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Chick-Fil-A preps for opening

Location at College, Horsetooth set to open Thursday

BY PAT FERRIER

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Just four months after breaking ground, Chick-Fil-A will hatch a new restaurant at Fort Collins Marketplace on Thursday, occupying a popular intersection and providing up to 65 new jobs.

To celebrate the opening, the national franchise is giving away a year's worth of free meals to the first 100 adults in line for the 6 a.m. opening, franchise operator Stevan Stein said. Based on previous openings, up to 400 people are expected to be in line waiting for a chance to win the free chicken.

If more than 100 show up 24 hours in advance, all 100 spots will be determined by a raffle.

"The community has been eagerly awaiting this for a long time," said Stein, who gave up his franchise at Foothills Mall to operate the freestanding store.

"The visibility is greatly enhanced with (the Horsetooth/College) location. We couldn't have asked for a better location," Stein said in June when construction began on the store.

The Fort Collins restaurant is the first of four locations opening in Colorado in the next seven weeks. Other locations are scheduled to open in November in Colorado Springs and Longmont and in Aurora in December.

It opened a store in Sheridan in April.

The new Chick-Fil-A is part of Marketplace owner NewMark Merrill Mountain States' attempt to build on recent upgrades such as fresh landscaping, parking lot upgrades, outdoor music, promotional events and new signage.

NewMark Merrill, which owns more than 40 shopping centers in Colorado, California and Illinois, bought the marketplace, anchored by Albertsons and Famous Foot-wear, in 2006 for \$9.2 million.

When Wildfish, a reincarnate of Nate's seafood restaurant, closed in September 2006, the marketplace was saddled with an empty building that languished for almost three years.

In June, that building was deconstructed to make room for Chick-Fil-A, the second in the city.

"It will be a huge boost to the marketplace," said Luke McFetridge, an associate with NewMark Merrill Mountain States.

"When Chick-Fil-A came in, it demonstrated how strong being on Main and Main was," said McFetridge, referring to the third-busiest intersection in the city that sees more than 70,000 cars passing by every day, according to city records.

Chick-Fil-A's customers "have perfect synergy with our center," McFetridge said. "Every level of Chick-Fil-A is focused on family and service and having them in the center will be a perfect

complement to Albertsons and Famous Footwear.”

The marketplace currently has two vacancies — one of which is about to be leased — bucking a national trend of increased vacancies, McFetridge said.

Additional Facts

About Chick-Fil-A

- > Address: 3605 S. College Ave. (southwest corner of Horsetooth Road and South College Avenue).
 - > Size: 4,343 square feet
 - > Number of jobs: 65
 - > Grand opening: 6 a.m. Thursday
 - > Hours: 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Saturday, serving a full breakfast menu until 10:30 a.m. Closed Sunday.
 - > Other features: Indoor play area, drive-through
 - > Manager: Stevan Stein
 - > Sales: About \$3 billion last year, a 12 percent increase over 2007.
 - > Information on the giveaway: www.chick-fil-a.com/#insidersfirst100.
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