



HAROLD HINSON PHOTOGRAPHY

Dave and Sam Marson join Tony Stewart and Danica Patrick at the ceremony announcing Nature Bakery's backing of the NASCAR team.

Driving sales

Nature's Bakery profile rises with NASCAR sponsorship

By Steve Sinovic | nfo@nnbw.biz

In 2010, father-son snack food innovators Dave and Sam Marson set a very high bar — by creating a bar all their own.

When the Carson City maker of baked goods sold under other vendors' labels faltered, the company rebranded as Nature's Bakery and moved into producing and selling its own brand of healthy fig bars for retail sale.

Self-funded from the get go, the Marsons developed their own product line and shipped out sampling packs to buyers at mainstream and natural foods grocers to get their products on the shelves.

"Like a snowball, product demand picked up traction," said Sam. They started staffing up. "We went from 12 employees to nearly 500." Along the way, several private backers provided needed capital to grow.



ANNIE CONWAY

Sam Marson at the reception area of the company's warehouse. Fig bar samples are always on offer for visitors.

The business wasn't bankable in the early going, said Sam, so the Marsons had to create their own equipment — buying a machine shop in Carson City to build equipment customized to its manufacturing processes.

"We started getting calls back for orders and then it just took off," said Sam, 27, co-founder of the business, which recently announced it would become one of the smallest primary sponsors in NASCAR, with fewer than 500 employees in the U.S. Sam said the company's products are in all 50 states and 22 countries.

BAKERY, 4

Project bringing Sparks to life

New \$25 million development is underway at Victorian Square

By Sally Roberts
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The future of Victorian Square in Sparks is looking bright with work beginning on major projects that combine apartments, retail, restaurants and office space. The developments are expected to revitalize Sparks' downtown.

"We've been working on this a long, long time," said Sparks Mayor Geno Martini, who was first elected to the city council in 1999 and has served as mayor since 2005. "We had many plans that didn't work, good plans, then the recession hit.

"This (project) is terrific," he said.

SPARKS, 16



KELLY MIER ARCHITECTURE COURTESY

An architectural drawing of The Yard, a mixed-use development of offices, restaurants, and retail by LandCap Developments and GreenStreet Communities in the former Bourbon Street Casino.

Cleaning up in the linen business

Sparks-based business covers all the bases

By Annie Conway
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With the holiday season fast approaching, one northern Nevada business is ready with the latest event and décor trends.

Creative Coverings is a high-end linen rental company headquartered in Sparks. The business rents linens to party and event planners, other rental companies and hotel and wedding venues across the county.

LINEN, 4

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RECAP

Last week's highlights from Northern Nevada Business Weekly's e-mailed daily update of breaking business news:

■ The Pizza Factory, a chain of 111 pizza restaurants known for using fresh ingredients, providing a family-friendly atmosphere, announced the opening of its third location at 2900 Clear Acre Lane in Reno.

■ The Reno-Sparks Indian Colony, along with project partners and community leaders, held a ribbon cutting ceremony for the

Northern Nevada Transitional Housing Center last Wednesday.

■ The unemployment rate in the Reno/Sparks area fell to 6.1 percent in August, according to a report by the Nevada Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation. The unemployment rate in Carson City stood at 7.1 percent.

■ Roadshows Inc., producer of Street Vibrations, which will be in Reno on Sept. 23-27, could pump more than \$96 million into the local economy. About 50,000 motorcycle

participants and enthusiasts are expected to be in town to enjoy the event.

■ The Bureau of Land Management, Winnemucca District, Humboldt River Field Office, has completed a Preliminary Environmental Assessment to analyze the impacts associated with a proposed modification to Newmont Mining Corporation's Twin Creeks Mine Plan of Operations. The modified Plan proposes expanding operations at the existing Twin Creeks Mine. The Twin Creeks Mine is approximately 35 miles

northeast of Winnemucca in Humboldt County. The public is invited to provide substantive comments on the PEA until the comment period ends on October 20.

■ The Reno Bighorns basketball club has renewed its hybrid partnership with the Sacramento Kings.

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SPARKS

From page 1

LandCap Investments Partners and GreenStreet Communities released artist's renderings last week in a public unveiling of their mixed-use plans for the long empty Silver Club Hotel and the short-lived Bourbon Square Casino (previously the Silver Club casino). Both Victorian Square buildings are being gutted to make way for the completely new concepts.

