale estimates that it will cost about \$20,000 to get the place looking like new.

Once finished, they plan to

defunct Ken's Auto Parts and now Bedford Auto Body.

They plan to sell late-model used cars and classic cars, and hope that the shop will become a hangout for classic car buffs.

It was the pair's love of classic cars that inspired them to start the Bedford Summer Charity Cruise car show last summer in Kroger Plaza.

Beyond the business plan, Dale, who also is a member of the Bedford Township's Economic Development Corporation, hopes that by opening this business it will encourage others to follow suit, boosting the downtown area.

"I think downtown Temperance is really going to change face in the next five to 10 years," he said.

Hinkelman will go before the Bedford Board of Zoning Appeals Feb. 3 to try to get approval to operate a used car business.

Since Bedford Township's zoning ordinances stipulate the used car dealerships must operate in a C-3 district, this, if approved, will be the first

Linda Locher has owned Dominick's Pizza on Lewis Ave. for eight years.

In the last year, she has seen two businesses adjacent to her close, so she believes that the increase in people that a used and classic car shop would bring would be an asset to her business.

Selling problems

Selling the property was no easy task.

Loga's husband, Bob, was killed in an auto accident in 1996. In 1970, he purchased the service station, which he operated until 1993.

In the latter half of the '90s, Loga couldn't sell the property because the site had a leak from one of the underground fuel tanks

Steve Lennex, the real estate broker for the property, said that many offers came in on the property, but that banks declined to finance the purchases because of the legal nonconforming status and the environmental issues.

Lennex said the numerous legal nonconforming land uses in Bedford have made it difficult for him to sell many properties in the township.

He said the township's new commercial zoning ordinances, which were passed in August, make many more businesses legal nonconforming and will, in the long run, make it difficult for owners to sell their businesses or get loans for improvements.

Loga never came before the township board to ask for the property to be rezoned.

Lennex said he'd made

Revitalizing the station is a father/son project for Dale and

open Bedford Auto Source, a business they've operated since 1999, first out of the now-

approved, would give the new business legal nonconforming status.