

1.5M jazz club planned near ballpark

Lancaster New Era

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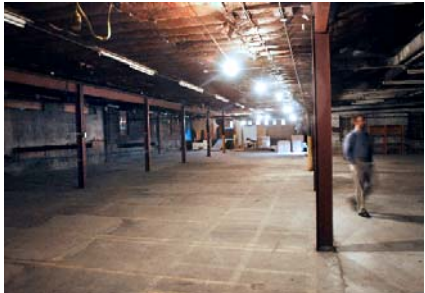
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Lancaster

By TIM MEKEEL, Staff



Pete Catalano (left) and Pat Deibler are proposing to open the Prince Street Blues & Jazz Club on this tract opposite Clipper Magazine Stadium.
Marty Heisey/New Era



This is the inside of a century-old warehouse that would be renovated into the Prince Street Blues & Jazz Club. The stage would go at the rear of the space.
Marty Heisey/New Era

Revitalization projects along North Prince Street not only are changing its look.

They're also changing its sound.

A city businessman and a music enthusiast are proposing to develop a blues and jazz nightclub in a vacant warehouse opposite Clipper Magazine Stadium.

Named the Prince Street Blues & Jazz Club, the 500-seat club would open in early November. It would be a non-smoking facility operating Wednesdays through Sundays.

"There needs to be more things to do in Lancaster City...," said Pete Catalano, owner of Gallagher Construction and a partner in the club project.

"Our customer will be someone who appreciates the music and who appreciates having a place to go after dinner," he said.

A \$1.5 million investment, Prince Street Blues would be the third music-venue project on the street to be completed this year.

The Chameleon Club finished its \$2 million expansion in March. The Pennsylvania Academy of Music will unveil its \$25 million expansion in June.

Mayor Rick Gray welcomed the partners' proposal.

"It sounds like a great adaptive reuse of the building and it's in a great location across from the stadium," he said today.

The plans for the club dovetail with Gray's desire to promote the city as an arts and entertainment destination.

And the mayor, a jazz aficionado, noted there is no local venue for people to regularly hear blues and jazz, in contrast with the several places here where rock 'n' roll bands perform.

"It provides additional live entertainment for a group that is not regularly served," Gray said.

He said city officials will work with the partners to clear any zoning hurdles.

"I'm sure we'll be able to help them along if there are problems," said Gray.

Prince Street Blues, being designed by Mula Architects, would need the approval of city officials.

Plans for the 9,000-square-foot club have yet to be submitted to the city, although Catalano and partner Pat Deibler have discussed the concept with city officials.

The 607 N. Prince St. tract is zoned mixed use, although it was not immediately clear whether a club would be a permitted use there or would require a special exception.

Catalano and Deibler envision the club hosting a variety of talent:

- Wednesdays and Thursdays, emerging and independent-label rock, pop, jazz and blues artists;
- Fridays and Saturdays, regional and national blues and jazz artists; and
- Sundays, gospel artists during brunch.

Admission would be \$5 to \$15 per person, depending on the artist.

In addition to their club performances, some of the musicians also would accompany Catalano's friend John Gerdy on his visits to local schools through his "Music For Everyone" program.

Other than Sundays, Prince Street Blues would not serve entrees, just light fare and desserts. It would serve alcohol; the partners are negotiating to buy a liquor license. So patrons would have to be at least 21 years old to enter.

The 20-employee club would have valet parking, with cars parked on the Clipper lot. The stadium's tenant, the Lancaster Barnstormers, has approved the arrangement, Catalano said.

He promised the Barnstormers that the club would not have major acts the same nights that the stadium is hosting a game.

Providing the musical expertise for the project is Deibler, a 2004 Franklin & Marshall College graduate who was president of the college's blues and jazz concert organization, the Bessie Smith Society, in his student days.

Deibler, who was introduced to Catalano in 2005 through mutual friends who knew the contractor was interested in opening a nightclub, is a paralegal at Timoney Knox law firm.

They had considered opening a blues and jazz club named the Sapphire on North Arch Street in 2006, but those plans were dropped when the space proved unsuitable.

Catalano bought the Prince Street building this month for \$650,000, according to courthouse records. **Handling the transaction was Tom McDermott of NAI Commercial Partners.**

Prince Street Blues would occupy about half of the tract's 16,000-square-foot building. Catalano anticipates developing a restaurant on the other half with different partners.

To make the Prince Street building more suitable for live music, the partners would replace six interior columns with overhead spans, making the stage clearly visible to customers.

They also would provide tables and booths in the rear of the club for customers who are more interested in eating and talking than the music.

In addition, they would turn about 1,000 square feet of the club into free studios for local artists. The studios would be enclosed in glass, so club customers could watch the artists work and buy the pieces.

Catalano, 52, is an energetic New York City native who moved to Lancaster 17 years ago and now lives on Wheatland Avenue.

He owns and operates Steel Solutions, a manufacturers' representative for steel makers. Last October, he acquired Gallagher Construction, based two blocks from his future club. Gallagher would build the club.

The 17-employee construction firm specializes in high-end residential renovation and remodeling work, light commercial projects and new home construction.

(Staff writer Bernard Harris contributed to this report).