



Arizona Daily Star

SUNDAY, AUGUST 20, 2023 | [tucson.com](https://www.tucson.com)



GRACE TREJO, ARIZONA DAILY STAR

The outdoor space at Corbett's includes a beer garden, a stage for live music, and pickleball courts, N. Sixth Ave., Aug. 16.

Pickleball restaurant is a game-changer

CATHALENA E. BURCH
Arizona Daily Star

The corner of East Seventh Street and North Sixth Avenue has long been overshadowed by the hip-and-happening North Fourth Avenue and East Congress Street.

But that could dramatically change when Tucson's first restaurant anchored by pickleball courts opens later this month.

Corbett's at 340 N. Sixth Ave., a sprawling multipurpose entertainment complex that takes up a city block, with five pickleball courts, a full-service restaurant,

Chicken N Pickle opens Glendale venue

Kansas City, Missouri-based Chicken N Pickle, an entertainment venue centered on pickle ball and rotisserie chicken, opened its first Arizona location at Glendale's behemoth Westgate Entertainment District, 9330 W. Hanna Lane, next to Desert Diamond Arena and State Farm Stadium. It features 11 courts, six outside and five inside, cornhole, Ping-Pong, bocce and life-size Battleship and Jenga games.

Glendale is the seventh Chicken N Pickle location to open since the company launched in 2016. Seven more locations are set to open this year including in Henderson, Nevada, outside Las Vegas.

an outdoor live music stage and a beer garden, will open on Tuesday, Aug. 29.

"We're changing the traffic pattern of how this area gets used," said Regan Jasper, a

partner in the project with developers Scott Stiteler and Rudy Dabdoub. "I think Fourth Avenue has its history and steady players, and Sixth Avenue has had some growth. Now people are going to say, 'What's going on on Fifth Avenue?'"

Please see **PICKLEBALL**, Page A4

 **LOOK:** For more photos of Corbett's space on North Sixth Avenue in Tucson, point your smartphone camera at the QR code and tap the link. **NEWSVU**

Tucson office vacancies rising

GABRIELA RICO
Arizona Daily Star

Older office buildings across Tucson could soon start disappearing as vacancy rates remain high and owners struggle to find new tenants.

The exodus from traditional offices that began with the pandemic is ongoing and many employers have either embraced hybrid work schedules or turned out the lights for good.


While newer offices with amenities in desirable locations are still leasing well, such as along East Skyline Drive, securing a loan to build new offices is a challenge.

Tucson recorded five consecutive quarters with no new office construction, in part because of the uncertainty of future demand and the fact that banks aren't lending for speculative development.

The vacancy rate of office space in the Tucson area is 14.5%, compared to 11% at the end of 2019.

And even though some

Please see **BUILDINGS**, Page A4

 **READ:** To see the latest news from Tucson's real estate scene, point your smartphone camera at the QR code, then tap the link. **NEWSVU**

Pickleball

From A1

Corbett's takes up nearly an acre of the four-acre Corbett Building lot bordered by Fifth and Sixth avenues and Seventh Street, just off the path of the months-old Maclovio Barraza Parkway that bypasses downtown.

The area is home to the neighboring Tap & Bottle and Exo Roast Co. on North Sixth Avenue and, if you venture a couple of blocks down to East Sixth Street, Anello artisan pizzeria. But most of the nightlife migrates to North Fourth or Congress, home to at least a dozen bars and live music venues, as well as a plethora of restaurants.

Corbett's could alter that dynamic.

"I think the timing for Tucson to have something this size, indoor outdoor, it seems to be just right," said Stiteler, who bought the Corbett Building in 1999 but held off on developing it while he and his Tucson-based Loveblock Partners — founding partner Stiteler, Dabdoub, Omar Valle, Christina Rosete, Chris Hodgson and Nick Fox — focused on their "Congress and Fifth" projects downtown including the Hub, Playground, Connect Coworking, One North Fifth apartments and the AC Marriott Hotel.

Stiteler and Dabdoub broke ground on Corbett's 2½ years ago with the goal of building a 4,000-square-foot restaurant and 12,000-square-foot covered patio on one end of the property and create event space at the old J. Knox Corbett Lumber Yard building on the other end. The 90-year-old building, which had endured fire and flood damage in recent years, had been abandoned for 10 years.

