

northwest

Stark Landscape

Gender-fication continues with Club Portland closure

by Julie Sabatier

The plane continues to shift for the Burnside Triangle. Businesses are changing hands, while plans for tear-downs or remodels hang in the balance.

One thing is for sure: The Continental building, home to Club Portland and Silverado, has been sold. As of Feb. 20, the new owner of the white, windowless building at 303 S.W. 12th Ave. is Burnside West RPO LLC. The company is a subsidiary LLC of what is known as TOB LLC, the owner and developer of a 22-story building going in just up the street.

"The Continental Building was, as they say, in the path of progress, and that's why it was included [in the deal]," said Brian Wilson, one of the principals at Kalberer Company, an investor in the project. "It was a necessary acquisition to bring that level of street presence, sophistication and cleanliness to the area where the main project is."

Wilson, who is gay, indicated that the new owners have no interest in continuing to lease the space to the five-story Club Portland bathhouse or Silverado and that both might close within 60 days.

"I would characterize them as a very reluctant seller. This was a very tough deal to get through," he said.

Wilson stressed that he was speaking only for himself and his company. Representatives from TOB LLC had not drafted a media statement by

press time, and Club Portland owner Dick Lawson did not return repeated phone calls seeking comment.

Meanwhile, at the tip of the triangle, there is some good news for Karl Wilgus, who runs the Eagle PDX at 1300 W. Burnside St. The bar will not be closed anytime soon, as building owner Craig Henderson has decided not to push forward with a renovation right away.

"Karl has been a good tenant, and there's not really much I can do in the meantime, so I may be able to have him stay there for a longer time," Henderson said. Although he couldn't be specific about the building's long-term future, he said the Eagle might not be able to stay forever. "At some point, it could be a tear-down and start all over again."

Henderson said the property is a hot commodity right now, especially with all the new developments going on around it. "I think if I have one more option, my head's going to explode. It's impossible to get a handle on this thing," he said.

The battle over the Eagle's name seems to have cooled a bit in recent weeks. Bears, leather enthusiasts and curious observers now have two Eagles to choose from: Eagle PDX on Burnside and Eagle Portland (formerly Urge, formerly Porky's) on North Lombard Street.

At one point, it looked as though Wilgus and Eagle Portland owner Pat Lanagan might have to

settle the name dispute in court. Lanagan seized on the opportunity to register the name "Eagle" when Wilgus allowed his registration to lapse last summer. The high-profile squabble eventually led to Wilgus banning Lanagan from the Eagle PDX.

"I've had a bar for 20 years under that name, and I have a legal right to that name," said Wilgus, who characterized Lanagan's threat of a cease-and-desist order as "bullshit."

Lanagan said he is still considering whether to take legal action against Wilgus over the name. "Despite the disparaging words that Karl Wilgus has had toward me, I still wish him the very best, and he's still welcome in my bar anytime."

Lanagan said he has noticed an interesting trend as Portland gets used to having two Eagles.

"My bar, it seems to me like it has morphed into what the Eagle used to be back in the day," he said. "It's very much a masculine men's bar, and it's my understanding that Eagle PDX has kind of morphed into what Porky's used to be like, which is kind of like gay guys, lesbians, the transgendered, the queer crowd if you will."

Whether or not the scene has changed at the Eagle PDX, Wilgus' new bar/lounge, Casey's, is set to open in Old Town this month and will be geared toward a more assorted gay crowd. "Casey's is going to be a much broader, all-inclusive type club," he said. No word on whether that applies to Lanagan. ☪



The message is loud and clear: The Eagle PDX will not be closed anytime soon.

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