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Umami Burger and Two Boots Pizza Announce New Job-Creating Ventures on Broadway

Iconic businesses to become neighbors to the historic Orpheum Theatre on Broadway, contributing to the Bringing Back Broadway's initiative's revitalization effort, which is celebrating its third anniversary - Orpheum Theatre turns 85

LOS ANGELES (Jan. 25, 2011) - Two formerly vacant spaces in the historic Broadway corridor will soon house top-notch eateries designed by top designers, bringing fame, popularity and a foodie following from their respective coasts to Downtown L.A. while adding 50-75 jobs to the area.

The UMAMICatessen, a new concept from the gastronomic experts behind the vastly popular Umami Burger restaurants dotted across L.A., will open at 852-854 S. Broadway. And hailing from New York City, Two Boots Pizza will premier at 828 S. Broadway.

"Thanks to a strong collaboration between property owner, entrepreneurs and the City, Bringing Back Broadway will soon celebrate the arrival of two new businesses that will bring as many as 75 jobs to Broadway," said Los Angeles City Councilmember José Huizar, who is spearheading the Bringing Back Broadway revitalization effort. "This collaboration between the private and public sector is a prime example of what the Bringing Back Broadway initiative is all about and one we hope to duplicate again and again."

The UMAMICatessen will incorporate a burger joint, bar, deli, dessert, as well as rotating concepts from some of America's greatest chefs. The Broadway location will be the sixth Umami establishment and the largest among the company's independent, locally-owned L.A. eateries. The downtown restaurant will be designed by SO/DA and will seat approximately 60-80 people. By operating 7 days a week until 2 a.m., this new restaurant will be a welcomed addition to Broadway's nightlife. The ambitious plan came about after several months of discussions with property owner Steve Needleman and assistance from the Bringing Back Broadway initiative.

"We are thrilled to call Broadway home for our newest and biggest venture yet," said Adam Fleishman, CEO of Umami Burger. "Downtown L.A. is a dynamic, rapidly changing area, and we can't wait to turn a vacant, lifeless storefront into Downtown's own unique Umami location as part of Bringing Back Broadway."

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In New York City, Two Boots Pizza's flagship pizzerias have earned a wide and devoted following for their delicious blend of Italian and Cajun flavors, cornmeal-crust pizza, overstuffed po' boys, organic salads, plus calzones, strombolis and strombolinis. Downtown will join Echo Park as the only current Los Angeles locations for the popular eatery.

Phil Hartman, owner of Two Boots Pizza feels historic Broadway is a natural location for Two Boots Pizza because of the area's similarities to the pizzeria's New York roots.

"Two Boots loves Downtown L.A.!" said Hartman. "With its vintage theater district, amazing architecture and diverse and eclectic culture, we feel right at home here and are thrilled to be part of the Bringing Back Broadway effort. We're looking forward to creating amazing signage that harkens back to the area's glory days and to creating a tribute pizza that celebrates Broadway's glorious history."

Every Two Boots branch is unique. Some have full-service dining, some have full bars, while others have live music. Like all the company's locales, Two Boots Broadway will display the work of local artists. The restaurant design will feature a large viewing window into the kitchen where patrons can watch pizza dough being tossed and food being prepared for the eatery's streetside service or delivery. Well-known architect George Kelly is spearheading the design.

Both additions to the street bode well for the future of revitalizing Broadway. Umami will add 35 to 50 jobs downtown. Two Boots Broadway is expected to create 15 to 25 jobs. The new restaurants will complement other revitalization at the southern anchor of the Bringing Back Broadway initiative, which is celebrating the third year of its 10-year plan.

Much of the credit for the welcomed new additions goes to property owner Steve Needleman, owner of Anjac Fashion Buildings and the historic Orpheum Theatre, who recruited both businesses and worked out deals and long-term agreements to make them viable.

"My belief is that the best way to build your own community is to bring in that unique type of tenant who will complement existing businesses and attract residents and visitors alike to the historic area," Needleman said. "Economics cannot be the driving force behind these deals; at times, you have to be willing to take a risk, make incredible deals and forge long-term partnerships."

The fully restored historic Orpheum Theatre is turning 85 years old this year and is the centerpiece of Broadway's south-end revitalization, which also includes the iconic Eastern Columbia Building and the recently renovated Blackstone Building, both former department stores adapted for residential use above the commercial ground floor. The Broadway Bar was one of the first night-life establishments in the area.

Needleman credits Bringing Back Broadway for providing critical assistance with these projects and with others in the pipeline.

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“When we were facing obstacles with City departments, both on the Umami project and with the upcoming renovation of the Singer Sewing Machine Building, Councilmember Huizar’s Bringing Back Broadway Executive Director stepped in and worked directly with us, cutting red tape and getting the answers and responses we needed in order to allow these job-creating projects to move forward,” Needleman said. “The partnership for revitalization and the problem-solving, can-do spirit in the City that each of these projects benefited from never existed before Bringing Back Broadway.”

Needleman’s Anjac Fashion Buildings is providing offices on the ground floor of the historic Wurlitzer Building on Broadway for downtown publication BlogDowntown in a space that also features a community center. Anjac is also in preparation to reactivate the long-vacant Singer Sewing Machine building at 808 S. Broadway into unique, live/work style lofts that will include about 2,700 square feet of living space and 3,500 square feet of work area on each floor. Renovations on this project are planned to begin this summer.

“Steve Needleman sets the pace – and the example – for other Broadway property owners,” Councilmember Huizar said. “Bringing this plan to fruition in the historic district was no small feat and what Steve is doing should be considered a model for other owners on the street. But the City must also use this as model and continue the collaboration that made this happen. Solving problems for businesses on Broadway takes out-of-the-box thinking and leadership.”

Launched in January of 2008, key components of the multi-faceted Bringing Back Broadway initiative include a major streetscape and infrastructure improvement plan; the introduction of modern streetcar service in Downtown; reactivation of historic theater venues; support for entertainment and cultural activities; implementation of historic preservation, urban design and lighting guidelines and a Broadway historic sign district.

Considering there is approximately 15 to 20 percent ground-floor vacancy rates on Broadway and more than one-million square feet of empty space on the upper floors, a major component of the plan is economic development opportunities and job creation. With the world-famous Clifton’s Cafeteria set to undergo a major renovation and expansion, which will bring 100 jobs downtown, and now the opening of these two new restaurants in underused retail space, Broadway is beginning to see much-needed improvement.

UMAMICatessen and Two Boots Broadway are expecting approximately 18 months of renovation, tenant improvement, construction and design before their grand openings.

“Bringing Back Broadway is a 10-year plan that has already seen enormous success, and this is another example that we are beginning to see the seeds of progress begin to sprout,” Councilmember Huizar said. “As we celebrate the third year of success of Bringing Back Broadway, we look to a bright future for this important and historic street.”

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