

Home center buys building

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Note: Cascade, in downtown Cottage Grove, will expand into the neighboring former Pacific Power offices

COTTAGE GROVE - The Cascade Home Center is expanding, again, in a move that will more than double its retail space in downtown Cottage Grove, according to one of the owners.

The home center's owners have bought the neighboring former Pacific Power building in what Cascade co-owner George Devine described as "a leap of faith."

"It is a unique building, not suited to everyone," Devine said. But it serves Cascade's long term expansion plans well, he said.

"The whole back and yard area is where we will move our equipment rental business," he said. "The front side has a break room, lunch room, offices. That's where we'll move our administrative offices."

"There's kind of a big open area in front that we'll convert to a showroom, so contractors can bring their customers in," he said.

The property is at 75 S. Fifth St. Cascade paid \$410,000 on June 25, according to the purchase deed filed with Lane County.

Devine and his partners plan to do extensive remodeling of the building, which was built in 1975 and sits on a half-acre. Devine declined to disclose the estimated cost of remodeling, other than to say it is significant and that the company will use outside financing.

When the work is finished, in about eight to 10 months, Cascade will go from about 6,800 square feet of retail space to about 14,000, he said.

Devine said the partners expect to add five or six employees to their current 27 over the next year.

Like a lot of companies tied to the construction and remodeling industry, Cascade has taken a hit from the downturn in the economy in the past few years.

"We lost a fair amount of our contractor business as a direct result of low housing starts," Devine said. The company dealt with this, he said, "the old-fashioned way, by tightening our belts, just controlling expenses and inventory."

"The retail portion of the business has stayed steady," he added, and that's where the store is hoping to see sales growth in the short term to support its physical growth.

Devine said he hopes that the expansion, which will allow Cascade to add more product lines, will keep shopping dollars in town that have been going to hardware and home supply stores in Eugene-Springfield.

The purchase of the former Pacific Power building comes after a series of earlier expansions by Cascade, including the opening of a Creswell store in 1999 and of a neighboring building in downtown Cottage Grove in 2003.

Devine said of the latest purchase: "It's kind of like the best time and the worst time to do this. It's the best time because interest rates on money are really good. It's the worst time because the economy is really down."

"We're trying to find ways to perk it up. The town needs it, the community needs it," he said. "It's good for the future of our employees, good to provide for our future - and we're trying to support the downtown."

Real estate broker Justin Schmick, who represented Cascade in the deal, said the expansion is good for Cottage Grove.

"In addition to creating jobs, by expanding their product line and services, it provides the community with more opportunities to buy local. Supporting locally owned businesses keeps more money within a community and has a trickle down effect which will eventually benefit everybody," said Schmick, of Windermere Commercial.

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Abstract (Document Summary)

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