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Pieces in place for next Banks phase

Developer touts restaurant mix, hopes grocery store, bookstore not far behind

By Lisa Bernard-Kuhn
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DOWNTOWN — By Opening Day, The Banks could be home to seven newly opened restaurants and entertainment venues serving up everything from live music, hot dogs and draft beer to top-shelf wines and filet mignon.

The offerings, bolstered this week by the addition of Ruth's Chris Steak House, further solidify a grand vision for the riverfront community that leasing agent Mark Fallon has doggedly chased for more than a year. The effort is helping to set the stage for The Banks' next phase, which could include a grocery store, coffee house, bookstore and spa.

In June 2010, Atlanta-based developers Carter and The Dawson Co. tapped Fallon, vice president of leasing at Jeffrey R. Anderson Real Estate, to lure top retail tenants for The Banks' \$80 million first phase.

Since then, he's sought the right mix of national chains and locally-owned restaurants and entertainment spots that he hopes, when combined, will make The Banks unlike any development in the Midwest.

"Our strategy has been to go after an eclectic mix of restaurants and entertainment operators who can stay busy on a random Tuesday night, in the middle of winter when nothing else is happening Downtown," Fallon says. "If we can do that, then we'll be hugely successful."

The lineup is a considerable shift from the initial plan laid out for The Banks less than five years ago.

In 2007, before ground was broken on the 18-acre project, developers touted plans that

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Mark Fallon, vice president of leasing at Anderson Real Estate and leader of The Banks development, sat in on more than 80 meetings with potential tenants last year. THE ENQUIRER/GARY LANDERS

LOCKING UP THE BANKS

OPEN NOW

Residential units
The Holy Grail
Johnny Rockets
Police welcome station

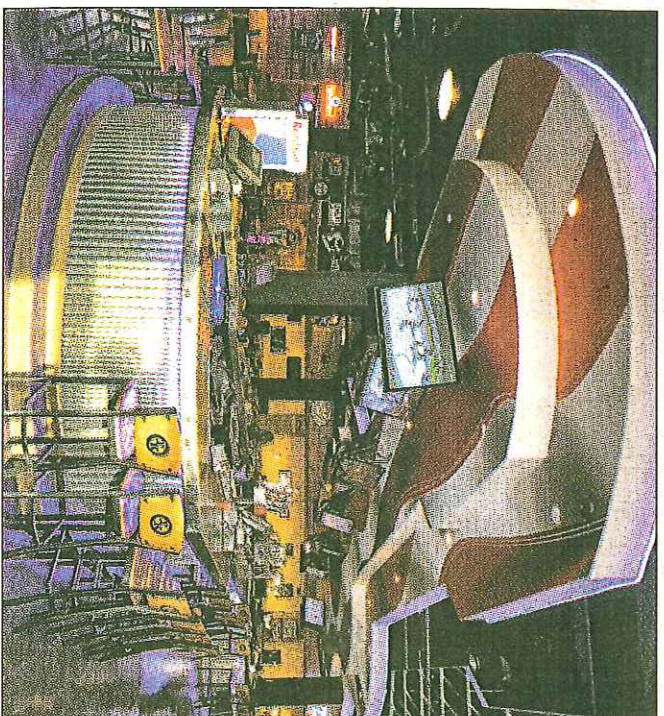
COMING SOON

Toby Keith's I Love This Bar and Grill
Grave
Mahogany's Café and Grill
Tin Roof
Ruth's Chris Steak House

The Wine Guy Bistro
Moerlein Lager House

PROPOSED

Grocery store
Coffee shop
Bookstore
Spa
Hotel
Office tower



Toby Keith's I Love This Bar and Grill is one of five businesses at The Banks opening on Opening Day, April 5. THE ENQUIRER/JOSEPH RUQUA II

In the super PAC era, do handshakes even matter?

By Jack Gillum

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Forget kissing babies on the campaign trail. The millions of dollars' worth of political advertisements airing before the early primary elections are

primary results more than other forms of campaigning, including personal appearances by candidates, campaign speeches or town hall meetings, according to an analysis by the Associated Press.

The AP's study of advertis-

offers the first tangible signs of how new super political action committees, which can spend unlimited amounts of cash to influence elections, are poised to remake presidential politics this year. So far, those groups have paid for at least \$10 million in ads — and

ROMNEY MUM ON TAX ISSUE

» Mitt Romney tries to sidestep the tax furor he ignited over tax returns.

» GOP candidates' campaign rhetoric is raising concerns about race.

Housing dispute could backfire

Even more may need assistance after cuts

By Sharon Coolidge and Dan Horn

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Social-service agencies are the latest casualties in Hamilton County's fight over public housing for the poor.

Groups that feed the needy, prevent foreclosures and help low-income homeowners do emergency repairs will have less money this year because eight communities refused to participate in a federal grant program tied to public housing.

The program provides millions of dollars in federal grants each year to communities that sign a countywide cooperation agreement with the Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority to allow new public housing units in the county's suburbs.

