



The Gametime Lanes and Entertainment venue in Peabody, Massachusetts, features multiple levels connected by a staircase and an elevator.



# A Venue for Families That Adults Will Love

The vision for Gametime Northshore was to create a space that would appeal to multiple demographics. Anthony DeCotis says early response has been good.

BY JOHNNY CAMPOS

**F**or more than two decades, part of the basement space of the Northshore Mall in Peabody, Massachusetts, sat dormant — a former gym frozen in time.

Today, the treadmills and weight benches have been replaced by bowling lanes, flying axes and billiard tables. Gametime Lanes and Entertainment, the city's newest family entertainment center, has brought some fresh energy to a long-vacant corner of the shopping complex.

Located near Salem and about a 40-minute drive from Boston, the

new FEC opened last November, sitting between Arhaus, a furniture store, and an L.L. Bean store at the mall.

"It's a pretty heavily populated area, just off a commercial highway," says Anthony DeCotis, one of the proprietors of Gametime Lanes. "There are a lot of commercial retail places where the mall sits. It's a great location, and we were lucky to be able to find the space."

DeCotis, 51, is also part owner of a Gametime Lanes and Entertainment venue in Amesbury, Massachusetts, about 30 miles from Peabody, and his family owns a

traditional 48-lane center, Luxury Lanes, in Malden, Massachusetts.

"The center was in my family, and I probably got involved when I was a teenager," he says. "That's going on 30-plus years. I owned it, renovated it and bought everybody out about 20 years ago."

DeCotis put his experience in the industry to good use in planning his newest venture. The decision to build part of the center in the lower level of the mall was strategic.

"It had been vacant for about 25 years," he says. "Upstairs, we kind of built out from the existing shell. So, this was all new kind of real estate for them. We just added





The downstairs lanes can take on many different “personalities” via a large video wall and diverse lighting package.

on to the basement with the upper floor.”

DeCotis started the design with the bowling lanes, which are in the

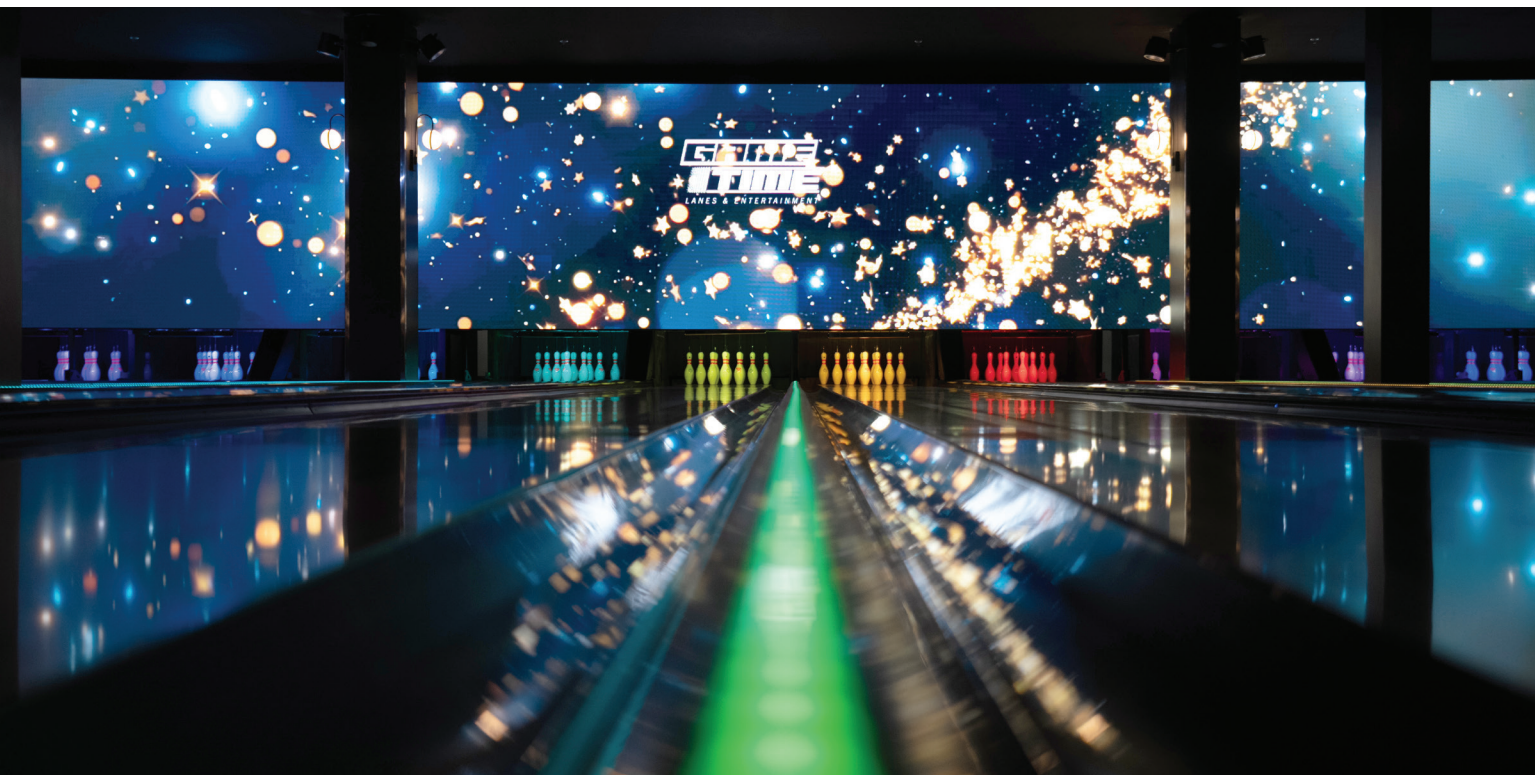
lower level of the FEC.

