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Wendy's tries out a fancier look locally

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By [Tracy Turner](#)

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Wendy's new restaurant prototype in Columbus seems to be a hit with customers, the Dublin-based company said yesterday.

The testing of prototypes is part of an effort to refocus on Wendy's growth and development now that Arby's has been sold.

Sales at the first local prototype that opened, at 5505 W. Broad St., are up "significantly" from before, and officials anticipate a similar response from diners at the 739 Bethel Rd. store, which opens today, spokesman Denny Lynch said.

The new design includes flat-screen TVs, free Wi-Fi, comfortable chairs with ottomans, coffee tables, wood-grain tables and pullout chairs, fresh flowers and a glass-enclosed fireplace lounge.



Restaurant redesign

1. Wendy's: 739 Bethel Rd.

2. Wendy's: 5505 W. Broad St.

THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Wendy's, which is the nation's No. 3 hamburger chain, is testing four new store designs as part of the company's plan to completely redesign its restaurants and the company itself, Lynch said.

The first design is in the two Columbus-area stores. The other three designs will differ slightly and will be built in four other U.S. cities by the fall. Lynch declined to say which cities.

"The customer response has been more than gratifying. It's a big deal for us," he said. "We've put a lot into this new design and are looking to see what works, what doesn't work, and what customers want in our restaurants."

The goal, CEO Roland Smith has said, is to re-energize the Wendy's brand.

It's a concept that other fast-food chains, including McDonald's and Burger King, are trying. The trend is an effort, experts say, to refocus on adult diners who grew up on fast food but don't want to dine in an environment that looks like it was designed for children.

The Wendy's restaurants boasting the modern designs are also testing new menu items, including in-store baked cookies, brownies and muffins; fresh blended smoothies; a new breakfast line; and Wendy's own line of roasted coffee, Lynch said.

The stores also feature a Freestyle Coca-Cola machine that allows consumers to create more than 100 drink combinations, he said.

Wendy's demolished the Bethel Road and Broad Street locations last month and rebuilt with the new design in less than six weeks, Lynch said. The goal is to have all the new prototypes up and running in a similar expedited fashion to minimize the time that the stores are shut down.

With the new restaurant designs the chain is trying out, Wendy's is searching for a new look that is "ultramodern," Lynch said. He said the company has re-engineered its menu with a new line of hamburgers, new chicken offerings, new salads and new sea-salt french fries.

The company, now based in Dublin again, is to announce its earnings on Thursday.

tturner@dispatch.com