

THE JOURNAL



Inside ...

Growth
Planet
Culture



Culture

Fandom businesses thrive in St. Louis

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Show me what's new, STL.

An inside look at the city's evolving landscape and culture

In the past few years, St. Louis has seen a lot of changes. New developments have popped up all over the metro area, establishing new communities and contributing to the city's ever-changing social and cultural scene.

For our Fall 2022 Special Edition, we decided to take an in-depth look at some of these new changes.

Whether it's a completely new market in

Midtown or expansion on a beloved institution in Forest Park, our staff worked hard this fall to let our readers in on a little more information.

Inside, you'll find three sections: Growth, Planet and Culture. Growth contains stories about new structures and concepts: ones that are already built, as well as ones we're anticipating for the near future. Planet contains stories

about green developments and how the city is moving forward environmentally. Finally, Culture takes a look at our evolving communities and how connection within the area is being fostered in a time of such great change.

It's the Show Me State, and St. Louis has a lot to show--keep reading to see.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO / STL From Above
The skyline has changed drastically with the addition of the St. Louis Wheel, seen here lit up with holiday colors.

Expanding City Foundry STL curates local vendors in Midtown

BY ALEXANDRIA DARMODY
Editor-in-Chief

It all started in Atlanta: Will Smith, managing director of New + Found investment firm, was living there when his father, the company's CEO, Steve Smith, visited. Smith showed his dad bustling, mixed-use developments around the city, including Kroger Street Market and Ponce City Market. The markets were full of restaurants, shops, offices and most importantly, people. The old warehouses were turned into places people took their families or explored with their friends on weekends.

It didn't take the Smiths long to realize they had struck gold.

"I said 'We gotta figure out a way to do this in St. Louis.' We both kind of said that at the same time," Smith

said. And thus, the inspiration for City Foundry STL was born.

The firm acquired the former Century Electric complex nearly six years before opening what is now known as City Foundry STL. The 350,000-square-foot complex has a mix of buildings and land in Midtown, showcasing architectural features demonstrative of St. Louis' history as an industrial hub.

After years of planning and development, City Foundry STL officially opened its Food Hall at City Foundry on Aug. 11, 2021. The Food Hall is a main attraction of the market, featuring a variety of vendors. Local businesses make up booths within the hall, some moving brick-and-mortar restaurants to be inside of the innovative new space.

Kalbi Taco Shack, an Asian-fusion restaurant in the Food Hall, was one of those vendors. After originally opening on Cherokee Street, owner and head chef Sue Wong-Shackelford heard about the Foundry and immediately knew her

family's restaurant belonged there. The Smiths had actually visited the original location and loved it and Wong-Shackelford had seen the development while still only populated by workers in hard hats and the dust of new construction. Within the

first few weeks alone of being open, she knew she'd made the right decision.

"It was crazy. We sold 16,000 tacos in the month of August," Wong-Shackelford said. The trend has continued, with Kalbi Taco Shack consistently selling out of

food and harboring lines wrapping around its section of the Food Hall. As someone raised in the restaurant industry and always dreaming of opening her own restaurant with family, she's been overwhelmed with excitement at the success of the Foundry since its opening just over a year ago.

A sense of community has developed for the business, not only through a new customer base (including many regulars), but also through the relationships the family developed with other vendors in close quarters.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO / City Foundry STL
City Foundry STL sits off of Forest Park and Vandeventer Avenues, just off the interstate. The location makes it ideal both for travelers and locals alike.

See Foundry Page 2

Saint Louis Zoo Wildcare Park expected to open in 2027

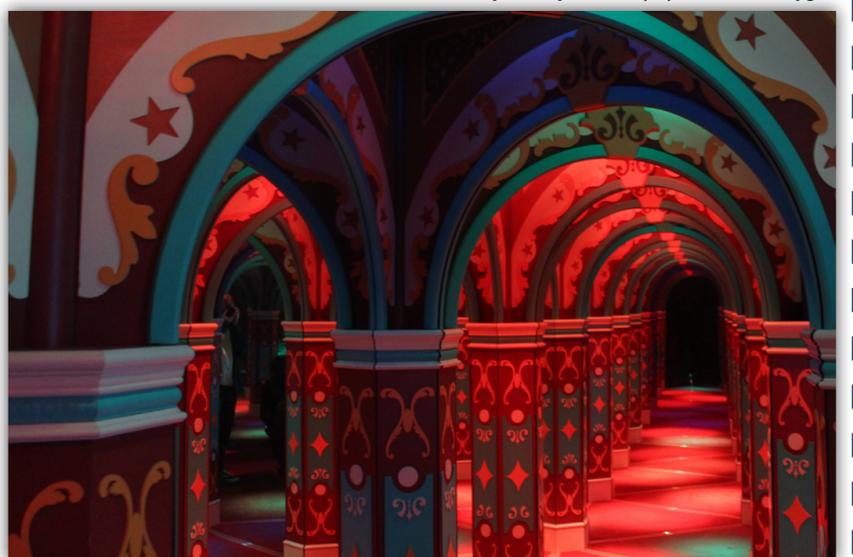
Story on the zoo's expansion out of Forest Park by Molly Foust on pg. 4



CONTRIBUTED IMAGE / Saint Louis Zoo

Inside look at Union Station's evolution

Sneak peek of photo story by KP Benton on pg. 3



The District in Chesterfield wows as new entertainment venue

BY RAYNA FRIEDMAN
Staff Reporter

Bringing new life to Chesterfield, The District of St. Louis offers a unique combination of entertainment sure to capture all audiences, including the already-popular Factory concert venue and the new Reverie event space.

Locally owned by longtime catering company Butler's Pantry, The Reverie is located next door to The Factory, creating opportunities for both to partner and collaborate with concerts and other special events.

"There's a brewery that's in there, there's also a cigar bar, an art gallery, and so it's really focused on more local and smaller business owners as opposed to the nationwide chains," Bridget Bitza, chief revenue officer for Butler's Pantry, said.

Even as a relatively new venue, The Reverie has already attracted lots of guests interested in hosting a variety of events.

"We have been able to host a few nonprofits. We hosted a couple of corporate events and weddings, and then our holiday season is really, really packed with a ton of holiday parties," Bitza said.

Those interested in hosting gatherings at The Reverie take advantage of the uniqueness it offers such as including all the components to hold an event.

"We take care of all of your food, all of your bar [and] all of the labor, which is something we take a lot of pride

in," Bitza said.

In addition to the quality of beverages and food provided, clients also enjoy the ease that they have when it comes to creating the event.

