

Ormsby's nearly doubles size in under two years

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Despite **Ormsby's** lack of clear signage — just a single “O” hangs above the entrance door — the restaurant and bar garners a regular line out the door on most weekend nights. Patrons gather to enjoy a selection of international beers and bar games in the subterranean tavern environment. Situated in the up-and-coming neighborhood of West Midtown, Ormsby's has garnered a level of success on par with many of the other restaurants in the White Provision development.

Unlike nearby spots, however, it is one of the few offering a late-night entertainment option that is bringing in crowds both young and old.

“Essentially the idea was that Ormsby's would be a bridge between the empty-nesters and the young families and provide a bit of a more engaged sophisticated pub culture. I think it has fulfilled all of those expectations,” said Michael Phillips, managing partner of **Westside Urban Market** and managing director of **Jamestown Properties**, which owns the White Provision development.

Ormsby's is part of a growing collection of unique restaurant concepts brought in by the owners of White Provision that includes **Abattoir** and **Yeah! Burger**. This movement originally began in 1997 when Phillips began acquiring real estate on Howell Mill Road and worked with well-known restaurateurs like Anne Quatrano of **Bacchanalia** to develop new food concepts.

Behind the success of Ormsby's is a lead-



Growing space: Ormsby's subterranean tavern atmosphere is so popular it's added 4,000 square feet to its initial 5,000. SPECIAL

ership team that includes restaurateur Warren Bruno, who's owned and operated 12 restaurants in the Atlanta community over the past 35 years and is the owner of **Atkins Park** restaurants in Virginia-Highland and Smyrna. Named for Bruno's mother's family name, Ormsby's encompasses the laid-back and full-spirited approach to life enjoyed by his relatives.

“They were characters and blue-collar workers. Just simple people and I just kind of liked that ethic,” Bruno said. As the owner of Aunt Charley's — one of Buckhead's first neighborhood bars — from 1975 to 1995, Bruno was hoping to re-create the feel of this former watering hole in a more up-to-date environment. Also a commercial real estate broker, Bruno said he wasn't looking to open a restaurant, but fell in love with the subterranean space in

the White Provision development while trying to lease it to other tenants.

"We were trying to lease this floor as a subterranean tavern and then I went down and saw the basement and I said, 'Do you mind if I cut a hole in the floor and go down there?' And they kind of looked at me like I was crazy," Bruno said.

Signing a lease in June 2009 and cutting a hole in the floor to create a two-level restaurant, bar and game lounge, Bruno and an ownership team of five opened Ormsby's in December 2009. Along with Bruno, Michael Goot, formerly of Sweetwater Brewery, Bruno's wife, Sandra Spoon, Leslie Battle of Aunt Charley's and Kevin Drawe, Bruno's partner in Atkins Park, all joined forces to bring the Ormsby's concept to reality. The two-level restaurant and bar experience combines a wide selection of

craft brews and out-of-the-ordinary bar food with a downstairs game lounge that is complete with pool tables, bocce ball courts, darts, shuffleboard and more.

"It is innovative in terms of the offerings of the interior of the space, the game offerings, the structure, the management staff and the beer selection," Phillips said.

Despite the experienced leadership team behind Ormsby's, Bruno said they were all blown away by the restaurant and bar's immediate and overwhelming success and had to make some adjustments along the way to accommodate it.

"I was expecting to ramp up slowly and we had a line out the door the second week and we were running out of beer," Bruno said. "I thought we'd sell some sandwiches, but the clientele really wants better food so we brought the chef from Atkins Park and redid the menu and really had to establish it as a dining destination as well."

Since opening, Ormsby's has expanded from its initial 5,000 square feet to 9,000 square feet. Part of the expansion included adding bathrooms and a second bocce ball court, which can be rented for corporate parties. Although the bar downstairs was initially designed to handle some overflow, four bartenders are now on hand to deal with the game crowd.

"As far as our expectations, it is basically double what I assumed it would be. At least double, if not more," Bruno said. "I thought we'd be doing about \$120,000 to \$140,000 [monthly] and that we might get up to \$180,000 and we are doubling those numbers."