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## Angier gets a business boom One man to open three businesses



Joe's Diner at 2100 Angier Ave. has slated this Saturday as the date for its official opening.

JOHN ROTTET - [jrottet@newsobserver.com](mailto:jrottet@newsobserver.com)

**BY JIM WISE, Staff writer**

In East Durham, economic stimulation has taken physical form: Joe's Diner: Home Of the One-Pound Hot Dog is open for business.

"It's been a whirlwind," proprietor Joseph Bushfan said last weekend, with sunlight streaming through his front windows, omelets sizzling on the grill and customers partaking of Sunday brunch.

Two years ago, those windows had protective bars across them. But that was before Bushfan, professional bodyguard and hot-dog entrepreneur, bought three closed and rundown buildings at the corner of Angier and Driver streets and set out "to build a village" in one of Durham's toughest neighborhoods. "Soft opening" was Dec. 18; hours are 7 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. daily; "grand opening" is this coming Saturday.

"It's been a whirlwind," he said again.

Joe's Diner occupies the former Crabtree Pharmacy location at the corner. The pressed-metal ceiling is restored, the black-and-white tiles are visible again on the dust- and grime-free floor, scenic prints and abstract art hang on the walls, and the swinging doors behind the kitchen are flanked by signs that say "Believe."

The diner opens into the next-door space, a hardwood-floored Internet café that doubles as rental meeting space. The diner is basically a sandwich shop, but for meeting groups chef Bobby Wade said he's ready to produce any menu desired.

"We like the opportunity to do some upscale meals," Wade said.

A grocery store is coming in next down the block; retired grocer Billy Matthews has been consultant, and TROSA has signed on to run it.

"We've opened up half the block," Bushfan said. "Three different businesses - it's definitely going to have an impact."

Durham businessman Dan Hill III has been Bushfan's mentor and backer, and he has similar sentiments.

"This is more than a restaurant and grocery store," Hill said. "It's going to make people feel good about the community. ... be a community gathering place."

Angier/Driver in times gone by was a bustling business corner in a thriving mill district of town. But the mills closed, people died or moved out, narcotics and prostitution moved in and the intersection became, as Hill put it, "ground zero for Durham's issues with regard to crime."

Hill put \$138,000 into Bushfan's plan to put value, jobs and optimism back into the neighborhood, and introduced him to assorted people of influence around town. (Not that Bushfan was not already connected - he's married to District Court Judge Elaine Bushfan.) Architect Pat Harris handled design, and negotiated the red tape to secure \$100,000 in preservation tax credits. With \$250,000 invested and an occupancy permit, Bushfan has qualified for \$200,000 in a Neighborhood Commercial Revitalization grant.

"I'm just trying to harness the energy," Bushfan said. To that end, he's hired staff from the neighborhood and for the neighborhood provided "a wholesome environment so people have a hospitable atmosphere."

"Hospitality, cleanliness and treat people like the individuals they are." No alcohol, but there are the omelets, and pancakes and salmon croquettes. And, yes, one-pound hot dogs.

[jim.wise@newsobserver.com](mailto:jim.wise@newsobserver.com) or 932-2004

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