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Outdoor dining coming to Red Iguana 2 on South Temple

West side » City Council to sell small strip of land for a planned patio.

By Christopher Smart

The Salt Lake Tribune

Updated: 03/17/2010 12:17:32 PM MDT

The Red Iguana Mexican restaurant has always posed two great challenges: The first is getting a table; the second is which killer mole dish to order.

The first challenge got a little easier in December when Bill and Lucy Coker opened Red Iguana 2 at 858 W. South Temple, just two blocks from the original cafe at 736 W. North Temple.

The original Red Iguana is still open. But getting a seat at either place can be daunting. A planned patio at the new place, however, will make chances of scoring some of those famous enchiladas suizas even better.

The new cafe has the same menu as the original with all the customer favorites, including Pollo a la Moreliana, Chochinita Pibil, and Michaca chimichangas, among others.

The North Temple restaurant can seat 98. The Red Iguana 2 on South Temple adds 70 more seats in a bright, open atmosphere that includes a long counter.

The open-air patio, scheduled for operation this summer, will accommodate another 64 patrons.

That was made possible last week when the City Council agreed to abandon an odd piece of municipal property between the sidewalk and the storefront at the new restaurant. According to Jennifer Bruno, the council's deputy director, the land was technically city right-of-way. But it is not adjacent to the street.

The strip --- 484 square feet -- is needed to build the patio. Coker will buy it from the city after officials determine its fair market value. Construction

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Cardenas, opened the Red Iguana in 1985. During the past quarter century, it has become hugely popular. "We got to the point where we had long waits every night and every day at lunch," he said. "We were concerned that loyal customers were being turned away."

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The interior of The Red Iguana II in Salt Lake City. (Thomas Nelson / The Salt Lake Tribune)

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will begin in the next month or two. Patio dining could be available as soon as July.

City Councilman Soren Simonsen said selling the sliver of land is the right thing to do and will add to the neighborhood.

Abandoning the right-of-way in this case "was relatively benign," he said. "It was the easiest way to accommodate what the Red Iguana wanted to do."

The new location is tucked along South Temple and a rail line that plies the otherwise quiet neighborhood. Coker said he and his wife decided to build the second restaurant close to the North Temple one because patrons were waiting too long for a table.

If diners can't find a seat at one, they can stroll to the other, he noted.

Lucy Coker's parents, Ramon and Maria

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Also, Coker said they wanted to plan for the upcoming construction of a light rail line that will run from downtown to the airport along North Temple. That construction is expected to impact business for many months. "We wanted to keep a revenue stream going," he said. And their patrons, no doubt, will still have an appetite for those enchiladas, construction or no construction. csmart@sltrib.com

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- Avenues monster house gets split up
- Watch yourself: Wasatch Hollow may get security cameras

- Viewmont has tradition of giving to Guadalupe
- Heritage Makers earns attention
- Reporting a crime? Do it online
- Clinic for war vets is one-stop shopping
- Contest aimed at dating violence
- Early Christmas leaves students giddy
- Weather funds are 'an angel'
- Siblings start a new family tradition in 'Nutcracker'
- Volunteer corner
- Thrift store benefits families, home improvement fans
- Auschwitz survivor speaks to students
- Young artists on display in new exhibit
- SLC to roll out big bike changes in spring
- Sisters celebrate health by donating tree, toys
- Sugar House pushes 'buy local' for Christmas
- Salt Lake City wants your opinion on streetcar plans
- Rotary Clubs donates dictionaries to third-graders in Salt Lake City
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