

Exclusive: An inside look at Legacy West's planned food hall

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A three-story food hall set to open in Plano's Legacy West development will include food vendors, two full-service restaurants, a beer garden with event space and a craft brewery.

Legacy Hall, slated to open in September 2017, will be operated by Randy DeWitt and Jack Gibbons, CEO and president, respectively, of Addison-based Front Burner Restaurants. Front Burner operates the Twin Peaks brand, as well as The Ranch at Las Colinas, Velvet Taco, Whiskey Cake, Mexican Sugar and Ida Claire.

The duo is also forming the Food Hall Company to open the Legacy food hall and other similar concepts around the nation.

"We still have some great brands and will continue to grow them, but we're really jumping in with both feet into this line of business of developing food halls," DeWitt added.

LEGACY HALL



SUBMITTED RENDERING

The food hall will encompass roughly 55,000 square feet in the 255-acre Legacy West mixed-use development created by Fehmi Karahan, founder of The Karahan Cos. The area has attracted regional campuses for JPMorgan Chase, Liberty Mutual and FedEx Office, as well as the headquarters for Toyota North America.

DeWitt said Karahan set aside the hall's square footage for DeWitt and Gibbons to create a "fun" concept for the development. After gathering inspiration from around the globe, including a visit to Amsterdam's Foodhallen, they pitched the idea of a food hall like Boston's Faneuil Hall and San Francisco's Ferry Building.

"When (Fehmi) asked what we were thinking, before we even finished the word 'food hall,' he finished it for us and said, 'That's what we're going to do,'" Gibbons said. "For a developer and landlord to agree and work on that with us is pretty exciting."

DeWitt and Gibbons expect the hall to see between 4,000 and 5,000 daily visitors when it opens.

Encompassing 16,000 square feet, the venue's first floor will include a central bar and 22 local food and beverage vendors operating in stalls that will range between 200 and 350 square feet. Vendors will serve between four and five dishes and have the opportunity to customize their stalls.

While the duo is not ready to disclose any vendors, food options may include a sushi bar and a raw bar serving oysters.

"As we were putting our plan together ... one of the first decisions was whether to get a chef out of New York or allow Starbucks to do the coffee," DeWitt said. "We want to sell the local food scene."

With the stalls' small footprints, DeWitt and Gibbons hope to launch aspiring restaurateurs who may not have the money to open large brick and mortar operations. They plan to help with funding, procurement and other operational needs. Rent for the stall space will also be assessed as a

percentage of sales, so if a vendor has a slow week, they will pay less in rent.

“On the culinary side, you have this pent up demand of people who want to start their own business. They have the talent, but with the cost and the difficulty in raising money, there are so many barriers in starting your own business,” Gibbons said. “Our business plan is to take down the barriers, find the talent and give them the opportunity.”

The first floor will have around 200 seats in communal-type seating and include an information stall that can also serve as a will call booth for events held in an adjacent beer garden and event space.

Just outside of the first-floor food hall, Legacy Hall will feature an 18,000-square-foot outdoor space that DeWitt and Gibbons have dubbed the “box garden” because it will utilize and be decorated with freight shipping containers. Inspiration for using the containers came from Container Park, a retail, restaurant and entertainment space in downtown Las Vegas.

Chefs in the food hall stalls will be able to plant gardens on top of the containers to grow fresh ingredients, and the containers will also be used to house an elevator inside the food hall and a craft soda fountain on the hall’s first and second floors.

The box garden, which will include seating, games and fire pits, will also feature a stage equipped with a 14-foot-by-25-foot high-definition screen. In addition to live music, the space will host festivals, movie nights and other events year-round.

The stage backs up to a six-story parking garage, which will be outfitted with planter boxes to create a green wall.

A barbecue restaurant will be housed in two 8-foot-by-20-foot storage containers on one side of the outdoor space. An operator of that restaurant has not been announced.

“You should have a sense of ... community,” DeWitt said of the space. “We

want our customers to feel like they're sharing an experience, we want our food stall vendors to feel like they're sharing experiences and ideas and products."

Planned for the venue's second floor, which will encompass roughly 11,000 square feet, are an inside/outside bar and balcony space and seating that will overlook the box garden. Freight containers on the balcony will serve as private boxes for event-goers.

Another full-service restaurant is planned for the second floor, but an operator for that space has not been announced.

Visitors on the second floor will see also part of the tanks used in a brewery that will take up all of the hall's 10,000-square-foot third floor. Suds from the brewery will be served in the hall's second-floor bar. DeWitt and Gibbons said they are not ready to announce their brewery's name.

In total, the hall is expected to employ between 500 and 600 workers. More details, including the hall's restaurant operators, vendors and more information on the brewery will be announced in the coming months as the hall prepares to open.

Gensler is serving as Legacy Hall's architect. Rogers-O'Brien is the project's general contractor.

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