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## 91-year-old The Blossom Shop opens new location at old Map Shop space in midtown

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Maps, flags and globes in a midtown Charlotte store have been moved out and replaced by floral arrangements of every size and color.

Last month, The Blossom Shop opened a 4,457-square-foot store at 1500 E. Morehead St. — the former Map Shop space at the corner of Morehead Street and Kings Drive. It replaces the florist's Providence Road location, although The Blossom Shop's original store since its founding 91 years ago, at 2242 Park Road, will remain.



MELISSA KEY/CBJ

John Berdusis and his wife, Indeg, became the third owners of The Blossom Shop just last year. The business was started in 1929 by the Parker family, who owned it for about six decades before selling it to Ted Todd in the late 1980s.

Berdusis retired from a career with the Marines Corps and moved to Charlotte for a job at Bank of America. After about five years with the bank, he and Indeg decided to pursue a longtime dream of becoming small-business owners.

"The key in that is finding the right small business," Berdusis said. "You have to get excited about going into work every day and really love what you do. You have to want to put everything toward it."

Mutual friends of Todd and the Berdusises introduced them and, after about a year, The Blossom Shop changed ownership.

Less than a year later, Covid-19 changed everything else.

The Blossom Shop was forced to close in mid-March amid stay-at-home orders issued by Gov. Roy Cooper and Mecklenburg County, as flower shops were deemed a nonessential business.

Berdusis said the Park Road store reopened about a month and a half later for no-contact delivery and curbside pickup. About a quarter of his employees were laid off as the business had to get leaner.

Somewhere between 25% to 35% of The Blossom Shop's business comes from large events like weddings, which still haven't fully rebounded seven months later. Until there's certainty around when capacity limits on gatherings will be lifted, Berdusis said he expects that will continue.

Berdusis said he didn't apply for a Paycheck Protection Program loan or other subsidy but said he had to get creative in recouping business that evaporated during the initial shutdown.

into place, and did a big social-media push. Berdusis said there was some organic growth from customers ordering flowers for people they weren't able to be with in person because of the pandemic.

Despite the challenges brought on by Covid-19, the opportunity to move to the corner of Kings and Morehead was too good to pass up, he said. The Map Shop relocated earlier this year to a larger spot in South End after two decades at the 1500 East Morehead building.

Berdusis said he never reopened the Providence Road shop after stay-at-home orders this spring and, instead, decided to reopen in a new location.

Notably, the Providence Road shop was on an outparcel of a retail center that's been speculated as a potential redevelopment target, particularly in the wake of anchor tenant Regal Manor Twin's permanent closure in May. But The Blossom Shop began contemplating a move out of that location last year, primarily to find a bigger space, and ultimately decided not to renew the lease.

Not only was the old Map Shop location right, the space was larger and fit The Blossom Shop's needs, Berdusis said.

He did stop to ask himself: Do I really open up a second storefront in the middle of a global pandemic?

But, Berdusis said, customers have been supportive and loyal to the business and, long term, he feels having the new location will pay off.

"I look at it in terms of the long game," he said. "I knew that Covid was going to be temporary but location has more permanence."

The old Providence Road location had, in addition to flowers, a small selection of housewares and gift items for sale, which the owners have expanded on at the Morehead Street shop. They've built a larger cooler for a bigger floral selection as well as a dedicated space for customers to consult with staff on arrangements — for a wedding, decorating a home or simply what flowers could go in an empty pot.

As much as Berdusis has had to get creative in navigating the pandemic, it's a delicate balance, he said. Flowers should, and will, remain at the core of what the shop offers.

"The Blossom Shop has been in business since 1929," Berdusis said. "It's got a soul to it and you have to be true to that. You absolutely have to find ways to expand your business, especially in an economic downturn and a global pandemic. But you also can't be something you're not."

Gantt Howell of Coldwell Banker Commercial MECA represented The Blossom Shop in the lease transaction. Henry Breaux and Patton Hearn of The Providence Group represented the landlord.

**Ashley Fahey**

Real Estate Editor

*Charlotte Business Journal*

