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Saladworks opening 15 area locations

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Homer Simpson claims you can't make friends with salad, but that's not stopping one chain from trying.

Conshohocken, Penn.-based fast casual restaurant **Saladworks** aims to open 15 locations in the D.C. area in the next few years, with the first of these opening in early March.

A Saladworks store will occupy 2,400 square feet at 1140 Elden St. in Herndon, and is scheduled to open March 4.

The expansion effort is being led by Vernon Hill II, the founder of **Commerce Bank** and CEO John Scardpane.

"The restaurant has been successful wherever it's been tried," said Hill, a Vienna native. "I'm from the area, and there's a relatively high income population, and lots of office workers." Hill is chairman of the Executive Committee for Saladworks.

The next location is slated for Fairfax, and will open this summer, Hill said. The company will first target Northern Virginia, and potentially expand beyond that. Nationally, the group is aiming to open 1,000 locations by 2013.

The company briefly had an outpost in Union Station but that closed in November, according to spokesman Patrick Pantano.

The restaurant offers a create-your-own salad approach, as well as soup and sandwich dishes. D.C. has a number of salad-focused entrants in the market already, including Chop't and Sweetgreen.