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Fleming's location will beef up tenant list for EpiCentre

Charlotte Business Journal - by Ashley M. London

Fleming's Prime Steakhouse & Wine Bar is entering the local beef battle, which has spread from SouthPark to uptown.

The Newport Beach, Calif.-based chain plans to open an 8,000-square-foot restaurant in the EpiCentre's entertainment complex under construction at College, Trade and Fourth streets.

"They approached us," says EpiCentre developer Afshin Ghazi. "I think it's becoming evident that the best location in town for restaurants is downtown over SouthPark."

In 2005, Fleming's was eyeing a 6,600-square-foot location in the SouthPark area at Grubb Properties' Morrison development at Sharon and Colony roads, but the deal fell through.

The uptown location will be the first in the state for the company, which has 32 restaurants nationwide.

Fleming's plans to open by late summer or early fall, Ghazi says. It will compete with Morton's, The Steakhouse, the newly opened Ruth's Chris Steakhouse and The Capital Grille with its selection of wine, food and even décor.

The average cost of dinner at Fleming's is \$55 per person.

An open dining room will be built around an exhibition kitchen and bar. Features will include light woods with rich cherry accents, high ceilings, leather upholstery and custom-designed alabaster chandeliers.

Fleming's officials couldn't be reached for comment.

Ghazi believes one reason the company chose EpiCentre is because of its entrance at College Street and also a shared entrance with the W Hotel Lofts that is part of the mixed-use project, which also includes the 210 Trade condo tower.

"It's going to be a good place to see and be seen," he says. "It will be the hippest and most fun steakhouse in town."

QUICKINFO

EPICENTRE

\$300 million development: Mixed-use project on 3 acres with 100,000 square feet available

Tenants include: Black Finn Restaurant & Saloon, The Fox Sports Grill, Moe's Southwest Grill

Developer: The Ghazi Co.

NEWS & NOTES

Italian family-style restaurant chain **Buca di Beppo** is now serving lunch at its Pineville location.

The restaurant is also offering a menu with single-serving portions and nine items that cost under \$8 for the lunch crowd.

Minneapolis-based Buca Inc. owns and operates 92 restaurants in 24 states, but not all of them do lunch, says Allison Sweeney, a field-marketing manager for the company. "In Pineville, there was a market for it, and it just made good business sense for us," she says.

Public relations executive David Jewell -- who recently brought former rock singer Grace Slick's music-themed portraits to town -- is now responsible for promoting a project of the great-grandson of Pierre-August Renoir.

Alexandre Renoir will be in Charlotte with a collection of paintings, drawings, etchings and lithographs of his great-grandfather and his contemporaries such as Paul C»zanne, Édouard Manet and Camille Pissarro. Renoir will also show his own works while at the Wentworth Gallery in SouthPark mall.

The opening receptions for Renoir & The Impressionists will be held today and Saturday.

Kathryn Karakus has joined Donald Haack Diamonds as marketing manager. A graduate of Northeastern University, she has seven years of experience in marketing luxury jewelry.

Los Angeles-based La Brea Bakery is rolling out a line of organic artisan breads at **Harris Teeter Inc.** stores beginning March 18. The company took top sellers -- including wheat and French loaves -- and created organic variations to meet customer demand for breads with no preservatives, additives or ingredients processed with pesticides.

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