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OCBJ Poll

Do you support Costa Mesa's plan to enforce immigration laws?

In part. Police should look at immigration status in arrests, but not use precious resources singling out people.

No. Immigration is an issue, but it's a federal one.

Yes. Cities should stand up and do something about immigration.

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Posted date: 3/6/2006

Yard House Following Eastern Migration to Inland Empire

By WYATT HAUPT

Growing restaurant operator Yard House Restaurants LLC of Irvine is planning a second spot in its own back yard, the Inland Empire.



Galleria at Tyler in Riverside: Yard House coming first half of 2007

Yard House has finalized plans to open a restaurant at the Galleria at Tyler mall in Riverside in the first half of next year, said Steele Platt, the company's chief executive and founder.

The restaurant is part of a planned 145,000-square-foot outdoor expansion of the 36-year-old mall.

The move is the latest in the Inland Empire by an Orange County company.

As development gets harder to come by in OC, homebuilders, retailers and others are looking east to find plentiful room for growth.

Last week, Anaheim-based Pacific Sunwear of California Inc. said it plans to open one of the first stores in a new shoe chain at the Galleria at Tyler.

The mall's location off the Riverside (91) Freeway and the area's growing population are attractive, Platt said.

"That market is probably underserved," he said. "With the recent migration of people from places like Orange County, we see two or three market opportunities. The first being Galleria at Tyler."

Yard House runs restaurants built around hundreds of beer taps and a classic rock theme. The company, which now has 15 restaurants and five more on tap, had sales of \$78 million last year and expects to do \$110 million this year.

Locally, Yard House has restaurants in Irvine, Costa Mesa, Brea and Long Beach.

In 2004, Yard House opened at Victoria Gardens in Rancho Cucamonga, just north of Riverside.

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William Esper

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The Riverside restaurant is expected to be some 10,000 square feet, about the size of the one in Rancho Cucamonga.

The Victoria Gardens restaurant has been a hit, Platt said, generating roughly \$11 million in sales in its first year. The average Yard House does about \$9 million in its first year.

“It was pretty clear from the beginning that location was going to do well,” said economist John Husing of Economics & Politics Inc. in Highland. “If anything, they may have built it too small.”

Platt said he’s eyeing another Inland Empire spot, likely in the Golden Triangle area in Murrieta near Interstates 15 and 215.

The restaurant could be part of a planned 655,000-square-foot center by Domenigoni-Barton Properties of Winchester and Lewis Retail Centers of Upland.

Plans also call for a hotel, restaurants, retail stores, offices and a movie theater at the proposed center dubbed Murrieta Triangle Marketplace.

Platt said he’s waiting to see more on the project.

The site has a history of misfires.

A regional mall once was earmarked for the property, even being noted in guides from Thomas Bros. Maps for years. That failed to realize, in part with the building of the The Promenade Mall in neighboring Temecula.

Later, the Golden Triangle site was to be the home of RogersDale USA, a proposed \$180 million Western-themed entertainment and shopping complex. That project failed to take shape because of financial issues.

Yard House likes the idea of setting up a restaurant in southwest Riverside County, but “it depends on the economics,” Platt said.

The area needs Yard House and others just as much as they need it, economist Husing said.

“Quite frankly, the key to all of this is these kinds of companies, which until now have chosen not to come here, are finding out they made a mistake,” he said.

Meanwhile, Yard House is busy expanding elsewhere.

The company’s Brea restaurant opens this month. Restaurants in Kansas City, Kan., Glendale, Ariz., Las Vegas and Hawaii are due in the next year or so.

Haupt is a freelance writer covering the Inland Empire.



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