

Hall of Toys to open Aug. 1 in downtown Battle Creek

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(Photo: Dillon Davis/The Enquirer)

A new toy store is coming to downtown Battle Creek.

Hall of Toys, a specialty toy shop owned by Brett and Melanie Hall, is slated to open its doors Aug. 1 at 58 W. Michigan Ave. The property previously was home to Fantasy Costume; it also has housed Paris Audio, a record store, and Hazel's, a local department store.

A former employee of the defunct Meyer Toy World, Brett Hall said Hall of Toys is interested in creating an atmosphere that helps parents raise "raise socially, physically, and emotionally healthier kids through playable moments."

"I've worked in small family-owned shops my entire career, I love how they help tie a community together," he said in a news release Tuesday. "My wife was pregnant with our second child and shopping at Meyer's and found out they were hiring.

"We thought it would just be a temporary thing, but we both fell in love with it."

Melanie Hall said the business, the latest addition to the downtown area, wants to work with other Michigan Avenue businesses to "to build a fun, family-friendly downtown experience."

She said they're also working with local schools and churches to develop fundraising programs.

The historic downtown building is owned by John Hennink. Hennink told the Enquirer in 2009 that he and his wife estimated they had invested \$180,000 in labor in the process of rehabbing the 87-year-old property.

On Wednesday, Hennink said Hall of Toys was "a great selection" for his building, and for downtown Battle Creek. He credits Rob Peterson, [former downtown development director](#) for Battle Creek Unlimited's Downtown Partnership, for generating interest for new businesses to come to the downtown area.

"My building, I would say it's not as important as getting a retail operation to get the flow going," Hennink said. "That's the key. Picking out good destination type buildings that fit the niche for downtown and to make it to retail."

Efforts by the Enquirer to reach Hall for comment Wednesday were not immediately successful.

Hall of Toys will join Battle Creek Books, which opened in March, as the newest businesses downtown. The city of Battle Creek continues to explore revitalization of the area.

In June, the Battle Creek City Commission approved a contract with John Hart to oversee economic development services in downtown Battle Creek. The focus of Hart's new position involves business retention and recruitment; he's also helping providing assistance with the city's downtown marketing efforts.

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