

Floor Covering Media

Your Gateway to the Floor Covering Industry

Sears returning to Fort Gratiot



A Sears Hometown Store is slated to open in [Fort Gratiot](#) the first weekend of November. The owners of Independent Floor Covering, 3842 Pine Grove Ave., will be allotting about 2,000 square feet of their 21,000-square-foot layout to accommodate the store-within-a-store. Tom and Wing Thiele will sell washers, dryers, dishwashers, refrigerators, freezers, microwaves and vacuum cleaners in their shop.

In the future they may look into incorporating the Craftsmen brand and outdoor lawn equipment. They said have already gotten inquiries about that. There also will be a Sears kiosk within the store that will allow customers to order any Sears product, including those not on display at the store. "We thought the store would be a good complement to our flooring business," said Wing Thiele. "And we specifically asked for vacuums in addition to the other appliances since that relates to our flooring business."

A Sears representative approached the husband-wife owners about four months ago to see if they would be interested in the concept. Last week the Sears board of directors approved all the paperwork to move forward. Thiele said store staff is working to consolidate their flooring displays to make room for the Sears displays.

In October Wing and Tom Thiele will travel to Illinois to go through a week of Sears Hometown Stores training before they can officially open. "We still need to get the Sears signage and inventory," Wing Thiele said. "And we may possibly be adding additional staff such as sales, offices and warehouse help, but that will depend on how busy we will be." The Thieles opened their flooring store in 1998 at the corner of Lapeer and 10th avenues, where CVS Pharmacy is now located in Port Huron. A few years after opening shop there, CVS bought them out and they moved to their current Pine Grove Avenue location. Thiele said the Sears merchandise will help keep the store busy in the winter months when flooring sales typically slow.

Sears Hometown and Outlet Stores are a spin-off of the retail chain that is a separate entity from Sears Holdings Corporation. The store-within-a-store model typically costs between \$26,000 and \$30,000 to open. In January, the Sears and Sears Auto Center in Birchwood Mall announced it would be closing in March. The store originally opened in 1991. Thiele said she believes this alternative Sears model will fill that void. Currently there is another Sears Hometown store location at 201 N. Riverside Ave. in St. Clair.

For more information call Independent Floor Covering at (810) 984-4196.

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Flooring Updates

By Betty

Flooring Network

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