"They love that when they come, all of their chairs and tables are included," Bitza said. "When you're planning an event, especially if it's a wedding or a mitzvah where it's not something you're doing on a regular basis, it can be very overwhelming."

Even with large groups of people, The Reverie is set on making sure that its clients are taken care of by bringing their visions to life. With many venue options in St. Louis, Bitza mentions that quality sets The Reverie and Butler's Pantry apart.

"We are also incredibly blessed with a really great network of groups that we have been working with for years," Bitza said. "They are all asking, 'do you have a new venue we can tryout this year?'"

The company's great network also provides The Reverie clients with access to custom features for their events. Additionally, The Reverie is able to provide an incredible location, which is one of the reasons that Butler's Pantry decided to spread its wings in Chesterfield.

"We typically don't do a lot of stuff out in Chesterfield just because it is pretty far out from where our (usual base) is," Bitza said. "This is giving us an opportunity to introduce our brand out there."

Outside of offering the



The new event space, The Reverie, is used for a variety of events including weddings, corporate parties and others. It's only one portion of the new development, The District, in Chesterfield, visible from Interstate 64.

company room to expand, Bitza said the layout of The District also allows the venue to be flexible and accessible.

"The interest is: Everyone, of course, loves something

new. But I will say, with us being directly right off Highway 40 and with such ample parking, [that] parking and location is such a deal when you're trying to plan an event for a

large number of people," Bitza said.

As The Reverie continues by finishing out the year with several holiday gatherings, it will certainly bring new life

to the area. Already next year, the space plans to host a number of weddings, as well as corporate and social events.

No longer a military base: Armory STL opens to public

BY ELISE PALMER
Staff Reporter

The Armory building has seen many changes in its history. It originated as a base for the 138th infantry of the Missouri National Guard and has evolved over the years, the most prominent being as a space for athletes to practice.

The Armory has become a part of St. Louis history, and its upcoming renovations will shape the community. The Armory will become Armory STL, a dining and entertainment space boasting up to 250,000 square feet, with 85-foot ceilings and a capacity of 5,500 people. It's a truly unique space that St. Louis has never seen before. Armory STL officially opens to the public Dec. 16.

Armory STL director of marketing Ali Lamb expressed the importance of having a space like it.

"We're really purposeful and intentional about utilizing the space, as we call it, the living room of STL," Lamb said.

With over 40 games, a 60-foot stage and plenty of local cuisine, it's no wonder the Armory is essentially a living room on a massive scale. From pingpong and large-scale chess to four-square badminton and a two-story lime-green slide, the Armory has plenty to offer. One of the key points of the space is the connection to locality. The Armory is partnered with local businesses like Pappy's and Louisa's to have the cuisine of the city readily available to visitors.

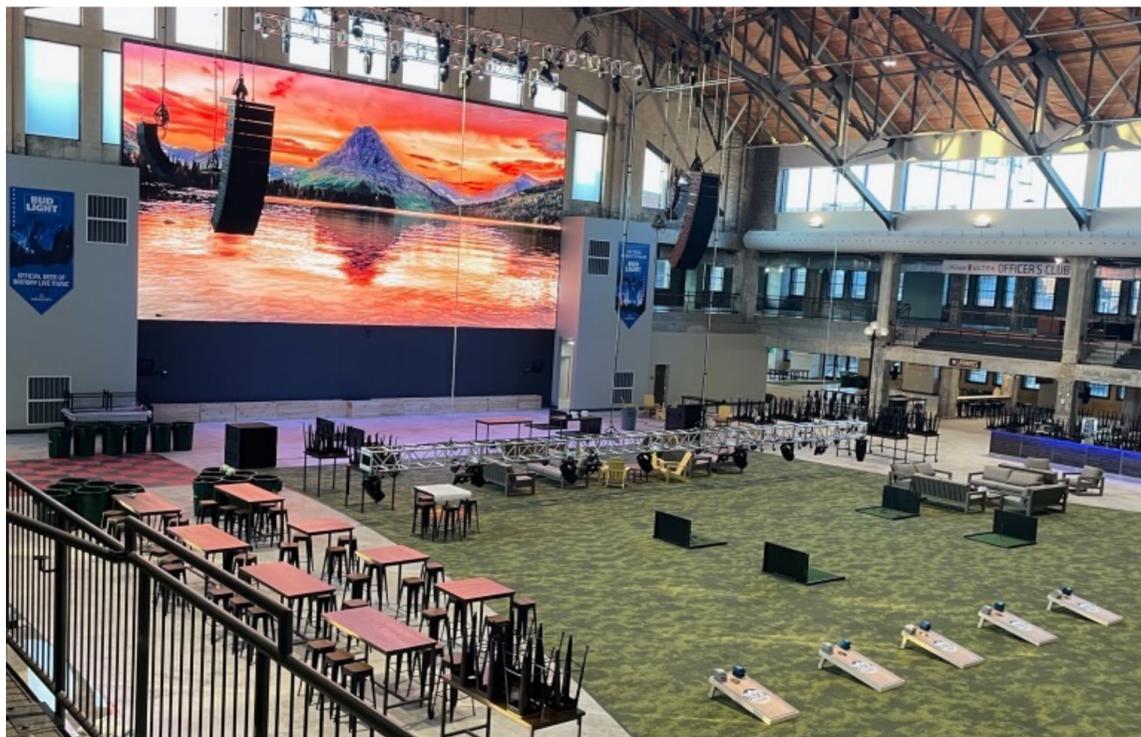
"We're two blocks from the new soccer stadium, you can see the Arch and the Union Station Ferris wheel from our rooftop. It was really important for us to stay rooted in St. Louis," Lamb said.

The Armory also makes connections to its historical roots. From being used by a military infantry to providing people with a space to practice sports, it pays homage in many ways. The dining area is called the Defact, which was a term for military dining halls.

