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Gillingham Ford plans multi-million dollar renovation

PARMA, Ohio -- Bob Gillingham, whose family is in its sixth decade of local business ownership, says that fact alone is proof that, for a businessman, there's no place like Parma.

"I can't think of a better place to have a business than Parma," Gillingham said. "That's why we've been here more than 50 years. It's really nice that we've been this successful. We try to return the favor by exceeding peoples' expectations."

Prepare to be wowed.

Early next spring, Gillingham Ford expects to complete substantial renovations to its dealership at 8383 Brook Park Road. The multi-million-dollar project includes a new café area for customer waiting, along with a customer business center with laptop work stations and a wi-fi connection.

Interior and exterior LED energy efficient lighting will be added and/or replaced throughout the dealership, and a new "vehicle vestibule" will be added, which incorporates what Operations Manager Scott Lockhart calls an "open customer touchpoint plan" that gives a whole new meaning to the term "drive-in service bay."

The exterior of the building will also be re-faced; the front blue pyramid pitch will be replaced with a brushed aluminum arch, Lockhart said. He added that the project, which is using local architects and contractors, should begin by mid-summer, and completion is expected to be "buttoned-up not long after the first of the year, certainly by early spring."

Lockhart and Gillingham both cited the dealership's community involvement as an additional reason for excitement surrounding the project. "We'd like to get back to those traditional community events we have with schools and community organizations," Lockhart said.

Gillingham added: “It’s so exciting to be able to give back to the community, and we can’t wait to get back to that. Without this community, we wouldn’t be here. Why wouldn’t we want to give back?”

Gillingham Ford is very active in local school fund raisers and events for community organizations.

“Bob Gillingham Ford is one of those business partners that any city would be proud to have, and we’re fortunate that they chose Parma back in 1962,” Mayor Tim DeGeeter said. “They have done such good work in our community and with our schools, and the dealership has certainly added to the health of our local business environment. We are looking forward to the completion of their renovation project, which will make the dealership even more attractive.”

The Gillingham project joins a spate of new commercial activity in the Brook Park Road corridor of Parma that includes Rush Truck Centers, Pitt Ohio Trucking and renovations at Axelrod Buick-GMC.