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## DeShantz to take on former Cafe Zao

Pittsburgh Business Times - by Tim Schooley

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The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust didn't have to go far to find a restaurant to replace Cafe Zao, which closed in the nonprofit organization's Theater Square property last August.

The Trust announced this morning that it has reached an agreement with restaurateur **Richard DeShantz**, who operates the acclaimed restaurant Nine on Nine only a few blocks away from Theater Square on Penn Avenue, Downtown.

DeShantz and his partners are currently working on the build out for their new, as-yet-unnamed restaurant. He hopes to open it in late April or early May.

DeShantz said to expect a more comfortable, casual restaurant with lower prices and a big bar, where guests would feel comfortable going twice a month rather than the special occasion dining of Nine on Nine, taking what he described as a gastro-pub approach to the new restaurant.

"I'm going to do a step down from Nine on Nine," said DeShantz, with more of a focus on comfort food and serving as a neighborhood spot.

He added that Nine on Nine had its best year last year and that it was time to try another place where he could experiment more and create the kind of place he'd like to go after work.

Trust CEO and President **J. Kevin McMahon** called DeShantz "a tremendous neighbor in the Cultural District" and a worthy replacement for Cafe Zao, which was operated by acclaimed local chef **Toni Pais**, long-time operator of the former Baum Vivant.

"His culinary talents and dedication to providing patrons with a quality experience clearly add to the exciting mix of retail, dining and entertainment in Downtown," added McMahon in a prepared statement.

Along with the new restaurant, which is expected to seat 120, DeShantz will also oversee the menu of adjacent Cabaret Theater, also in the building.

Theater Square, a 330,000-square-foot multipurpose facility that features a 790-space garage along with a small theater and box office, opened in 2003.

**Terri Sokoloff**, a principal of Ross-based Specialty Group, a restaurant services firm, was surprised the Trust turned to a restaurateur with another eatery so close by.

"You really don't want to trade off the same customer," she said while describing herself as a fan of Nine on Nine. "On the plus side, he does have an advantage in being across the street to be more hands on."



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