“That’s our staple,” he says.

“Then we went with our arcade, and we were familiar with axe

throwing. We’ve had some success with that at our other location.

“We looked around the area and saw that we didn’t have a lot of



competition. Axe throwing not only fit in our location, but it was also a good thing for the area. Nobody had opened up anything like that.”

The finished product has 12 lanes of tenpin bowling, six axe-throwing lanes, four billiard tables, about 80 arcade games, a restaurant, “func-

tion” rooms and two bars.

“Our vision was to create a place that could be very conducive for families,” DeCotis says. “We





In addition to 12 bowling lanes, Gametime features six axe-throwing lanes, currently unique to the area.

wanted it to be very inviting for you to have your child's birthday party, but also transition to being able to host adult parties as well.

"So, design-wise, we needed to create a perfect place that's not so adult driven. You could feel comfortable with your child and, in reverse, it could also be geared toward the children. We worked with our designers, who went heavy with LEDs and accent lighting that could be attractive to almost any age group. You know, sexy, but very inviting."

There is no access to the FEC through the mall, however, so customers must use the main entrance.

"We have no entrance through the mall, but you can see our sign," DeCotis says. "The good part is we have our own entrance. So, even if the mall closes at 10 o'clock, we can stay open until 1 a.m."

When customers go through the front entrance of the top floor, they see the restaurant and sports bar, with a function room to the right. Farther down and to the right is the location of the arcade.

"As you walk to our arcade, on your right is a set of steps and an elevator," DeCotis says. "They take you downstairs, where you come into our billiard tables.

Then you take a right to go to our bottom basement, where you hit our second bar. Behind

Gametime's restaurant features a menu of shareables, pizza, burgers, handhelds, salads and sweets, while the bar offers an array of beers, wines, seltzers, cocktails and "zero proofs."

that are the 12 bowling lanes, and if you keep moving forward, we have our axe lanes."

One of the big attractions at the center is an LED wall that can be used as an advertising board or promotional display.

"It's probably 12- to 14-foot square, and people can see it when they walk in," DeCotis says. "It's great if you want to advertise, and it gives us the ability to highlight some of our corporate, VIP or birthday parties.

"Every birthday child, at a minimum, can have their name up there, welcoming them. We can also make money by showing pictures or





## At a Glance

**Venue:** Gametime Lanes and Entertainment

**Location:** Peabody, Massachusetts

**Owner:** Gametime North Shore, LLC

**Architecture and Design:** Dynamic Designs

**Bowling Equipment:** QubicaAMF (EDGE String Pinspotters, BES X Bowler Entertainment System [scoring], Neoverse LED Wall, HyperBowling, SPL Select Lanes, Harmony Ball Returns)

**Carpeting:** Flagship Carpets

**Flooring:** Shaw Contractors

**Furniture:** Venue Industries

**Lighting and Sound:** DFX

**Music:** DFX/Control Play by Bowling Music Network

**Arcade:** Betson Enterprises

**Redemption:** BMI Merchandise

**Card System:** Intercard

**Axe Throwing:** Champ Throw

**Billiards:** Hans Delta Presidential V/Ac-Cue Rate Billiards

**Restaurant/Bar Equipment:** B&G Restaurant Supply

videos for them. Same thing with corporate, because you want to get corporate on social media. If you put their big logo up there, they love it. They feel like it's very personalized, and they all get to stand in front of it, take pictures, and put them on social media."

How has the new FEC been received thus far?

"The reviews have been great," DeCotis says. "The number-one thing when you're a new establishment is getting foot traffic through the door, letting people know you're there."

"Obviously, first impressions mean a lot, and I think that over the first six months, we're pleasantly surprised at our numbers and our growth."

By transforming a long-vacated gym into a lively entertainment hub, the owners of Gametime Lanes and Entertainment have shown how unused retail space can be reimagined to meet today's demand for experience-driven destinations — while also saving proprietors in construction costs.