

RESTAURANTS + BARS

Hamtramck's Metropolitan Baking Co. plans major expansion

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The Detroit News

Published 1:13 p.m. ET Oct. 17, 2023

If you've bitten into a Detroit-style coney dog during the past eight decades, chances are it was encased in a soft bun baked in Hamtramck at the Metropolitan Baking Co.

The 78-year-old business announced plans Tuesday morning for a major expansion that includes an additional 30,000 square feet of space, an additional 25 employees and a 30%-40% increase in production capacity. The project will bring the family-run bakery on Lumpkin Street to a total of 140,000 square feet.

"To give you an idea of output, we're currently packaging 140 dozen buns per minute, 20 hours a day, six days a week and we're hoping to add 40% to that number," said third-generation owner George Kordas at Tuesday's groundbreaking. "That number doesn't include our bread line where we're in the 120- to 140 loaf-per-minute range. I can't tell you how excited we are about this; we're busting at the seams."

Kordas is the current president of Metropolitan Baking Co., which was founded by his grandfather, a former Ford car salesman, in two nearby houses. A stone's throw from the current 20-acre facility, those houses serve as company offices today.

He spoke about the long history of the company that makes Coney Island "steamer buns" and pita bread for local Greek restaurants, as well as loaves of wheat, white, rye, French and Italian bread and buns for sliders and subs, too. The products are packaged under a variety of names, mainly Kordas. The bakery, which uses 125,000 pounds of flour a day, supplies packaged bread for grocery stores, restaurants and more than 300 school districts throughout the state.

As Kordas thanked employees, partners and the project's general contractor Roncelli Inc. of Sterling Heights, he also gave a special nod to the city of Hamtramck.

"We view this expansion as our commitment to the city, and I truly hope that you feel the same way," said Kordas, adding that the company has turned down grants and other funds and tax breaks in an effort to both grow the business on their own strength and to not take money away from other resources.

"Metropolitan Baking Company had the opportunity for a grant incentive from MDARD (Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development) which we respectfully declined because we wanted to do this on our own terms. My father and I also did not think it was the right thing to do to request the tax abatement or tax freeze from the city of Hamtramck, which has been a financially distressed city that's on the rise. Our view is that a financially stable city can do more for its people."

Construction on the expansion is set to start Monday and is expected to be finished in June.

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