But the federal government slashed those grants to \$2.1 million this year — \$800,000 less than in 2011 — in part because so

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Wikipedia goes black in protest

Wire and staff reports

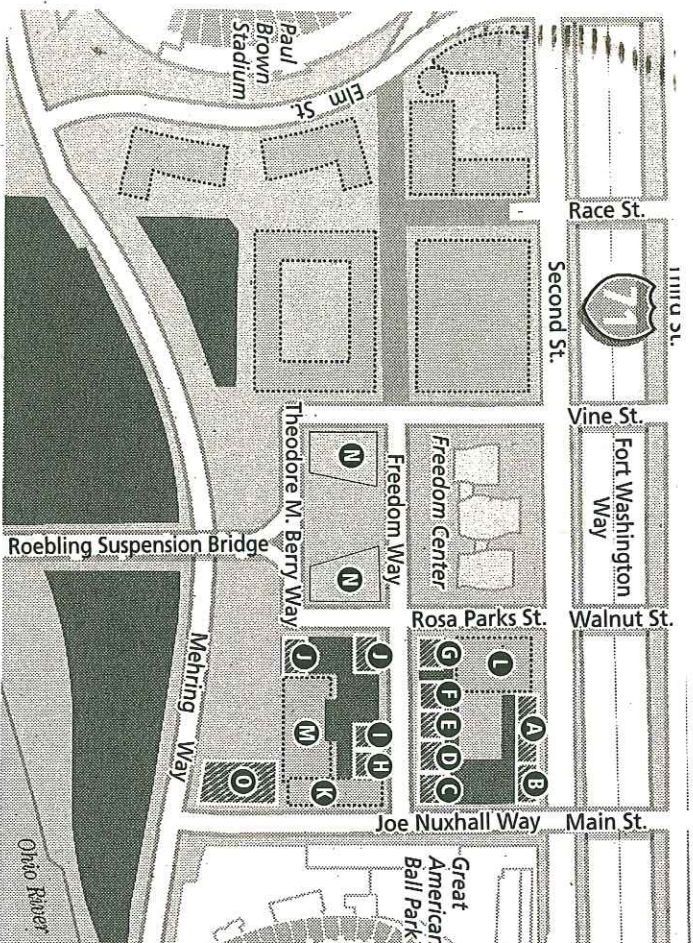
Jan. 18 was a date that lived in ignorance, as Wikipedia enforced a 24-hour blackout of its English-language articles, joining other sites in protesting pending U.S. legislation aimed at shutting down sites that share pirated movies and other content.

Both bills are designed to crack down on sales of pirated American products overseas, and they have the support of the film and music industry.

The entire entertainment industry wants lawmakers to ensure that Internet companies such as Google share responsibility for curbing the distribution of pirated material. But Internet companies such as Facebook, Yahoo, Twitter, eBay and

In this plugged-in world, would we be able to cope if the entire Internet went down in a city, state or country for a day or a week? **Nation, A5**

A BIG 'WHAT-IF'?



- KEY** Future development Riverfront park
- A. Toby Keith's I Love this Bar and Grill
 - B. Crave
 - C. The Holy Grail
 - D. Mahogany's Cafe and Grill
 - E. Tin Roof
 - F. Police Welcome Station
 - G. Ruth's Chris Steak House
 - H. Johnny Rockets
 - I. The Wine Guy Bistro
 - J. Future restaurants
 - K. Proposed hotel
 - L. Proposed office tower
 - M. Proposed residential
 - N. Future restaurants
 - O. Moerlein Lager House

Note: The Banks restaurants located between Joe Nuxhall Way and Rosa Parks Street sit below the 300-apartment community Current at The Banks

The Enquirer

The Banks

Continued from Page A1

included a grocery store, nightclubs and small- to mid-sized retailers unique to Cincinnati.

But as the financial crisis and recession took hold, developers had to adjust. They ditched plans for high-end condos and opted to build 300 luxury apartments – a step needed to avoid financing hazards that have plagued the housing market. As the project's 90,000 square feet of retail space and new apartments took shape in 2010, developers began fine-tuning their retail strategy.

"In 2007, we hadn't gone through any of the economic changes that we continue to deal with today," said Laura Swadel, director of Carter's investment group. "We figured the eastern side near the Reds stadium would be heavy on restaurants and bars, but we didn't think at the time that it would necessarily be the only kind of retail."

The fact that the first phase is now dominated by restaurants, however, doesn't concern developers. By offering a mix of locally owned restaurants and first-to-Cincinnati national chains, Fallon says The Banks has become the most "discussed and sought after project" in the Tristate area among national retailers.

Fallon is actively leasing retail space for The Banks' second phase, which could break ground later this year and include another 90,000 square feet of space with another 300 apartments. The phase is located at the corner of Second and Vine streets, in the block just west of The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center.

In addition to a grocery store, Fallon hopes to land retailers such as a coffee shop, bookstore and spa – businesses aimed at catering to The Banks' growing residential base. On Wednesday, The Banks' first 300 apartments, known as Current at The Banks, reached 100 percent occupancy.

"One of the things that I have been surprised by is how quickly the resi-

dential portion leased up here," he said. "I'd like to continue to add other uses that enhance that experience."

Fallon is as confident about what he thinks will succeed at The Banks as he is about what won't work. Traditional retail shops, including fashion retailers, won't make it, he says.

"It's just not appropriate here," he said. "If you put a fashion store down here that's already in all the malls, you've squandered the best piece of real estate in the Midwest. That's not what this is about. We already have an empty mall downtown."

With more than 80 percent of the retail space now leased in the first phase, Fallon's vision continues to come into focus. By April 5, operators of Toby Keith's I Love This

Bar and Grill, Crave, Mahogany's Cafe and Grill, Tin Roof and The Wine Guy Bistro hope to be open, Fallon said. They'll join restaurants Holy Grail Tavern & Grille and Johnny Rockets, which opened last year. Before the end of the year, Ruth's Chris Steak House is expected to open and Fallon expects to sign at least four more restaurants for the project.

Last year, Fallon sat in on more than 80 meetings with prospective tenants and researched hundreds more.

"It's like a dating ritual. We're sizing them up and they're sizing us up," he said.

"It's a long and arduous vetting process, but it's worth the effort. We have no interest in opening something just to see the lights come on."