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North Park Lounge coming to Lawrenceville

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North Park Lounge is coming to Lawrenceville.

Mark Baranowski, who currently operates North Park Lounge restaurants in McCandless and Murrysville, has bought the former Gus's Cafe in the ninth ward of Lawrenceville and his working to open a new urban version of the restaurant by the beginning of June.

Located at 4717 Butler Street across from Allegheny Cemetery, the new North Park Lounge is in the works along a very busy stretch for restaurants, with such operations as The Abbey on Butler Street, La Gourmandine, and two new restaurants from New York, one a Texas-style barbecue place also in the works.

"We're pretty excited about that whole area of Lawrenceville," said Baranowski, who sees a void for a sports bar in the neighborhood. "There's so many people moving in down there I think there really is a niche for North Park Lounge."

Baranowski expects to invest about \$1 million buying the real estate and building out the new restaurant.

The restaurant will open with a limited offering at first, he said, adding he is working to build out an expanded kitchen that will feature a wood-fired oven for pizzas.

"We'll have a lot of TVs and all of our staple items with our wings and burgers and lounge fries," said Baranowski, who first bought the original North Park Lounge on Babcock Road 28 years ago.

Expecting the kitchen expansion to take six or seven months between permitting and construction, Baranowski added a key appeal of the location is its large capacity -- its permitted occupancy is about 220 people -- and an ample patio.

Working with Carapella Architecture, he expects the Lawrenceville restaurant to seat between 120 and 150 people between the indoor dining room and its patio seating.

Baranowski also is working to roll out a delivery service at the North Park Lounge locations, starting in McCandless and Murrysville and eventually expanding to Lawrenceville when its full kitchen is up and running.

Terri Sokoloff, a principal of Ross-based Specialty Group, who brokered the transaction, expects Baranowski will be able to implement a strategy he's already succeeded with elsewhere.

"Mark has really been able to capitalize on creating an environment that attracts people," he said. "He's an industry veteran. He can get the right talent and the right people to create something that's a little bit different and a fun place."

Tim Schooley
 Reporter
 Pittsburgh Business Times



TIM SCHOOLEY

Rendering of the proposed build out of the new North Park Lounge in the works for the ninth ward of Lawrenceville.