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# Left Bank relocating to Walnut Creek

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Lance Bellamy, manager at the Left Bank in Pleasant Hill.

Left Bank, an upscale regional chain of French brasseries owned by Vine Dining Enterprises Inc. of Corte Madera, will leave its Pleasant Hill location early next year for a spot in Walnut Creek's first mixed-use luxury condominium and retail project.

The white table-cloth restaurant, modeled after a Parisian Saint Germain des Pres neighborhood bistro with sidewalk seating, was courted by developers of the new Mercer condominium complex.

The restaurant, after eight years in Pleasant Hill, is planning a move in March into a 6,750-square-foot space on the ground floor of the five-story, 181-condominium complex at the corner of North California Boulevard and Trinity Avenue, kitty-corner from the Leshner Center for the Arts.

The pedestrian-friendly project, a few blocks from both BART and Walnut Creek's downtown, has nine retail spots, seven of which have been leased.

Edward Levine, Left Bank owner and Vine Dining CEO, is hoping the new location, next to a gourmet burger joint and a hip frozen yogurt shop, will be "la chose" to turn things around.

The Pleasant Hill location was never a "super strong performer from a business standpoint," Levine said. "We do OK in terms of sales, but we haven't done well in terms of taking care of our investors."

Some 135 of the 181 one-, two- and three-bedroom condos in the Mercer have been sold for prices ranging from \$500,000 to \$1.2 million, according to John Moss,

senior vice president of development for Prometheus Real Estate Group. The project features amenities ranging from underground parking to a swimming pool, fitness center, outdoor fireplace and barbecue area.

The developer is hoping to create a “Fourth Street Berkeley” feel for the neighborhood, which is mainly residential with office buildings at the moment. One restaurant, The Counter, is already open and many of the other retailers will move in this fall.

Levine said that part of the dilemma for the restaurant when it opened in Pleasant Hill eight years ago was that the original “foodie” concept for the Crescent Drive shopping center didn’t pan out, after the first developer went bankrupt and sold the project to another developer.

Instead of being surrounded by a neighborhood of wine shops and full-service restaurants – as is its restaurant in San Jose’s Santana Row, for instance – Left Bank-Pleasant Hill ended up surrounded by a Chipotle Mexican Grill, a Coldstone Creamery and a Sweet Tomatoes.

The recent economic downturn hasn’t helped, although Levine said that Vine Dining is still hoping to make a go of it with a different concept in Pleasant Hill.

The company still has 20 years on its lease on the property owned by Developers Diversified Realty Corp. of Beachwood, Ohio.

“We are just going to explore reconcepting, and we have some ideas about that,” Levine said. “If we are solicited to sell (the lease), we would explore it.”

#### Moving into Mercer

- Galaxy Nails – 2,200 square feet
- Skin Spirit, skin care clinic and spa – 3,000 square feet
- Elements massage and day spa – 1,900 square feet
- European Cleaners – 1,000 square feet
- White Peach frozen yogurt – 854 square feet
- Counter Burger – 3,228 square feet