



## News

# Rainforest Cafe creator introduces two restaurant-retail attractions

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Sporting sunglasses branded with the Legends at Sparks Marina logo, Sparks Mayor Geno Martini said on Wednesday the city is basking in a "bright future" after RED Development announced 13 tenants slated to open at the Legends at Sparks Marina project.

The gathering was set against the backdrop of the steel structure of Scheels All-Sports store, the first of many tenants, on the east side of the Marina.

"You know with what's going to be an exciting project, we're expecting over 800,000 visitors a year, going to create a largest tax revenue, many new restaurants that are not in the Truckee Meadows," Martini said. "We're creating new businesses and venues that are not anywhere else in the Truckee Meadows and I think that's really great."

Steve Graham, vice president of destination development at RED Development, spoke of the company's progress in attracting retailers that would provide services for which area residents and tourists have had to travel elsewhere to find.

"We've brought national tenants here ... and they've just been amazed at how they've been treated and the quality of people here and the excitement of this building," he said. "I talked with our head of leasing and he said he was so excited completely. He said he's confident this will be the best project in the history of our company."

Graham said the developer will reveal new tenants each quarter until the Legends' opening in fall 2008. He added this project will be the first destination retail center in Nevada to use STAR bond financing.

"This has been a start; this will be an amazing project," Graham said.



**Photo courtesy of Schussler Creative Inc.**

A rendering of American Roadhouse, one of Shussler's restaurants.



**Tribune/Debra Reid**

Steve Schussler makes an entrance on a chopper to introduce two new concepts he's bringing to the Legends at Sparks Marina. 13 new tenants were announced for the development Wednesday.

In addition, Steve Schussler, creator of Rainforest Cafe and T-Rex, made an entrance befitting of one of his concepts, America's Roadhouse - Bikers, Blues and Barbecues. Upon his introduction, he rode in on a classic chopper accompanied by several other riders.

The energetic entrepreneur revealed that America's Roadhouse will host a large barbecue pit and 50 different types of beer. There will be a collection of antique and contemporary motorcycles, convertibles, antique jukeboxes and a place for children and adults to use an interactive feature that will produce what their custom-made motorcycle would look like.

The restaurant will serve classic American meals, including meat loaf, roasted chicken, pot pies, specialty French fries and husked corn on the cob.

The second of his two newest concepts, Hot Dog Hall of Fame, will offer a variety of meats, garnishes and condiments. Schussler said this restaurant/retail store will offer 3,600 types of mustard which will be available in the store or by order.

"We will offer nine types of hot dogs, nine types of sausages and nine types of French fries, and do you know why it's nine?" Schussler asked. "Because there are nine innings in a baseball game."

Hot Dog Hall of Fame will allow guests to "paint their own wieners," Schussler said. Customers can use paintbrushes as props and mustards on an artist's pallet to sample a large selection of hot dogs and garnishes.

"Twenty percent of sales (at Hot Dog Hall of Fame) will be from retail goods," he said. Schussler said the family environment of his restaurants is especially important.

"One of the neat things about these concepts is that they cross all boundaries, all creeds, all colors, all demographics. It's very impressionable upon kids and their families ... and don't forget the food has to be great."

Dignitaries who appeared for the announcement included District 31 Assemblyman Bernie Anderson, Reno Mayor Bob Cashell, Washoe County Commissioners Bob Larkin and Bonnie Weber, and Ellie Oppenheim, chief executive officer of the Reno Sparks Convention and Tourism Authority (RSCVA). In addition to Martini, councilmen John Mayer, Ron Smith, Mike Carrigan and Ron Schmitt also were present.

Schmitt, chairman of the Sparks Redevelopment Agency, helped open the relationship between the Sparks City Council and RED Development. He said he was pleased with Wednesday's announcement.

"I think it's going to be a great line-up of tenants," Schmitt said. "I'm glad to see RED will be announcing (new tenants) once a quarter and to see these new restaurants will be breaking ground across the country. There's dynamic leadership in RED and it continues to shape out as being a phenomenal project."

At this time, Schmitt said he wasn't sure which tenant will be slated for construction following Scheels, but that it could possibly be T-Rex, one of Schussler's concepts. Legends has experienced some delays and downturns in its progress. City officials had hoped for a baseball stadium to enhance the Legends development, but that stadium is now slated for downtown Reno.

Also seemingly problematic for the council was opposition from citizens regarding the approval of the Olympia Gaming Legends hotel casino in June, but it will continue to move forward.

Schmitt said despite these setbacks, the quality of the Legends at Sparks Marina is still greater than he and the other councilmen originally anticipated.

"I can't say I haven't had my down days," Schmitt said. "There have been a lot of disappointing days and weeks, but I still believe (RED) will deliver a top-notch project. ... We want the best here in town."

Carrigan also spoke positively of the project.

"It's a great idea that they announced the tenants in advance," he said. "Ninety percent of this, we don't have in the area. Truthfully, I didn't recognize most of the names.

Carrigan said one benefit will be the creation of jobs in the area.

Dave Claflin, vice president of marketing with RED Development, explained the location's influence on the company's decision to build here.

"We were introduced to Ron Schmitt, who did a great job of selling this property. It's a great piece of real estate, right off the interstate," Claflin said. "Northern Nevada was very underserved. People flew to Las Vegas and drove to San Francisco to shop, and the market was very underserved. So we were very interested in the opportunity here and the growth and dynamic nature of the region drew us to this area. Along the way, we've met some of the nicest people who have been supportive and it's been a great relationship.

"It's always exciting once you see steel in the air and have the reality start coming to life from the dream. It's a great, great time in the project."

Tribune staff reporter Sarah Cooper contributed to this report.

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