

Retail returning to Downtown at 2 sites near Columbus Commons

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The pace of retail development Downtown is picking up, as two projects near Columbus Commons revealed plans to add tenants.

Highpoint on Columbus Commons has signed up its first three tenants: a fast casual restaurant; a new cold-press juice company that does not yet have a name; and a mobile-phone store. They are expected to open in the spring.

Todd Schiff, vice president of the Robert Weiler Co., co-developer of Highpoint with Atlanta-based Carter, declined to name the restaurant.

He also said space remains on the first floor of the mixed-use project for two additional — and larger — restaurants.

In a separate development, the creator of the popular Harvest pizzerias will open a nonpizza restaurant in the 250 High building, a 12-story, \$50 million Daimler and Kaufman Development project at 250 S. High St. The mixed-use building is expected to be finished in June.

The Downtown resurgence is being [fueled by millennials, empty nesters and others who want to live and work in amenity-filled urban centers](#).

About 70 percent of Highpoint's 302 upscale apartments have been leased.

"The interest has grown significantly over the past year (since Highpoint opened)," Schiff said. "We're having to turn people away and are looking at only the stronger retail tenants."

Meanwhile, the 250 High building includes retail space on the ground floor, topped by five floors of offices and then six residential floors with 120 apartments.

"We feel this area is really going through a resurgence," said Bob White Jr., president of Daimler.

Digital marketing agency Resource has signed a lease to occupy two complete floors, and architectural firm NBBJ will occupy most of a floor at 250 High.

"We've done a lot of speculative office developments, and often there are no tenants in place this early in the process," White said.

[Chris Crader, the operator of two Harvest pizzerias and the Sycamore gastropub in German Village, will open his fourth restaurant in the 250 High building](#), but it won't serve pizzas and does not yet have a name.

NAI Ohio Equities was the real-estate broker that worked with Crader and his partners to locate and lease the 250 High spot.

Crader said, "We weren't even looking Downtown," but the rising number of residents changed his mind.

Mike Simpson, president of NAI Ohio Equities, said, "I think it's all systems go Downtown for retail. And Columbus Commons is the epicenter.

"Lunch for Downtown restaurants is easy, but the bigger challenge is dinner," Simpson said. " Since this

area has the highest concentration of residents, it makes it a great spot for the dinner crowd.”

This section of S. High Street between State and Rich streets is quickly becoming a new restaurant row.

Recent openings include Manifesto Tuscan Grato & Scotch Bar and De-Novo Bistro & Bar, and the Chintz Room is slated to open soon in the Lazarus Building. There is space for two restaurants at Highpoint. The proximity of Columbus Commons and the Ohio Theatre are additional magnets.

Even more residents are coming as Lifestyle Communities has begun construction on two buildings at the northwest corner of Rich and S. High that will each have 106 apartments.

“I think it will become a destination,” Crader said of the area. “And as long as everyone is offering quality and interesting food, it will help bring people to the area.”

Crader’s new restaurant will serve breakfast, lunch and dinner and feature locally produced ingredients.

“We want to make it easier to help people eat healthier,” he said, “and still prove healthy isn’t bland or boring.”

Breakfast will include sandwiches with eggs and free-range pork sausage.

Lunch and dinner will focus on what Crader calls “sustainable protein” from local farms as well as meat alternatives such as beans, tofu, seitan (a wheat-based meat substitute) and tempeh (a soy product).

The restaurant will be 7,000 square feet and have seating for 100.

“It is a big space. We could fit all three of our other restaurants inside this one,” he said.

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