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Arsenal Bowl lands buyer, keeping the iconic lanes rolling

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Arsenal Bowl, a Lawrenceville institution dating back to the Great Depression, has found new ownership.

Ross-based Specialty Group announced it has brokered a deal to sell the bowling alley and bar business to an ownership group made up of local individuals, some from the neighborhood. The business will remain a bowling alley.

Terri Sokoloff, principal at Specialty Group, said the deal is under agreement, the transfer of liquor license has been posted, a long-term lease is in place for the business and she expects the license transfer to wrap up by year's end.

Sokoloff did not disclose the buyers.

Specialty Group, which specializes in bars and restaurants, met with more than a dozen buyer groups and received multiple offers.



TIM SCHOOLEY

Arsenal Bowl, the long-time bowling alley in Lawrenceville, has landed new ownership.

“In the end, we saw the opportunity to ‘marry’ two of the parties to create the ultimate buyer group,” Sokoloff said. “One party possessed the hands-on experience of operating a bowling alley, while the other party brought the business acumen and management experience necessary to ensure the successful continuation of the Arsenal Bowl the community has come to know and love. Essentially, the two parties were a Cinderella, and the glass slipper perfect fit.”

Sokoloff said she asked the ownership group about their bowling averages.

“A fun fact ... one of the members of the group has bowled a 300,” Sokoloff said.

The iconic entertainment venue has long been a focal commercial anchor in the 9th ward of Butler Street's business district. It both cultivated the traditional league bowling clientele, while also offering more of a nightclub appeal, hosting live bands and DJs and attracting movie stars in town for various film productions, including Tom Hanks and Bryan Cranston.

Sokoloff said the business' sales are stronger than they were pre-pandemic.

The facility includes 22 lanes, a full-service bar with a commercial kitchen as well as space for live entertainment. The sale includes all furniture, fixtures and equipment. The real estate, which includes a collection of storefronts on Butler Street, was not part of sale.

The property went on the market in June after 40-year owner Paul Buncher decided to retire.

Sokoloff said the reaction to the sale announcement was overwhelming.

“The biggest thing was people were worried, ‘is this going to stay a bowling alley, are we still going to have our Arsenal Bowl?’ Yes, the bowling lane will be there and continue that tradition,” Sokoloff said.

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