

Harbor Freight will open Warrenton store next year

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Discount tool retailer Harbor Freight has signed a multi-year lease for 15,000 square feet in the Warrenton Towne Centre, including this space that Gold's Gym occupied for 13 years.

They expressed interest even before we had space available.

— Nicholas Kalis, shopping center owner

Harbor Freight, a discount tool chain based in California, will open a Warrenton store next year.

The company recently signed a long-term lease for 15,000 square feet in the Warrenton Towne Center at Frost Avenue and Van Roijen Street, according to the shopping center owner.

Harbor Freight will occupy the former Gold's Gym space at 627 Frost Ave. and a warehouse area behind it, Nicholas Kalis said in a phone interview Thursday.

“They expressed interest even before we had space available” last year, Mr. Kalis said of Harbor Freight.

But, with their lease about to expire, the Gold's Gym franchise owners in December sold their business to Old Town Athletic Club. That freed the space and serious negotiations with the tool retailer began in February, according to Mr. Kalis.

Warrenton remains attractive to retailers because of high traffic and lower rents than Gainesville or Manassas, he suggested. Mr. Kalis declined to provide details of the Harbor Freight lease or rent. But, commercial leases to the east can run as high as \$50 per square foot annually, plus \$10 a square foot for other costs, such as taxes and insurance, he said.

It will take months for Harbor Freight to remodel the interior and front of the building, with the store probably opening “in the middle of 2021,” he said. “They'll be doing a new facade, with a taller parapet.”

His company, McLean-based Kalis Development Corp. has owned the shopping center, with 123,500 square feet of buildings, since 2003. Tenants include Food Lion and CVS.

Tuesday Morning, a discount home goods store, and the Country Cookin' restaurant in the center recently closed. But, Mr. Kalis said he hopes the restaurant — one of 14 in a Roanoke-based chain — will reopen when the business climate for sit-down eateries improves.

Otherwise the shopping center remains fully leased, Mr. Kalis said. “I feel fortunate.”

Chairman/CEO Eric Smidt, while a teenager, and his father started Harbor Freight and Salvage as a mail-order business 43 years ago in North Hollywood, Calif.

The privately-held company has grown to more than 1,000 stores and estimated revenue of more than \$3 billion a year. In this region, the company has stores in Culpeper and Manassas.



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