



Happiness Plaza Concepts, LLC (DBA "The Belmont") is owned by Tory Demarce and Ryan and Anthony Francisco. For the past 26 months, we have worked with a team of Kansas architects, local general contractors, local sub-contractors, along with a kitchen staff, working towards the goal of opening and operating a new restaurant in town called The Belmont. We centered our business plan around identifying the ideal location in a historic neighborhood to be a part of its renaissance. We saw our vision and dream come to fruition with the complete revitalization of the historic building in which The Belmont is located when it opened to a great community reception on June 2, 2020. We were ready to open March 12th, 2020, but due to local restrictions, that was not possible.

Because we were not open and operating in 2019 and had not hired any employees, we did and do not qualify for the PPP program. Since then, we have hired approximately 40 employees. Per the City mandate, we are operating the restaurant at 50% of fire code capacity and no tables with more than 8 patrons. In addition, 95% of our holiday parties were canceled due to the mandate and pandemic. In order to remain compliant, we offer guests protective masks in case they mistakenly forgot theirs, provide hand sanitizer on every table, weekly fog our restaurant with viruscide by a professional company, and are a partner testing site with Wichita State University's MDL Laboratories. We follow strict regulations to ensure the safety of our staff as well as our guests. These precautions are additional costs we must incur while also being forced to run our restaurant at minimum capacity.

The public has lost their confidence to go out to establishments due to concerns related to the pandemic. Even though we adhere to all regulations and continue to employ a staff of 40, we are not eligible for any relief programs.

We are currently paying \$12,000 per month in sales tax. This equates to \$144,000 per year during a pandemic. Additionally, during the revitalization of the property and construction of the restaurant we paid \$200,000 in construction sales tax.

We are proud to say that our restaurant has brought light to the community during what has otherwise been a rather dark year. Unfortunately, without financial relief, the capacity restrictions risk closing this vibrant business before we have had the opportunity to operate the restaurant at full capacity. The government, at every level, is providing financial aid to established restaurants, but since we opened after the January 2020 deadline, our business does not qualify for financial aid. We are in a unique situation, but it is just as important to provide assistance to new restaurant owners who have invested in the community, provide employment for local residents and have invested a significant amount of personal capital into the overall improvements.

There is one significant question you need to think about. Is it reasonable that a group of entrepreneurs, trying to create a positive economic impact, are treated unfairly and not extended the same opportunities as their competition? We believe the answer is obvious. We strongly encourage the passage of SB 15 as it could provide an opportunity to provide financial support to businesses like ours which have fallen through the cracks.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Tory DeMarce, Ryan Francisco and Anthony Francisco
General Partners

The Belmont
316-477-3555
3555 E Douglas Ave Wichita, KS 67218