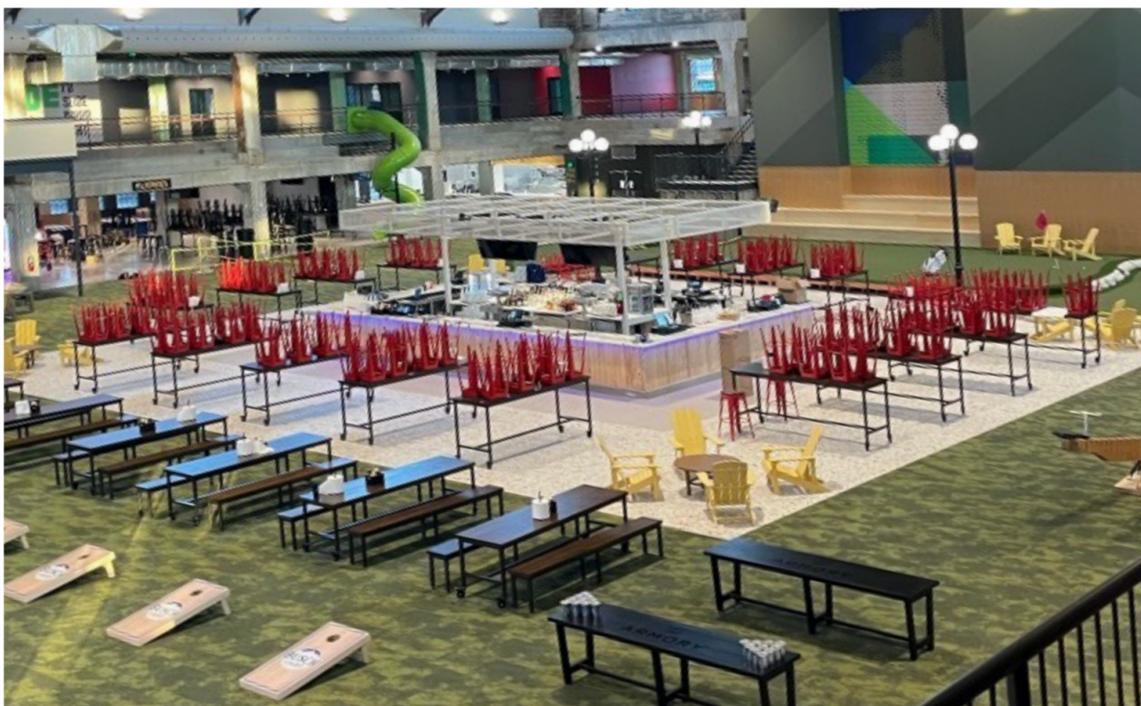
"We're being really intentional about tying in the important history because this is a space for the community," Lamb said. "We want people to be curious and excited to see how this space is coming together because it's been here forever."

The commitment to staying true to the local community is not just confined to providing local brands, but also in giving back.

"Every time we hold an Ar-



Formerly a Missouri National Guard base, the space in St. Louis City features a wide open venue with plenty of room for guests to enjoy.



The newly converted space includes multiple forms of entertainment such as food, drink, bags, cup pong and more.

mory event, we will attach ourselves to a charitable initiative because it's really important to us as a company to make

an immediate impact," Lamb said.

This is only the first phase of what is to come at Armory

STL. A place like the Armory is perfect for bringing people together to connect and play, while honoring what makes St.

Louis so special. It is rooted in celebration, which is something the community needs now, more than ever.

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The Foundry from page one

“There are times when people run out of certain things and they’ll come borrow from us, or [ask for] taste-testing. It’s a good, close community,” she said.

Community is just what the Foundry is meant to establish. St. Louis, notoriously considered unwalkable, needed somewhere in Midtown for people to meet and explore local businesses within a walkable area, according to Smith.

“It’s about curating people and small businesses that have that same mindset that aren’t interested in necessarily just getting as big as possible, as quickly as possible. We want this to be a unique experience,” he said. “We’ve tried to bring this collection to create something that St. Louis can be excited about. Proud that we have [it], but also something that they want to participate in and be a part of.”

Over the past 16 months of being open, the community at the Foundry has been expanding. In addition to the Food Hall, retail vendors moved into the development in 2021,

success through networking and staying true to its roots.

Co-founder Trimayne Boyd started as a clothes designer working in an artists’ cooperative studio. After hearing about the Foundry, he and other co-owners knew they wanted in. The store is one of the first retail vendors at the market, and considers the location key in its success.

“I think it’s hard for local designers, in general. But I think City Foundry embodies local support and people who shop here also value those things,” Boyd said. “People want to come because it’s even bigger than clothing, shoes. Musical artists come and they want to shoot [music] videos, and so on.”

Throughout their time at the Foundry, the business and brand have launched products from a variety of local designers, including having pop-up shops for designers who aren’t even featured in their stores. Musicians shoot music videos there, as Boyd mentioned, and bigger musicians like St. Louis native Smino have been seen



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO / City Foundry STL
A variety of people visiting May’s Night Market, which happens quarterly.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO / City Foundry STL
Guests gather in the Food Hall, where restaurants like Kalbi Taco Shack serve new customers and regulars alike.

as well. One of those retailers, HUSTL3 CIT4, tries to embody the St. Louis community within its business model.

Featuring clothing from local designers and events meant to uplift local musicians and artists, HUSTL3 CIT4 finds

on stage repping designs from HUSTL3 CIT4.

“Having a place where people enjoy being [there] whether they plan on spending money that day or not, that’s also a plus too. So just creating that vibe, a welcoming vibe,

and that sense of community,” he said.

Other vendors have felt their respective communities flourish, too, at the Foundry. May’s Place, a sustainable fashion and lifestyle retailer, has only been at City Foundry STL since late September, but

is already feeling a different vibe in its new location.

The store hosts “The Night Market” quarterly, an event featuring about 40 vendors, a mix between vintage curators, designers, jewelry designers and more. The Foundry started hosting the Night Market

in the summer of 2021, which owner Katie May explained saw approximately a tenfold increase in visitors after relocating to the Foundry. After her storefront in the Grove sold this past summer, she said moving to City Foundry STL “felt like the next logical step.”

“This place draws such a cross section of St. Louisans, of tourists, of age groups. So it’s been really cool to see our customer base kind of expand,” May said. “[I’m] definitely happy to bring more people in who are interested . . . It’s a movement for me; the more people who shop second-hand, the better. My goal is for the need for new clothing to be reduced.”

Already seeing changes in their businesses and a blossoming, expanding community, all of the vendors are still evolving. For the holiday season, Kalbi Taco Shack is introducing an apple pie egg roll, recently developed by Wong-Shackelford. HUSTL3 CIT4 is continuing its Sip n Shop pop-ups, planning on bringing in local musicians for events in the new year. May’s Place will continue to host its popular markets, always looking to expand the local fashion community.

The Foundry itself is also still in development: The Alamo Drafthouse opens Dec. 12, as well as the Puttshack opening and a secret underground development St. Louisans will have to look out for in Spring 2023.

