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## De Cavell plans OTR restaurant

By Joe Wessels Post contributor

Cincinnati restaurateur Jean-Robert de Cavell plans to open a new restaurant late this year or early next in the city's Over-the-Rhine

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neighborhood, joining a growing group of business owners giving the troubled neighborhood a chance.

The owner of popular downtown restaurants JeanRo Bistro and Jean-Robert at Pigall's said he plans to open a café akin to his Greenup Café, near the foot of the Suspension Bridge in Covington's Licking Riverside neighborhood.

The site of the new restaurant is now a vacant building on Vine Street between 12th and 13th streets in the newly dubbed "Gateway Quarter" area - where 93 moderately priced condos are under construction in an effort spearheaded by the Cincinnati Center City Development Corp., or 3CDC.

"I think it will be a perfect combination for the neighborhood, with a young, hip crowd," de Cavel said Thursday.

De Cavel's new venture will follow the opening of MetroNation, a contemporary downtown gift shop and home accessories store that has agreed to expand by 66 percent and relocate to 1213 Vine St., next to de Cavel's business. It hopes to open by early June.

And Below Zero, a martini and piano bar, open in the location of the former Alchemize Bar on Walnut Street early this summer. Its owner is former Hamburger Mary's/Universal Grille co-owner Nigel Cotterill.

No name is picked out yet for the de Cavel's new eatery. He is referring to it as the "Greenup Annex," until the project is further along, he said.

The café, which will have a European feel and operate at first for breakfast and lunch only and specialize in pastries and food made from scratch, will have outdoor seating on the sidewalk and on a rooftop outdoor patio, he said.

Over-the-Rhine supporters began wooing de Cavel about a year ago. He said initially said he wasn't interested, but encouraged them to contact him later. They did and said things felt different when he toured the neighborhood a second time.

"We were very impressed with how the neighborhood is being built," he said. "They put a lot of things into it. They are doing the best they can to make this a hot area."

Renovations should begin by year's end, de Cavel said.

George Crawford and Jerry Schmidt, a couple who own MetroNation and live in the Betts Longworth neighborhood on downtown Cincinnati's western edge, said they also felt leery about moving their successful business into an area that has been battered by crime and blight. But the recent development in the area changed their minds.

"I told them definitely no," Crawford said. But months later he and Schmidt's opinion changed.

"You can feel the energy up there," Crawford said. "If people haven't been up there, they are going to be very shocked. People who have been leery of Over-the-Rhine and stayed out, they are going to be shocked when they see how those blocks have been brought around."

Their new store will have 2,650 square feet. Crawford and Schmidt also plan to now carry a large line of furniture, designed specifically for urban living, among other home goods-type items, Schmidt said.

The MetroNation owners are friends with Dan Korman, who will open Park + Vine, a new "green" general store in the next block south, and Cotterill. Both stores are aiming to open by June 3, in time for the Over-the-Rhine Summer Tour of Homes that day.

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