

**Kentucky.com**

## **HopCat bringing bar, craft brewery and restaurant to The Square**

By Janet Patton

[jpatton1@herald-leader.com](mailto:jpatton1@herald-leader.com) March 24, 2015



A new \$3 million craft beer bar, restaurant and brewery is coming to The Square.

HopCat, a chain founded in 2008 in Grand Rapids, Mich., and owned by BarFly Ventures, plans to open in August at 410 West Short Street, according to a news release.

The bar, to be the seventh in the chain, will serve as many as 140 craft beers, including 40 or more from Kentucky, with seating for about 300 people in two stories across from the Lexington Opera House and next to the Lexington Children's Theatre.

HopCat joins Pies & Pints, Tony's Steaks & Seafood, and Vinaigrette Salad Kitchen as new restaurant tenants, alongside Saul Good, in The Square, which is being redeveloped by Jeffrey R. Anderson Real Estate Inc. of Cincinnati and The Webb Companies of Lexington.

"The Square in downtown Lexington is perfect for HopCat due to its proximity to downtown employers, healthy neighborhoods, universities and cultural attractions such as the Lexington Opera House," HopCat founder Mark Sellers said in a statement. "I believe HopCat-Lexington will serve as a hub for craft beer culture and support the continued growth of microbreweries in the state."

The bar will create 150 jobs and revitalize a space that has been vacant since Blue Agave closed, Sellers said. Extensive renovations on the two-story space will include restoring a transparent storefront along Short Street, creating a new kitchen and adding a small-batch microbrewery, pending state approval.

HopCat's kitchen, known for its Crack Fries — beer-battered fries with cracked black pepper house seasoning — will specialize in homemade food "your mom would make if she loved craft beer," according to the news release.

HopCat spokesman Chris Knape said Lexington is an attractive market for the chain.

"Lexington was hugely appealing to us because there's a really strong passion for craft beer there," Knape said. "We feel the market is underserved. There are some really great brewers in Kentucky: Country Boy, Against the Grain, some others."

HopCat will showcase Kentucky's craft beer but also will have beer from all over the world. What it won't have: Miller, Budweiser or Coors. In fact, the bars even stop serving crafts that are bought by "macros," Knape said.

You can follow progress toward the opening on Facebook at HopCat Lexington and on Twitter @HopCatLexington, Knape said.

Janet Patton: (859) 231-3264. Twitter: @janetpattonhl.