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Restaurant/brewery to lease old Borders

A German-themed restaurant, bar and microbrewery, Gordon Biersch Brewery Restaurant, has signed a lease to occupy most of the abandoned Border Books & Music space at 4th Street Live.

Gordon Biersch's owners have agreed to take about 9,000 square feet of ground-level space and serve as the northernmost anchor for the entertainment hub operated by an affiliate of the Cordish Co. The restaurant will be located near the southwest corner of Liberty Street and Muhammad Ali Boulevard.

Kelly Wilson, a spokeswoman for the Chattanooga-based CraftWorks Restaurants, which owns the Gordon Biersch brand, confirmed the lease agreement Monday. She said the restaurant expects to open in March or April and employ about 80 people, with a capacity to seat about 250.

She said the restaurant will have extensive outdoor dining, with a full bar and ample large-screen televisions. The microbrewery will offer at least eight beers and feature German lagers and ales. Reservations will be taken but not required.

Borders and the Hard Rock Cafe were among the first tenants to commit to 4th Street Live nearly a decade ago. But Borders closed the large downtown store,

which spanned two floors at 4th Street Live, earlier this year amid a nationwide liquidation.

Wilson said CraftWorks has 14 different restaurant concepts. They include 31 Gordon Biersch outlets, with the closest one to Louisville in Columbus, Ohio. Its other major chains include 33 Rock Bottom Restaurant & Brewery stores and 64 corporate-owned Old Chicago pizza restaurants.

The Gordon Biersch restaurant and brewery chain was founded in California in the late 1980s. What's now CraftWorks bought the restaurants in 1999.

The Gordon Biersch menu features what Wilson described as traditional American food "with fresh California cuisine influences."

She said the Louisville restaurant will be open for lunch and dinner seven days a week.

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Wilson said there is a Gordon Biersch restaurant in one other Cordish urban development, in Kansas City, Mo.

Cordish Co. spokeswoman Megan Slattery didn't return phone calls Monday.

News of the Gordon Biersch lease was the second major tenant announcement for 4th Street Live in six weeks. Cordish announced in early October that PBR Louisville, a franchise of Professional Bull Riders Inc., plans to open a nightclub featuring a mechanical bull early next year.

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