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## RESTAURANTS

# Frozen yogurt chain to open two local stores

### *Yogen Fruz plans 15 area locations*

By Samantha Maziarz Christmann NEWS BUSINESS REPORTER  
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Trendy international frozen yogurt chain Yogen Fruz will kick off its 15-store expansion in the Buffalo area with two stores in area malls opening this summer.

The Euro-tinged, Canadian-based chain has a target date of late July for its first store at the Eastern Hills Mall in Clarence. The second, at the Boulevard Mall in Amherst, should be open by late August. Another 13 stores are planned for the area within the next five years.

Within the same time frame, the expansion will bring 15 locations to Rochester, eight to Syracuse and another 60 or so scattered elsewhere throughout upstate New York.

The expansion is being undertaken by master franchisee YF of Upstate New York, which operates out of Rochester. President George Traikos, whose history includes restoring historic buildings in downtown Rochester, cites a commitment to the so-called Rust Belt as the driving principle behind his local expansion.

“I like what I see happening in downtown Buffalo, Syracuse, Rochester. That redevelopment is something I want to invest in,” Traikos said.

Setting up shop in indoor malls is an important first step as the company spreads the Yogen Fruz name, Traikos said, but he hopes to make the jump to plazas and sports venues as demand develops.

That initial dependence on the built-in consumer traffic of retail malls is something that worries Traikos in these slumping economic times. But he hopes he has hedged his bets by picking the “best malls” with the most favorable demographics and economics.

“[The recession] is a short-term situation, but we don’t know how short short is,” he said. “It could be six months,

it could be 16 months, but I don't believe it will be five years.”

The company is currently hiring full-and part-time employees, and will need about 12 people to staff each store.

The company's first location opened in November at Rochester's Eastview Mall, followed by the Great Northern Mall in Syracuse last weekend.

Yogen Fruz was founded in Markham, Ont. in 1986. It has 1,100 stores in more than 20 countries. Currently, the closest Yogen Fruz locations are in Niagara Falls, Ont.

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