

# Auto recyclers' decades-long efforts to modernize wins approval

by Jordan Madorsky

Standing in front of the future offices of Auto Parts City, Inc., owners Larry and Jay Brosten finally feel vindicated.

In September, by a 6-0 margin, the Board of Trustees in Gurnee, Illinois, approved the auto recyclers' move from their current "antiquated" 8 acre site to a 16 acre site directly across the street. The board vote followed a 5-1 favorable plan commission recommendation.

"We might be moving from one side of the street to the other," Larry Brosten said. "But in terms of the facility we will now be operating, this move will put us at the forefront of twenty-first century auto recycling."

Behind the modern glass building, there awaits a modern multi-bay service garage as well as another out building, which the Brostens will use for processing end-of-life vehicles.

"We have some more building to do," Jay Brosten said. "But the combination of available land for inventory storage as well as the existing buildings and infrastructure makes development on this scale feasible."

The new facility will cost an estimated \$6 million. Larry Brosten said that initial costs to get the project through the village board have amounted to more than \$100,000 in engineering studies, site plans, legal and other consulting fees.

The Brosten family has been in the auto salvage business for approximately 75 years. They bought their existing facility in 1984. The newly approved site is actually the third property proposed by the Brostens in the past decade.

Previous attempts to move to a larger site were thwarted after citizen groups exerted pressure on local officials to deny Auto Parts City's proposals. In each case, considerable attention by the local press was given. Larry Brosten said the low point occurred during their 2002-2003 attempt to relocate Auto Parts City to a former 15 acre utility company maintenance site. It created a tremendous amount of controversy in nearby Waukegan.

In fact, it took two attempts this year before they finally won Gurnee's approval. Last April, a similar proposal



was denied after residents and local politicians from Park City, a manufactured home community that borders much of the proposed site, showed up several dozen strong to voice their objections. Trustees at the time were hesitant to change the I2 zoning to more intensive I3 zoning.

“It was one of the big sticking points, a technical issue with the ordinance,” Larry Brosten said. “Broken down into its component parts, every process we do as an auto recycler is permitted in I2 zoning, but the business category we’re classified under is I3. Part of the board’s concern centered on what would happen if we sold the property to another type of I3 business.”

In August, Auto Parts City went back to Gurnee officials with a slightly modified proposal to make it a planned unit development. As a PUD, the property would not have to be rezoned to be approved.

According to the Brostens, Auto Parts City settled some outstanding issues with Park City officials. As a result, Park City officially took a neutral position this time around. However, joined by the manufactured home park’s attorney, some residents showed up to decry the plan again.

Jay Brosten said settling with Park City officials was essential because part of the new Auto Parts City facility (an additional three acre retail parcel) will be located within the village of Park City. He said a deal to win Park City’s approval is expected to be finalized soon.

“Using twenty-first-century technology we will win over our detractors. I think we finally won unanimous board approval because we presented the most comprehensive, environmentally responsible and aesthetically pleasing proposal of its type ever designed,” Larry Brosten said.

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