

CONTRIBUTING WRITER  
DAVID BOX  
**Charlotte EPICENTER**  
Making Waves in Charlotte's Social Scene



**WHAT'S OPEN NOW?**  
**WHISKY RIVER**

Open Tuesday through Sunday, Dale Earnhart Jr.'s bar is already quickly becoming a favorite of the NASCAR fan and casual bar-hopper alike. With live music on Sundays, a rock and roll DJ, and a mechanical bull, Whisky River is making noise on the Charlotte social landscape.

**SUITE**

Open on a limited basis, it offers exclusive service and a more refined crowd; for a price. This nightclub is consistently at capacity, so plan ahead if you want to enjoy your night.

**HOWL AT THE MOON**

This dueling piano bar is a source of likely entertainment and good times all around. It has a slightly different crowd Suite and Whisky River. It even claims to be "the most fun you can have with your clothes on!" I'm not too sure, but will give them the benefit of the doubt.

**SO, WHO IS THE MAN BEHIND THIS \$200 MILLION CONSTRUCTION PROJECT?** Surely it is an elder investor with more money than a Byzantine Sultan and the experience to feel assured of his investment, right? Well, I soon found out as I had arranged an interview and tour of the facility with the proprietor, the man in charge, of the EpiCentre construction project.

Afshin Ghazi is a self-made man in just about every respect. He came to Charlotte from Kentucky with only \$10,000 to his name. Now he is one of the most respected and successful members of the community. I was looking to make a good impression. Consequently, I spent a moment deliberating my outfit before arriving. I didn't want to show up looking like an unprofessional bum, of course but at the same time I didn't want to overdress and look like an overzealous snob. So, the Charlotte STYLE fashion consultants suggested I opt for safety in numbers as in "Brooks Brother" linen khaki pants and simple collared shirt. It was classy, yet casual Refined without being haughty And noticeable but not flashy. Perfect.

A young-looking guy in plaid cargo shorts and white shirt approached me with a friendly smile and two impressive looking German Shepherds in tow. I felt relieved when it turned out that this was the man himself. Ghazi. He flashed a friendly smile and gave a congenial

**WHAT TO EXPECT?**

**BOWLING ALLEY**

This will not be the chili-cheese fries and beer joint from the Big Lebowski, nor will it be much of a family establishment. It will be adults only by nightfall.

**MOVIE THEATER**

Also an adult-only joint by night, will feature wine and dessert bars along with a cultured atmosphere

The Charlotte EpiCentre stands to make some waves in Charlotte's social current. With three bars/clubs already open and many other stores and attractions in the works, Charlotte's heart beat is in its geographical center. Located at 210 E. Trade Street it is only a few doors down from Time Warner Arena (formerly Charlotte Bobcats Arena) and has an escalator connecting pedestrians directly with College Street. It is currently open for business on a limited weekly schedule with Suite, Whisky River, and Howl at the Moon. Soon to debut are the Fudge Factory, a movie theatre and bowling alley. Eventually there will be 50 retail tenants and space is sure to come at a premium.

welcome and was a casual and personable guy who just happened to be overseeing a \$220 million construction project. Don't get me wrong; he was very much in charge and had little time to spare. But, he spent several minutes listening to and answering questions attentively.

I took several things away from my interview with Mr. Ghazi. The first lesson I learned was one that everyone is reminded of several times during their life. That is to say you should never assume anything about a person before meeting them. People in this country and all over the world have amazing stories of success and human will.

Afshin Ghazi is no exception to this, but ironically this means that he is quite exceptional indeed. The world is filled with exceptional people doing exceptional things. Some people build multimillion-dollar retail outlets and elevate the social fabric of the city while others wake up everyday, put on their shoes, a friendly smile, and simply do their best. I was pleasantly reminded that one does not exclude the other, and in this case both are certainly true, as.

Ghazi is a man with a vision. We should consider ourselves fortunate that this vision includes our city and the further development of it. It is people like Afshin Ghazi and their dreams and ideas that make this city what it is and will become.



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