

## **The Depot offers affordability for shoppers, sellers**

Posted: 02/09/2010 8:53 AM

Robin L. Gardner | Independent Tribune

Plans for The Depot are ambitious, managing partner Gary Pigg admits. He hopes to open a restaurant in the building, which already includes individual stalls that retailers can rent to sell their wares. The concept is a cheaper alternative for businesses that can't afford to open a storefront of their own.

Union 21, which closed in downtown Concord, has set up a stall.

"Our rent is one dollar per square foot," Pigg said.

Businesses that are downsizing or going out of business can find this an affordable alternative, he explained.

One vendor, Debby Clark Designs, was putting finishing touches on the two stalls she is renting. Clark is a residential designer who specializes in faux painting and accent finishing.

"Last year, my father was dying of cancer, and he wanted me to have my own business," Clark said.

Her father helped enhance her residential design skills at a faux painting school.

The Depot gives her an opportunity to have a business, while working her day job.

Clark hopes the exposure will help build up her clientele.

"We want to turn this mill into a destination point. We have plenty of room to do it," Pigg said. "We are going to have everything — collectibles, antiques and some new furniture. We want to keep it upscale. It's not going to be something that you could just get at a yard sale."

The Depot, located at 325 McGill Ave NW, Suite 510, opened its doors on Feb. 1 and is filled to capacity for Phase I, according to Pigg. Pigg and the Southpaw Partners who own Gibson Mills — Tom Cotter, George Liles Jr., Trey Barnette and Joe Liles — all have a 20 percent share in the antique and home furnishing venture.

"My partners came to me and my dad and said, 'Hey, we got this spot, and we really want to do something with it,'" Pigg said.

The Depot is comprised of 88,000 square feet. Phase I makes use of approximately 44,000 square feet, which includes 296 stalls for vendors.

Phase II already has 25 stalls occupied, about 25 percent of what will be available.

Pigg also plans a separate design center, an additional 30,000 square feet space where a customer will be able to fully design a room. One vendor will be represented from each specialty service like cabinet making, rugs, landscaping and flooring, and will help design the customer's vision.

This will make The Depot one of the largest antiques malls in the area, according to Pigg.

During this slow economy, it's a perfect time to open this type of business, he explained. His parents have been in the antique and furniture business for years, and own Décor and More in Concord.

Growing up around the business, coupled with the different business ventures he's been involved in, Pigg feels his experience gives him what he needs to make this work.

"People aren't looking to pay retail right now," Pigg said. "They can't afford it. Everyone is looking for a deal. There is always haggling."

Some of the vendors carry new furniture and home furnishings but offer them below retail price.

"You may want to look at a farm table for \$1,000, but you can come in here and buy a reproduction for \$200," Pigg said.

The Depot also has vendors who specialize in old antiques.

There are six employees to help customers navigate around the space. They will contact vendors if there are any questions about the merchandise.

For more information about The Depot, call 704-280- 4278