

Bermex buys High Point building

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By Michael J. Knell
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HIGH POINT — Full-line furniture producer Bermex Group has acquired the 95,000-square foot former Natale showroom building here for about \$2.4 million.

Officials of the Maskinongé, Quebec-based company said the showroom at 400 W. English Road will be open for business for the April High Point Market.

Bermex purchased the building from the Bank of North Carolina. Originally built as an Adams-Millis hosiery mill around 1910, in recent years the four-story red brick building had been owned by Gabriele Natale of Natale Furniture, the former Italian leather upholstery specialist. He acquired the building in 2000 and sold it to investors about the time Natale went out of business in 2006. The bank foreclosed on the property in 2010.

Bermex President Daniel Walker said Natale had "spent some millions fixing the space."

Bermex's various divisions are currently scattered throughout the High Point Market. Bermex is in the Radio Building, while Shermag, Dinec and Jaymar are in Atrium on Main.

Walker said all will be moved to the newly purchased building by the April market, which will also see the U.S. debut of the company's two new upholstery divisions - Liinz and Dezmo - which came online in December, just in time to roll out their offerings at January's Canadian Home Furnishings Market.

A longtime exhibitor in High Point, Bermex has ambitious plans for the buildings.

"We want to make it 'the talk of the town,'" Walker said. "What we liked about the building is its ambience - the inside of the building is amazing."

Another attractive feature is its ample parking space.

For the past several years, Bermex has been heavily investing in its infrastructure. Since completing its acquisition of Shermag last year, the company has spent at least \$1 million upgrading upholstery specialist Jaymar's factory in Terrebonne, Quebec. It also has expanded its facilities in Trois Rivières, Quebec, and has completed an expansion of Dinec's production facility.

Walker acknowledges that times are tough, but said the company believes it needs to prepare for the recovery.

"We're in this business for the long term," he said. "Our business in Canada remains strong and our U.S. business is still there and will rebound. It's up to us to reinvent ourselves for what's coming. We're very optimistic about what's going to happen in the next five years."

However, he said the new showroom is probably too big for Bermex to occupy all by itself, and that Bermex will be looking to offer showroom space to other companies that have the same quality and design profile.