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## The Orrin B. Hayes dealership to spend \$1 million on new Mercedes-Benz showroom in downtown Kalamazoo



An artist's rendering by TowerPinkster architects and engineers provides an idea of how the new Orrin B. Hayes Mercedes-Benz showroom should look in downtown Kalamazoo. The dealership will add another 3,100 square feet to the 32,000 square feet it already has in the 500 block of West Michigan Avenue. *(Courtesy Photo)*



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**KALAMAZOO, MI** – The Orrin B. Hayes automobile dealership plans to create a new showroom space for its Mercedes-Benz franchise in downtown Kalamazoo.

The dealership expects to spend about \$1 million to add another 3,100 square feet to the 32,000 square feet it already has adjacent to 543 W. Michigan Ave. and to remodel.

Construction may begin as early as October and be completed by April.

**The dealership** has used that location at the corner of West Michigan Avenue and South Westnedge Avenue in downtown Kalamazoo since 1938, selling Mazda and Mercedes-Benz vehicles from a combined showroom there.

Mazda vehicles were previously sold from an 11,000-square-foot building to the immediate south, at 140 S. Westnedge Ave., but that building is being leased by the car dealership to **a new craft brewery** that is expected to open this fall, **Gonzo's Biggdogg Brewery**.

The dealership sold Oldsmobiles out of its main downtown showroom until production of that line of vehicles was phased out in 2004.

“Mercedes and Mazda are growing,” said Amy Krone, general manager and co-owner of Orrin B. Hayes Inc. “Both are introducing new products and their products are really well received.”

She said Mercedes-Benz, known for high-end luxury and performance, is introducing a new line of front-wheel-drive vehicles that will start at prices around \$30,000 to attract younger buyers, those who might not otherwise consider the car line until they are further along in their working careers.

The new line is called the Mercedes-Benz CLA-class.

“They have a new direction that will help them grow with a whole new group of buyers,” Krone said.

Although she did not cite figures, she said Mercedes sales have improved in the post-recession era.

“We’ve been seeing growth that supports our decision to do that,” she said of the expansion.

Mazda recently introduced a redesigned version of its mid-sized sedan, the Mazda 6. Among other things, it has new technology that provides better fuel economy, Krone said. It is rated to get 26 miles per gallon of gas in city driving and 38 in highway driving.

The Japanese car company is also expecting strong sales for its 2014 Mazda CX-5, a crossover SUV that also lays claim to better fuel economy than other vehicles in its class (26 city and 35 highway).

“We spent a fair amount of time deciding do we stay or do we move,” Krone said of expanding in downtown location.

She co-owns **Orrin B. Hayes Inc.**, including the **Hayes Jeep** franchise at 3718 Stadium Drive, with her sister, Amanda Woodruff, and their father, Robert Hayes. Krone said they like being downtown and like the visibility that their location provides.

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