

White Castle sliders coming to downtown

By Eli Segall
Las Vegas Review-Journal

After serving up sliders on the Strip for more than two years, White Castle is gearing up to take its tiny burgers downtown.

Rob Richardson, whose group owns the White Castle location on Las Vegas Boulevard, confirmed on Thursday that he's opening another outpost at the northwest corner of Fourth and Fremont streets.

The building, 107 N. Fourth St., is fenced-off for renovations, and city officials on April 26 issued a permit for \$3 million worth of work at the site, records show.

Richardson could not confirm when the 3,400-square-foot restaurant would open but said the project is "definitely moving forward."

Landlord Todd Marshall said Richardson's group signed a lease for the property around late 2016 or early this year. He declined to discuss the terms of the contract.

He noted that motorcycle dealer Harley-Davidson also has a retail shop in his 6,500-square-foot building, which is being "reconfigured" for the two tenants.

White Castle, based in Columbus, Ohio, says it owns and operates



Chitose Suzuki Las Vegas Review-Journal @chitosephoto

The site of a planned White Castle restaurant at 107 N. Fourth St. downtown.

about 400 restaurants in 13 states. An attempt to get comments from the company about the downtown location was unsuccessful Thursday.

White Castle had a door-buster debut in January 2015 at the Best Western Plus-Casino Royale, 3411 Las Vegas Blvd. South. It was the first location west of the Rocky Mountains, and workers served up 4,000 burgers an hour in the first 12 hours, reports said.

The first customer in line arrived

more than three hours before the restaurant opened, and one diner told the Review-Journal that she drove in from Phoenix for it.

The next day, the restaurant temporarily closed its doors "for maintenance and to restock," citing "overwhelming demand."

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IN BUSINESS

PRIVATELY OWNED COMPANY

Casino operator Centaur exploring sale, sources say

Centaur Gaming LLC, a privately owned U.S. casino and horse racing company, is exploring a sale that could value it at more than \$1 billion, including debt, according to people familiar with the matter.

Casino operators have been consolidating in recent years, partly in response to a decline in revenue as gamblers age. Scale gives them more resources to invest in their facilities and become more appealing to a younger demographic.

Indianapolis-based Centaur is working with investment bank Deutsche Bank AG on the sale process, the sources said this week, asking not to be named because the discussions are private. There is no certainty that the process will lead to a deal, the sources added.

Centaur Gaming was founded in 1993 and operates two properties in Indiana, Hoosier Park Racing & Casino and Indiana Grand Racing & Casino, which it calls "central Indiana's premier entertainment destinations."

TAKEOFF BROADCAST LIVE

Chinese-made passenger jet completes first flight

The first large Chinese-made passenger jetliner completed its maiden test flight on Friday, a milestone in China's long-term goal to break into the Western-dominated aircraft market.

The takeoff of the C919 elicited cheers from hundreds of invited guests at Shanghai Pudong International Airport and was broadcast live on Chinese state television.

The jet soon became invisible on a windy and polluted day in Shanghai, which was also in the path of dense sandstorms from the north.

'GREYBALL' SOFTWARE

Did Uber block municipal officials? Probe underway

The Justice Department is investigating allegations that Uber used phony software to thwart city officials looking at whether the ride-hailing company was following local regulations.

The city of Portland, Oregon, said in an April audit report that it was notified of the federal inquiry by the U.S. Attorney's Office in San Francisco. Portland says it is cooperating. Uber and the U.S. Attorney's Office both declined to comment.

Reuters and other news outlets have reported that the investigation is a criminal inquiry before a grand jury.

Uber's software — nicknamed "Greyball" — identified regulators who posed as riders while trying to collect evidence that Uber's service was breaking taxi law.

BOUGHT DURACELL, PRECISION CASTPARTS

Berkshire Hathaway posts profit fall, cites purchases

Warren Buffett's company reported a 27 percent drop in its first-quarter profit, largely because of a big gain it booked last year in connection with two acquisitions.

Berkshire Hathaway said Friday it earned \$4.06 billion, or \$1.65 per Class B share. That's down from \$5.59 billion, or \$2.27 per B share, a year ago, when it completed its acquisitions of Duracell and Precision Castparts.

Following those deals last year, Berkshire recorded a \$1.85 billion gain on its investments and derivatives. This year its gain on investments and derivatives was \$504 million.

Berkshire's operating earnings excluding those investment gains were \$3.56 billion, or \$1.44 per Class B share. That's down from \$3.74 billion, or \$1.52 per A share. Analysts surveyed by FactSet expected \$1.78 in the latest quarter.

PILOT

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Students interact with one of Square Panda's 10 learning games, in which students are prompted to place letters onto the play set to be sounded out by characters in the game. The games reward students for spelling actual words.

Tight budgets

Gene Ward Principal Lea Chua said this type of technology-based pilot program is a relief.

It is becoming increasingly important to expose children to technology-driven learning in order for students to be tech savvy as they move forward, Chua said. But, that technology strains school budgets.

"The budget is very tight lately," she said.

Partnering with organizations or companies that can provide the materials students need eases the burden of having to purchase that equipment.

Clark County Superintendent Pat Skorkowsky said businesses and organizations will only become more important to the school district.

