

As Earth Fare opens first St. Johns County store, here are their plans for future expansions

October 16, 2019
By Alex Wilson

Just as Earth Fare opens its first store in St. Johns County – marking the third store to be opened on the First Coast – the company has already set its sights on more locations throughout Florida, including St. Augustine.

Founded in 1975, Earth Fare has grown over the years to include 55 locations in 10 states. The St. Johns County store marks the 15th location in Florida, but Earth Fare isn't stopping there, according to CEO Frank Scorpiniti.

"We're working about 15 opportunities between Miami and Tallahassee, right now," Scorpiniti said. "That would put us at 30 stores in Florida."

Scorpiniti added that Earth Fare has approximately 100 stores at various stages of development in its "real estate pipeline," and said they are also considering locations in St. Augustine.

"We have enough opportunity to more than double the size of the business over the next few years," Scorpiniti said. "There's not one on the books for St. Augustine right now, but our real estate team is looking in St. Augustine for opportunities."

Northeast Florida's newest Earth Fare opened Wednesday at 120 Shops Blvd, located in the still-developing Shoppes of St. Johns Parkway. Scorpiniti said a variety of factors played into the decision, including demographics, anticipated traffic and the company's relationship with the landlord.

The 23,650-square-foot building is built on property owned by Sleiman Enterprises, the same company which also owns the property for Earth Fare's Mandarin and Atlantic Boulevard locations.

"[Toney Sleiman] is a developer who we know, trust and collaborate with," Scorpiniti said.

In regard to traffic, the new location is found at the intersection of CR-210 and St. Johns Parkway. Additionally, a fairly new off-ramp that connects St. Johns Parkway with SR-9B makes that particular intersection an attractive site for a large retail operation such as a grocery store.

“[That off-ramp] is just going to make this corner a fantastic center of traffic and place where the community can gather,” Scorpiniti said.

However, Earth Fare is looking for a specific kind of traffic, which is where their targeted demographic comes into play: families with children. St. Johns County boasts 2.68 persons per household, and 26.6 percent of the population is under the age of 18, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

“The demographics here looked fantastic, it’s a very vibrant, growing community with neighbors that are really looking to live a healthy lifestyle,” Scorpiniti said. “Our stores tend to do best [in] communities with families with children.”

Scorpiniti declined to comment on the overall buildout costs of the new store, but the project was upwards of \$2.6 million, according to St. Johns County building permits. The store is projected to employ a staff of 98, 46 percent of whom will be full-time employees.

Earth Fare, headquartered in Asheville, North Carolina, markets itself as an “authentic specialty organic and natural foods grocery store.” The company offers more than 8,000 products –including 1,300 Earth Fare brand products – and employs approximately 4,600 people across 10 states.