The \$25 million development includes transforming the old hotel into a 100-unit urban loft-style rental community named the "C" Street Lofts, and recreating the old casino into a destination center with retail, restaurants, and Class-A office space, to be called "The Yard."

"Today's celebration is largely a product of a 20-year vision," Stephen Hinkley, CEO for LandCap, said Sept. 21 in presenting the plans to a gathering of government and business officials at the Victorian Square gazebo. "It's been hard work through the years."

The old Silver Club Hotel and Casino originally opened in 1982. The six-story hotel, behind the casino on C Street, had 206-units.

"We're stripping out everything, taking it down to the bone," said Dane Hillyard, partner in Reno-based GreenStreet.

The building will be recreated with all new energy-efficient air systems, windows, fire protection, elevators, and plumbing.

Plans for the apartments feature stained concrete floors, hard surface counter tops, modern amenities and 10-foot exposed concrete ceilings. Each will have its own balcony, washer and dryer



SALLY ROBERTS/NNBW

The former Silver Club Hotel has been empty for years. It is being gutted and reconstructed into the "C" Street Lofts apartments by LandCap Developments and GreenStreet Communities.

and fully equipped kitchen.

Common areas include a fitness center, business center, cyber café, bike storage units and staff offices. An outdoor recreation area features a fire pit, barbecue, and community garden.

The apartments are expected to be ready for occupancy in six months, Hillyard said.

Demolition has also been gun on the interior of the 112,000-square-foot, three-story Bourbon Square Casino in preparation for its rebirth as The Yard.

The Yard will feature a ground floor mix of restaurants and retail, with indoor and outdoor patio dining. The upper two floors will house Class-A office space.

"We have engaged some of the top consultants and designers in the country and we are confident this will become a landmark destination people will be drawn to and Sparks will be proud of," Hillyard said.

Caliber Retail Group is lead consultant for The Yard. "This will restore an incredible

landmark asset for the city of Sparks," said Caliber's Bart Pebbles, of Orange County, Calif.

Already, the developers have had inquiries from retail, restaurants and others about getting into The Yard, Hillyard said, including a single company interested in both floors of office space. Colliers International is the leasing agency.

The Yard will take longer to develop than The Lofts, he said. Timing depends on the selection of tenants and how they need space designed.

The concept for The Lofts and The Yard began two years ago when Hillyard was looking for a parking spot during Hot August Nights.

He found one next to the empty Silver Club Hotel.

"I wondered why this great beautiful building was here empty," he said.

Having previously converted hotels into apartments, he envisioned its potential. The vision got even bigger when he saw the



KELLY MIER ARCHITECTURE COURTESY

An architectural drawing of the "C" Street Lofts apartment. Designed by Kelly Mier Architecture, Reno-based Allco Construction, Inc. is lead contractor for the project.

inside and its 10-foot ceilings, an unusual feature for an old building.

While in negotiations to buy the old hotel, the owners of Bourbon Square Casino asked if GreenStreet developers would also be interested in the casino that was operating in the red.

The GreenStreet partners brought in LandCap, which had more experience with retail development.

Hinkley noted that, even though LandCap is based in Southern California, he's been a regular visitor to northern Nevada for 40 years.

He's also involved in other major projects in the area including apartments near the Sparks Marina, Legends outlet mall and north and south Reno.

"We're here today and we're here for the long run," he said.

LandCap and GreenStreet are not alone in big plans for the transformation of downtown Sparks.

Today, Silverwing Development

will have an official groundbreaking for its Fountainhouse mixed-use project.

A section of parking pavement west of the Sparks Galaxy Theater is already being torn out to make way for the 236-apartment complex with retail and restaurant space.

City and business officials see the new mixed-use developments as a rebirth for downtown Sparks.

The apartment buildings could bring 400 to 600 people living in downtown, Mayor Martini said, that will benefit all the downtown businesses.

"The restaurants and businesses already downtown, that have hung with us, it will benefit them as well," he said.

New office space will not only bring in new jobs, but also customers for the restaurants and retail shops in Victorian Square, both new and old.

With new residents, workers, and new and old places to go, Victorian Square "will be an exciting area to be in." Martini said.

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