“We’re getting to the end of the beginning. And we’re going to continue to grow,” Smith said. “This has become a destination for seeing some of the best of St. Louis’ local small business.”

Photo story: St. Louis Union Station modernized for changing city

BY KP BENTON
Staff Reporter

Union Station has been a landmark in St. Louis since its opening in 1894. Through the years, its use has evolved from its original purpose as a train station and terminal hub.

After being partially vacant for a time, the revamped landmark has literally changed the

skyline of the city with its Ferris wheel, and has increased St. Louis’ appeal as a tourist destination through the development of a zipline course and an aquarium. What used to be a renowned location in St. Louis is finally restored to its former glory, just in a different form now.

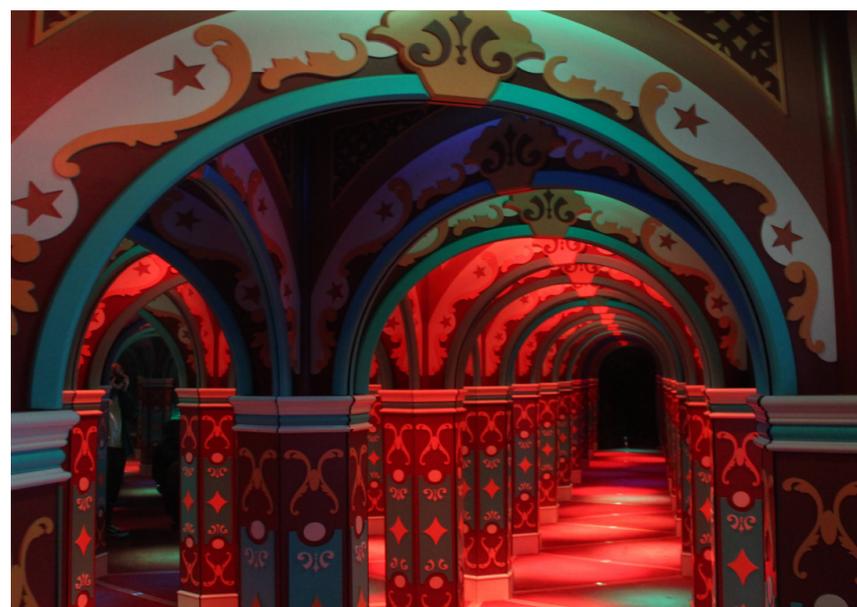


Pictured right:

St. Louis Aquarium visitors file into the entrance at the former Union Station Mall, gazing up at the digital, vibrant aquatic-themed light show on the ceiling.

Pictured below:

Webster University students explore the Mirror Maze at St. Louis Union Station, modeled after the exhibit from the iconic 1904 World’s Fair in St. Louis.



Brickline Greenway to connect several St. Louis parks

BY KELLY BOWEN
STAFF WRITER

In five to 10 years, St. Louis city's infrastructure will be completely transformed and changed.

Forest Park, Tower Grove Park, Fairground Park and Gateway Arch National Park will become connected with up to 20 miles of welcoming pathways and greenways.

A greenway is an outdoor space that includes four elements: trail, conservation, amenities and connections.

Great Rivers Greenway is a public agency that strives to recreate connections throughout St. Louis City, St. Louis County

and St. Charles, Missouri.

This new greenway, called the Brickline Project, will connect 17 neighborhoods.

"It really is much more than just a trail, it is creating connections and becoming a catalyst for public art, transportation, exercise, mental and emotional health and more," Emma Klues, vice president of Communications and Outreach of Great Rivers Greenway, said.

Over the years, Great Rivers Greenway has created and completed a total of 28 greenways throughout the St. Louis and St. Charles region.

These greenways allow people to have safe, accessible options to get to school or work,



CONTRIBUTED IMAGE / Great Rivers Greenway

Artist rendering of Brickline Greenway. Visitors can use the walkway to travel, relax and explore. Great Rivers Greenway ensures that the new greenway will benefit the environment and local economy.



CONTRIBUTED IMAGE / Great Rivers Greenway

Anticipated map of Brickline Greenway. The trail will connect Forest Park, Tower Grove Park, Fairground Park and Gateway Arch National Park. It will also connect 17 neighborhoods.

exercise, read a book, appreciate nature, explore and more.

Great Rivers Greenway also focuses on connecting communities to help them collaborate and explore new places.

"We've seen neighborhoods and communities meeting to throw a 5k or organize a block cleanup," Klues said. "They weren't doing those things before because they had not been connected to each other."

This agency makes sure it is being conscious and mindful to the community and considers the possible unintended conse-

quences a greenway might have.

With its Equity and Economic Impact director, T. Christopher Peoples, the agency makes sure that there is still affordable housing in the areas and the paths will benefit the environment and economy. They consider possible jobs the project could bring.

"We want to make sure the project has prosperity for everyone," Klues said.

Located on the Gravois Greenway on Grant's Trail, co-owner of Pedego St. Louis, Carla Sauerwein, has already seen

the benefits of greenway paths.

Pedego is a store that sells and rents electric bikes.

"The greenways benefit cyclists by providing a safe space to ride that connects them from home to work to beautiful St. Louis sites," Sauerwein said.

Sauerwein states that they have many customers who will not bike on roads for safety reasons, but the greenways are a great way for cyclists to ride their bike and stay safe.

She hopes that, with the increasing number of cyclists, the trail system will continue to

grow and connect active people to their destinations.

"We appreciate the Great Rivers Greenway and all the work they do to build trails and promote health and a greener environment," Sauerwein said.

Great Rivers Greenway estimates the Brickline Greenway project will be done in five to 10 years. The organization is always open for ideas and for more people to get involved.

To get involved or to check out more information, visit bricklinegreenway.org.

Saint Louis Zoo WildCare Park expected to open in 2027

BY MOLLY FOUST
NEWS & LIFESTYLE EDITOR

In five years, locals and St. Louis visitors will have the opportunity to experience a real-life safari without leaving the city at the upcoming Saint Louis Zoo WildCare Park.

The Saint Louis Zoo has begun the process of installing a \$230 million, 425-acre zoo expansion in Spanish Lake, located in North St. Louis County. Animals will begin arriving in 2023 with a 2027 target public opening.

Funding for the expansion comes from multiple sources, including philanthropy, external finances and cash reserves from both the zoo and the Saint Louis Zoo Association. and zoo and Saint Louis Zoo Association cash reserves. Admission for St. Louis County residents will be free, per 2018 Proposition Z, and the zoo plans to share details of costs for non-residents at a later date.

