

# Antique mall on North Shore to close by end of August; new owner to renovate property

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The Knitting Mill, at 205 Manufacturer's Rd., is soon to be sold and repurposed. The 20,000-square-foot first floor of the old building presently offers antiques.

Photo by [Tim Barber](#) /Times Free Press.

## Gallery: Knitting Mill gets new owner and plans Antique mall on North Shore to close by end of August



Chattanooga's booming North Shore is getting another multi-million-dollar shot in the arm but will say goodbye to a well-liked antiques mall.

Atlanta developer David Woodbery, of the Woodbery Group, paid \$3.55 million for the Knitting Mill Antiques building at 205 Manufacturers Road. He plans to spend another \$8 million upgrading the brick, 60,000-square-foot, two-and-a-half-story (counting the windowed basement) structure.

"It's a 100-year-old, beautiful building," Woodbery said. "We really want to bring out its character, its charm and its authenticity. People want that — and you can't recreate it."

The building's first and second floors will be converted into a space for boutiques, specialty food shops, offices — and a second restaurant at the building's opposite end from Food Works, which will remain.

"Yes, we are staying in the building," Danny Hilson, general manager at Food Works, a restaurant that's open daily and popular Sunday brunch destination that just celebrated its 10-year anniversary.

Woodbery also will add parking spaces on his property.

### **'Quietly for sale'**

Woodbery bought the textile mill, which was built in 1916, from Scott and Lynn Short, who turned it into an antiques mall in 2003.

"We have actually had this quietly for sale for about two years," Scott Short said. "We've just kind of been flying under the radar."

Woodbery plans to rebrand the building as Signal Mill. He's chosen Chattanooga's Accent Construction Services to renovate the building, which will include replacing the heating and cooling systems and creating offices on the vacant second floor.

Woodbery expects to welcome his first tenants in early 2017.

He declined to say what the restaurant may be.

"We're currently in discussions with a couple of different concepts," Woodbery said.

Woodbery has some 25 years' experience in real estate investment and development, mainly in Atlanta, but also in Florida and on St. Simons Island, Ga. He still works with his longtime business partner, Jay Weaver, with whom Woodbery formed a company, Weaver & Woodbery Co.

"We do a range of projects, from residential development to commercial redevelopment projects," Woodbery said.

Woodbery's \$11.5 million investment comes on the heels of other big investments near the Knitting Mill, including the recent \$28 million sale of the Whole Foods-anchored 2 North Shore center next door, a bid of \$5.6 million in bankruptcy court for a 6.6-acre tract across the street where Allen Casey's would-be restaurant barge was moored and Vision Chattanooga Northshore, a \$10 million five-story apartment and retail complex being built at Cherokee Boulevard and Manufacturers Road.

"The North Shore is really popping," Woodbery said. "I think it's the best location in Chattanooga, personally."

### **Antiques liquidation sale**

In the meantime, the antiques mall's roughly 100 vendors will have to move out before the end of August. The last regular day of business is Saturday, Aug. 7. Then a four-day liquidation sale is scheduled from Aug. 12-15. Many vendors already have discounted their wares.

"Everybody's kind of bummed out," said Mark Kissel, a vendor who has sold his paintings for the past 11 years at the Knitting Mill, as well as picture frames, light fixtures and other antiques.

"This mall does the best of any antique mall in town," said Kissel, who will relocate to Sugarplums Antiques and Treasures near Ringgold Road and Interstate 75 in East Ridge.

"Some people come here every day. The whole community is going to miss this," Kissel said. "What makes the Knitting Mill so great is this building. It's not just a vacant grocery store."

Short said he and his wife plan to open another antiques mall in a yet-to-be decided location, and most of the vendors have said they would follow.

"Rejoin us, when we reopen," Short said.

While the Shorts launched the antiques mall in 2003, they actually bought the building in 1998 from Signal Apparel when the mill still operated — barely — as textile manufacturing moved out of the United States.

"They were in their last — I call it their death throes," said Short, who also runs a commercial real estate business, Rivercity Realty Inc., with business partner Tom Cofer. "You remember Ross Perot referencing that 'giant sucking sound.' That's what happened to Signal Apparel."

The Shorts paid \$375,000 for the building in 1998, according to the Hamilton County Assessor's Office.

"We put a lot more money than we originally paid," Short said. "The big money was in the renovations."

The Shorts initially planned to turn the building into loft apartments, but then decided to launch the antiques mill. In 1998, the North Shore hadn't yet transformed into a trendy place to shop, live and play. There was a lumber yard — not a Whole Foods-anchored shopping mall — next to the Knitting Mill, and Roper Corp. still assembled stoves at its factory that stood on the site of what's now Renaissance Park.

"We were pioneers over on that side of the river, but we knew it was coming," Short said. "I have to give my wife all that credit. She's the one that had the vision, of seeing where that building could go, what it could be — and she was right."

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