

Promotion spotlights downtown OKC restaurants

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Construction in front of the Museum Cafe on Monday. (Maïke Sabolich)

OKLAHOMA CITY – Downtown Oklahoma City restaurants will offer an incentive the week of Jan. 22 to counter some of the traffic challenges caused by extensive Project 180 street work, business operators said.

Sunday through Jan. 26, eight fine-dining restaurants in the business district and surrounding sub-districts of the downtown area plan to feature prix-fixe specials, three-course meals at a set price of \$30, each night of the promotion. At the end of each meal, consumers will be asked to complete survey cards that will be entered in a drawing for \$50 gift cards to each of the restaurants.

“Oklahoma City is home to some impressive culinary talent,” said Jane Jenkins, the president of Downtown OKC Inc., which is organizing the event. “Downtown Restaurant Week gives local restaurants and chefs an opportunity to show off their skills and treat guests to a first-class dining experience.”

The promotion is only partially in response to problems caused by extensive streetscaping under way throughout downtown. Project 180, which is expected to continue for another two years, involves renovating all the streets, sidewalks, lights, benches, trees and signage, so the full project has been broken down into small packages. However, even though city crews are trying to work around business operations as much as possible, detours and delays have prompted complaints from merchants in the area.

Downtown OKC spokeswoman Gentry McKeown said her organization recognizes the difficulty of operating under those constraints.

“I suppose that always has something to do with it, but it’s not necessarily just because of the construction,” she said. “I know there are a lot of businesses that are suffering because of it. It’s something we took into consideration.”

“It’s always a goal of the organization to try and help generate business downtown and help people get familiar with our offerings,” McKeown said. “There are a lot of places that people might have never tried or might not know exist.”

And not all the restaurants are in the construction zone, although they may suffer indirectly as customers try to maneuver through the area to reach them. Participating restaurants are Nonna’s Euro-American Ristorante, Park Avenue Grill, Iguana Mexican Grill, Ludivine, the Melting Pot, Stella, Trattoria il Centro and the Museum Cafe. The subdivisions of downtown include the Arts District, Bricktown, Midtown and Automobile Alley.

Manager Lauren Cates at the Oklahoma City Museum of Art said a similar promotion held throughout the city during the summer was successful, but she’s looking forward to a tighter focus downtown. She said restaurateurs appreciate the opportunity to showcase their chefs and attract diners who might not otherwise consider downtown for dinner.

Downtown OKC organizer Allison Shumate said the special will be offered only in the evenings. No passes, coupons or cards are required; however, reservations are strongly suggested. For details, visit www.downtownokc.com/downtownrestaurantweek.aspx.