

Bowling boutique coming to Polaris



Star Lanes Polaris' interior, as envisioned after a former Circuit City store is transformed

By [Tim Feran](#)

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Star Lanes Polaris is expected to open in the spring, giving central Ohio its second upscale, boutique bowling alley. The 20-lane center is planned for a former Circuit City store near the Polaris Fashion Place mall, 8655 Lyra Dr. Ten Pin Alley is a similar operation in Hilliard.

The total project budget for Star Lanes Polaris is roughly

\$4 million, said Doug Mechling, one member of the ownership group.

"Bowling is no longer a 64-lanes-and-a-snack-bar business model," Mechling said. "You have to have other tie-ins to make it profitable. And this concept can be very profitable if done correctly."

Boutique bowling centers have been around for at least a decade, said Brandon Thomsen of Lucky Strike Entertainment, which is consulting on day-to-day management at Star Lanes Polaris. Lucky Strike opened its first center in 2003 in Hollywood, "and since then, we've rolled out 20 locations in the U.S. and one in Canada."

The company also manages various Star Lanes centers, including the one in the Cincinnati area.

Like other boutique-bowling centers, the Polaris location will have upscale features such as state-of-the-art lanes, billiards, a game room, a private-party area with its own lanes, a bar offering specialty cocktails and a full-service restaurant, the Point, offering items such as sliders, tacos and salads.

"The great thing about it is you can go for lunch or dinner, be there for happy hour," Thomsen said, "and if you want to go bowling, you can, if you want to play a game, you can. There are all different options."

Mechling and Thomsen said they expect a significant part of the business to come in corporate and private parties.

"It's very true, that's a very, very important part of the business," said Sarah Garland, owner of Ten Pin Alley. "Companies find it's an outstanding atmosphere to team-build."

The new Star Lanes location in the Polaris area is far enough from Ten Pin Alley's Hilliard address to avoid taking away business, Garland said, and in fact should help in raising the concept's profile locally.

"I think it's wonderful," Garland said. "We were really excited when we heard they were going in at Polaris. It's good for the business of bowling. It's taken a while for people to believe this new concept." Ten Pin Alley has been in operation since 2006, "and every year, business has gotten better and stronger," she said.

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