



Entertainment District: Six blocks and a dream

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Right now it doesn't look like much.

The Entertainment District, a six-block area anchored by Fremont Street with three blocks stretching out on either side between Las Vegas Boulevard and Eight Street, has empty storefronts, graffiti, check-cashing places and a few bars.

The plan is that the rundown area of downtown would -- through the help of the city -- someday resemble the popular Gaslamp Quarter in San Diego or Bourbon Street in New Orleans, bringing locals and tourists to its nongaming bars and clubs.



Three years after introducing the redevelopment plan and cleaning the area, two bars have opened and a third establishment, a Thai restaurant with a nightly piano bar, has applied for the special tavern-limited license the city offers to businesses opening in the specific area.

"This relates to what we're doing with downtown redevelopment," said Scott Adams, Las Vegas' Office of Business Development director. "It complements casinos and creates another reason for people to come downtown."

Take 1 Nightclub, a Hollywood-themed bar with a production studio in back, was the first club to open in the Entertainment District.

Beauty Bar Las Vegas, a retro salon-themed bar, opened in May. The bar, owned by Paul Devitt, is similar to Beauty Bars that Devitt owns in New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco.

The ordinance, however, ends if seven establishments are not completed by fall, Adams said. But he still has faith in the effort.

"There's a whole bunch of folks lining up to get in," Adams said. "We've agreed to put up more money for street-scape improvements. We offer storefront grants for stores to improve the front of buildings. We're doing more aggressive marketing. We're not going to let either one of them do this all by themselves."

In addition to creating a special nongaming liquor license, the city waives the 1,500-foot distance between bars to create a more pedestrian environment. The venues are required to have entertainment a at least four nights a week.

"There seems to be a real niche demand in this marketplace," Adams said. "What you've got now is clubs in big megacasinos and it's very difficult to leave and go to another club."

Business owners receive additional funding if they put up illuminated signage.

"We want it gaudy because that's what Glitter Gulch was," Adams said.

The street scape, he said, would include signs promoting the area using the Las Vegas retro theme.

Gary Sax, who opened Take 1, said he was interested in the area because of redevelopment and what he saw as a sincere interest from Las Vegas Mayor Oscar Goodman.

The city has been helpful, Sax said, but added, "Government runs slow. The Office of Business Development, they seem to be wanting to expedite things. But they're pretty slow on the (street scape)."

But, Sax said, "We're here for the long haul. We're trying different things. We've had rockabilly, original acts, R&B. We have different production companies come down here."

Devitt, who was surprised to learn that the Nevada State Board of Cosmetology's strict regulations