

Buffalo Wild Wings Chain Coming to Lakeland

Buffalo Wild Wings coming to Lakeland, taking advantage of real estate deals.

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LAKELAND | A Buffalo Wild Wings restaurant is coming to North Lakeland in early 2011.

Diversified Restaurant Holdings, a Michigan-based Buffalo Wild Wings franchisee, has taken over the defunct Don Pablo's Mexican restaurant at 3750 U.S. 98 N. in Lakeland.



Company officials say they have signed a 10-year lease for the property and plan to open a 7,400-square-foot Buffalo Wild Wings there in February.

"We're looking all over Florida for good properties, good locations, good demographics," said David Burke, chief financial officer for Diversified.

"We're taking advantage of some of the better real estate deals now, and we think Buffalo Wild Wings is gaining popularity from a national perspective. We're not letting off the gas here. We're continuing our growth because we believe in the concept."

Diversified currently operates six such eateries in Florida and 13 in Michigan. The company plans to have a total of 38 Buffalo Wild Wings sites in the two states by 2017, Burke said.

Minnesota-based Buffalo Wild Wings Grill & Bar was founded in 1981. The restaurants offer a full lunch and dinner menu in a sports-bar atmosphere, similar to popular chains such as Hooters and Beef 'O' Brady's.

According to Buffalo Wild Wings' website, its nearest locations to Lakeland are in Brandon, Riverview and Kissimmee.

The Lakeland area has seen several chain and independent eateries close in the recent lean years, but Florida Southern College professor Larry Ross notes some are opening new locations, such as the recently-opened Chipotle Mexican Grill in Lakeland, to position themselves for an economic recovery.

"If you wait until all the news is good, it's too late, because you're not going to get a good deal on the next piece of real estate," said Ross, a business professor at FSC who also works as a restaurant consultant.

Though consumers cut back on restaurant spending during the recession, opting for fast food chains or dining at home, Ross said casual restaurants such as Buffalo Wild Wings should benefit as household incomes improve.

"As people get more jingle in their pockets, they're going to trade back up," he said.

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