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B-More Kitchen food incubator on track to open by the end of August

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When Jonathan Fishman and Eben Altmann announced the B-More Kitchen food incubator was coming to Baltimore, it was met with nearly 400 inquires from those in the industry, they said.

The incubator is the anchor that holds down the nearly \$3 million development, but the building it is housed in at 5604 York Road — a former Chevrolet car dealership — offers so much more to the area.

Fishman, the founder, and Altmann, the general manager, have held a few open houses thus far to get the B-More Kitchen into the mind's of people in Baltimore, but they said a true grand opening will probably come at the end of August or early September at the latest.

Above the incubator space is a nearly 6,000-square-foot event space that provides the members a chance to put their products on display. The event space includes a 1,200-square-foot patio.

And in front of the kitchen and event space is about another 8,200 square feet of space across two floors that Fishman and Altmann hope to lease to other food companies. Hex Ferments is already set up in the front space of the second floor.

"This is the only place like this in Baltimore and right now we are providing a resource that does not exist here," Fishman said. "There is this whole growing economy of locally produced food and artisanal food and we just saw that the city really had a need for this."

In the next few weeks the duo hopes to start getting their first members in the incubator door and acclimated to the process. Within a year, Fishman said they hope to be full up, which could be as many as 60 members.

Fishman purchased the building for \$425,000 in February 2015 after working with Union Kitchen, a minority partner in the project. A career architect, Fishman was introduced to Altmann through Union Kitchen after Altmann realized several people in the food industry were struggling to get off the ground due to a lack of capital to get their own place.

Altmann started out in corporate marketing out of college, but made the change to food shortly after, a move he took him across the East Coast and out west. When he came back to Maryland he knew he



JONATHAN MOUNT

wanted to be involved with food in some capacity.

"The goal is to give food entrepreneurs a chance to grow or start their business," he said. "We can give them a proper commercial kitchen, they can get deliveries here and they have access to the proper equipment to take their operations to the next level."

The incubator will offer up two types of memberships — a full-time membership with 24/7 access and a nights and weekend membership with access from 7 p.m. - 7 a.m. on weeknights and 24 hours on Saturday and Sunday. The full-time membership will cost around \$1,200 a month and the nights and weekend membership will be priced around \$950.

The kitchen space is laid out with 26 prep tables, mixers, ovens, stoves and a walk-in refrigerator and freezer. The number of members the space can hold depends on the members, Altmann said, as a catering company may have more employees than a one-person operation.

James Beard Award winner Spike Gjerde's canning and baking operations were set to move in as an anchor tenant, but Altmann said delays led to Gjerde having to find a new space due to time constraints. Those operations will eventually move into the Hoen Lithograph redevelopment in East Baltimore.

Already signed members include Pie Time, Trish's Almond Toffee, Bottoms Up Bagels and B'More Saucy.

Outside of the kitchen space, Altmann said they also want to provide the tools for the start-up companies to succeed long term, even if that is outside the B-More Kitchen.

"We want to bring in marketing professionals and business planners and just a lot of services on top of the actual facility," he said. "We want these start ups and medium-sized businesses to graduate and go out and get their own facility or achieve whatever their end goal is."

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