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Lobby Lounge dons elegant style

With original drinks, beers and tapas, renovations add an option to Zionsville

*By Donna Monday
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The Brick Street Inn, 175 S. Main St., reopens Tuesday in a style that could be called "antique hip."

Dahlia's Linen and Luxury and The Café, which operated in the inn's front two rooms, closed so the owners could make renovations and create the Lobby Lounge.

Colleen Fanning, Brick Street Inn's executive director and owner, promises the lounge to be "something different for the Village, a little updated. And it will be elegant."

The Lobby Lounge will be an afternoon/nighttime place for drinks and tapas. Seventy different wines will be offered by the glass, and more than 35 bottled beers, many of them microbrewed, are planned.

C.F. Jones Group has been working on the project for more than eight weeks. Fred Jones, owner, reports the renovation has been extensive. "We removed everything and started over," he said.

Though the inn was completely renovated from 2002-04, the original building dates back to 1865. Jones said such a structure "creates its own challenges." Still, he says, "It's pretty neat working on an old building like that."

Mike Grundy, Jones' job superintendent, said the job "has been a major remodel -- from a storefront to a lounge."

In a quick tour of the bar, Grundy said the bar top is birch with an oak Chicago rail around it and it sports a brass foot rail. "Everything else is oak," he said.

A bronze mirror hangs over the bar -- giving a candlelight effect to the room. Fanning herself faux-painted it.

Done in hues of chocolate brown and golds, the lounge offers soft seating in a quiet, intimate setting. A couch, comfy chairs, crystal chandeliers, and antique-looking crystal sconces set the scene. It is reminiscent of Nicky Blaine's in Downtown Indy, or an Edward Hopper painting.

The brick fireplace with the inn's original 1865 knotty pine mantel and replica antique tin ceilings add to the coziness. All told, with two high pub tables with stools, seating at the bar itself, and soft chairs with small occasional tables scattered about, there are 35 seats.

That amount will probably double in good weather, as outdoor seating will be offered and is expected to be extremely popular, whether in waning afternoon sunshine or moonlight.

Food and beverage manager Sean Buffie is a busy man. He created the menu, the wine list, and a number of original drinks. This is all in addition to his job as food and beverage manager for the inn itself, which is no small feat with eight guest rooms and another three large rooms for special events.

Buffie is excited about some of the drinks to be offered, especially those he created. The lounge will offer all the usual martinis, he said. In addition, though, are a few one might not find elsewhere. Among them is a martini called "The Wetnight," named after a buddy of his whose last name is Wetnight. Ingredients include raspberry vodka and island blue pucker. The drink is a light blue on top and purple on the bottom.

Buffie said the goal of the lounge was to create something not found anywhere else in Zionsville.

"We just wanted to do something really simple," he said, explaining that the tapas, "are essentially all finger food. We wanted people to share light food items. The idea is to pass things around."

Those include a tapa called "The Greek" and another dubbed "The Sicilian." The first features feta cheese, olives, roasted red peppers, and hummus with whole wheat pita. The second offers, among other things, salami, provolone cheese, prosciutto ham, marinated artichokes, and gourmet crackers. The idea is for each patron to build a tapa, using those items he or she finds tasty.

Fanning said the Brick Street Inn is "making the shift from a small bed and breakfast to a world class hotel property," and the lounge is part of that effort.

Another goal of the Lobby Lounge is to "increase traffic on Main Street, and to the rest of the village so Zionsville can thrive," she added.

Friendly Tavern owner Scott Barnes welcomes the new venture.

"The more the merrier," he said. "It's a nice option for people to have."

Chamber of Commerce President Mimi Ricigliano agrees.

"I am thrilled about the Lobby if you want to know the truth," she gushes. "I just think it adds a little bit extra to Zionsville. It gives a little more of a choice. People can have dinner and go there after. They can take clients there for business entertaining."
