

Foodie central: village for indie vendors to rise in West Palm industrial zone

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Palm Beach County's foodie city of the moment is about to get more tasty. West Palm Beach might soon be home to a **new food and drink-centric district** that's in development along the city's industrial zone.



Celis Produce is among the vendors at the upcoming Grange Hall. (Credit: Oak Media)

The Warehouse District, a sprawling complex of vintage buildings, is shaping up to be an eclectic urban village of food and beverage creators and vendors, artists, fitness buffs and other indie entrepreneurs. Developers say

they hope to open sometime in December or January.

This district will boast a New York-inspired food hall, [Grange Hall Market](#), as well as what will be the city's only craft beer brewery, [Steam Horse](#). It's located in the industrial zone that sits off Elizabeth Avenue, just southwest of the Palm Beach County Convention Center, near downtown West Palm Beach.

The food hall portion of this village is the brainchild of real estate developer **Chris Vila**, a transplanted New Yorker who envisions a Chelsea Market-type of place that provides locals with one-stop-food-shopping options.

“Locals can do their shopping there, buy their proteins and veggies, and take it all home to cook. Or they can just buy a whole dinner and wine and eat it there,” says Vila, son of home-improvement star Bob Vila of “This Old House” fame.



The District will be home to Steam Horse brewery, sibling to Tequesta and Twisted Trunk breweries. (Cox Newspapers photo)

A covered loading dock will be transformed into a dining and events space, he notes, and a greenway will offer plenty of spots for enjoying a bite. Vila says he's secured 12 vendors for Grange Hall, among them **Rabbit Coffee** roasters, **Celis Produce** vendors, plus a butcher, fishmonger, florist, coffee roaster, taco spot and rotisserie chicken joint.

Central to The District's larger mission is that the market and other spaces within the complex will nurture independent vendors and artisans.

“Our goal is to have a place where those folks can thrive, expand and grow,” says **The District's developer Hunter Beebe of Johnstone Capital Partners**. “I believe the ultimate synergy will drive success for the entire community. The heart and soul of this is not me or my team, but these tenants.”

One of those indie vendors is Celis Produce, whose owners have nabbed a spot in Grange Hall. It will house Celis' second location.



The Celis brothers (from left: Felipe, Camilo and Alex) are bringing their organic goods to The District's food hall. (Bruce R. Bennett / The Palm Beach Post)

“The concept sounds amazing. I feel it’s what we need here,” says Felipe Celis, who co-owns a West Palm produce delivery and juice bar business with his two brothers. Besides selling produce and some pantry items at the food hall, the Celis brothers plan to sell juices, acai bowls and quinoa bowls for onsite consumption.

The District’s 85,000-square-foot area includes about eight buildings that were constructed between the 1920s and the 1950s, says Beebe.

“There’s a lot of character in those buildings. We bought them all within the last year, and we’ve undertaken this effort to essentially redevelop them,” he says.

Beebe envisions a district akin to Miami’s hip, artistic Wynwood

neighborhood, “with a heavy focus on local entrepreneurs, culture, art and food – but not food in the big business kind of way.”

Adding lifestyle layers to The District, his team has signed on an **indoor cycling studio**, he says. “We will also have the first squash club that West Palm Beach has ever had. We’re excited about that,” says Beebe, who counts art galleries in the mix as well.

While it may seem as if developers are building a brand new neighborhood, Beebe cautions that’s not the case.

“The neighborhood exists. What we’re trying to do is bring it back to life. This is not like CityPlace where you are sprouting up with a (from-the-ground-up) development,” he says, emphasizing that The District’s project seeks to redevelop an area, not build from scratch.

He notes that many of the previous inhabitants of the industrial district were working trades that are now gone.

“A lot of those businesses have gone away, and so the buildings have become less productive,” says Beebe, who splits his time between Palm Beach and New York. “What we saw is this opportunity to reimagine the neighborhood with something that’s consistent with productivity now in West Palm Beach.”



Rabbit Coffee is among Grange Hall vendors. (Meghan McCarthy/ The Palm Beach Post)

Some of the remnants left behind by previous generations and inhabitants will serve new functions. Take the long-abandoned 1920s rail line that cuts through the property:

“We are developing the Trail Line,” says Beebe, describing a pedestrian swath of green that connects various concepts. “This will become a very active pedestrian greenway.”

West Palm’s quickly emerging food and entertainment scene provides fertile ground for The District’s development, says Vila.

“I think it’s a wonderful time to be here,” he says. “West Palm Beach is growing and can sustain something like this.”

Follow The District’s progress: on Instagram [@grangehallmarket](#) and [@warehousedistrictwpb](#)