Pompey Mall, the 1,400-square-foot convenience store Don Neugebauer has owned and operated since 2003, was still producing, but had become tired.

The building, fixtures and equipment were beyond upgrading. He had a big decision to make. The choice was “either everything or nothing,” he says.

Don approached the situation the way he does most business challenges – analytically. He read everything he could find about industry trends. He ran some numbers. Could the small hamlet of Pompey in Onondaga County support his major investment in a bigger new store, and new underground storage tanks? He picked the brains of other retailers, suppliers, and industry consultants. For nearly two years, he mulled the options.

“Finally,” Don says, “I decided I needed to jump in with both feet, and build what’s appropriate for the community and for the industry.”

So he is constructing the new 4,400-square-foot Pompey Mall with 1,200-square-foot outdoor seating area, directly behind the existing shop, which will stay open until the new one’s finished this fall. Twice as long and twice as tall, it’ll be cleaner, brighter, and roomier, with plenty of space for a full food service program. Don has incorporated exterior design features he noticed other retailers using and liked, notably a barn-like profile and arched entryway. With the new tanks already in the ground, he’ll soon expand from four unbranded fueling positions to eight.

He has a son he hopes will become more involved in the business, and that factored into his decision to build. Plus, “the convenience store business is what I’ve always done.” For years, he was an executive of a chain operating in upstate New York.

Surrounded by rolling fields of corn and hay, Pompey is more or less midway between Syracuse to the north, Cazenovia to the east, Fabius to the south, and LaFayette to the west. But Route 20 provides a stream of commuters and travelers to supplement the local regulars.

Back in the 1970s, a previous owner named the place “The Pompey Mall” as sort of a half-joke about how remote and tiny it was, but the name stuck and it became a landmark. Ironically, this mall is still thriving while others in the region are struggling to survive.

Don knows he made the right choice, and is fully aware of the financial ramifications. He notes, with a wry grin, that “I’m 62 now, and I’m going to be paying my mortgage until I’m 84!”

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