



Times-Democrat Staff Photo/Randy Litzinger

NEARLY GONE: Little remains of the former Joe Jacoby Jeep dealership in Warrenton, as workers prepare the site for a new Wawa gas station and convenience store.

Warrenton Wawa to open in fall

BY DON DEL ROSSO
Times-Democrat Staff Writer

With bulldozers and backhoes, workers this week finished demolishing the old Joe Jacoby Jeep dealership showroom and garage in Warrenton, making way for a Wawa gas station and convenience store.

"It looks like we're going to open around October or November," said Joe Scarantino, Wawa's construction-engineering project manager.

It will take about five months to complete the project,

said Scarantino, who has worked on 77 Wawa stores in Virginia and Maryland in the last decade.

The Warrenton store will employ about 35, including up to 12 full-timers.

Wawa has an agreement to lease the 1.4-acre commercial site at West Shirley Avenue and U.S. 211 from Jacoby's L.J. Realty Ltd. Partnership in Winchester.

The Pennsylvania-based company typically owns and

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develops its sites, he said.

For tax purposes, the county values the site's land at almost \$1.4 million. It assessed the dealership building at \$569,600.

The former Redskins lineman opened the dealership at 510 W. Shirley Ave. in October 1993 and shut it in February 2008, according to town records.

The landowners will deliver a pad-ready site and Wawa will pay construction costs for the 4,085-square-foot convenience store and gas station. It will be built of brick, block and siding and include 10 gas pumps on five islands.

"When the lease expires, if Wawa elects not to renew it, all that goes to the landowner," Scarantino said.

He described the Warrenton store as a "prototypical building for Wawa" and the property as a "very straight-forward site," posing no unusual land development challenges.

The Warrenton store puts Wawa in direct competition with the Pennsylvania-based Sheetz, which opened a gas station and convenience store at the south end of town on Lee Highway in 1977. (It opened the Opal operation in 1996.)

Both companies specialize in fresh, made-to-order meals, assorted branded products, coffee, convenience and quick service.

"It's another business coming in," Sheetz Vice President of Operations Travis Sheetz said of Wawa's Warrenton store. "Anytime a business opens, you've got additional competition."

He believes "there's room" for Wawa and others in the area's "growing market."

"They're a good company," said Sheetz, nephew of the company's founder, Bob Sheetz. "People are going to go there."

In other markets where the two companies have stations and stores, "it's never happened that we could attribute" fluctuating revenue "to a Wawa coming in," Sheetz said.

He said "gas pricing drives the variation in customer counts."

Many people go from station to station in search of the lowest gas prices, not for food, Sheetz said.

But with the "food business, you build a loyalty, a brand," he

said. "Food customers are much pickier than gas customers."

Wawa's Warrenton store will not change how Sheetz operates it town store, Sheetz said.

"It's not big news," he said.

For its part, Sheetz will continue to provide Warrenton customers the best possible service it can, he said.

In the Mid-Atlantic, Wawa has more than 570 stores and Sheetz about 390 stores.

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