

# Orlando Sentinel

## TOURISM PULLS OUT OF STATION

### ENTERTAINMENT IS ONLY 1 FACET OF RENOVATION

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The old Church Street Station is going away forever.

"I don't see it as an entertainment complex or a tourist attraction," Robert Kling, one of the property's three new owners, said Friday.

What Kling does see is a vibrant slice of downtown Orlando, including not only restaurants, bars and entertainment but also such elements as a bookstore, dry cleaners, shoe repair, and maybe a grocery store and movie theater.

If the area draws tourists after its redevelopment, it will be because it's a downtown city district as exciting as Georgetown in Washington, D.C., Kling said.

The developer said he is still working on a redevelopment plan. Possibilities include construction of a hotel next to the complex's Presidential Ballroom and office-apartment towers on vacant property south of the complex and west of City Hall.

His first concrete steps, to be undertaken during the balance of this year, will be renovating the Presidential Ballroom and the adjacent Cheyenne Saloon.

Patrick McBride, head of the McBride Co. of Miami, architect for the redevelopment, said improvements to the Cheyenne Saloon won't "change the essence of a very unique place. We'll enhance what's there."

Changes to the ballroom's meeting and banquet space -- including new furnishings, carpeting and chandeliers, are aimed at making it "a memorable place for memorable events," McBride said. Those changes are under way.

Improvements to the Cheyenne Saloon and the ballroom combined will cost more than \$1 million, Kling said.

Trammell Crow Co. has been hired to seek tenants for the now- vacant buildings on the north side of Church Street. The saloon and ballroom are on the south side.

Kling said he hopes to lure a high-end, nationally known steak house or other type restaurant to the complex.

He said he has had discussions with several prospective tenants and with hotel and office developers. He would not identify them, saying talks are in preliminary stages.

Kling is president of F.F. South & Co., an Orlando real estate investment company. He and Maury and Daryl Carter, father-and-son operators of the Maury Carter & Associates real estate brokerage, bought the complex at Church Street and Garland Avenue in May for \$15.85 million from Enic PLC of London.

The first thing the new owners did was shut down all the money-losing businesses on the north side of Church Street, including Rosie O'Grady's Good Time Jazz Emporium and Lili Marlene's restaurant.

But the owners also began actively promoting the south side of the street, reinstating live entertainment and a weekly nickel-beer promotion at the Cheyenne Saloon.

Church Street Station was developed by entrepreneur Bob Snow, who opened the entertainment complex in 1974. It sparked a revitalization of downtown Orlando and at its height drew more people annually than any other tourist attraction in the state.

Snow sold the complex after 15 years. It has been in decline in recent years as its tourist business was siphoned off by similar attractions at Walt Disney World and Universal Orlando.