November 24, 2005

Distillery spreads its wings

Sports bar with Buffalo-style chicken to add second location

Frank Bilovsky
Staff writer

Sports fans in western Monroe County who now head to The Distillery on Mt. Hope Avenue will likely have a new choice that's closer to home.

A second Distillery is slated to open on West Ridge Road in Greece, possibly by March. Peter Psyllos, who owns the Mt. Hope establishment, is teaming with an investment group headed by former Rochester community development official John Accorso. They'll turn the 7,200-square-foot former Don Pablos restaurant into a sports bar and restaurant.

Psyllos and the investment group will work together at the new location for a year. Psyllos will then turn over the operations to the group under a licensing agreement similar to a franchise.

"We're not a cookie-cutter-type operation, but we are going to introduce as much of the look and feel in that building as we can," Psyllos said. "The name will be licensed to them, the menu will be licensed to them, our recipes will be licensed to them."

The Mt. Hope Distillery opened in 1980 and quickly became a post-game hangout for the American Hockey League's Rochester Americans players and fans. Later it was adopted by other local sports franchises, including the lacrosse Knighthawks and soccer Rhinos, Psyllos said.

Warren Sackler, associate professor of hospitality and service management at Rochester Institute of Technology, said he likes the concept but sees some potential stumbling blocks in a Greece location.

"He has a proven record," Sackler said. "My concerns are about the economy.

"The Rochester economy is not the best in the world, especially in the restaurant business. I don't know if there is that much to go around to make it profitable. Where he is, he gets college kids, he's near the ballparks, he's almost in the city. What's in Greece? I don't know."

Accorso believes there are enough potential customers.

"There are a lot of people I know who live in Greece," he said. "They all say that there is a market there for it."

Accorso is leasing the site from Munipro, a Greece town development corporation. He said his group had been considering another franchise when Psyllos approached them.

FBILOV@DemocratandChronicle.com