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By: Joshua Burd

Local restaurant moving to JMF rental building in downtown Maplewood



Clarus Maplewood at 160 Maplewood Ave. in Maplewood – Courtesy: JMF Properties

A popular restaurant in Maplewood is relocating within the township after leasing 4,500 square feet at the base of a recently completed apartment building.

JMF Properties, the developer and owner of Clarus Maplewood, announced Friday the commitment from Restaurant Lorena's. The French American eatery is moving to 160 Maplewood Ave. after more than a decade at its current location, which is just steps away, and is now making interior design improvements to the new space.

"We've always considered a move to a larger space, but over the 15 years we have been here nothing of this caliber ever became available until now," said Humberto Campos, the restaurant's chef and co-owner alongside his wife, Lorena. "Clarus Maplewood is the perfect fit for us. It's a beautiful building, barely three years old, and the proximity relative to our current location is super convenient.

“We’ve created a huge client base over the years, so we wanted to stay close by. Our regular customers will have no trouble finding us here. They’ll actually be parking in the same parking lot.”

JMF noted that Lorena’s is open for curbside pickup and local delivery at its new location, while its new owners are aiming for a late February grand opening. Once the new restaurant space is ready to debut, Lorena’s hopes to offer indoor dining with limited capacity, depending on current conditions, regulations and guidelines from public health officials.

The new space will allow Lorena’s to more than triple the size of its restaurant, JMF said. It will offer both a formal dining room and a separate upscale casual section, while also introducing a new full-service bar after previously operating as a BYO restaurant.

“What we’re really looking forward to is seeing our clients again soon and sharing the joy of the new space with them, as well as seeing new faces and making new connections,” Campos said. “The fact that we are able to stay in Maplewood is quite comforting. We’ve formed a lot of friendships here over the years, not just with our longtime clients, but also with the town’s merchants. It’s a tight-knit community. People look out for each other. I couldn’t ask for a better town, so being able to move just next door is a no-brainer.”

Clarus Maplewood, which is home to 20 luxury apartments, opened in 2017 and is the first residential community in the state to achieve WELL Certification through the International WELL Building Institute’s multifamily pilot. It’s also only the 13th in the world to achieve that recognition, which is due to a design and construction style that is meant to enhance the health and well-being of its occupants.

Lorena’s joins existing retailers at Clarus Maplewood such as Starbucks, BCB Bank and Abby Haliti Salon. The building is just steps from the Maplewood train station.

“We are thrilled to welcome Restaurant Lorena’s to Clarus Maplewood,” said Joseph M. Forgione, founder and principal of JMF Properties. “Lorena’s is one of the businesses that make downtown Maplewood a special place, a popular destination for both Maplewood locals and people from nearby communities. The fact that we were able to accommodate their desire to upgrade their space without the need to move out of Maplewood Village is something we are very proud of.”