This expansion - WildCare Park - will offer safari, observational and virtual reality experiences designed to connect visitors with nature through immersion.

"At WildCare Park, guests will be immersed in nature and ani-

mal pastures, providing unique experiences with every visit," Dr. Jo-Elle Mogerman, WildCare Park director, said. "Every visit will be a new adventure."

Two 30-minute guided safaris - woodland and savanna - allow guests to get a glimpse of a day in the life of over 100 animals, including the star of the woodland safari: the white rhinoceros. Visitors can also enjoy a walking safari through a multiple-acre habitat surrounded by animals, or they can explore the nature adventure area. Indoors, the "zooseum" offers an interactive virtual and augmented nature experience.

For added fees, guests can access off-road and behind-the-scenes premium safaris, climb the 11-story safari observation tower and feed giraffes. The campus also features a restaurant with indoor and outdoor seating, luxury cabins and an event center with two ballrooms.

In addition to hosting myriad guest experiences, WildCare Park will also house the Kent Family Conservation and Animal Science Center, a 61-acre reserve that numerous endangered species will soon call home.

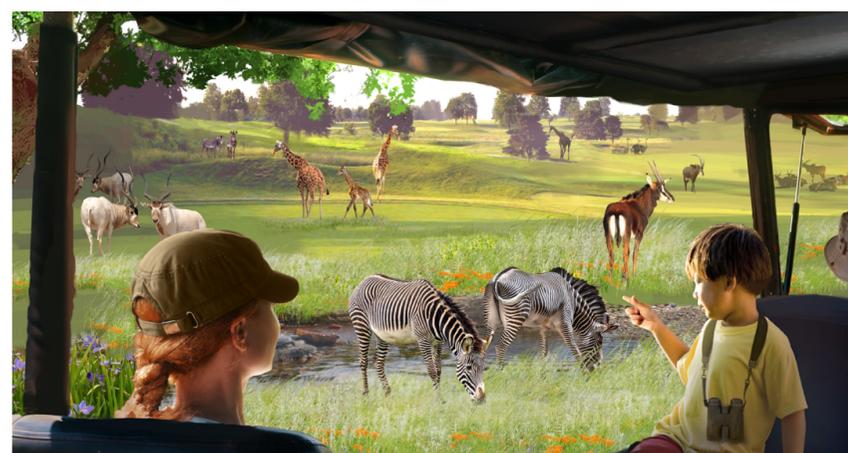
"With the Kent Family Con-

servation and Animal Science Center, we are striving to support species recovery programs and population sustainability," Martha Fischer, general curator at WildCare Park, said. "This is where conservationists will work to sustain populations of endangered species, conduct research and engage in applied conservation programs. It is key to the zoo's work to advance wildlife conservation efforts."

The conservation center at WildCare Park will have at least six endangered species living in large single-species pastures. The first animals expected to live there are the Grevy's zebra, addax, bongo, Przewalski's horse, roan antelope and Somali wild ass, distributed among five barns and up to 12 interconnected pastures.

Currently, conservationists are studying species in and around WildCare Park to better plan property development, spanning across eight areas of study: bats, birds, coyotes/foxes, invertebrates/pollinators, plants, reptiles, amphibians and water quality.

As of July 2022, demolitions of the expansion's 425-acre lot have nearly completed, and fencing the property has begun and is



CONTRIBUTED IMAGE / Saint Louis Zoo WildCare Park, PGAV

The 101-acre Savanna Safari is where guests can enjoy viewing approximately 100 animals in a natural grassland habitat from a safari vehicle. Animals pictured here include Grevy's zebra, addax, giraffe, sable antelope, ostrich and eland.

expected to continue throughout the first few months of 2023. Designing and constructing a massive, sustainable campus has been a challenging struggle.

"There are a lot of complexities associated with building a large zoological park like this. The enormity and importance - size

and scope - are incredible," Mogerman said. "Understandably, the COVID-19 pandemic and supply chain issues - including long lead times of up to one year for key materials like steel, wood and fencing - have slowed down many aspects of the process; however, we still were able to continue

with our planning, as well as our biodiversity studies. We want to do this right so that it's sustainable for generations to come."

To find out more information on WildCare Park, one can visit stlzoo.org/about/wildcare-park.

Gateway Arch gains national park status; revitalizes landmark

BY KATE MCCrackEN
STAFF WRITER

In 2018, St. Louis' most famous monument - The Gateway Arch - was granted the status of national park, one of many in Missouri but the smallest in the United States, at 91 acres.

The re-classification of the site from a memorial to a park was approved by Congress and signed into law that February, but changes to the park have been underway since long before. In the mid-2000s, the Gateway Arch Park Foundation (formerly CityArchRiver Project) kickstarted a \$380-million public-private partnership that worked to connect the city to the park and then to the river.

Over the years, staff at the Gateway Arch National Park have been further working with their partners in nonprofit, governmental and public organizations to rejuvenate local and national traffic to downtown St. Louis with renovations to the park's camps grounds and buildings.

Pam Sanfilippo, chief of Museum Services and Interpretation at Gateway Arch National Park, said the hope is that the new status not only gives St. Louis renewed pride, but also provides opportunities for national recognition and increased visitation downtown



CONTRIBUTED IMAGE / Gateway Arch Park Foundation

Scenic view of the walkway at Gateway Arch National Park.

from locals and tourists.

"We're well over 1 million people visiting so far this year, and I think we are on that upward trend where we will see increased numbers next year and in years following. And I think for the community, that will be an economic boom," Sanfilippo said.

In addition to the recent re-

naming, revamping the buildings and exhibits is a key part of the effort to improve the relevancy, accessibility and interactivity of the park to engage visitors. The Museum of Westward Expansion was reopened as the Museum at the Gateway Arch in July 2018.

"The museum had not been renovated since it originally

opened in 1976, and so it was well past time to redo all of those exhibits," Sanfilippo said. "One of the things that we were excited about doing was talking more about multiple perspectives, not just, you know, Jefferson's vision and Lewis and Clark."

Maria Tsikalas, senior manager of Communications at

Gateway Arch Park Foundation, agreed the original museum was out of date and told the story of westward expansion from one view: the settlers.

"But the great thing about the museum now is that it's all been refreshed; so much of it is interactive and it tells those stories from lots of different perspectives," Tsikalas said. "One of our reasons why we're here is to help make [the area] vibrant, help support it and help keep it safe and welcoming for everyone."

The new exhibits now have accessibility features they previously did not: braille, audio description, closed captioning and mobility accommodations.

