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Has Jack London Square made it?

Two new eateries join bustling pack

Oakland's Jack London Square has undergone a major redevelopment over the past several years, attracting numerous businesses, housing projects and notable restaurateurs.

This week, the Forge Pizza — a 4,100-square-foot, 150-seat new restaurant from partners Michael Karp and Bob Burke — welcomed the public. And next week, Chop Bar owners are unveiling Lungomare in the former Miss Pearl's restaurant space at the Waterfront Hotel.

All the new activity and interest

prompts the question: Has Jack London's waterfront finally lived up to its expectations? Well, not quite. But it's getting there.

While office space in the square is 90 percent leased and restaurants such as Bocanova have seen double-digit revenue growth, there's still 72,000 square feet of retail space — originally promised to house a Ferry Building-like public market — that remains unfilled.

Jim Ellis of Ellis Partners LLC said early last year that his firm was considering leasing space to food manufacturers to produce and sell food in the space. But that hasn't happened yet, and Ellis

Partners is staying pretty tight-lipped about the project until more materializes.

Once that space is filled, the neighborhood will finally realize its potential, said John Dern of Dern Greinetz Inc., which is working as an adviser to Ellis Partners. "All the ingredients are there," he said. "So it's inevitable that it will get there."

Karp agreed, adding that he and his partners are determined to work with nearby businesses to ensure Jack London hits the mark. "It's amazing how much the foot traffic has increased since we signed the lease a year ago," he said.

The restaurant already turned away nearly 300 people from its lunch Sunday, part of its friends-and-family opening. "And we expect that to keep growing," Karp said.



Karp