

# Perfect blend: City officials welcome SPoT Coffee to North Tonawanda

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY MICHAEL DEPIETRO

Business is a-brewing in the Lumber City.

On Friday, North Tonawanda city officials hosted a public “Welcome to Webster Street” event to commemorate the arrival of downtown’s newest business, SPoT Coffee. Mayor Arthur G. Pappas, Common Council President Robert Pecoraro, and several city administrators were on hand to toast the java shop’s arrival and deliver the official occupancy certificate to franchise owner and local developer Ralph Dailey, who purchased the building in 2018.

“I really want to thank Ralph for leading forward (and) committing himself to North Tonawanda and the downtown merchants association and the businesses associated with Webster Street. This is really, truly a transformational nature for us,” Pecoraro said.

The popular café and bake-shop franchise officially opened its doors to customers earlier in the week at a newly renovated 54 Webster St. The site, once a popular G.C. Murphy depart-



North Tonawanda city officials welcomed Spot Coffee to 54 Webster St. From left: North Tonawanda Clerk Treasurer Donna Braun, Common Council President Robert Pecoraro, Mayor Arthur G. Pappas, 2nd Ward Alderman Frank DiBernardo, building and franchise owner Ralph Dailey, and franchise manager Josh Horton. • A look inside the newest SPoT Coffee location.



ment store, was most recently the home of the North Tonawanda History Museum, which has since moved to a new location at 712 Oliver St.

Reflecting on the location’s history, Pappas recalled a time when Murphy’s was “the place to be” in NT. As he marveled at the extensive renovations that have been done to the building this past year, he expressed optimism the building would see its popularity

return.

“Look at the facade of this building; look at the improvements that have been made. It’s just so exciting and it’s so nice to see, and Mr. Dailey, we have to thank you for choosing North Tonawanda,” Pappas said. “When you chose North Tonawanda for SPoT coffee, you were spot on.”

The Toronto-based coffee-house chain now has seven franchises throughout Western New

York as well as locations in Ontario, Rochester, Saratoga Springs and Glens Falls. There are now even franchises in Connecticut and Florida.

The Webster Street store features a unique interior design that pays tribute to the city’s canalway heritage. The trendy looking interior features a number of nautical accents, including a wooden captain sculpture and a suspended boat that previously belonged to

the North Tonawanda History Museum. The entrance hallway is also adorned with artwork from dozens of NT artists.

The chain, known primarily for its microroasted coffee and gourmet sandwiches and pastries, has been a hit in NT even before it opened. For perspective, Dailey said when he put out a call on Facebook for local artwork submissions, he was inundated with close to 1,300 submissions. He also says the page alone has received more than 63,000 hits.

“The response is, it’s insane. It’s really overwhelming,” Dailey said. “People have asked, ‘What can we bring to the community?’ I think we just bring good food, good coffee. And people are just embracing this. It’s fantastic.”

Dailey’s not the only one celebrating the success. Pecoraro, who is also the president of the city’s Chamber of Commerce, said having a popular company like SPoT Coffee commit to the area bodes well for other nearby businesses.

“It means a lot to get a national sponsor and a national company like SPoT Coffee in here to say, you know, we’re committing ourselves to North Tonawanda and franchising here, and it shows North Tonawanda matters. That’s the thrill of it for all of us merchants in the area,” Pecoraro said.

He said the immediate success of the coffeehouse is particularly significant to Webster Street. Businesses in the area have had to navigate the pandemic without one of the area’s biggest draws: the Riviera Theater. Luckily, businesses have so far been able to weather that storm.

“With the Riviera being closed since last March, the downtown merchants have really found that, even though they’re the anchor to bringing businesses to the downtown area, that these businesses are still thriving. Even though we love the Riviera and we want to continue to see him thrive, as well, it’s good to see businesses have been able to thrive on their own without having an anchor like the Riviera. But it’ll be better for everyone once we have the Riviera reopen,” Pecoraro said.

As businesses in the downtown area like SPoT Coffee wait for that anchor to reopen, plans are in the works for the café to implement outdoor seating come spring. Pecoraro said city planners are taking this opportunity to craft an overall plan that will allow other downtown businesses to implement outdoor seating more quickly and efficiently.

“I’m working with the building

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