The Old Courthouse, currently undergoing new construction, is the latest step in renovations at the grounds intended to expand and broaden the park's assets. Sanfilippo said it is estimated the work will be completed in 20 to 24 months and will reopen with new exhibits. For the first time, there will be elevator access to the second floor.

Under the \$380-million project, which was encouraged and partially financed by the St. Louis community, several changes were made to the infrastructure around the Arch. There was construction of the new entrance to the park that faces the Old Courthouse, restructuring of the highway that went through the grounds to cre-

ate a mini park over it - connecting the Gateway Arch National Park to downtown - as well as the remodeling of the museum and courthouse.

The park now grants visitors easier access to the rest of St. Louis. People can walk from the Arch grounds to and through neighboring landmarks such as Luther Ely Smith Square, the park near the Old Courthouse, Kiener Plaza and Citygarden Sculpture Park. Additionally, the National Park Service Wellness Challenge invites the public to explore what the Gateway Arch National Park has to offer.

"People [can] come out and take walks or hikes around the five miles of paths we've got through the park or participate in some of the different programming that we offer," Sanfilippo said.

Tsikalas said renovations' goal is to make visiting the Arch "a more seamless experience." "People from all around the world come to see the Arch, and before, they might never have stepped into downtown St. Louis once they left the Arch because it was sort of physically cut off," Tsikalas said. "[Now] it really invites visitors to continue to explore St. Louis and have economic contributions going into the city."

Minority- and women-owned businesses support each other at City Foundry

By **JORDYN GRIMES**
Staff Reporter

Tiffany Wesley was diagnosed with a hormonal condition called polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS) in 2013 that led to severe skin issues such as acne and hyperpigmentation.

According to the American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology, PCOS affects women of color more frequently and severely than it affects white women.

Wesley struggled mentally with her outer appearance, so she started creating natural skincare products paired with essential oils to achieve clean, healthy and vibrant skin and to improve her overall mood.

“(It) was born out of personal necessity,” Wesley said.

A few years later, her oldest daughter was diagnosed with eczema. This fueled her fire even more to establish a staple brand for locally and ethically sourced skincare and wellness products: Pure Vibes.

“[Our philosophy is] ‘Clean People, Clean Community and Clean Planet,’” Wesley said. “Our products are made with love and intention.”

Wesley approached her childhood friend, Demetrius Neal, and asked if he would be a founding member to help jumpstart Pure Vibes.

City Foundry STL. Wesley said that while she is thrilled to be part of the community at the Foundry, there are challenges that come with being a person-of-color (POC)-owned and woman-owned business.

“For us, there is a vast knowledge gap,” Wesley said. “Fortunately, when we first started, we received so much support throughout the St. Louis Business ecosystem on a foundational level to assist with start-up costs, inventory and primary business needs, but our needs have evolved.”

Other POC-business owners at the Foundry have been able to rely on each other as a support system, but Wesley hasn’t gotten the chance yet.

“It’s been so busy that we haven’t had the opportunity to connect with other businesses as much as we would like, but we have plans to mingle soon,” Wesley said.

Alioun Thiam, the owner of the restaurant Chez Ali at the Foundry, has also felt the support from POC businesses there.

“The relationship that has formed between myself and the other POC owners at City Foundry STL has been beyond helpful,” Thiam said. “When I or others need anything, we feel welcome to ask each other, and we are all willing to help in any capacity. I really



THE JOURNAL / *Craig Reynolds*
A variety of teas, mugs and other products available at Pure Vibes, which originally started as a skincare retailer and evolved into a wellness brand.

Just before the Food Hall at the Foundry opened in August 2021, Thiam contacted the Foundry’s management and they set up a showcase. He cooked for them live in front of the award-winning chef Gerald Craft, who oversees the kitchens at the Food Hall. A few weeks later, Thiam got a

tomers’ faces is what keeps me going,” Thiam said.

While he is striving to achieve his goals, Thiam is also trying to overcome challenges; something he finds challenging is the workforce. Thiam has to be able to duplicate how the food is made and the quality in which it is served, even when the head chef is off or unavailable.

“I always make sure I have at least two cooks on a shift in case something goes wrong,” Thiam said about his staff. “Even though this has doubled the payroll, it’s worth it at the end of the day to know that my food is being made right.”

Brandi Artis, one of the owners of 4Hens Creole Kitchen at the Foundry, also notes the monetary challenge. Artis feels like the biggest adversity in funding comes from being a Black-owned and women-owned business.

“It seems as if there are always roadblocks as a Black person trying to open a new business especially when it comes to getting loans from banks,” Artis said. “As a woman-owned business, the biggest struggle that I have had is that male employees have a difficult time respecting the fact that they work for a woman that is not meek and direct with her delivery.”

Nevertheless, Artis and the other owners of 4Hens have felt support from other POC-owned businesses at

the Foundry.

“It is sometimes very hard to navigate in spaces where very few look like you,” Artis said. “The City Foundry has been very welcoming.”

4Hens Creole Kitchen was formed by two couples and friends who moved to St. Louis together last year and pursued the idea to create a restaurant. Artis and her wife are the sole owners of the restaurant.

“The motive in starting 4Hens was offering a concept to the Foundry that wasn’t already there,” Artis said about moving to the Foundry. “St. Louis and New Orleans have similarities as cities, and Creole and Cajun food is very well-loved here in St. Louis.”

4Hens moved to the Foundry in January 2022.

“We actually opened the restaurant because we fell in love with the City Foundry’s concept,” Artis said about what inspired her. “I’d always wanted to go into a food hall, and when the opportunity rose with the City Foundry, I said, ‘why not take this leap of faith and try something new?’”

In the future, 4Hens plans to open more locations, not just in Missouri, but across the country. It also opened a second restaurant, Simply Delicious, which was once a catering company.

“I’m just living the dream and checking goals off,” Artis said.



THE JOURNAL / *Craig Reynolds*
The storefront for Chez Ali’s Afro-Caribbean Cuisine.

“He agreed, rolled his sleeves up and got to work with no questions asked, after completing the Buffalo Coop Academy through Cooperation Buffalo,” Wesley said. “We worked with Wash U Legal Clinic to complete the conversion.”

Wesley and Neal opened their first storefront in early June 2021 in University City. Pure Vibes opened a second location on Nov. 12, 2022 at

believe that we’re all in this together.”

Chez Ali started in 2013 at St. Louis Union Station. Before then, Thiam cooked food in various festivals throughout the city.

