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# Bare Blends adds 7th local shop, plans expansion in two more states

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Bare Blends is opening yet another franchise in the Capital Region, this time in North Greenbush.

The new-build end cap space at 26 N. Greenbush Road is in the process of being built out, according to Ann-Marie Berdar, co-founder and chief operating officer of Bare Blends. The store is expected to open in the next two months.

The retail plaza, owned by Benderson Development, also houses a recently opened Starbucks and will be the first Capital Region location for Bubbakoo's Burritos, a New Jersey-based chain.

"It was one of the highlights of my year because we were asked to be the end cap in that new build and the other end cap was Starbucks. And I was so honored that we were asked by the development company to go in there," Berdar said.

The franchisee is Robin Gulay. Gulay also owns and manages a Bare Blends at 380 Feura Bush Road in Glenmont Plaza near



SAM RAUDINS / ABR

The new Bare Blends at 26 N. Greenbush Road.

Delmar. She's the first franchisee to operate two locations.

"The space is unique because it's going to have a couple of lounge areas. There's little cut out areas, we're going to put benches in with pillows. And it's just that vibe because it's across from [Hudson Valley Community College]," Gulay said.

Bare Blends has three locations co-owned by Berdar and CEO Jessica Fuller: Albany, Latham and Clifton Park. Berdar said the company has 13 locations sold for franchising nationwide, four of which are currently open in Centennial, Colorado, Glenmont, Glenville and Saratoga. A Boston franchise is in the works as well as two Florida locations: downtown Tampa and Sarasota, opening in 2023. The Florida franchisee signed on for five total stores.

The cost to open a Bare Blends consists of an initial franchise fee of \$40,000. The range of investment is from \$222,494 to \$414,489, which includes the franchise fee. The rest of the estimated costs include expenses for fit out, equipment and inventory, third party professional advisory fees, insurance and three months of working capital, according to the Bare Blends website.

Bare Blends' corporate team helps franchisees with real estate decisions, Berdar said. Franchisees are connected with the company's commercial real estate brokerage, Site Source, and the franchisee and the corporate team reviews characteristics such as the demographics, foot traffic and other factors of two to three locations. The franchisee ultimately decides on the final location.

Since beginning the franchise program in 2020, Berdar said the company has learned how to refine its growth strategy.

"Everything has been a great learning process. And we've been able to since kind of fine tune that operations manual, and we're now working collectively with the franchisees to help grow the brand," Berdar said. "I would like to believe that every time you sign on a franchisee in your early stages, it's like finding a new business partner."

**Sam Raudins**