

Prototype movie theaters coming to Prairie Village shopping center
Former AMC execs propose concept at Prairie Village center.
KEVIN COLLISON and JOYCE SMITH, The Kansas City Star

A new restaurant and movie theater concept hatched by a pair of former AMC Entertainment executives is in the works for the Prairie Village shopping center.

The new venture, called **Standees** — The Entertaining Eatery, is planned for space formerly occupied by the Macy's home store and the existing Einstein Bros. Bagels. It includes a 200-seat restaurant and three 80-seat theater auditoriums. The target demographic will be the over-40 market, Frank Rash, president of Dineplex International, said Wednesday.

"The genesis goes back to our time at AMC and how to further enhance the out-of-the-home entertainment experience," Rash said.

Rash, a former senior vice president of strategic development at AMC, is working with Peter Brown, the former CEO and president of AMC who now runs the Grassmere Partners investment firm. The two decided upon the name **Standees** both to honor Stan Durwood, the founder of AMC, and as a nod to the past when theaters sold special tickets for "**standees**" who stood in the back of the auditorium.

The restaurant will be a full-service operation offering appetizers to entrees to desserts. McDonnell Kinder & Associates of Kansas City, which specializes in culinary concepts, is the consultant.

The restaurant will feature booth-style seating and a horseshoe shaped bar. The dominant feature will be a 35-foot-long video screen above the bar that will run film clips, film trailers, sports events or, if the facility is being used for special occasions, corporate and other personal messages.

The three theaters will share a common lobby with the restaurant and will feature first-run films, independent films and simulcast concerts.

"It won't be geared to family or teen-age products," Rash said. "It's designed as an adult evening out."

Although people can bring food and beverages from the restaurant into the theaters, they will not be able to order food from their seats. If the Prairie Village prototype is successful, Rash said his company would like to develop other **Standees** in the region, nation and perhaps internationally.

Lane4 Property Group, the owner of the shopping center, said the new business fits well with its plans for upgrading the property. Other changes in the works include an expansion of the existing Hen House grocery store and the demolition of the building housing the former Waid's restaurant which will be replaced by another 5,000-square-foot building for new retailers.

“This is a fantastic addition to the Village,” said Justin Kaufmann, a senior associate at Lane4. “The Village has a unique character, and we think this is a perfect concept to support what we have.”

Kauffman said Lane4 is trying to keep Einstein Bros. Bagels in the shopping center.

“We’re making every effort to work out an agreement to find them another space,” he said.

Einstein Bros. officials could not be reached for comment.

Some tenants at the shopping center said the new **Standeers** should attract more business in the evenings and weekends.

“This is the one thing that the shopping center has been missing — destination entertainment,” said Susan Thorne-Thomsen, co-owner of Story, a restaurant there. “I think it will bring more people to the area.”

Donna Pitts, director of the Prairie Village Merchants Association, said there may be concerns about parking. Rash said most of **Standeers** customers will be coming in the evening, a time when there is surplus parking at the center.

“I think the neighborhood will like a theater,” Pitts said. “It is definitely something that Prairie Village doesn’t have.”