

Shopping center gets first tenant

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Culver's Frozen Custard and ButterBurger hopes to begin construction next month on its first Owensboro restaurant in the new Highland Pointe shopping center at Kentucky 54 and the bypass.

"Weather permitting, Culver's hopes to break ground in January and open in May of 2007," a corporate spokeswoman said in an e-mail this week.

The Wisconsin-based chain of 345 restaurants in 19 states will be the first tenant of the new 85-acre shopping center.

But Brad Anderson, managing partner of the center, said he expects to announce a second restaurant chain within a few weeks.

"We're excited about Culver's," he said. "It will be right behind the Chevron station. They'll be a great addition to Owensboro."

The 5,000-square-foot restaurants employ 80 people, a spokeswoman said earlier.

The chain opened its first restaurant in Sauk City, Wis., 22 years ago.

As recently as 1993, it had only 14 restaurants in Wisconsin.

But by 2000, it had grown to 100 restaurants. And by 2003, the chain opened its 200th.

The 300th Culvers opened in October 2005, the chain says.

The chain specializes in "ButterBurgers" -- named for the buttered buns the hamburgers are served on -- and frozen custard. All hamburgers are made fresh at the store, Culver's says.

The menu includes such items as fried battered cheese curds, salads, fried chicken and milkshakes.

The chain markets its own brand of root beer.

Earlier this week, Culver's announced plans to eliminate all trans fat in its cooking oil by March 1.

It will have switched all restaurants to 100 percent canola oil by that date, the company said.

Anderson said getting the first tenant in the new center should speed its development.

"When the roads start going in and the construction starts on the restaurant, we expect to see more announcements," he said.