

## G&C AutoBody expands to Ukiah, Fairfield

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UKIAH and FAIRFIELD — The impact of a tough economy has totaled a number of North Bay automobile body repair shops, but it hasn't seriously dented growth plans for G&C AutoBody, which has about doubled its number of locations in the past few years.

The Santa Rosa-based company opened a 16,000-square-foot store in Ukiah on May 29 and a 10,000-square-foot shop in Fairfield on June 4. That follows openings in Novato and Rohnert Park last year and one in Windsor in 2010. [See "[Rohnert Park to be third new G&C shop](#)," July 4, 2011.]

G&C AutoBody (707-525-3520, [www.gandcautobody.com](http://www.gandcautobody.com)) now has nine locations, 75 staff and 60 independent contractor repair technicians, repairing an average of 215 vehicles a week. The other locations are in Santa Rosa, Petaluma and San Rafael, which has two shops. The company plans to open a 10th store this year.

Company revenue was \$22.75 million last year and is projected to grow by 30 percent this year to \$30 million. Growth so far this year is 28 percent ahead of the same pace in 2011. That kind of growth garnered G&C the No. 5 ranking nationwide for 2011 by trade publication *Automotive Body Repair News*.

"The new shops are going to give us a shot in the arm in the third quarter," said Shawn Crozat, chief operating officer.

Ukiah and Fairfield are good expansion areas for G&C because competition isn't as fierce as elsewhere in the North Bay, and asking prices for businesses and real estate isn't as steep as Napa, where the company has been looking for opportunities to expand, Mr. Crozat said.

The Fairfield-Suisun City area with its 130,000 population and Interstate 80 thoroughfare has been a target expansion area long in G&C's five-decade history.

"Fairfield was supposed to be the location of the second shop, but a deal never materialized," Mr. Crozat said.

The Solano County location at 2011 N. Texas St. formerly was Fairfield Auto Body, started by Bruce Schafer in 1980 and operated for three decades. That business had closed when G&C secured the property. The shop now has five employees and was renovated over three months to have a similar exterior and high-end interior look of the other locations.

The expansion to Ukiah wasn't planned, Mr. Crozat said. An owner of a smaller shop in the city contacted G&C about taking over the location as the business was winding down. As negotiations progressed, Ross LaRue, owner of the city's largest shop and the other's main competitor, European Auto Werks at 51 Kunzer Ranch Rd., convinced the Crozat family to acquire its equipment instead.

Because European Auto Werks had a bustling book of work, G&C opted for a rolling acquisition, negotiating a new, 20-year lease then closing the shop on a Friday and reopening it the following Tuesday as G&C. Over the next two months, the building will get its own G&C makeover inside and out.

"It's been crazy, but we've kept it all together," Shawn Crozat said. "We'll keep growing as long as service and quality don't diminish."

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