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Cafe Yumm! keeps on growing

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Eugene's fastest-growing restaurant chain has plans to enter the Portland market.

Cafe Yumm! will open its ninth location by the end of this year in Beaverton. The restaurant, which will be owned by the company rather than by a franchisee, will be in the Millikan Pointe condominium and retail development, about a mile from the Nike world headquarters.

"There are a lot of benefits to having a company-owned store (in a new market) first," said Ed Gerdes, the chain's secretary and general counsel, adding that additional Portland area locations are planned.

Having a company-owned store pave the way allows the chain to resolve "some of the distribution issues that materialize as we move farther from our home base," Gerdes said.

Cafe Yumm! has been on a steep growth curve for the past couple of years. The chain was recognized recently by Inc. Magazine as 56th out of the 100 fastest-growing food and beverage companies in the United States.

Owners Mark and Mary Ann Beauchamp gave up their original location in

the Fifth Street Public Market when the market was remodelled in 2006, leaving them with outlets at the Meridian building at 18th Avenue and Willamette Street, and at the Oakway Center.

They added an outlet at the North Delta Center on Green Acres Road last summer, then followed with their first franchise store at the Crossroads Center in Springfield's Gateway area and a new headquarters restaurant on East Broadway in Eugene. The company then added franchise operations in Bend and Corvallis.

Cafe Yumm! announced last month that its Springfield franchisee would open a second location by the end of this year at the new Sacred Heart Medical Center at RiverBend.

Gerdes said economic conditions have caused the company to scale back its growth plans since announcing last year that it would sell franchise rights — and estimating that there could be as many as 50 Cafe Yumm! outlets within five years.

“Our expansion plans have slowed from our projections of last year, but all of our stores are very healthy,” Gerdes said. “And we haven't had trouble getting capital for the (scaled back) expansion plans that we have.”

The main impediments to faster growth have been reduced availability of premium sites, because of an overall slowdown in commercial development, he said, along with a reduction in the number of people looking to invest in franchises.

“A lot of people are taking a wait-and-see attitude, including the banks,” Gerdes said.

He said the new Beaverton store will be similar in design to the North Delta Cafe Yumm! outlet, which included a number of sustainable construction elements. The North Delta outlet cost the company between \$400,000 and \$500,000 in tenant improvements.

The Beaverton store also will offer a large outdoor seating area, Gerdes said.

“It will probably be the most beautiful store that we've created yet,” he said.

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