

Local News

Buck to the future

Restaurants, retailers part of downtown St. Joseph boom

[Print Page](#)

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ST. JOSEPH - The Buck is back.

And the rest of downtown St. Joseph, the scene of several new business openings, is not doing badly either.

Those new businesses include The Buck Burgers and Brew at 412 State St., the former site of the Silver Dollar Cafe, a popular gathering spot informally known as The Buck. Most recently it was Port 412, a martini bar.

Nearby, Lighthouse Fibers, for knitting enthusiasts, and Pure Style, a women's clothing and upscale consignment shop, have opened their doors.

Coming soon on State Street will be Pure Michigan, selling products made in the Wolverine State, and State Street Stuff, selling silliness with such offerings as Bacon Lollipops and The Crazy Cat Lady board game. The businesses are expected to be open before the arrival of the Senior PGA Championship at Harbor Shores in late May.

All of the new entrepreneurs have been eager to be open for business before the thousands of golf enthusiasts arrive Memorial Day weekend.

Ken Kozminski, owner of The Buck, hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony Thursday attended by city officials and representatives of the Cornerstone Chamber of Commerce.

The day before they held a "soft" opening without any fanfare and drew 139 customers, Kozminski said.

That testified to the anticipation that the restaurant's resurgence has generated.

"It is a new business that is really an old business," Cornerstone Chamber President Pat Moody said. "This is a whole new tradition for Michigan's southwest."

Mary Goff, a city commissioner and chairman of the Downtown Development Authority, remembers the old Buck as a place where all generations would get together to have fun and relax.

Kozminski said he is catering to the same diverse crowd, from families to young professionals.

Crews have been working since January to get things ready. The menu will focus on burgers, salads, sandwiches and soups, many made with locally grown ingredients. Fresh-cut french fries and sweet potato pies are among the extras.

"The focus is on local foods and local people," Kozminski said.

The owner and his staff of 26 will also be emphasizing hospitality, understanding the customers' needs and giving them a positive experience, he said.

The interior features the original Buck bar. It will also have loft seating, which is not yet open, and an outdoor deck.

Hours are 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Monday-Thursday, 11 a.m.-midnight Saturdays, and noon- 8 p.m. Sundays. The website is www.eatatthebuck.com.