

Town's mall draws regional customers

By Rosalind Raby
Espanola

Espanola is considered the hub of the North Shore (of Lake Huron) for several reasons, especially when it comes to shopping.

There are more than 200 small businesses located in the bustling town, plus many retailers such as Hart, Giant Tiger, Canadian Tire, Independent Grocers and more.

The Espanola Mall, which opened 30 years ago, became a destination for area residents.

"Things were going very well," said pharmacist Boris Petcoff, who opened his IDA location at the mall in 1976. "We were the nucleus for the whole area."

The mall went through many changes over the years and was recently purchased by Winchester Developments. The mall has since undergone an expansion with additional floor space added to the front façade to allow for the housing of several new businesses.

Mark's Work Warehouse district

manager Keith Lim says the Canadian retailer decided to open a location in Espanola, the only one between Sudbury and Sault Ste. Marie. The clothing store opened in a 2,700-square-foot facility a couple of years ago.

"We saw success in other smaller towns, so we saw an opportunity here," he said.

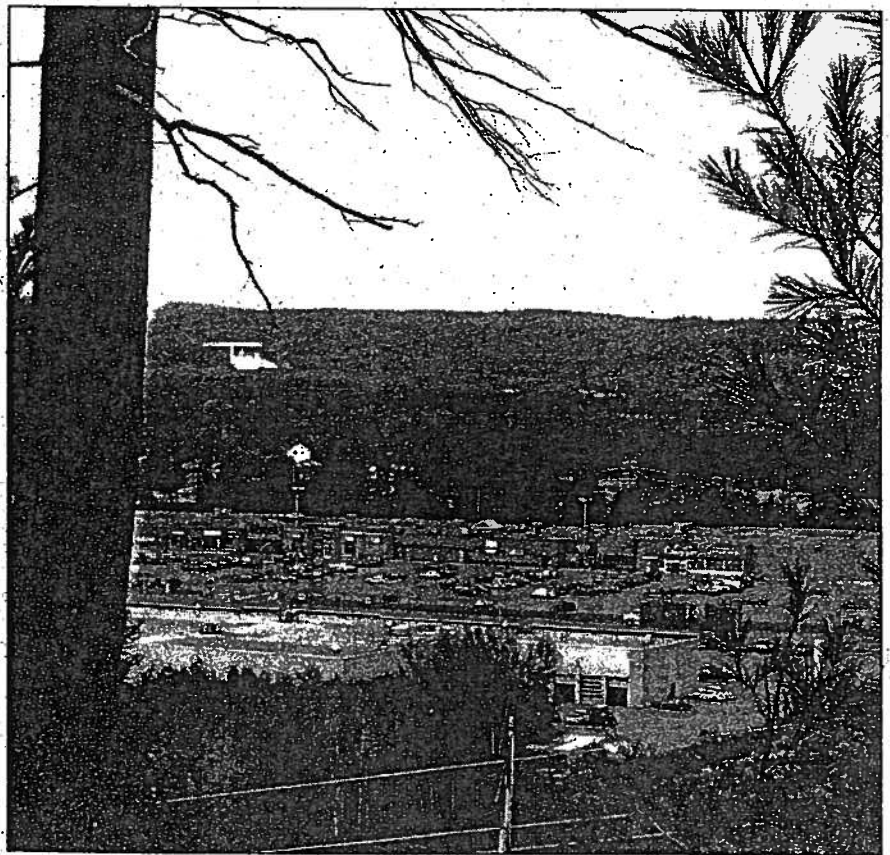
The store experienced a good first year in business at its Espanola location with improved sales over the second and third year. The decision was made to expand the location.

"It's interesting. We didn't realize at first how much of a draw the Espanola Mall is to the region. You have Manitoulin Island right there. In the spring, summer and fall there are a lot of people who pass by the mall," he said.

The vacancy rate has gone from 43 per cent when the Espanola Mall was first purchased to its current three per cent.

For tenants like Petcoff, that is welcomed news.

"We wanted more traffic in the mall, and we're seeing that happen," he said.



The Espanola Mall has been in the community for 30 years.

Rosalind Raby Photo