



Sushi restaurant opens in former Milano Inn

March 26, 2020 | [Susan Orr](#)

Amidst a wave of coronavirus-related restaurant closures, **Mori Sushi** at 231 S. College St. is an outlier—it opened March 17, the same day that a citywide prohibition against dine-in restaurant service took effect.

Nini Ye, who owns Mori Sushi along with her husband, Denson Yang, said the two had already planned to open on St. Patrick's Day. By the time the dine-in prohibition was announced, the restaurant had already received its first food and alcohol shipments and didn't want them to go to waste, so they decided to go ahead and open.

"We already had everything ready," Ye said.

The restaurant, which occupies 1,925 square feet plus an outdoor patio, offers a menu of sushi, ramen and udon bowls—thick wheat-flour noodles with broth and other ingredients.

Mori Sushi operated on a take-out-only basis for the first week. On Wednesday the restaurant began offering delivery through third-party delivery service GrubHub, and it will be adding delivery via Uber Eats as well, Ye said.

With support from neighbors, Ye said, business has been steady so far.

Several apartment buildings are within walking distance of Mori Sushi, and residents have both ordered food and taken menus to post in their buildings, Ye said. Employees at the nearby Mexican Consulate, at 331 S. East St., are still working from the consulate and have also ordered take-out.

"Almost every day, we get 15 to 20 tickets to go," Ye said.

Before opening Mori Sushi, Yang was the sushi chef at Wild Ginger, a Japanese restaurant in Fishers. Before that, he was a partner in a restaurant in Newport, Rhode Island. He has studied sushi-making in both the U.S. and Japan.

Ye has experience as a restaurant server and manager and has a background in banking.

Mori Sushi is part of the first phase of LaGrotte Square, a mixed-use development on the site of the former Milano Inn restaurant just north of the Fletcher Place neighborhood.

The Milano Inn closed in December 2016 after 82 years of operation. South Bend-based developer Holladay Properties [purchased](#) the site in 2017 to rehab the historic building and redevelop the city block on which it sits.

The redeveloped Milano Inn building, now called The Milano, is the first phase of the development. Holladay Properties has relocated its Indianapolis offices to the building and occupies the majority of the 15,200-square-foot building. A fitness studio, The Barre Code, also operates there.

The one vacant space in that building is a 1,900 spot that could accommodate either a retail or office tenant, said Holladay Properties partner Dan Phair, who is the firm's senior vice president of development.

Also in the works at LaGrotte Square is The Leo, a 141-unit apartment complex with parking garage. Construction on that project is set to begin this fall.

Holladay Properties is also planning a third building, The Noble, with just over 70,000 square feet of office and retail space. Holladay is working with real estate brokers at Cushman & Wakefield to find tenants for that building. Phair said Holladay would like to secure tenants for at least half of the building before beginning construction. He's optimistic construction will start in the fall.

A fourth building, the Jefferson, is a former school building that has been converted to multi-tenant office space. Holladay owns property to the south and east of the block that could house future phases of development.

At this point, Phair doesn't believe the COVID-19 pandemic will affect the LaGrotte Square project but he acknowledged "we're in uncharted waters right now."