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Monon Hotel gets face lift

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Observant people have already noticed changes in the 100 block of North Green Street. However, more, many more, are planned at the old Monon Hotel Building.

A trio of local residents - Scott Ferretti, Brian Pedro and Jason Roche - purchased the historical four-story building recently and officially took over control on Aug. 1.

Immediately, the name was changed from the Showdown Saloon and replaced by a banner which now reads "Rumors Bar and Grill."

"We took control last Tuesday (Aug. 1) and the first thing we did was the change the name of the old Showdown Saloon," Roche said. "We came up with the name Rumors which is appropriate for a bar so we named it Rumors Bar and Grill."

While other changes might not meet the eye yet - they will and soon.

The plans calls for the bar to be closed for a three-week period in September to do some extensive remodeling to the first floor of the 14,000 square foot building located at 125 N. Green St., which originally opened on Aug. 18, 1927.

New owners of the old Monon Hotel make plans to renovate for a bar and grill restaurant. The hotel operated until 1977 when it closed and the building was condemned by the city.

Rumors
BAR & GRILL
It All Starts Here!

"We are going to remodel the existing bar area and make some changes to the first floor and add a kitchen," Roche said. "When it reopens it will be rearranged, have a facelift and have a kitchen. Patrons will definitely notice a difference. We have been talking to the customers and I would say 90 percent of them are excited about the changes. We are right in the middle of downtown with banks, businesses and the courthouse all within a block. We are hoping to make this a place those people would like to come and eat lunch at and then

after work stop by for a cocktail."

To help run the bar and grill the trio of owners has already hired a manager.

Belinda Williams, who has been the manager at the local Eagles Lodge for the past two years, was hired to run the daily operations.

"She brings boat loads of experience with her and we are real excited about her being on board," Roche said. She started fulltime on Tuesday.

"Our main goal is to attract more business downtown," Williams said. "We really like all the renovations and historic preservations going on downtown and are excited to become a part of that. We just want to provide people downtown one more option. During the weekday we will cater to the business people and on the weekend we are hoping to provide an atmosphere where your can come and spend an evening with friends and listen to some live entertainment."

Ferretti also brings food and restaurant experience to the table.

His family has owned a grocery store in Illinois for 75 years and he ran a restaurant in Florida for more 18 years before moving here 17 years ago. He also has attended culinary school.

"We are looking for an opportunity to serve the Crawfordsville community and give it a place where everyone of all walks of live can meet and be comfortable," Ferretti said.

Ferretti and Pedro will also bring much needed remodeling experience as that is what they do every day.

"We will probably do about 90 percent of the work ourselves," Ferretti said, who along with Pedro, are co-owners of Brickstone Builders located in Crawfordsville. "We want to do that to make sure we keep the integrity of the building and by doing the work yourself you have a good feeling about what you accomplish."

Once the first floor is completed, attention will turn to the second floor. Current plans call for the second story to be opened as part of the bar and grill in a year. The second floor will hopefully include a balcony like the old hotel had. The balcony will eventually include tables where customers can enjoy a meal outside overlooking the street.

In addition, Ferretti said there are plans for couches and possibly a fireplace to create a comfortable sitting area where people can enjoy being with friends to be created.

"The Monon Hotel used to be one of the premiere hotels in all of Indiana," Roche said. "We are hoping to bring back some of that excitement to the building. It has played a big part in the history of the downtown area of Crawfordsville and we just want to bring some of that back."

The building has a third and fourth floor and the plans on those two floors are still up in the area. Some possible ideas include the possibility of restoring them into hotel rooms. That could also be turned into condos or office space.

"Right now we aren't set in stone as to what we are going to do with the top two floors," Roche said.

The three were not necessarily looking to get into a downtown restoration project. Roche and Ferretti have know one another for about 10 years and are both members of ABATE. Roche is the area coordinator and Ferretti is the assistant ABATE representative. Ferretti and Pedro have know one another for about 12 years and joined into business together about 1 ½ years ago. Roche and Pedro just met earlier this year.

In April they talked with Jenny Harrison, the former owner of the building who had been running the bar for seven years since the death of her husband. When it came up that she might be ready to sell the building, talks began.

"We like to entertain and enjoy people," Pedro, a 1984 Crawfordsville graduate and former owner of B&M Construction, said. "When the opportunity came about we decided to do it. We are going to totally clean the place up, revamp it and then bring in some live bands. We want it to be a place where the people of Crawfordsville can go and have fun and be comfortable."

"We talked and the thought of being about to help the restoration of the downtown area and do something to give what had been a big part of the history of this town was something that we all thought we would like to be a part of," Roche said.

Roche said he, Ferretti and Pedro would be interested in anyone who has photos or other memorabilia from the hotel's past. Anyone who has such information and would like to share it with the new owners are asked contact Roche at 362-5900.

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