

# Mixed-use plaza planned for W. Central

Jessica Dyer / Journal Staff Writer

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The Albuquerque developer behind the Aveda Institute and Vinaigrette project has more in store for the Central Avenue corridor between Downtown and Old Town.



Jay Rembe said he plans to start site work early next year on Country Club Plaza, a 3.4-acre mixed-use development near the intersection of Central and Laguna SW. The project eventually will feature 80,000 square feet of combined commercial, office and residential space.

Five Star Burgers and Chama River Brewing Co. each already have signed leases for spots in the development and talks have commenced with a few more potential tenants.

Attracting tenants is getting easier, Rembe said, because Aveda Institute, a salon and cosmetology school, and Vinaigrette restaurant are flourishing nearby.

Rembe and Aveda Institute owner Mark Pardo Gonzales worked to convert an old movie theater into a salon, school and office. It opened about two years ago at 1816 Central SW.



This rendering shows the planned renovation of 1710 Central SW into Country Club Plaza. (Courtesy of Mullen Heller Architecture)

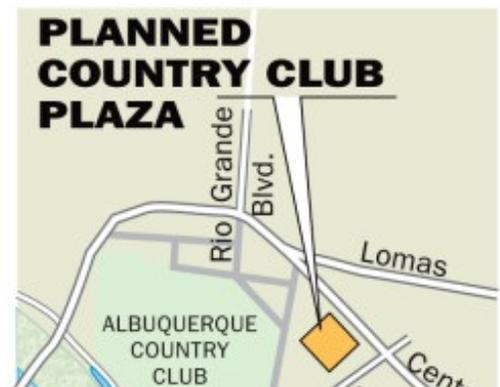
Restaurateur Erin Wade moved in next door, turning a onetime grocery building into Vinaigrette. The popular salad bistro opened last November.

“I think Aveda was really the catalyst that helped me attract Vinaigrette, and Vinaigrette takes it to a whole (new) level with her success,” Rembe said. “The area’s always been underserved, but I don’t think people really believed they could be successful there.

“But with two wonderful local businesses there thriving, (it shows the) demand is there for people to be successful.”

Five Star Burgers owner Bob Gontram said he’s ready to be part of the same scene, acknowledging that he dismissed a previous opportunity to expand his upscale burger chain in the area.

“I turned down the Vinaigrette site (before) because I didn’t think it was such a great location,” Gontram said with a laugh. “Now when I stand there and wait for a table for lunch, I decided you lose some and you win some.”



Rembe, the owner-developer, said he's been working toward Country Club Plaza for about 10 years, but the recession and other challenges hindered progress.

He cleared one of the last hurdles two months ago when he finally acquired the Central Paint & Body Shop spot at 1710 Central SW, the heart of the development.

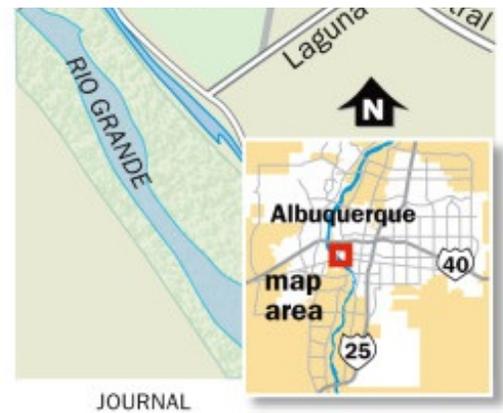
Rembe will renovate that building for Five Star Burgers and a few smaller suites.

The former Horn Oil Co. site at 1720 Central SW – already a multitenant building – will be repurposed to make space for the Chama River tap room/restaurant.

Brett Hills of NAI Maestas & Ward is helping with the leasing.

The development's new construction includes:

- A 21,000-square-foot, three-story building with ground-level commercial space and two levels of residential units.
- A 6,400-square-foot, two-story office building for Rembe Urban Design + Development, Mullen Heller Architecture and other tenants.
- A 40-by-150-foot plaza that Rembe said is "meant to be a great gathering space" that can also work as outdoor restaurant seating.



Country Club Plaza has already signed two restaurant tenants. (Courtesy of Mullen Heller Architecture)

The city's Environmental Planning Commission approved the project earlier this month.

The plans didn't include a proposed residential building near the back of the development that had drawn some neighborhood objections.

Rembe said he'll focus on the front of Country Club Plaza for now but still intends to pursue approval for a residential building that would include 40-45 units.