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## Riverfront reels in a Big Fish

### Rehoboth restaurant takes roofing spot

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A Rehoboth Beach restaurateur is planning to bring a Delaware beach favorite -- Big Fish Grill and Seafood Market -- to Wilmington's Christina River waterfront.

The approximately 8,000-square-foot restaurant would be built on the site that now neighbors Iron Hill Brewery and Restaurant and is currently occupied by P&C Roofing, according to Michael S. Purzycki, executive director of the Riverfront Development Corp. The existing industrial building on just under 1.5 acres will be torn down, Purzycki said.

Construction could start on the approximately \$3 million restaurant project as early as the fall, Purzycki said. Plans call for the restaurant to open in the summer of 2009.

The restaurant is the latest sign of progress in the redevelopment of the city's once-industrial area along the Christina River.

"I'm very, very happy," said Purzycki, who heads the state-supported organization charged with rejuvenating the riverside sites. "We've added another great addition to the Riverfront dining experience."

The development corporation has signed a long-term lease on the property with restaurateur Eric Sugrue, 37, of Rehoboth Beach, Purzycki said. Earlier this year, the development corporation reached a deal to buy the P&C Roofing property, Purzycki said.

Purzycki called Big Fish Grill a "high-quality local operator" that fits the development corporation's plans for the Riverfront. The area is not suitable for high-end national restaurant chains because the Riverfront doesn't meet some of the highway standards for some of the national chains, he said. "It's a much, much better result when we get good local people."

Sugrue, who with his brother, Norman, opened the award-winning Big Fish Grill in 1997 on Del. 1, said he looked at the Riverfront site after being approached by Purzycki.

Sugrue said he studied the location for about a year before deciding to go forward with a family-style eatery.

One reason for the decision is that many customers of Big Fish Grill in Rehoboth Beach live in Wilmington and know the brand, said Sugrue, who also owns the Summer House Restaurant on Rehoboth Avenue.

"The Sugrue brothers have been tremendously successful down at the beach and they've got a built-in constituency who summer down in Rehoboth and live in northern Delaware," Purzycki said.

Plans call for the one-story restaurant to be open for lunch and dinner. It will seat 300 people, which

includes the outdoor deck and bar, Sugrue said. He said the Seafood Market will be within the restaurant. An architect has not yet been chosen.

The Big Fish Grill and Seafood Market could employ approximately 110 people, he said.

The cuisine will feature only fresh seafood and beef, Sugrue said. There will be sandwiches, pasta and a children's menu. Sugrue said he has not priced the menu yet, but it will be similar to the prices in Rehoboth Beach.

Having the Big Fish Grill on the river will help the development corporation in its effort to fill the vacant restaurant pad located between Iron Hill Brewery and the Big Fish Grill, Purzycki said.

Xavier Teixido, co-owner of Harry's Seafood Grill on the waterfront, said it's clear that "good quality works" on the Riverfront.

"We went to the Riverfront knowing there were going to be more restaurants," Teixido said. "I've always felt: The more the merrier. As long as the development continues to have a lot of diversity, it gets stronger and stronger."