



Michael S. Domine

Dana Shertz, left, has become a partner in EnDev LLC, headed by James Brennan.

Have Nightclub Concept, Will Travel

Developers Plan Las Vegas-Style Venues in Markets Where None Exist

BY CONNIE LEWIS

Nightclub owner James Brennan says that eight months ago he had no plans to go corporate, at least not in a big way.

Brennan, 33, and his lifelong sidekick, Demien Farrell, who is also 33 years old, had one successful club, an adjacent pizzeria, another bigger club and

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an event hall under their belts. The first two clubs, Side Bar, which is connected to Ciro's Pizza, and the Stingaree in the bustling Gaslamp Quarter, were opened within a few years of each other.

The Witherby opened atop the Side Bar in late 2006.

Now with three other projects in the works, Universal, a combination lounge, restaurant and New York-style Italian deli in Hillcrest, and the Top of the Cove, a landmark La Jolla eatery that they recently acquired, and Bar West, soon to open in Pacific Beach, Brennan has decided to go corporate. The name of his company was changed from 373 Corp. to EnDev LLC.

Just how big does EnDev intend to become? Well, that depends.

Plans are uncertain, but the hope is to roll one of two concepts — the Stingaree or Universal — out of the county. Maybe both. Just where is also uncertain.

Entertaining Ideas

But the idea, according to Brennan and the newest member of his EnDev team, Dana Shertz, formerly president and chief operating officer of MacGregor Golf and, before that, Callaway Golf's vice president of sales, is to find markets that are "under-served" from an entertainment standpoint.

Brennan said the company wants to do the same type of thing — introduce Las Vegas-style clubs and restaurants in markets where none currently exist. He says such a business plan worked in the Gaslamp, so it should work elsewhere.

Whether he's right or wrong, the \$6 million, 23,000-square-foot, Sixth Street venue is always crowded on weekends and has garnered nationwide press.

Brennan laughs, however, when he recalls how he and Farrell, who acted as general contractors on the over-budget, on-time project, were literally painting out the back door as opening night guests were coming in the front door. Now he sees that continued growth of the company calls for delegating responsibility.

Brennan, who started his first business



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James Brennan, left, and Dana Shertz of EnDev LLC review plans for Bar West, a Pacific Beach bar and restaurant the company is planning to open in April.

brokering logo T-shirts to fraternities and sororities while a student at the University of San Diego, has had a knack for riding the crests of local real estate and business cycles.

After graduating, he sold his T-shirt business to buy into a mortgage lending company, and then parlayed those earnings into condo conversions, and from there he branched out into the restaurant and nightclub business. EnDev is also involved in office conversions in Phoenix.

A bootstrap entrepreneur — his father was a pest exterminator in Manhattan — Brennan learned about his businesses and how to manage them as he went along.

Now those tasks will be divided between Shertz, the firm's chief operating officer who will also act as its chief marketing officer, and Farrell, who will be in a special role of new development on-site project manager. Mitch Compton will oversee real estate development and acquisitions.

Plenty Of Work Remains

They have their work cut out for them. Bar West, currently under construction, is scheduled to open in mid-April on Hornblend Street where Margarita Rocks formerly operated. Plans are that Universal, which occupies a site formerly operated as an adult bookstore and two other storefronts on University Avenue, will open in late July.

Work on the Top of the Cove, which was closed early this year, could take up to two or three years, depending on how long it takes to acquire permits. But plans call for a restaurant and lounge. Brennan said EnDev spent \$5.5 million to acquire the property.

He declined to cite the purchase price of the Margarita Rocks business, but said that the cost of remodeling the 5,000-square-foot building will be \$2 million.

"This will be an upscale establishment for people who live in the beach area and

don't want to go downtown," Brennan said. "Its chief draw will be beach community residents."

Added Shertz, "No doubt because of our reputation at Side Bar and Stingaree, a lot of people, not just Pacific Beach residents, will want to check out Bar West."

Steve Zolezzi, executive vice president of the San Diego Food and Beverage Association, applauds EnDev's plans to expand out of the county.

"If they can make it in San Diego, and clearly they have, they can make it anywhere else," Zolezzi said. "San Diego is a very conservative county compared to a lot of other places in the U.S., even in California. And the costs are higher."

"What they allow here is very restricted (in terms of liquor and operating licenses) compared to most any other market. It's different than Los Angeles and San Francisco and Seattle and major Eastern cities."