“I just love good food,” Thiam said. “Everybody, in general, loves good food, so I thought that opening a restaurant that serves flavorful Afro-Caribbean cuisine would be a great addition to the St. Louis area.”

call from the Foundry telling him he would be one of its first restaurants.

“I was very happy, to say the least,” Thiam said.

Every day since then, Thiam wanted his restaurant to improve. He said his ultimate goal is to serve quality, multicultural and hearty food to customers. He also hopes to expand Chez Ali to other local neighborhoods.

“Seeing the smile light up on cus-

Fandom businesses thrive in St. Louis

By **SEAN MULLINS**
Managing Editor

From conventions to small businesses that celebrate hobbies like games and anime, St. Louis is becoming a hot destination for fandom.

St. Louis has always had fandoms, though their presence was previously limited. Conventions as general as sci-fi or games and as niche as “My Little Pony” (that is to say, niche before “Friendship is Magic”) have all called St. Louis their home. Over time, smaller conventions disbanded and left bigger ones like Anime St. Louis as the main local options, but even these were small compared to big cities like Los Angeles.

Fandoms often associate the most well-known events and businesses with the East and West coasts - home to events like New York Comic Con and California’s Anime Expo - as well as Texas, where companies like anime licensor Funimation are stationed. However, corporations behind major franchises are taking notice of St. Louis, including two California-based game companies, “League of Legends” developer Riot Games and “Pokemon GO” developer Niantic.

According to Amir Kurtovic of the St. Louis Business Journal, Riot Games opened its St. Louis office - the second of three North American offices - at 7777 Bonhomme Ave. in Clayton in June 2012. Scalability architect Scott Delap, who wanted to work closer to his roots in St. Louis, started with a team of 20 local employees that doubled by March 2013.

“The great thing about running a video game company in St. Louis, Beemer said, is there isn’t a lot of local competition for top talent like there would be in California,” Kurtovic wrote. “Riot Games hires seasoned engineers and developers and also attracts interns and top gradu-

ates from Washington University and the Missouri University of Science and Technology in Rolla.”

The Clayton office has expanded to more than 50 employees across multiple teams, from Developer Experience to Cloud Technology. Riot continues to scout talent from local universities, participate in events like Code Day and take advantage of the growing local tech scene.

Shiny form, Unown letters spelling “STLOUIS” and region-exclusive spawns like Chatot. Niantic stated that players walked over 218,000 km and caught over 3 million Pokemon during the event. Tower Grove Park remains Niantic’s choice for official events in St. Louis, including an in-person meetup during Stufful Community Day on April 23.

Pokemon-themed events captured



CONTRIBUTED GRAPHIC / *Niantic*
Key art for “Pokemon GO” Safari Zone St. Louis showcasing rare wild Pokemon featured during the event.

Niantic planned to host Safari Zone St. Louis, one of several ticketed events featuring rare Pokemon in specific cities, at Tower Grove Park from March 27 to 29, 2020. However, Safari Zone St. Louis became the first “Pokemon GO” event to be delayed indefinitely due to COVID-19. Ticket holders were offered a bonus event that could be played remotely from anywhere during their ticket date, plus the postponed in-person event.

Safari Zone St. Louis eventually happened in November 2021, featuring Teddiursa’s newly introduced

St. Louis even before “Pokemon GO.” The St. Louis Symphony performed “Pokemon: Symphonic Evolutions,” a concert of music from Generations I-VI, in May 2016. The St. Louis Science Center’s Pokemon First Friday event in September 2019 included science lessons about Morpeko’s Hunger Switch ability, a screening of “Mewtwo Strikes Back” and a panel by Eric Stuart, who voiced Brock and James in “Pokemon: Indigo League.”

See Fandom
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Renovated Kaplan Feldman Holocaust Museum opens



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO / *St. Louis Kaplan Feldman Holocaust Museum*
Outside view of the St. Louis Kaplan Feldman Holocaust Museum.

By **BRIAN RUBIN**
Staff Reporter

Seventy-seven years ago, the tragedy that is the Holocaust ended after killing over 6 million Jews. Since then, Holocaust museums and memorials have been built across the world, including one in St. Louis, which opened in 1995.

The newly renovated Kaplan Feldman Holocaust Museum opened Nov. 2, 2022. Amy Lutz, director of marketing and communication at the museum and a volunteer before the update, said this is the newest museum in the country to open its doors.

“Something that is very unique about this museum is that we focus on the stories, the voices, the faces of St. Louis area survivors, liberators and witnesses. Their stories and their narratives take people through the chronological history of St. Louis,” Lutz said.

On the 50th anniversary of the Holocaust’s end (1995), the St. Louis museum was opened, and on the 75th anniversary, museum officials approved the renovation.

“The former museum was a really incredible, impactful space, but it opened in 1995. It needed some new technology, it needed to grow [and] it needed to reflect newer research. But also, because it’s bigger, it gives us more space to tell more stories and to tell other stories more in-depth,” Lutz

said about the renovations.

While the Kaplan Feldman Holocaust Museum was built telling the stories of survivors, it is open for all who want to educate themselves about the Holocaust.

“[The Kaplan Feldman Holocaust Museum] includes a special exhibition space, archives, a research room and an impact lab,” Helen Turner, director of education at the museum, said. “I educate not only students, but I also educate adults, seniors, police officers, nurses, teachers and anyone who is interested in this history.”

One aspect of the Holocaust Museum that isn’t open until January is the Impact Lab.

“The Impact Lab is a special experience in addition to the permanent Holocaust exhibition where visitors can go and learn about contemporary events and hate crimes and genocides through the lens of the Holocaust,” Lutz said. “This is a place for anyone of most ages to learn this important history. We do recommend this for 10 and up. . . this is an important museum because learning does not stop when you leave school.”

The museum’s artifacts include escape maps, cameras, shoes, weapons and more.

The Kaplan Feldman Holocaust Museum is located at 36 Millstone Campus Drive in Creve Cour in West St. Louis County.

LETTERS & COMMENTARIES

The *Journal* welcomes letters to the editor and guest commentaries. Letters to the editor must be fewer than 450 words. Guest commentaries must be between 450 and 750 words, and guest writers must have their photograph taken to run with their commentaries. The *Journal* will edit all submitted pieces for grammar, style and clarity. If there are any substantial revisions, the writer will be notified and allowed to edit his or her own writing.

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Fandom from page five

Industry support is essential for fandom growth in the Midwest, and although many companies primarily target coastal markets, St. Louis has proven lucrative for them. However, as vital as major companies are, small businesses - which St. Louis has in spades - are fandom's lifeblood.

