Rivals Hope to Land LAX Duty Free

By JAMES RUFUS KOREN Staff Reporter

Remember the big food fight at Los Angeles International Airport a few years ago? The one that pitted local celebrity chefs against each other over who would get to feed burgers for travelers?

Get ready for another. Except this time, instead of a fight over restaurant and retail concessions, it’s a battle for the privilege to sell billions of dollars worth of duty-free booze, tobacco and clothes to free-spending travelers.

(Photo by Richard Hurd)

Doing Duty: DFS at LAX international terminal.

Please see RETAIL Page 76

Landlords Don’t Dig Subway Plan

CONSTRUCTION: Pair tap CEQA to bury Metro project.

By ALFRED LEE Staff Reporter

Some of downtown L.A.’s biggest players are taking on the Metropolitan Transportation Authority over a planned subway route that would tear up a major Financial District thoroughfare.

Owners of City National Plaza, the Westin Bonaventure hotel, Citigroup Center and the California Club are in talks with the Related Companies about a three-block stretch of Flower Street.

The owners have tried to play down the dispute, but months of negotiations have broken out into legal wrangling. And it even has prompted developer John Trachtenberg, chairman and chief executive of City National Plaza owner Thomas Properties Group Inc., to employ a legal strategy usually reserved for smaller developers.

Please see CONSTRUCTION Page 75

Mall Owner Sold On Century City

REAL ESTATE: Westfield plans expansion, new HQ.

By JACQUELYN RYAN Staff Reporter

The Westfield Group is gearing up for a $500 million expansion of its mall in Century City – already one of the top performers in the country – at the same time it plans to move its U.S. headquarters closer to its prized outdoor mall.

The Sydney, Australia, mall developer is slated to sign a lease with landlord JP Morgan Chase & Co. this month to move from its longtime Brentwood offices into the Century Plaza Towers, at 2029-2049 Century Park East.

“Similar to Westfield’s Sydney headquarters, where the office is “on top of the shops,” the objective is greater proximity to a flagship property.”

Please see REAL ESTATE Page 77

SPECIAL REPORT

BANKING & FINANCE

Awash in Cash

L.A.’s private-equity firms have $33.5 billion in uninvested cash, near an all-time high. Money is flowing in from investors seeking big returns, but private-equity firms just can’t find enough good companies to buy. Read about their dilemma in this special report.

BEGINNING ON PAGE 21

UPPER CRUST

Pizza places vie to spin artisan pie into dough

By BETHANY FINHABER Staff Reporter

B EFORE Nancy Silverton opened Pizzeria Mozza in 2006, there were few places Angelenos could go to find the kind of hand-crafted artisan pizzas she serves. But pizzas dish- ing up similarly styled pies have been popping up all over Los Angeles lately, and more are in the oven.

Pizzeria Artisan Pizza, for example, a small Venice chain with five locations, will nearly double by opening four more pizzerias in the next 18 months.

Though his Pizzeria predates Mozza, co-founder Paul Hibberd said he gives Silverton credit for popularizing artisan pizza in Los Angeles. “We’re eight years older than Mozza, but I think they really started this,” he said. “Nancy really opened the eyes of people in Los Angeles.”

Other pizza restaurants slated to open this summer include dinner-oriented Italian places Soleto and Trattoria Neonopolis, opening by the

Please see DINING Page 74

Beyond Financial Statements... CPAs that Provide Real World Insight

SOLUTIONS + PERSPECTIVE

www.ps CPA.com
310.828.9798
Dining: Pizza Makers Pursue Slice of Artisan Pie

Continued from page 1

end of the month in downtown Los Angeles and
Pasadena, respectively. In addition, two Blaze
Fast Fire'd Pizzas by Rick and Elise Wetzel of Wetzel's Pretzels,
will open in Irvine in July and in Pasadena in
September. Another fast-casual pizza concept,
800 Degrees, opened in Westminster in March.
While chefs seem to be running to get a slice of the artisan pizza pie, those who have
been around longer say it's not that easy.
Hibler said chefs can't expect to succeed if
they haven't taken the time to learn how to
make a good pizza.
"You don't just buy a pizza oven and start
making pizza, then expect that it's going to be
good," he said. "It's a craft like any other; it
requires time to develop your style. You can't
skip to the end."

Rick Wetzel said that's why he and his wife
hired L.A. chef Bradford Keen of Olio Pizzaria
& Café to help develop the menu for Blaze.
"He has spent years in front of the oven, and
he brings that to our chain," Wetzel said. "It
gives us a big advantage. That's why I think I'll
be one of the first to succeed on the other
side. It's easy to get into the pizza business,
but it's hard to make a really good pizza."

Innovative Dining Group will open
Soloio shortly. The company currently owns and
operates 11 restaurants in Los Angeles,
including Smith & Wollensky and BOA Steak,
casual restaurants. Lee Maen, a partner at
Innovative, said he has a lot of respect for
people who have perfected their pizza skills.
But even though making pizza in a departure
from what the company has done in the past,
he believes the restaurant will be successful.
"I don't think it's easy to come out of
nowhere and say, 'Something great,'" he said.
"But it definitely happens."