

Bohemia brothers opening another Checkers

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Photo credit: Heather Walsh | Pete O'Hara, above, and his brother Mike, who brought 10 Checkers fast-food drive-ins to Long Island and then sold them, are opening a new Checkers in Patchogue and hope to add more soon. (Nov. 9, 2011)

The Checkers Brothers -- Pete and Mike O'Hara -- are back.

The O'Haras are the Checkers Brothers because in 1995 they brought the first Checkers Drive-In Restaurants Inc. fast-food eatery to Long Island, in North Babylon.

By 2001 they had opened 10 of the 1950s-style eateries in Nassau and Suffolk counties, making them the Tampa, Fla.-based company's largest franchiser in the region. That same year they sold all of the restaurants to another franchisee. Two years ago the O'Hara brothers built a 63-unit condo complex, Bay Village, in Patchogue.

Now they are going back to being the Checkers Brothers.

Their Bohemia-based company, Capital Management Development Llc, is about to complete a strip shopping center at Main Street and Route 112 in Patchogue, which will include a 7-Eleven, a Bethpage Federal Credit Union branch and a Checkers. There are 15 such restaurants on the

Island, according to Checkers chief development officer Jennifer Durham. But the O'Hara brothers plan to open more in the next year or so.

"I believe in the concept," said Pete O'Hara, 56, who over the years has operated a Pudge's, run a Coca-Cola route and worked as an FBI investigative assistant -- and was once board chairman of Checkers. "I like the simplicity of the operation."

Checkers has drive-in service and specializes in hamburgers, fries and other fast foods. The restaurants are small, and not all have dining space, although Pete O'Hara said the one opening in Patchogue -- on the Monday after Thanksgiving -- will have seating.

Mike O'Hara, 59, said there is a need for at least five more Checkers on Long Island. "There's a big area out there in Suffolk that is untapped," he said.

Aside from being good for some people's palates, the O'Hara brothers' plan is good news for Patchogue Village, said Mayor Paul Pontieri.

"The project is right on the border of the village," Pontieri said. "It's the first piece of real estate you see when you come in. It's a critical piece" of property. The village, Pontieri said, helped relocate an auto-repair shop that had been on the site.

Checkers works on the Island, Pete O'Hara said, because "we all know everyone on Long Island is always in cars."