

# BRONX *Times*

## Checkers set to open on Southern Boulevard

By David Cruz



A new checkers is set to open at 1058 Southern Boulevard on Thursday, June 7.

Photo by David Cruz

Vijay Ghei, proud franchiser of a brand new Checkers fast-foot eatery in Longwood, will take a pass on tasting his product, not that there's anything wrong with it.

While Ghei's learned all aspects of his franchise, he can't give an account of how the food tastes.

"I'm a vegetarian," said Ghei, having only tried the 350-calorie fries.

His new fast-food eatery, his third, is set to open June 7 at 1058 Southern Boulevard, home to a former bank.

Ghei will rely heavily on the foot traffic from the nearby 2 and 5 Simpson Street subway station.

But Ghei, a native of India, is veering off the brand's double drive-thru windows by setting up a sit-down burger joint sans the windows.

He's setting up shop within the Longwood section, a neighborhood plagued by poor health trends, according to the New York City Department of Health.

Obesity, diabetes and heart conditions are the norm in that area.

Ghei's other ventures are in Fordham and The Hub, two other areas with high obesity rates.

"It's one's personal choice," was Ghei's take on those who choose to eat the popular food.

Jennifer Durham, vice president of franchise development agreed, saying it does not withhold nutrition data from its customers.

"All of our restaurants in the borough post the calorie counts on the menus," explained Durham.

One healthy aspect will be the 50 jobs that will now come to the Bronx, suffering from a 14% unemployment rate. Residents can expect 30 full-time and 20 part-time jobs available.

As for Checkers deviating from its gimmick of drive-thru windows, Durham said exceptions are always made.

“Research showed that customers don’t mind the double-drive window. They come for the flavorful food,” said Durham.

Ghei, a former controller for a private financial firm, isn’t done expanding his operations.

“I like to grow with Checkers,” he said.