

Auto parts company eyes store here

Location, investor needed to proceed

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A new store might be opening in Fostoria, but it depends on who the owner turns out to be.

Josh D'Agostino, Genuine Parts Company's director of new business development, explained he wants to see a NAPA Auto Parts store in Fostoria.

D'Agostino said before determining where a good fit would be for a new store, the company looks at how many vehicles are registered in the area and also where the next closest store is located.

Fostoria has 23,790 vehicles registered, according to D'Agostino, and the nearest store is more than 15 miles away from the city. With those numbers, D'Agostino said the company does not feel it is adequately serving the market in Fostoria.

"When you're that far away, that really detracts from the service capabilities," D'Agostino said.

Fostoria Economic Development Corporation Executive Director Joan Reinhard said she has spoken to D'Agostino about what is needed to make the idea of a store into a reality.

"They are looking for a 5,000 to 6,000 square foot building," Reinhard said.

The company is also considering renting as opposed to purchasing the structure. But, the

company isn't who is needed to get things put into motion, Reinhard explained. Instead, an investor is needed to become an independent owner.

"The independent owner would put up \$75,000 and then what (the company) would do is furnish him with the inventory of up to (\$500,000)," Reinhard said.

Now is the time for the auto parts store to come to Fostoria, though, D'Agostino said. With new hires brought in anytime a store opens, D'Agostino said if the plans work out, seven to nine new jobs could be created.

Due to the type of businesses in Fostoria, D'Agostino said he believes NAPA, of which 70 percent of the business is wholesale, would be useful for the smaller business owners in the area.

"There's more to a NAPA store than what we would call light automotive," D'Agostino said.

He explained NAPA stores sell tools and equipment from major car lifts to hand tools. But, identifying a location is usually a challenge, D'Agostino said.

Besides the appropriate size, the building used for the store would also need the right visibility and parking.

"That's really the next step for us," D'Agostino said.

But, while Reinhard's next step is to prepare a list of properties that might fit what an independent owner would want to look for in a store, that individual has not been identified yet, if one steps up to the challenge at all.