

SC Telcom to be home to fitness center

BY CHRIS MOON

Hoping to piggyback on its increased office and residential activity, a Minnesota businessman has targeted downtown Wichita for a 24-hour fitness center.

Paul Johnson says he plans to open a Snap Fitness franchise in December or January in the former SC Telcom Building. It would be another sign of redevelopment for the city's core, which long has lacked such services.

"I like it," says Johnson, who has 12 Snap Fitness stores in

Snap Fitness

Headquarters: 2025 Coulter Blvd., Chanhassen, Minn., 55317.

Phone: (952) 474-5422.

Kansas locations: Atchison, Lawrence, Olathe, Overland Park, Salina, Shawnee.

Minnesota. This would be his first in Kansas, although there are eight other Snap Fitness stores around the state owned by others — but none in Wichita.

Snap Fitness is a new chain of fitness centers based in Chanhassen, Minn. The company reports having sold 1,300 franchises nationally since 2004. About 1,000 of those are in operation today.

Its closest competitor appears to be another 24-hour chain, Anytime Fitness, which recently saw a gym close in west Wichita. Another one opened, however, near 21st Street and Greenwich Road.

The downtown Snap Fitness location will occupy 6,000 square feet on the first floor of the SC Telcom Building, which has been renamed the Wichita Executive Center by its Minneapolis-based owner, Real Development Corp.



Lundberg

Real Development owns nine downtown Wichita office buildings.

"Probably 10 different tenants said we need a fitness center downtown. Everyone's on a health kick," says Real Development partner Dave Lundberg.

FITNESS DEMAND

Certainly, the market appears open. The downtown YMCA is the only other commercial fitness center in the city's core. Nearly 20,000 people work downtown.

"Oh yeah. We're busy, mostly on week days," says Mike Kramp, executive director of the downtown YMCA. "Most of the members here are definitely the ones who work down here."

Johnson says he expects 500 people eventually to be working in the SC Telcom building. And he's working on a deal with Real Development to offer workout packages to the company's other downtown tenants.

Snap Fitness also will serve as the workout center for Real Development's Exchange Place project, slated to be built into 144 apartments. The building is connected to SC Telcom by a walkway.

Johnson came to Wichita through a coincidental connection with Lundberg.

Lundberg owned a mall in Minnesota that contained a struggling Snap Fitness franchise. Johnson took it over and expanded it.

In talking, the two men discovered they were from the same town and had cabins on the same lake. The conversation eventually turned south.

"You can't know me and not talk about Wichita," Lundberg says.

Johnson says he will lease space in SC Telcom building for \$12 per square foot. His store will employ four people.

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