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Downtown Eugene



Photo by Steve Card

Manager Al Jenkins (right), Art Moser and Rob Bailey opened New Max's tavern last Wednesday evening, marking the return of an old campus landmark.

New Max's opens in old location

By Sam Silverstein
Emerald Contributor

New Max's tavern opened for business last Wednesday evening, after five months of renovations and legal battles over the issuing of its liquor license.

New Max's, 550 E. 13th Avenue, stands at the site of the landmark Max's tavern, which closed in May following a dispute between the building's owner and manager. The bar had been prepared to reopen under new management in late September, before a local neighborhood group voted to oppose its application for a liquor license.

In an Oct. 7 letter to the Oregon Liquor Control Commission, the West University Neighbors Association asked that the New Max's liquor license application be denied on the grounds that enough taverns already existed in the neighborhood, and that not enough space stood between the bar and the residential apartments in the area.

The letter also complained of adding to an atmosphere "conductive to transient activity and unpleasant behavior associated with these elements," and "boisterous activity," that could "spill out on the sidewalk and street."

WUNA board member Shannon McCarthy said the protest was "an attempt to reclaim the residential atmosphere of that block."

The City of Eugene, however, found the WUNA complaints were not valid, said business license specialist Denise Spyke, and the city endorsed the application on Nov. 1.

The OLCC then issued the license early last week, and on Wednesday evening around 6:30 a former employee "walked in and bought the first beer," said New Max's manager Al Jenkins.

"I'm just glad it's open," said Jenkins, who claimed to have lost two months of income because of the delays. "That's all water under the bridge now."

Though there were no conditions put upon the bar by the city, Jenkins has promised some changes in the way New Max's will be run, Spyke said.

"They were getting kind of loud," he said of the bar under previous management. "I'm not going to run the place like it was before. I've hired a full time sound man (who will) be keeping the sound at a reasonable level - that's his only job."

New booths and seats, an expanded stage, and refurbished heating and plumbing systems also give New Max's a new look, Jenkins said, though the bar's original "feel" will remain.


"The place is such a tradition; it's a historical place," Jenkins said. "(Restoring the bar) is definitely something I am really committed to and have take a lot of pride in."

Beyond the usual televised sports and rock music attractions, Jenkins said he plans on hosting acoustic and experimental acts — "everything from country and western to punk" — on weeknights, and more conventional blues or rock performers on weekends.

"Peanut Night," featuring a 55-pound barrel of peanuts, and a weekly dart league are also planned.

Tuesday, November 21, 1989


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