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Star Rentals is moving “right next door” in Sodo.

By Benjamin Mlnnick
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After nearly 60 years, Star Rentals is closing its Seattle branch at 1919 Fourth Ave. S. – but don’t worry, it’s opening an express branch next door at 1943 Fourth Ave. S.

Star’s 15,000-square-foot headquarters and main branch operated on that site until the company relocated those operations in 2016 to a new 17,000-square-foot building in Kent. The space on Fourth was retained as a branch for rental equipment, primarily serving customers downtown and in the Sodo neighborhood.

Star President Bob Kendall said the company needed more space for its headquarters and wanted to avoid ever-increasing traffic in Sodo, which has gotten worse since the Alaskan Way Viaduct closed. The Kent site also has more space for equipment storage and maintenance.



The old headquarters on Fourth was built on land that Star had a long-term ground lease on with Efron Investments. Kendall said Efron is looking for a new tenant for that site.

Star owns the new 5,700-square-foot masonry building and the land below it that make up the express branch. Kendall said they will close the old branch when the new one opens in mid-August. Staff are in the weeks-long process of moving into the new building, which will be overseen by manager Bob Dubuque.

The express branch construction team included MRJ Constructors, SynThesis Architects, Barghausen Consulting Engineers (civil) and Shutler Consulting Engineers (structural).

Star has 18 branches and 255 employees. Kendall said his company’s revenues have flattened out at a high level, at about \$90 million a year. “We’re very fortunate to be in a strong economy,” he said.

Kendall said he’s somewhat concerned about a slight oversupply in the equipment rental business over the past few years, which he attributed to too many competitors.

“It’s been great run there.”, he said, “We’re delighted to be able to be right next door.”

A 2017 article in *Rental Equipment Register* said Star was founded in the 1890’s by Christian Rabel, a German immigrant who was adept at fixing steam engines and used that skill to rebuild sawmill boilers. The company was incorporated in 1901 as Star Machinery on what is thought to be the north parking lot of Century Link Field and became Star Rentals in 1960. Fourth- and fifth-generation members of the Rabel family still own it.

Rental Equipment Register ranks Star No. 50 on its list of the top 100 rental companies in North America for 2019.