

Beer bar slated for Germantown

Local operators partner with Core on latest addition to Werthan complex overhaul

By William Williams

08-24-2010 1:19 PM —

Germantown's rebirth began about 15 years ago. With the looming arrival of a neighborhood bar — courtesy of the popular 12 South Taproom and Grill team, no less — the historic North Nashville district will next year accelerate that transformation.

Hunter Connelly, president of Core Development Services, has told *NashvillePost.com* that the Boiler Building at Werthan Mills is undergoing a \$1.5 million rehabilitation to accommodate the as-yet-to-be-named bar/restaurant.

“This will help Germantown in general, and The Lofts at Werthan Mills specifically, maintain momentum as an emerging urban neighborhood,” said Connelly, whose company has overseen the adaptive re-use of the buildings housing The Lofts at Werthan Mills. “The goal is to have the restaurant ready for a late summer 2011 opening.”

Germantown currently offers three entities that serve alcohol: City House, Germantown Café and The Mad Platter. However, each is primarily an upscale restaurant with a modest bar component. The planned bar/restaurant, in contrast, will focus as much on craft beer and a cool neighborhood bar atmosphere as on a quality pub menu, said co-owner and co-operator Alex Torres.

Torres, who is joined in the venture by Jamy Borda and Will Shuff, said the bar will take some subtle cues from the Taproom yet offer a distinct vibe.

“It would be remiss of us to transplant 12 South Taproom as is and not let the new space speak to us,” said Torres, who declined to offer an estimated cost for the effort.

DA|AD (design), Southland Constructors (construction) and U.S. Bank (financing) are participating in the project, while Nashville-based businessman Brent Coursey is a partner with Core.

Connelly said initial feedback to the bar/restaurant, which will front the Taylor Street/Seventh Avenue T-intersection, is that a “comfortable, relaxed restaurant and bar would really thrive in Germantown...the kind of place that ... you could go to more often than just on special occasions.”

In addition to retrofitting The Lofts at Werthan Mills — buildings that previously served an industrial purpose — Core has developed Station Lofts, Madison Square and Germantown Place. Combined, the four entities have 357 residential units.

Emerging mixed-use urban districts in other cities have seen positive results with the addition of an inviting and laid-back bar. Ron Fisher, owner of Atlanta-based consulting firm Profiling Solutions, said his city's Cabbagetown area has benefited from the arrival of Milltown Arms Tavern. Like Germantown, Cabbagetown (in which Fisher owns multiple properties) is a historic, mixed-use urban district within close proximity of its city's downtown.

“Before Milltown Arms Tavern, the building was a derelict eyesore that made visitors and residents uncomfortable,” Fisher said. “Merely by opening, Milltown helped to change the sense of possibility of the street. More important is how Milltown integrated itself in the neighborhood by providing a place for artists to show their work, a gathering spot for runners/walkers, a meeting place for people and someplace to take visitors/friends.”

Fisher said a neighborhood pub serves as a “locus that helps support and sustain an ecosystem of other businesses” and generates follow-on investment from businesses and individuals. Ray Oldenburg, a Pensacola, Fla.-based urban sociologist, said pubs represent “social capital” that is key to creating vibrant urban spaces. Oldenburg is author of the 1989 iconic place-making book *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Community Centers, Beauty Parlors, General Stores, Bars, Hangouts, and How They Get You Through the Day.*

“The typical neighborhood tavern [found in areas that developed prior to the full-scale arrival of the car] has always drawn about 80 percent of its business from a two-block area,” said Oldenburg, professor emeritus at the University of West Florida. “I would think that still applies to the small unadorned tavern. To be able to walk to a place is important to many people.”

