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**Phil Vettel • Contact Reporter**

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## Big Star to open second spot in Wrigley Field hotel? Partners talk details



One Off Hospitality, the restaurant group that includes Blackbird, The Publican, Avec and, not incidentally, Big Star, has big plans for Hotel Zachary, opening in 2018.

If the name doesn't ring a bell, Hotel Zachary is the hotel being built across the street from Wrigley Field by the Ricketts family, which owns the Cubs. Several local restaurateurs (including Matthias Merges, of Yusho, A10 and Billy Sunday fame) will be operating within the hotel when it opens prior to the 2018 baseball season.

One Off looks to be the biggest fish in that pond; the group has taken nearly 8,000 square feet to create a two-story restaurant in the new hotel.

Partner Donnie Madia says the decision on the actual name of the restaurant isn't final, but chef Paul Kahan, also a partner, indicated that the restaurant likely will be another Big Star, the group's Mexican street-food restaurant in Wicker Park.

"For me, as a lifelong Cubs fan, to be able to have a taco and a tequila before a game really is a dream come true," Kahan said.

Kahan seemed unconcerned that a second Big Star, particularly one so big, might dilute the charm of the original.

"If anything, the new location will give us the opportunity to do more with the food," he said. "The kitchen will be built for speed and quality; we'll have great music, great beverages and delicious food."

Terry Alexander, another One Off partner, said preliminary drawings are for a restaurant that will seat 400, not including a large outdoor cafe (not included in the square-footage estimate).

"The goal (of the design) is to have it not look empty, even in the middle of winter," he said.

Alexander said the Ricketts' plan to turn the area into a year-round music and food destination sold the One Off group on the idea.

"I think the Ricketts' vision is what really got us up there," Alexander said. "If they had just said, 'We'll give you this space across the street,' I don't know if we would have entertained the idea. But when it became clear this would be an important year-round location, then we stopped and listened. What Tom (Ricketts) and his team are proposing is really going to change the area, and hopefully we'll be an important part of it."

*Phil Vettel is a Tribune critic.*