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Colonial Gardens takes shape for summer 2019 opening

By [LISA HORNING](#) | September 11, 2018 1:45 pm



Colonial Gardens, at the corner of New Cut Road and Kenwood Drive, is undergoing a major transformation. It will house four restaurants. | Photo by Lisa Hornung

Colonial Gardens, the property across from Iroquois Park that's been vacant for 15 years, is in the middle of a transformation and will be complete in early summer 2019,

according to Underhill Associates, which is leading the multimillion-dollar project.

Three restaurants are planned, with another to be added later, Underhill said. As Insider has reported, one of the restaurants will be [El Taco Luchador](#). There are four buildings on the property, including the original building that is being renovated and three new ones, with a courtyard area between them.

The main building will house a sit-down restaurant on two levels, with a patio overlooking the courtyard. The other three buildings will also house restaurants with indoor and courtyard seating. The buildings are close enough that friends can move between buildings and eat and drink from different places, Underhill said.



Workers add the first truss to a building at Colonial Gardens on Kenwood Drive. The building will house a restaurant. | Photo by Lisa Hornung

“The idea is to create a meeting place for folks, not just from this part of town, but people to visit the park go to the amphitheater or walk for the Cancer Society, whatever it is, they have a place to come now,” said Jeff Underhill, a principal with Underhill Associates. “They’re going to have a reason to hang out over here.”

The property was once [Senning’s Park](#), a local gathering place for families. It was built in 1902 by Frederick Carl Senning, who immigrated to Louisville from Kesse, Germany (now part of Estonia), in 1868. It was a park, beer garden, restaurant and, eventually, a zoo. Elvis is even believed to have played there when he came to visit his grandparents, who lived nearby.

The city bought the property at 818 W. Kenwood Drive for \$430,000 in 2013 and made sure Colonial Gardens wasn't leveled or filled with inferior tenants, Underhill said last year.

The city sold Colonial Gardens to [Underhill Associates](#) for \$1 and will contribute \$2.4 million toward its redevelopment, according to the mayor's office. Underhill Associates is contributing \$2.8 million, with financing help from [Republic Bank](#).

An artist's rendering of the overview of the completed Colonial Gardens courtyard. | Courtesy Underhill Associates

There will be 74 parking spaces on the property, along with 31 after-hours parking spaces leased from Republic Bank across the street and street parking on Kenwood Drive, Underhill said. During cleanup, they found the original Colonial Gardens neon sign, and it's being restored by [Rueff Signs](#).

A view of the second floor of the original building at Colonial Gardens. This wall will open up to a patio overlooking the courtyard. | Photo by Lisa Hornung

Underhill said the restaurant tenants would be announced in early 2019. All restaurants are local and have other locations in Louisville. But they will be distinct from each other, he said.

"They are proven, and so we're trying to keep a mix of product as well so that we don't have two of them that are doing a burger or have two different pizza concepts running on site," Underhill said. "But they're distinctly different, even to alcohol that's served. One of them's craft beers, one has more of a cocktail lounge within, the other one is more about margaritas and that would be more about Latin beers and such."

Garage-style doors open up to view Iroquois Park. | Photo by Lisa Hornung

All the buildings will have garage-style doors so that they can open up on nice days. The two buildings adjacent to New Cut Road will have an excellent view of the park, and the property is within easy walking distance to the amphitheater.

The courtyard will have trees and outdoor benches for people to gather, as well as some animal statues to pay homage to the property's zoological past.

"We're going to make it very green," Underhill said. "Each restaurant will have some outdoor seating and we'll have room for where there can be some acoustic music certain nights out here. We just really want to make a nice space for people to gather. And if, you know, somebody in their group is eating at one place getting food and somebody is getting a drink at another, there is still a nice common area to have a drink out here and see your neighbors or celebrate after the after the big game or whatever it may be."

This post has been updated.

LISA HORNUNG

Lisa Hornung a native of Louisville and has worked in local media for more than 15 years as a writer and editor. Before that she worked as a writer, editor and photographer for community newspapers in Kansas, Ohio and Kentucky. She has a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Georgia, and after a 20-year career in journalism, she obtained a master's degree in history from Eastern Kentucky University in 2016.



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