

Monday, April 23, 2007

Business is Blooming on West Broughton Street

Fuddruckers, Panera Bread and Annies Guitars have taken out permits

by **Strother Blair**

TBR Staff

Broughton Street continues to be awash in change and investment by both national brand companies and local investors.

The dressed-down high-fashion house Marc by Marc Jacobs opened at the far western end of Broughton last week to fanfare. With \$1,000 haute couture sundresses, \$20 Savannah t-shirts and \$11 flip-flops, the shop manages to reflect some of the city's diversity of taste and means.

And move over, Frozen Paradise. But not too far. Peter T. Kusek, principal of The Magnolia Fund, LLC, and Ramsey Khalidi, principal of RK Construction, have joined to form West Broughton Partners which is currently revising 217-221 W. Broughton Street, a structure totaling 32,400 square feet.

The Frozen Paradise nightclub, now occupying 221 W. Broughton's basement and first floor, will be moving to 641 Indian Street - currently the site of Club Oz - by the end of June or early July.

The second and third floors at 221 W. Broughton are now ready for build-out, according to Kusek, who said that he and Khalidi are currently accepting lease proposals for that property as well.

"We're talking to restaurants and retail," said Kusek.

Another tenant of that row of addresses, the Coconut Breeze restaurant, has already vacated the property. "We have completed demolition of the interior. We are currently accepting lease proposals for the basement through third floor interior," said Kusek.

Long-time residents will recall that site is the former location of Sears and Belks. However, when the local indoor shopping mall opened up in the 1960s, Broughton's businesses district tumbled into a decline. Only in recent years has it been revitalized.

"I think we're being responsible in trying to support and continue the great growth and resurgence that's been seen on West Broughton Street," said Kusek.



Work is underway at new site of Panera Bread at 1 West Broughton St., at the corner of Bull St.



Peter Hale Cooney III is one of the sales associates at the new Marc by Marc Jacobs store that opened last week on West Broughton St. at Barnard St.

Paperwork for a new Fuddruckers at 5 West Broughton is also moving through the city's channels.

Franchisees James and Donna Soleo have "high hopes" it will get historical review board approval for the proposed restaurant and its signage, the latter of which can sometimes be a tricky issue in the downtown, the nation's largest landmark historic district.

Soleo said the restaurant will feature 6,000 square foot dining area, with seating for at least 150 people, and a basement with games and additional private party space.

The Soleos also run the Fuddruckers on Ogeechee Road and Hwy. 17 which opened in October 2006. Donna Soleo says, "Business is going good" at the other shop.

According to their lease agreement with the national restaurant chain, they have to develop three stores in four years to retain exclusive rights to the brand in this area. For their third location, Soleo said she's leaning toward Pooler and Rincon.

The couple, who have six children between them, originally moved here from Florida for James Soleo's job. However, Donna Soleo says, "We decided to pursue something else. We've decided to become independently wealthy, pass it onto the kids and let them take care of us in our old age," explains Soleo with a laugh.

Panera Bread has also applied for a building permit at the former Gottlieb Restaurant location at 1 W. Broughton Street, but no Panera official could be reached for comment.

An Annie's Guitars is also expected to soon go into that same stretch of buildings on Broughton just west of Bull Street.