



Alexandra Clough

CityPlace boosts entertainment in tenant mix

With clothing and furniture stores limping through this recession, **CityPlace** is moving toward a new identity: **Party Central**.

The West Palm Beach shopping and dining mecca is re-creating itself as an entertainment destination, focusing on tenants that amuse as well as feed.

Coming soon: **Carousel Can Can Cafe**. This is a French bistro that will feature a bar shaped like a carousel, as well as a healthy dose of entertainment, including can can dancers, fortune tellers, mimes — and waitresses dressed as French maids (Ooh la la!).

A creation of **Karim El Sherif**, who owns the popular **Metronome** brasserie in Palm Beach Gardens, **Carousel** is slated for the space vacated by **Mark's** restaurant last April. Look for an old-style theme that's colorful, festive and reminiscent of happier days gone by — such as a childhood spin on a painted wooden horse.

Also in the works at CityPlace: **B.B. King's Blues Club**. The regional chain, which has locations in Orlando, Memphis and Nashville, offers Creole and Southern comfort food, along with live blues music.

Carousel and possibly B.B. King's would join two other recent entertainment additions to CityPlace. **Taverna Opa**, a festive Greek eatery that also features dancing on the tables. **Palm Beach Improv**, a comedy club, recently doubled its space.

CityPlace managing partner **Ken Himmel** confirmed the deal with Carousel, and the talks with B.B. King's. He was enthused about the center's efforts to further enhance its reputation for offering entertainment. "They could be a great fit for us," Himmel said.

"What it does is transform CityPlace from a shopping destination with restaurants, to an entertainment destination with shopping," added **Alan Koch**, a Palm Beach Gardens restaurant broker with **Score Realty**. "That's really what separates CityPlace from the rest of the market."

"People love to be with people and watch people, and feel like there's something to do," said Koch, who is working these new deals.

There will be plenty to do and look at in **Carousel**. The restaurant's exterior will be pushed in, creating more room for an outside bar, which will have a carousel top. Can can girls will dance through the night inside in a dining room adorned with plenty of brass poles, mirrors — even a sculpture of a can can girl on a horse: "Very sexy," El Sherif said.

But start a new restaurant in this economy?

El Sherif said he wouldn't have done this deal if it were an upscale steak place, for instance. But a venue that focuses heavily on entertainment will serve the needs of people seeking an escape: "We all need an outlet to let loose and have fun," he said. "I want to transport people to yesteryear." The success of **Taverna Opa** convinced El Sherif that CityPlace was ready for another unique idea.

Food also will be important, of course, with bistro classics plus some Mediterranean dishes. Entrees will be prices mostly in the \$12 to \$18 range. El Sherif hopes to open **Carousel** by May.

Despite the down economy, Himmel said restaurants and the movie theaters did very well during the holidays — further proof that entertainment is the way to go.