



Downtown turnaround

Three Williams Street businesses undergoing renovations

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CORPUS CHRISTI — Pizza slinging could start at Dentoni's as early as this weekend under a new owner. The eatery is one of three businesses on the downtown block to undergo renovations.

Along the south side of William Street, between Chaparral and Mesquite streets, are Starz night club, Dentoni's Pizza and Big Daddy's, formerly known as Uncle Woody's. The three are being remodeled to offer more to patrons.

Shawn Zilca, known professionally as DJ Chaos, bought the pizzeria last week and has spent the past several days remodeling. He awaits his certificate of occupancy before he is able to open.

Zilca also owns Starz, which is getting a new stage.

The stage belonged to Uncle Woody's, but a wall is being torn down to attach it to the Starz building. Zilca plans to bring bands of any genre from throughout the state.

"I've learned that in times of recession, people need places to relax and blow off steam more than ever," Zilca said. "Although the entertainment industry has been hit by the recession, it hasn't been hit as bad as other industries."

Raul Zuniga agrees.

The 26-year-old new owner of Big Daddy's said he turned to buying and operating a bar because his career in the oil and gas industry was unstable.

He's investing his savings into upgrading the bar by bringing in new equipment, games and pool tables. He's redecorating the interior and upgrading the sound system.

Zuniga chose downtown because of the crowds, the planned upgrades by the city and his reluctance to move the existing equipment to another location.

"That sounds bad, but it was a factor," Zuniga said. "But I like knowing the city is planning on sprucing downtown. I think it'll bring more people here."

John Vidaurri, executive director of the Corpus Christi Downtown Management District, said now is the time for entrepreneurs to invest in a downtown business and for current business owners to renovate.

"I think people need to do more to bring people in through the doors," Vidaurri said. "House of Rock renovated recently and now we have these three establishments. I think it will continue."

Vidaurri said the recent improvements by business owners are on par with the city's Chaparral Street Improvement Project, which will kick off in spring 2010.

"The city also has some money left over from the 2004 bond package that will go toward a downtown beautification project," he said. "It will add landscape and improve some of the side streets off Chaparral. All these things will add to the physical look and value of downtown."

