



The Gulf commercial project to be built at Perdido Pass

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ORANGE BEACH, Alabama -- Local developers plan to build The Gulf at Alabama Point, a boardwalk of shops, a restaurant and fishing amenities on 4.5 acres at Perdido Pass Bridge, with the first venue to open this fall — an eatery built of shipping containers.

The Gulf restaurant will be a configuration of four shipping containers averaging 40 feet high and 8 feet wide, according to Johnny Fisher, who has partnered with Shaul Zislin, owner of The Hangout in Gulf Shores, to build the mixed-use project overlooking Perdido Pass, Alabama Point and the Gulf of Mexico.



Shaul Zislin, owner of The Hangout in Gulf Shores, is partnering with Johnny Fisher, formerly of Lulu's at Homeport Maina, to develop The Gulf, a boardwalk of shops, a restaurant and fishing amenities at the Perdido Pass Bridge in Orange Beach. (Press-Register/Mike Kittrell)

The eatery will serve as a temporary structure until the Alabama Department of Transportation repairs the bulkhead that surrounds part of the site, according to the developers and city officials.

Zislin and his business partners bought the bank-owned property last December for \$2.5 million. However, the boardwalk and its amenities cannot be built until the weather-eroded seawall is fixed. The Alabama Department of Transportation has fenced off the popular fishing spot until the estimated \$7 million to \$10 million in repairs is done.

The city of Orange Beach owns a strip of land at the site and is looking to partner with Zislin and Fisher on the Gulf project, according to Kit Alexander, the city's engineering director. The developers would make improvements to the city's land by incorporating the boardwalk on that property as well, she said.

"The city would reap the benefit from his project," she said. "It would be a place for tourists and our community to go. It would have fishing and open markets and be a place where people can interact with the waterfront. We want to get that point to its potential."

The state owns the asphalt parking lot that wraps underneath the bridge, and has given the green light in

support of the project, according to Alexander. In fact, she said the city, with the support of the highway department and the Alabama Department of Conservation & Natural Resources, has submitted a proposal to the Deepwater Horizon Natural Resources Damage Assessment panel to fund the bulkhead repairs. The panel oversees a \$1 billion fund set up by BP after the oil spill of 2010 to help in Gulf restoration projects.

“We’re all trying to work together to make it happen,” Alexander said.

The October opening of The Gulf restaurant “is a way to get our brand rolling,” said Fisher, who was general manager for Lulu’s at Homeport Marina restaurant in Gulf Shores for seven years. “We want to show what’s to come and start building our Gulf brand.”

“This restaurant is a very small version of what will be coming down the road,” Zislin said. “Every person in the community will go down there and be very proud of the end result.”

The permanent Gulf restaurant will seat 600, and the site will also include a parking garage.

Shipping containers have been used for shops and restaurants around the country, but this will be unique to the Gulf, according to Courtney Casburn Brett, a Daphne architect working with the developers.

The containers will be purchased from Southern Truck in Theodore, and typically cost a few thousand dollars apiece, according to Fisher. One container will house the kitchen and one will be a second-level observation deck. The roof will be made of sod or turf grass grown locally, he said.

The menu of burgers, seafood and breakfast will be take-out, and there will be ample outdoor seating. The area will be heavily landscaped with a palm-tree, beach-style look.

“This is one of the most beautiful spots at the Gulf,” Fisher said. “We want The Gulf to feel as if it’s always been there, to blend seamlessly with the environment and the community, and give local residents an asset to embrace and enjoy.”

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