

Beef O'Brady's to open in downtown Dade City

The chain restaurant, downtown's first, aims to open Nov. 1. It will have a large game room and be an Internet hot spot.

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DADE CITY - Beef O'Brady's, the family-friendly sports bar serving up beer and chicken wings, is coming downtown.

Investor Wilton Simpson announced Tuesday that he is buying the former Western Auto and Radio Shack store at Pasco Avenue and Seventh Street and converting it into the casual pub. Opening is targeted for Nov. 1.

It will be the first chain restaurant in a downtown district characterized by small, locally owned antique and gift shops, lunchtime restaurants and offices.

"It brings some diversity in the downtown from what's already there," Simpson said. "That will bring more business."

Todd Batchelor, who owns a Beef O'Brady's in Temple Terrace, is the franchise owner. He initially looked into building a free-standing restaurant south of town, near where a new Wal-Mart Supercenter is being built.

"From the time that I got up there," Batchelor said of his visits to Dade City, "my gut feel was this is where I need to be."

Batchelor said the 6,000-square-foot restaurant will emphasize families and community involvement.

An oversize game room will have two security cameras projecting images back into the main restaurant so parents can eat dinner while keeping an eye on the kids.

The restaurant will have a 35-seat meeting and party room that civic groups, sports leagues and others can use for free.

"My goal is to fit into the community and become part of the community," Batchelor said.

At his Temple Terrace restaurant, he said, he holds charity fundraising nights for local schools and sponsors youth sports leagues. He plans to duplicate those practices in Dade City.

What else? Beef O'Brady's will be a free Internet hot spot, maybe only the second in Dade City.

Amy Ellis, director of the downtown Main Street group, said the restaurant is a welcome addition.

"It's going to be a great boost to downtown, especially at night, and I think it's a good complement to the great restaurants we already have downtown because it will draw new people who might not otherwise have chosen to come downtown to eat or shop," Ellis said.

The nighttime trend already is off the ground. Several restaurants that used to cater only to the lunch crowd are staying open for dinner, at least on weekends. A couple of gift shops are on board, too.

Ellis said some business owners expressed concern initially about the presence of a chain downtown. But as a locally owned franchise, she said, the restaurant can blend in.

"They don't act like a chain," Ellis said. "I think they're a great fit and a great complement."

Simpson is also buying the building immediately east of what will be Beef O'Brady's.

Western Edge, a western apparel store north of town on U.S. 301, is moving in.

"My goal is to bring more businesses in and enhance the existing businesses," he said.

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