"We didn't know what to do with the middle, but once we were under construction with the restaurant, at that point pickleball was becoming very popular," Dabdoub said. "It was an evolution. We started out with a restaurant ... then we traced our steps and came up with Corbett's."

The scope of the project expanded to include three outdoor pickleball courts and two inside the Corbett Building, an outdoor music stage that will host local



GRACE TREJO PHOTOS, ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Joe Pagac depicts the main vision for Corbett's under the Southern Arizona skies as people play pickleball next to "A" Mountain in his mural that lives inside the restaurant, N. Sixth Ave., Aug. 16.



Corbett's three outdoor pickleball courts beam brightly in front of the historic pink Corbett building that now features two additional pickleball courts inside, N. Sixth Ave., Aug. 16.

singer-songwriters and acoustic artists and a beer garden with 16 taps including local brews from Barrio, Moto Sonora, Pueblo Vida, Crooked Tooth, Dragoon, Borderlands, Dillinger and 1912 Brewing Co.

Corbett's also will have Ray Ray's Sonoran Spirit Tea and a variety of cocktails, many of them crafted with Whiskey Del Bac spirits.

While pickleball is an obvious draw, Stiteler and his partners say the heartbeat of Corbett's is the full-service restaurant, helmed by Executive Chef Omar C. Huerta (Wildflower, North Italia, Rio Cafe).

Huerta had input in finalizing the menu, which was curated by Jasper and his former Fox Restaurant Concepts colleague Christopher Cristiano, the longtime Fox

corporate chef. Jasper and Cristiano were partners in Fox and left the company after it was sold to Cheesecake Factory in 2019.

The restaurant will serve lunch and dinner and weekend brunch, with a menu of sandwiches, salads, entrees and burgers including the bacon and poblano barbecue "Gronk" burger, a nod to former University of Arizona and New England Patriots star Rob Gronkowski. There's also the "Corbett's," with roasted mushrooms and blue cheese.

Dinner entrees include prime rib and seared salmon, and meal-worthy salads include the "Angry Italian" with spicy salami, and the "Sidewinder" with crispy chicken, bacon and roasted corn dressed in a jalapeño ranch.

"We're trying to satisfy all of the (tastes) of Tucson. Tacos,

burgers, sandwiches, salads, entrees," Jasper said.

In the spacious dining room, Tucson muralist Joe Pagac covered one wall with a Norman Rockwell-esque mural depicting people eating and playing pickleball. He created a second mural, of Bridget Bardot, on corrugated metal salvaged from Twelve Tribes Reggae Shop. That bright blue mural greets guests when they pull into the 192-space parking lot.

Corrugated metal walls from Twelve Tribes is repurposed throughout Corbett's, including the outdoor bar where Tucson muralist Ignacio Garcia painted a larger-than-life image of Twelve Tribes' late owner Dennis "Papa Ranger" Francis.

Francis's shop was located for years at 345 N. Fifth Ave.

"That kind of stitches it all together, connects it all," Stiteler said.

Francis's son, Jahmar Anthony, said his father would be blown away to see his legacy live on in a place that was integral to his family and his 30 years promoting reggae and the reggae culture in Tucson. Francis died last August at the age of 66.

"He never would have thought it would be a restaurant and music venue," said Anthony, a reggae and hip-hop artist who goes by the stage name DJ Jahmar who grew up in his father's shop. "This right here means so much. There are going to be hundreds of thou-

sands of people coming out there every year."

The nod to Francis's place on that property was part of Stiteler and Dabdoub's plan to retain much of the space's history and character.

Inside the Corbett Building, which was built in 1930 to house the family's lumber and hardware business, the partners left bare the stucco and brick interior walls of the building. With the exception of replacing some damaged wood, the original bow trusses also remain unchanged.

The rustic feel of the space contrasts with the twin regulation-size pickleball courts that take up most of the main floor.

"Any time you can marry old and new, it's special. It's hard to do well," said Stiteler, who estimated the project's cost at more than \$10 million. "This will forever change the intersection."

Stiteler, who has been developing projects in Tucson since 1994, said Corbett's is one of his favorite projects.

"I have not felt as good about a project in my career as this one," he said. "I am surrounded by positives. The people we have. The concept. The location. The time of year that we're opening. This building tells a story when you walk into it and it tells the story every time."

Contact reporter Cathalena E. Burch at cburch@tucson.com. On Twitter @Starburch