

# Duke Energy Center adds focus on fitness

## Flex + Fit will fill a big space with unique plan

Premium content from Charlotte Business Journal - by Will Boye, Staff writer

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**Shama Patel** didn't enjoy her job as a corporate lawyer in Chicago, but she did love her gym.

The Greensboro native had previously worked in Charlotte as a consultant uptown with Accenture. But while living here, she never found a fitness club entirely to her liking. In Chicago, where she worked for a large firm, she joined the East Bank Club, a well-known exercise, recreation and dining facility.

"I just loved the atmosphere and the social aspect," says Patel, 28. "I remember when I was (in Charlotte), there just weren't any alternatives that I was happy with. I wanted to create something that was a fun place to go where it didn't really feel like you were working out, but you were being healthy in the process."

Patel is fulfilling that New Year's resolution by opening a 10,000-square-foot health club in the Duke Energy Center called Flex + Fit.

She is planning for a May opening at the corner of Church and Stonewall streets. The club won't have any traditional exercise gear besides pilates equipment and spin bikes. Instead it will feature four studios — yoga, group exercise, interactive spin and personal training — and more than 50 fitness classes.

Patel says the gym will likely schedule 18 to 20 classes per day.

Flex + Fit also will feature an on-site instructional cooking kitchen where local chefs and Johnson & Wales culinary students will lead classes on how to prepare quick, healthy meals.

"That's definitely something that sets us apart," she says. "If we can show people how to make these meals under 10 minutes, and they're healthy and inexpensive, then we can get people to start eating healthy, which is half the battle."

Other amenities will include a tea and smoothie bar, dry-cleaning services and two-hour parking validation. The company plans to employ and contract with more than 50 professionals, including fitness instructors, personal trainers, culinary students and chefs.

Patel isn't disclosing how much she's investing in the venture.

She believes Flex + Fit won't compete with the YMCA, which is opening its 19th branch this weekend and has 220,000 members in the Charlotte market. Instead, she considers yoga studios more direct competition and hopes Y members will perhaps complement their memberships with a package of fitness classes at her gym.

Memberships at Flex + Fit will start at a pre-opening monthly rate of \$99 and will then be priced between \$129 and \$199.

At the high end, members receive unlimited fitness and cooking classes, towel service, a dedicated locker and one personal training session per month. Memberships will be month-to-month only. Fitness and cooking classes will start at \$15 per class.

Patel hopes to reach 1,500 members within two years of opening, and she plans a second location.

Patel Construction Group, headed by Shama's brother, Birju, is handling the buildout of the Duke Energy Center space. Patel Construction is an affiliate of [BPR Properties](#), a real estate development and management company based in Greensboro and headed by **Bhupendra Patel**, Shama's father.

The [Charlotte Chamber](#) assisted Flex + Fit with its local start, and [Charlotte Center City Partners](#) is helping the health club with its uptown launch.

**Donald Beck** of [Beck Commercial Properties Inc.](#) represented Flex + Fit in lease negotiations, and **Fred Klein III** of [Childress Klein Properties](#) represented the landlord, [Wells Fargo & Co.](#)

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**RAISING THE BAR**

•**Opening** in May in 10,000 square feet in Duke Energy Center

•**Memberships** start at a pre-opening monthly rate of \$99 and will then be priced between \$129 and \$199.

•**Facility** will focus on a range of fitness classes instead of equipment

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