

## Chapel Hill Coffee Shop to Relocate to Glen Lennox, Expand Menu

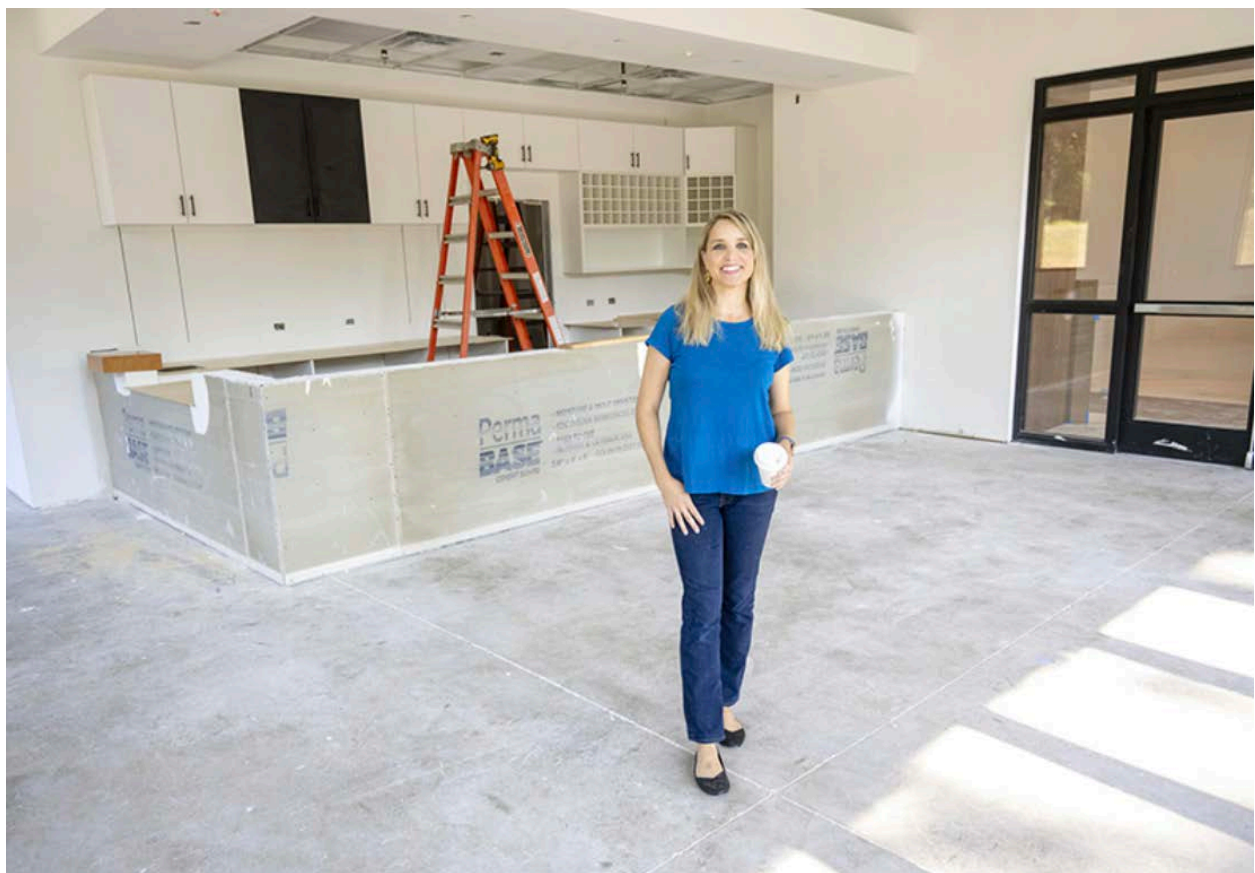
A Chapel Hill coffee shop is moving to the historic Glen Lennox community and shortening its name as it expands its offerings.

Coco Bean will become "Coco" following its relocation to The Gwendolyn, the 4-story office building that was finished in February as part of the 70-acre redevelopment project led by Charlotte-based Grubb Properties. The



109,000-square-foot building and the Link Apartments Linden were part of the first phase of the project.

Coco is set to open in September and continue serving its locally-roasted coffee, tea, specialty drinks and vegan baked goods. The new location also will feature a fully plant-based menu during the daytime. In the evening, the establishment will have a full bar with wine, beer and craft cocktails in addition to non-alcoholic options. Brunch will be available on the weekends.



Tamara Lackey, Owner of Coco in Chapel Hill

"The more I did focus groups around the Triangle, it came up that people would like a nice bar where they could also relax and have additional options where everyone could be included," said Tamara Lackey, who owns the business with her husband, Steve.

The coffee shop has been located at East 54 on Environ Way, near Glen Lennox, for the past five years, but the couple thought it was time to expand the concept.

“We wanted to start being a restaurant, but at our current location we didn’t have the capability,” Lackey said. “Grubb Properties came up with a creative way for us to not only move into The Gwendolyn but also build it out. They let us have creative freedom, which is something that wouldn’t have been available to us otherwise anywhere else.”

Lackey declined to share the investment cost but said the over 2,700-square-foot location will have an open floor plan including a window of walls and outdoor patio that may be useful for taking safety precautions amid the pandemic. Also, the office building has an advanced air filtering system.

Despite the pandemic-related labor shortage, the business has been able to hire and retain workers in recent months, Lackey said. The company will start with a staff of about 15 who are paid at a "rate that makes them comfortable and want to show up to work everyday," she said.

Coco Bean temporarily closed in March 2020 and reopened about two months later for takeout only. It resumed indoor dining earlier this year.

"We made it out because a lot of people supported us through buying gift cards and coffee," Lackey said. "We are an independent cafe ... but I could see the whole vision and I believe we have everything we need to be successful."

Lackey will also use the new space for events including music performances, movie nights, pet adoptions, rentals and fundraising for the non-profit Beautiful Together's animal sanctuary.