

Permit opens door for Goodwill store

Written by STEVE OSTERMANN
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Commission approval paves way for organization to set up retail business in former Sears building

Plans to establish a Goodwill Store and Donation Center in Grafton cleared the final hurdle Tuesday with approval of a conditional-use permit by the village's Plan Commission.

The permit paves the way for the nonprofit retail business to open in the former Sears store building, 1715 Wisconsin Ave., which has been vacant since last fall.

Goodwill Retail Services plans to lease the 21,400-square-foot building, which is owned by Continental Properties. A resale shop that will occupy all the space is expected to employ 40 to 50 full and part-time workers in positions ranging from management to customer service.

The proposal received a favorable initial review from the commission in January, when members said the planned use was well-suited for the building and would be a good addition to the village's south commercial district.

However, as a condition of approval, the commission agreed to a provision stating the permit would be terminated if the property is sold to Goodwill or any of its affiliate organizations.

Village Administrator Darrell Hofland said discouraging the sale of the building to a tax-exempt organization such as Goodwill is designed to protect the village's property tax base. As long as the building is owned by Continental, the property will remain taxable, he noted.

If Goodwill chooses to buy the property, it can continue operating the store by negotiating a payment-in-lieu-of-taxes agreement with the village, Planning Director Mike Rambousek said.

The permit approval also requires landscaping improvements and the use of signs that comply with design guidelines in the district's redevelopment plan.

A site plan for the project was approved by the Architectural Review Board in early February.

Goodwill officials said the store would be open 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. weekdays, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Saturdays and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sundays. A drop-off site with two drive-through lanes for donating items will be located in an area at the north end of the building formerly used for outdoor storage.

Plans call for the new store to use all of the existing 80 parking spaces at the site.

Goodwill Retail Services, headquartered in Milwaukee, currently operates more than 40 stores

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in southeastern Wisconsin and northeastern Illinois.

Goodwill stores sell a variety of new and used merchandise, including clothes, jewelry, antiques, sporting goods, electronic equipment, toys, books, records and home decor items.

The Grafton store is expected to open by late June or early July.