



MARK GORMUS/TIMES-DISPATCH

**Jerry Soble (left) and son Steve Soble stand in Popkin Tavern at 121 W. Broad St. The restaurant is in the former Popkin Furniture store building, which the Sobles owned since 1968.**

## Furniture's for lounging at new Popkin Tavern

Steve Soble tried persuading his father for 10 years to close the family's Popkin Furniture store in downtown Richmond. Soble had an idea: turn the first floor of the building at 121 W. Broad St. into a neighborhood restaurant and bar and upper floors into apartments. "I had done the same thing

to places in Chicago," Soble said.



**GREGORY J. GILLIGAN**

His father finally agreed. Popkin Furniture closed in late 2004, after operating since 1968.

The upper floors were converted to 18 apartments. Residents moved in this year.

Now his showpiece — Popkin Tavern — opens this week.

"My dad was right that we should have waited," said Soble, a 1982 graduate of J.R. Tucker High School. "It would have been too soon 10 years ago. Now we're right at the point where things are happening right now and how things are turning around on Broad Street."

He wanted to create a neighborhood restaurant and bar. "This is not a high-end place. We wanted it to be very casual."

He expects most of the regular patrons will be those living in his building and the other apartments and condos that have been developed in the past couple of years.

Popkin Tavern boasts original wood floors and a 20-foot high ceiling covered in its original tin. "It is a very dramatic space."

The Sobles added a mezzanine level, where furniture is grouped

much like items in a furniture store, he said.

"But this way you sit on them and enjoy them rather than buy them," said Soble, who will live in Chicago but will visit Richmond often.

He's also decorated the tavern with old photos of the building — which had been a furniture store since 1909 — and of Richmond's downtown.

### Play time

Chesterfield Towne Center has created a toddler-only play area.

The Creek Crawl, in front of the Dillard's store, is for children ages 4 and younger.

The soft-foam play area has a reading theme. Plans call for holding story times there on a monthly basis.

The popularity of the mall's River Romp play area prompted the center to create one for younger children.

The mall also is one of a handful of shopping centers in the country that has two soft-play areas.

### Chipotle coming

More changes are taking place around the Willow Lawn area.

The building at 4930 W. Broad St. that had housed the Fuqua and Sheffield Florist business since

1972 is being converted to a Chipotle restaurant that should open by late December.

Fuqua and Sheffield is still in business. It moved two blocks away to 4911 W. Clay St. about a year ago.

### Another Du restaurant

Look for David Du, son of Peking Restaurant owner Dick Du, to open a contemporary Asian restaurant by early November.

David Du's restaurant will be called Dd33 Asian Bistro — the name comes from his and his father's initials and age difference between them.

The restaurant will be in the Shoppes at Twin Oaks shopping center on Cox Road.

"We'll take dishes that appeal to the American palate and put an Asian twist on it," David Du said.

• Contact staff writer Gregory J. Gilligan at [ggilligan@timesdispatch.com](mailto:ggilligan@timesdispatch.com) or (804) 649-6379.