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business

Lowenstein project's cast completed: food, films

By [John Moore](#)
[Denver Post Theater Critic](#)

Neighborhood Flix Cinema & Café signed on Tuesday as the final partner in the \$15 million Lowenstein Redevelopment Project, joining the Tattered Cover bookstore and Twist & Shout record store.

The addition of food and first-run movies fulfills the original goal for the redevelopment to be a mix of locally owned cultural and retail tenants in a complex that will anchor East Colfax Avenue's revitalization.

"We've been able to deliver the original theme of the project," developer Charles Woolley said. "Books, music, film and food - these are the core anchors for any great community retail project."

The new Tattered Cover is under construction in the former live Lowenstein theater on Elizabeth Street. Neighborhood Flix will join Twist & Shout in a new, adjacent 24,000-square-foot building. Tattered Cover is slated to open June 26; the others plan to open by Thanksgiving.

Neighborhood Flix will build and operate three intimate, upscale, state-of-the-art theaters and a full-service cafe. The Denver Film Society once planned to occupy the space but dropped out of the project in January.

"We are psyched this has all worked out. This is huge. I am coming home," Neighborhood Flix general manager Jimmie Lee Smith said of his \$4.5 million project.

Smith, a 1983 graduate of Denver's George Washington High School, has worked as a Broadway

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stage manager since 1997. His partners are his wife, Michelle Dorant of New York, and sister, 1985 George Washington grad Melodie Gaul.

The three theaters will vary from 64 seats to 176, for a total capacity of 350. The smallest will have the feel of a deco screening room, the largest an expanded living room with couches, dining tables, love seats and stadium seats.

Smith said programming has not been settled, but he expects to compete for popular independent titles with Landmark Theatres, which staved off recent local competition

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The advertisement shows a man in a workshop setting, smiling, with the Xcel Energy logo to his right. The background is a red gradient.

from Madstone Theatres.

"But we're a completely different product," Smith said. "We are offering food and beverage that you can bring in with you from our cafe or have served at your table. We will have luxury seating, parking, digital projection and sound. In every way, this will be a state-of-the-art filmgoing experience as compared to what you see now at the Mayan or Esquire."

The food will be prepared on site, Smith said. The menu will feature sandwiches and salads, plus movie-theater staples such as popcorn.

"The goal is to offer a healthier menu than standard multiplex theaters," he said.

Twist & Shout had hedged on its participation after the Denver Film Society dropped out, but owner Paul Epstein said Tuesday it's full speed ahead.

"We're going in," he said. "When I heard that (Neighborhood Flix) was coming on, I couldn't have been happier."

Epstein said the 10,000-square-foot Twist & Shout will include a stage for live performances and a

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room for dance and hip-hop.

The Tattered Cover will feature a newsstand, a coffee shop, author event space and free parking. Woolley said he still has about 10,000 square feet of space available in the Lowenstein building.

Pop music critic Ricardo Baca contributed to this report.

Theater critic John Moore can be reached at 303-820-1056 or jmoore@denverpost.com.

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