The local dining industry has recently seen a boom in niche restaurants that often incorporate games. At "barcades" like Up-Down, visitors can grab pizza both in real life and in "TMNT: Turtles in Time." Brentwood's Localhost gaming cafe provides consoles and high-end PCs that may be too expensive for customers to own. Besides video games, board game enthusiasts are welcome in tabletop cafes like Pieces.

Customers at local businesses are often surprised by the rising amount of retailers that sell fandom merchandise, especially if they're used to nationwide chains. Compared to the dystopian walls of Funko Pops at GameStop and Target, Missouri-based chains like Vintage Stock and Slackers offer better used media selections at better prices. However, beyond local chains, independent stores like Animeggroll benefit from spe-



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO / Luther Vogt-Spencer
Shelves of anime figures at Animeggroll in Maryland Heights.

cialty knowledge and diverse interests that bigger retailers ignore. "Where larger stores will algorithmically chase trends and carry only the most popular products, small busi-

nesses provide a much more comprehensive shopping experience for their particular niche, which for us at least, Maryland Heights, Animeggroll is an anime-themed store owned by Elaine Vogt and Andy Spencer, who run the business with their children, Camille and Luther Vogt-Spencer. The family has been heavily involved with the St. Louis fandom scene for over a decade; their first convention visit in 2007 inspired them to volunteer at local fandom events, including Anime St. Louis 2008 and KawaKon 2009.

Camille and Luther described the family having "all kinds of entrepreneurial dreams" when they acquired a locking glass display case. After seeing a family friend open a trading card shop in the Crestwood Mall, which attracted independent businesses with cheap rent, they opened Animeggroll in the Crestwood Mall in 2010. Animeggroll moved to three different locations once the Crestwood Mall closed, finally moving to Maryland Heights in May.

"When we first opened, a lot of people seemed to have had one main fandom they would be into, whereas now, it feels like there are less people who are diehard into a particular fandom," Luther said. "Rather than having a lot of people who love anime and that's all they are into, we get a lot of people who like anime but also like video games, D&D, Comics, K-Pop and many other fandoms."

The Vogt-Spenacers credit two events as positive impacts on their business and St. Louis' fandom scene. The rise of legal streaming platforms in the mid-2010s made anime more accessible to mass audiences. Addi-

tionally, while the pandemic made community interaction challenging, sales rose in 2020 when people explored indoor hobbies like model kits, gaming and streaming anime.

Camille noted that anime in particular has grown in the 2010s, largely due to how many different ways people can interact with the same shows.

"There's a part of the community that's really into the cosplay side, another part that's into the model kits ... there's those who are really into collecting the shows and manga in their physical formats, and many who collect the figurines. There's now more ways to interact with the fandom than ever here in the U.S., and that's really helped people find a place to really express their enjoyment of anime," Camille said.

The family is optimistic that St. Louis will continue to see more fandom businesses open. Despite the difficult investment of time and money, Luther explains that millennials and Gen Z, who grew up in St. Louis' budding fandom scene during their mid-teens and early 20s, are now mature enough to pursue entrepreneurship and share their passions with fellow fans in local communities.

St. Louis has room for growth compared to the wider industry support of nearby cities like Chicago, but its strong infrastructure upholds fan communities. From convention halls and companies to small businesses and gatherings, the long-standing fandom scene in St. Louis grows every year and shows immense potential.



GRAPHIC BY KENZIE AKINS

has probably been the biggest part of what makes our business work," Animeggroll employee Camille Vogt-Spencer said.

Located at 11435 Dorsett Road in

Food truck scene flourishes with new gardens

By LONNIE WALTON
Staff Reporter

In the past decade or so, the St. Louis dining landscape has been transformed by food trucks, popular mobile kitchen units serving specialty items like unique sandwiches, ethnic dishes, indulgent treats and more.

The craze has given way to food truck gardens like 9 Mile Garden and Frankie Martin's Garden - the first ones in Missouri - designed to be family-friendly venues where people can gather to enjoy food, live music, movie nights and more.

"I had partners that had some land available," Brian Hardesty, a local chef and founder of the popular food truck Guerrilla Street Food, said. "So, I told them an idea I had in mind of starting food trucks."

9 Mile Garden opened in Affton in South St. Louis County in the summer of 2020 as a partnership between Hardesty, who serves as managing partner, and Seneca Commercial Real Estate.

"What I like most about it is that it brings people together," Hardesty said about 9 Mile Garden.

Every day, except on Mondays, 9 Mile Garden has a rotating schedule of local food truck vendors for lunch and dinner service, along with a slate of activities and entertainment such as wine tastings, movies, live bands, artisan markets and more, especially on the weekends.

The food is as varied as the people who come to dine there: barbecue, sushi, tacos, pizzas, sliders, mac and cheese, loaded fries and more. Desert trucks are part of the lineup, too, including favorites like Scoops, Pete's Pops and Fire & Ice Cream.

The on-site bar, The Canteen, is designed as a modern draft house, offering a large selection of local and national beer, as well as cider, cocktails and wine. The 4,500-square-foot space has seating and also room to play a variety of free games.

"I heard the place was amazing,



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO / 9 Mile Garden
Customers lining up for food trucks at 9 Mile Garden in Affton.

Therefore, I had to go," diner Brandy Nugert said.

Due to the success of 9 Mile Garden, which opened at the height of the pandemic in July 2020, Hardesty and his partners looked to expand in Cottleville in St. Charles County.

"The idea was to have more than one garden," Hardesty said. "I'd even like to take [9 Mile Garden] outside of Missouri."

Frankie Martin's Garden, which opened in July 2022, has a concept similar to 9 Mile, with its family-

friendly environment and offerings such as movies, games and, of course, the food trucks.

"I loved that they moved one here," customer Stella Easter said. "I feel like I'm in a different land when I'm here."

Frankie Martin's Garden got its name from Cottleville resident Frankie Martin, who was known for his warm personality and for being charitable. His 130-year-old brick home, which is located on the property, has been renovated and now called The House,

where whiskey and wine are served in an intimate setting. The House has more than 200 types of whiskey and more than 40 wine selections.

"There are just so many options for our customers to enjoy - so many," Hardesty said.

Both gardens are open six days a week, Tuesday through Sunday, for lunch and dinner. The food truck schedule changes on a daily basis, with the lineup announced beforehand on the social media pages for 9 Mile and Frankie Martin's Garden.