

Hesser Nissan current location likely will become parking lot

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(BUTCH COMEGYS / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER: Railroad tracks abut the Tom Hesser Nissan dealership at 25 Lackawanna Ave. in downtown Scranton. The dealership plans to move to Dunmore by year's end.)

After Tom Hesser Nissan moves from downtown Scranton to Dunmore, its Lackawanna Avenue location likely will be used as it is now - for parking, minus the showroom and service bays.

The property will likely come into play as Lackawanna County presses forward with the intermodal transit center, intended for a site across the street. The center will occupy what is now valuable parking for state employees.

The Hesser site, and neighboring Martz bus terminal site, are both slated to replace that parking, according to long-languishing plans for the intermodal center.

The Hesser site is owned by Scranton Acquisitions, sister entity to the Mall at Steamtown. When the shopping center was first developed, the site was the Montgomery Ward Auto Center. When Montgomery Ward closed, the site was leased to the auto dealer, said Brian West, operations manager for the Mall at Steamtown.

The Nissan dealership outgrew the odd-shaped lot. The announcement of the intermodal center and the need for parking it would generate prompted Scranton Acquisitions and the principals of the dealership to talk about the future of the site, Mr. West said.

"They use every inch of that site, and they were looking for another home," said Mr. West. "We've been working cooperatively with them for several years."

When the intermodal center hit snags in development and, for a time, lost a federal grant that provided a cornerstone in financing, Scranton Acquisitions extended the lease with Tom Hesser Nissan.

With a \$2.9 million grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation restored, the county plans to break ground this year on the project estimated at \$12.6 million. It will provide a new hub for County of Lackawanna Transit System and Martz buses.

Officials from Tom Hesser Nissan say they expect to move by the end of the year.

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