

The Birmingham News

Friday, February 6, 2009

Bojangles picks Birmingham

Chicken-biscuit eatery set to open here

By **MICHAEL TOMBERLIN**
News staff writer

Bojangles Restaurants Inc., a Charlotte-based chain with 425 locations, has included the Birmingham area in its expansion plans, starting with as many as five restaurants this year.

"Birmingham is not just part of our expansion plans, Birmingham is right at the heart of it," Eric Newman, senior vice president with Bojangles, said in an interview. "Our primary new market focus is the Birmingham region."

The chain, which specializes in chicken biscuits, now has locations in 12

states. Newman said Alabama's largest metropolitan area is the kind of market it looks for as it considers expansion.

"We think that the market in Birmingham and the people in that region of Alabama are a wonderful opportunity for us," he said. "It's a natural fit for our brand and our concept. We are, as we speak, putting together plans to develop as aggressively as we can."

Initial plans include three company-owned restaurants now under contract, while the operator of one

See BOJANGLES | Page 10C

BOJANGLES: Plans 460 sites by year's end

From Page 9C

franchise location is close to securing a site. At least one more franchise location could be set this year, Newman said.

"We hope to have four new restaurants open this calendar year in and around Birmingham," Newman said. "It's possible we could get a fifth in combined company and franchise locations."

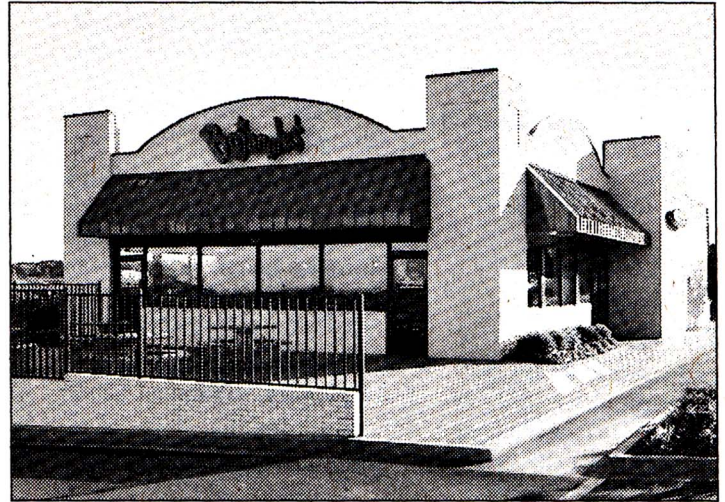
Newman said Bojangles is coming off its best year of growth since 1985 and is on pace to add almost one new restaurant a week in states

from New York to Florida. In Alabama, the chain operates locations in Huntsville, Florence, Dothan, Daleville and Athens, according to its Web site. It soon will open in Enterprise.

The chain aims to be a player in the breakfast business. Newman said at some locations, about 40 percent of a restaurant's business is in breakfast rather than, as some might expect, lunch or dinner.

"Because we are so breakfast-focused, we look closely at the breakfast side of demographics," Newman said. "Sometimes people think of us as a chicken chain, but really the dynamics of the concept is as much geared to breakfast and the biscuit sandwiches."

Newman said Bojangles'



SPECIAL

Bojangles hopes to have 460 locations nationwide by the end of 2009. Its expansion plan includes the Birmingham area.

breakfast menu is built on commuter traffic, its lunch menu depends on surrounding businesses and its dinner menu relies on people living nearby picking up meals on the way home.

"The best opportunities are those that can incorporate all three of those possibilities," he said.

Bojangles was founded in 1977 in Charlotte and first franchised in 1978. It now has 275 franchised restaurants and more than 150 company-owned ones, as well as locations in Honduras and Mexico.

The company plans to have around 460 locations open by the end of this year.

E-MAIL: mtomberlin@bhamnews.com