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# EpiCentre expects to open first nightclubs in January

Charlotte Business Journal - by Ashley M. London

After landing dueling piano bar Howl at The Moon this week, The Ghazi Co. has only few slots left for entertainment and restaurant tenants at its \$100 million EpiCentre project.

Next up for the uptown development could be an Italian restaurant, a 20-lane bowling alley and a 20,000-square-foot rooftop terrace that can be used for public and private events. An ice cream vendor and some small shops are also being vetted for the 267,000-square-foot entertainment and retail complex at College and Trade streets.

Howl at The Moon Inc., a Cincinnati-based chain of dual piano and sing-along bars, will open its venue in February.

The bar will be a key part of an entertainment component that's being pieced together by Bob Durkin, president of Charlotte-based Bar Management Group. His company is acting as both tenant and consultant on EpiCentre with developer Afshin Ghazi.

Durkin's group will be responsible for Black Fin, an Irish-themed pub, and will be instrumental in opening Whiskey River, Dale Earnhardt Jr.'s country music and rock and roll bar.

Whiskey River is expected to open in January, followed quickly by a couple of tenants every month.

Durkin says the leasing effort has come a long way. At the beginning, it was a challenge to recruit national tenants to uptown.

"People were used to towns like Chicago or Atlanta, but then they did some research and spent some time here," he says. "Then it got a whole lot easier. We are getting more and more calls when we're already filled up."

A Web site will soon be launched highlighting EpiCentre's entertainment options.

"We only have a few pieces left in the puzzle," Durkin says. "We wanted to bring things to Charlotte that aren't already here to get people to come in from farther away and to come back with greater frequency."

The EpiCentre site will eventually include a condo tower called 210 Trade as well as a 175-room hotel. The project also includes multitenant office space.

### **Sports Authority opens in Concord**

Colorado-based **The Sports Authority Inc.** will open its 42,000-square-foot store at Concord Mills tomorrow.

The store will be the chain's sixth in the Charlotte region. "Our nationwide presence gives us the ability to bring the world's top sporting-goods brands to all of our locations across the country," says Greg Waters, company chief operating officer.

The new store is at 8094 Concord Mills Blvd. It will offer equipment for activities such as camping, hunting, cycling and skiing as well as team apparel and sportswear.

"We've had great success within this region and felt it was time to expand our footprint," says Corey Smith, Sports Authority district manager.

### **NEWS & NOTES**

Damon's Grill will introduce at least one prototype restaurant to suburban Charlotte before the end of the year -- the company's first new design in more than a decade.

The Columbus, Ohio-based chain will own and operate the new restaurant, using it to attract more franchisees in the region. The exact location hasn't been announced.

"Damon's will remain a great place to watch sports, and this new design creates a more appetizing restaurant for a broader range of occasions," says Carl Howard, Damon's president and chief executive.

The chain was purchased last year by Charlotte-based Alliance Development Group. The company has 75 franchise restaurants in 16 states and the United Kingdom. It has a Charlotte location at 13230 Carowinds Blvd.

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