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BUSINESS

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Why not use an old computer to build a low-cost, high-fidelity music server? Here's how one expert did it. **D-2**

STORE FRONT

CAROUSEL HAS LOTS OF SPACE TO FILL

BOB NIEDT
RETAIL NOTEBOOK



This question has been center stage since Wednesday morning: Will there be more than just luxury outlets, restaurants and a funky bowling alley concept for the Carousel Center mall expansion?

That and many other questions from Store Front readers went into hyperdrive last week. The Post-Standard reported the names of 14 mostly upscale retailers with signed leases ready to go into Carousel Center's long-vacant, nearly 1 million-square-foot expansion.

Through sources, we've trickled out some of those confirmed names before: **Saks Fifth Ave.**, **OFF Fifth** and **The Melting Pot**, to name two.

Storefront reported in April 2010 that Pyramid has been pursuing, among other high-enders, **Neiman Marcus** — though it wasn't on the list Wednesday. But know this: It isn't OFF the list, either.

We also reported at the time that part of the focus of the expansion was heading toward high-end outlets.

But what was confirmed last week is only a small part; the rest of the expansion needs to be filled, and it won't all be outlets. And there's a lot more space to fill in that expansion. The names mentioned last week account for just 15 percent of the total space built onto the southwest side of the back of the mall.

What drew the first tenants to the expansion bodes well for the remainder: Carousel is not just "our" mall; it's a super-regional mall. Those retailers aren't landing there just to bring in shoppers from Central New York. Carousel is a major draw for Upstate and Southern Tier shoppers, reaching down to northeastern Pennsylvania, and north to the Canadian shoppers who helped save the Syracuse retail market in the depths of the Great Recession.

Ottawa residents especially don't have "all in one place" malls the size of Carousel. It is truly a destination, a resort, a vacation. Throw in the number of people from out of Central New York who shop there, SU and other college students and families, plus Central New Yorkers, and . . . well, it adds up.

It's likely why Saks is committed to coming here. It's likely why **Gordon Biersch Brewery Restaurant** is coming here.

On that: Unlike upscale The Melting Pot, which is opening a restaurant in Rochester and has one in Albany, California-based Gordon Biersch Brewery Restaurants are in only 16 states — mostly in the Sunbelt — and the District of Columbia. The Washington, D.C., Gordon Biersch is the closest one to Syracuse. There is none in the Northeast. That's a "get" for Carousel.

OK, 'nough said for now. Your turn. Tell me what you'd like to see in the expansion.

At noon Monday, head over to syracuse.com and hang out for your lunch hour. I'm going to be there for a live online chat about the expansion and anything else retail you wish to discuss. You can ask questions and I'll try to answer, at the time or down the road. But more than a Q&A, we want to hear your Dream Team, Top 5, whatever, to help fill the rest of the Carousel Center expansion.



DENNIS CROWLEY, co-founder of Foursquare website, and Contessa Brewer, an MSNBC anchor, offer a computer-aided personal message in this video produced for Syracuse University and delivered to incoming freshmen at its S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications. Brewer graduated from Newhouse in 1996, Crowley in 1998.

Greetings, (fill in the blank), and welcome to Newhouse

SU's alumni team with school for personalized videos for new students.

By **Ken Sturtz**
Contributing writer

What are the chances of coming face to face with your favorite celebrity, smiling and personally congratulating you on getting into college?

Pretty good if that college is Syracuse University's S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications.

The college has partnered with a digital media company to deliver two SU gradu-

ates — Contessa Brewer, an MSNBC anchor, and Dennis Crowley, co-founder of Foursquare website — to the desktops of the school's 300 incoming freshmen.

The students are receiving an email with a customized video message from the two alumni congratulating them on choosing SU and reassuring them they've made the best decision of their lives. Each video begins with Brewer greeting the student by name.

It's the first time incoming students will receive a personalized video message, instead of a regular email or

letter welcoming them to the university.

The customized video messages are the creation of another Newhouse alumnus: Eric Frankel, who is the founder and CEO of StarGreetz. He graduated from SU in 1980 and went to work for Warner Bros. the next day. A few years ago, he decided to try something new and started StarGreetz.

After less than two years, his Los Angeles company has 24 employees and produces personalized messages from celebrities for every occasion and nearly every form



Frank Ordoñez / The Post-Standard

THE GEM diner in Syracuse, formerly The Little Gem, reopened Friday for business with about triple the seating, a renovated kitchen and an expanded menu. The diner also added beer and wine.

A GEM IN A FINE SETTING

WITH MORE SEATING AND AN EXPANDED MENU, SYRACUSE DINER REOPENS FOR BUSINESS

By **Charles McChesney**
Staff writer

With practiced efficiency, Doug LaLone moved from the kitchen to the counter and then the tables of The Gem diner early Friday morning. It was opening day for the expanded version of what had been, for decades, The Little Gem.

LaLone, with 10 years of experience in restaurants, has revived the diner at the corner of Liberty and Spencer streets in Syracuse, leasing it from Salt City Enterprises.

Until a few weeks ago, he was the manager of Mama Nancy's, a diner on nearby State Fair Boulevard.

Television news crews were interviewing customers of the revived diner, their bright lights contrasting with the gray, wet sky dawning outside. LaLone moved amid the crews, checking tables, asking diners if they were all set and offering refills on coffee.

Asked how he's going to make The Gem succeed where the previous owner could not, LaLone said the restaurant's expansion from roughly 50 seats to about 150 is key. The bigger restaurant will allow him to do a bigger volume of business, which will help cover costs such as rent and utilities and, he hopes, leave something for the bottom line.

But that expansion cost money and time. LaLone wouldn't say how many dollars have gone into the additions, which have included a private dining room, a dining deck and an ice-cream stand at the landmark stainless-steel diner, or the renova-



DOUG LaLONE (right), owner and operator of The Gem, stands with Len Montreal, of Salt City Enterprises, which owns the building, outside the restaurant.

Frank Ordoñez / The Post-Standard

tions to the kitchen. It's in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, he says.

"It's less than a million, but we can see that number from here," LaLone said.

The investment pushed him to get the restaurant opened sooner. That had him working 4 a.m. to 10 p.m., he said, "living on coffee and candy bars."

In the opening hours, there were some glitches: A grill wasn't working right and some of the \$15,000 worth of food that was needed to supply all the items on the menu hadn't arrived yet, he said.

That extensive menu is another part of what LaLone thinks will bring success. It features diner standards such as two eggs and toast for \$2.25 and a cup of coffee for \$1.35,

but it also includes filet mignon and eggs for \$14.95. The filet is tied with the Italian platter as the most expensive items on the menu.

"It's as upscale as a diner can get, we believe," LaLone said.

Many of those eating in the diner's opening moments are old fans. Ed Hardenburgh, of Warners, first came