

## **Culinary school coming to Morrisville**

Indiana-based Chef's Academy to expand in North Carolina

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Jun. 16--MORRISVILLE -- The Chef's Academy, a young but thriving culinary school based at Harrison College in Indianapolis, is expanding here.

Chef Jayson Boyers and a team of culinary specialists and college administrators explored more than 20 cities across the country for their next big venture. But one location -- the Triangle -- appealed to their palates more than the rest.

That's sweet news for Morrisville, where Raleigh developer Capital Associates hopes to build a 23,154 square foot culinary school at the corner of Carrington Mill Boulevard and Lichtin Boulevard in Perimeter Park.

The 4.37-acre campus, which could open by August 2011, would be The Chef's Academy's first outside its original market.

"There are a number of things that have led us in that direction," said Boyers, who is program director and regional president of the academy. "The whole area is very attractive not only because of the people and the educational institutions but also because education seems to be a priority for the region.

"It's an area that really values and has a lot of tradition in its universities and colleges."

Perhaps more important from a chef's point of view, Boyers said, is the emergence in the Triangle of a strong independent restaurant scene.

"The food scene in that area is very high up there," Chef Tony Hanslits, national dean of The Chef's Academy, said.

Like its current campus in Indiana, Boyers said, the campus in Morrisville would have room for 400 students.

He said the school limits enrollment in an effort to produce quality graduates.

"When we started this about five years ago, we decided that we really wanted it to be focused," Boyers said. "We believed that growing much bigger than the capacity we've set can dilute what we give to our students."

Hanslits adds: "We're not a cook factory."

Having helped start the school's original campus, Boyers also will oversee the expansion to North Carolina. He and his wife Amanda bought a home in Cary's Lochridge neighborhood, where they will move next month from their current home in Greenwood, Indiana.

Boyers plans to bring a team of four to help get the school off the ground. He said the rest of the school's staff -- about 35 positions -- would be hired locally.

Plans for the school received the unanimous, conditional recommendation of Morrisville's planning and zoning board at a meeting on May 13. The school's fate now rests in the hands of the Town Council, which is scheduled to vote on the project on June 22.

Among the conditions that are likely to be required are for Capital Associates to submit a plat to subdivide the 8.24-acre property into two lots. The town will require the plat before it will issue a building permit.

Rodney Wadkins, a senior planner in Morrisville, said The Chef's Academy would be housed in leased space on the larger of the two lots.

Capital Associates also must agree to grant a cross-access easement between the second lot and an adjacent property owned by the family of Tony Chiotakis, Morrisville's director of community and emergency services.

Wadkins said the easement is necessary to afford the Chiotakis family the continued ability to access their property. Future development on the second lot would abut the Chiotakis' driveway, which intersects Lichtin Boulevard.

The family has no ability to move their driveway onto nearby Chapel Hill Road -- an option the town explored -- because of a mandate from the state Department of Transportation.

Wadkins said the NCDOT refused to allow a residential driveway so close to the intersection of N.C. 54 and the on-ramp to the future Western Wake Freeway.

Capital Associates, meanwhile, is offering a financial guarantee to the town in lieu of a deadline to install a landscaped median in front of The Chef's Academy property on Lichtin Boulevard. The money would be one and a half times the traffic engineer's estimate to complete the improvements. Should the town approve the project, Wadkins said, Capital Associates could break ground within a few months.