"We have to look to outside partners to come in and help our students have access to the skills necessary (to succeed)," Skorkowsky said.

Andy Butler, CEO of Square Panda, said the Square Panda pilot program is disruptive to a school's curriculum.

"When we donate, we require participation. Not just in owning and

More options

Some of the other technology and pilot programs within CCSD:

■ **#GirlsInTech #GirlsInSTEM.** Encourages young women to explore non-traditional careers. Over the last two years, the district has had 10 events with nearly 1,400 middle school girls participating from 20 middle schools. The district plans to expand programming in the fall.

■ **Advanced Manufacturing Technology.** Three schools have started Advanced Manufacturing Technology pathways: Cimarron-Memorial, Centennial and the Southwest Career and Technical Academy. CCSD is hoping to expand the program to six schools "in the next few years."

■ **Healthcare Information Management.** The first Career and Technical Education pathway opens at the East Career & Technical Academy in the fall. A CCSD spokesman said the district hopes to add up to six comprehensive high schools "in the following years."

■ **Nevada Ready 21.** In nine middle schools, this program provides infrastructure, devices and professional development to support the integration of one-to-one devices (in this case Chromebooks) as a way to create an educational experience that equips students with 21st century skills such as communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking. This is a project that is funded through a grant provided by the Nevada Legislature, and this is the second year in what is anticipated to be a six-year program.

using the equipment but working within our randomized trial and setting up a control group, setting up and following a certain regime," he said.

He said he appreciates the school district's "willingness to try new things."

CCSD gets first public school dubs

Las Vegas resident Tom Boeckle founded Square Panda in 2014.

It's because of those "deep roots" in the community that all of Square Panda's pilot programs are in Clark County, Butler said.

Square Panda's first six-week pilot program was implemented in first-grade classrooms at Andre Agassi College Preparatory Academy last November.

Butler said students who were the weakest readers in the class saw a 60

percent to 70 percent improvement with just 25 minutes of play per day.

The Square Panda pilot launched at Gene Ward mid-March, and the program is slated to launch at Crestwood Elementary in preschool and kindergarten classes this fall.

Andre Agassi, who is also an investor in Square Panda, said he'd like to see the play set in the hands of as many children as possible "from districts to one-on-one with parents. You build a brand, and if it does what we know it does, people are going to want it."

Butler said the next series of research-based pilot programs will likely be in special needs classrooms.

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SEGALL

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said Jennifer Lewis, vice president of the Lewis Group of Cos., which owns a nearby industrial park. "Most people would probably not tolerate that."

Workers have taped red "Danger" signs to the property along with a "Declaration of Imminent Danger" that says the "abandoned and unsecured" building "has become a haven for vagrants as well as criminal activity."

A county notice stapled to the boarded-up front entrance says the building "has not been maintained" and that vagrants have moved in and caused "multiple fires." It also says vandalism "has accrued with the removal of all electrical, mechanical and plumbing," that drywall was taken from "multiple" locations and that "all fixtures have been removed."

The notice, dated March 21, ordered the landlord to clear the property of occupants, secure the building and repair or demolish it.

A group called Itai Investments owns the property. The people behind the company could not be reached for comment, but a woman who answered the phone at the Almera Group in Southern California, a mortgage firm linked to the ownership, said the landlords "were blindsided" by Thursday's blaze and were trying to "figure out what to do."

She also said it's "not true" that the property was hit with multiple fires in less than a year but did not elaborate.

The 1.8-acre property is up for sale with no apparent asking price. Listing broker Curt Allsop of Newmark Grubb Knight Frank could not be reached for comment.

Whether developers put up proj-

ects near the stadium, they're certainly looking in the area. Lewis said her company has been "hearing from people pretty consistently" since the Russell Road site was identified as a contender for the planned \$1.9 billion, 65,000-seat domed venue. Sunbelt Development & Realty Partners founder Bill Lenhart, listing broker for a 2.5-acre parcel behind the Dean Martin building, also said he's been getting calls "consistently."

"I'm sure they're getting the same level of interest we're getting," he said of the cooked structure.

The land he's selling also has a homeless encampment along the fence it shares with Itai's property. Whenever vagrants are cleared out, Lenhart said, "it doesn't take long for them to return."

The Dean Martin property was built in 1991 and, according to a report by the Las Vegas Weekly, may have a ghostly past. It reported in 2009 that after "numerous unexplained experiences," the Paranormal Investigation Team of Nevada "was called in and collected evidence."

"It definitely has paranormal activity," an investigator told the paper.

Ghost stories aside, developers have looked at the site before. The Calida Group, a Las Vegas apartment developer, pursued plans last year to buy Itai's property and Lenhart's, tear down the empty building and construct a 285-unit rental complex.

Co-founder Eric Cohen said his group liked the site because it offers views of the Strip and is a close walk to the resort corridor. But, he said, the company scrapped its plans after learning a fault line ran through the middle of Itai's parcel. County building codes would have prevented him from developing on the fault line, he indicated.

Renovating the existing building would be difficult, he said. As Cohen sees it, the only new projects that could work on the parcel are surface parking, landscaping or maybe a bar and tailgate area.

Nothing too exciting. But look on the bright side: even if it's only a parking lot with tree planters, at least no one can kick through the walls and rip out the copper.

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