

The Aurora Beacon News

STILL ONLY



TUESDAY, JANUARY 29, 2008

Ballydoyle owner seeks downtown spot for Irish pub



Following the success of Ballydoyle Irish Pub in Downers Grove, the establishment's operator hopes to develop a similar spot in Aurora.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

Buildings would house entertainment venue along New York Street



ILLUSTRATION BY SHAWN VILAND / STAFF ARTIST

By Andre Salles
ASALLES@SCN1.COM

AURORA — Five years ago, Phil Cullen left a career in food service supplies to open his own restaurant. The result was the very successful Ballydoyle Irish Pub in Downers Grove — and now Cullen is looking to bring that success to downtown Aurora.

City officials announced Monday that Cullen is about to close a deal to bring a new Ballydoyle to New York Street. Specifically, Cullen's company will buy the even-numbered properties between 28 and 42 W. New York St. — 38,000 square feet in all — and, by year's end, open a 12,000-square-foot pub and entertainment venue there.



Phil Cullen, developer



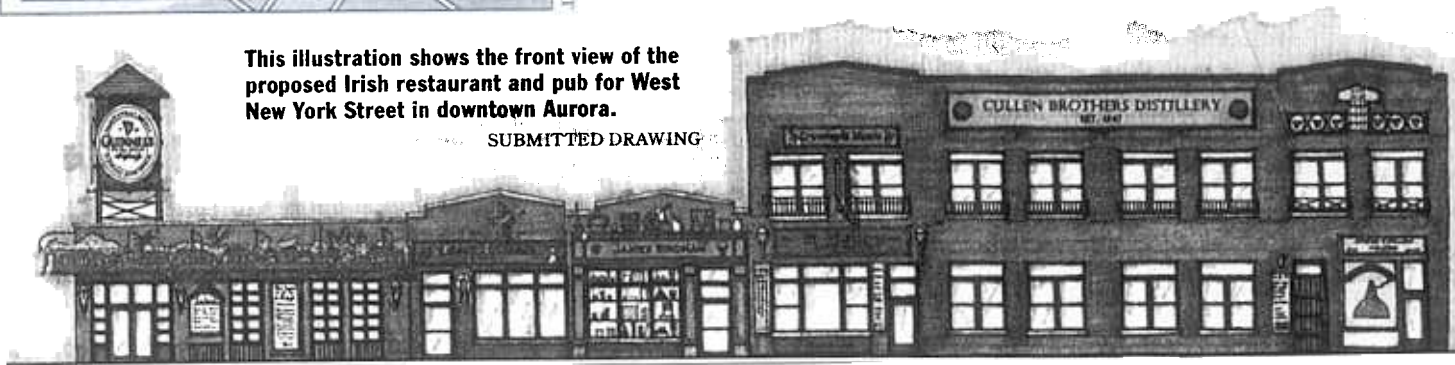
Cullen expects to spend \$8 million to \$9 million on the new restaurant.

The new Ballydoyle will, at least initially, be three times the size of the Downers Grove location, with plenty of room to grow. Ballydoyle is an Irish pub, and the original location has made its name on corned beef, cabbage and Guinness.

❖ Turn to **VENUE, A2**

This illustration shows the front view of the proposed Irish restaurant and pub for West New York Street in downtown Aurora.

SUBMITTED DRAWING



VENUE

From page A1

The food and service have won the pub several awards, and positive reviews in numerous newspapers and magazines as a family-friendly gathering place.

Ballydoyle will also be a venue for live entertainment, one of the few in downtown Aurora. Cullen's stage in Downers Grove has hosted bands from the U.S. and Europe, playing a variety of styles, and he plans to bring the same type and level of entertainment to Aurora.

Despite downtown's poor track record for restaurants, Cullen said he is committed to Aurora. He said he considered two other downtown locations, both of which fell through, and has been working to bring this second location to life for two years.

The New York Street building Cullen chose is roughly 90-years-old, which is part of what drew him to it. Ballydoyle will, he said, look like "it's been in the



SUBMITTED DRAWING

An artist's rendering of the back view of the proposed Irish restaurant and pub for downtown Aurora.

neighborhood for 60 years," and will feature reclaimed and vintage décor.

That includes placing authentic-looking facades on the street side of the building, with names of Irish businesses: "Geary Brothers Saddlery," for example, in honor of the pub's general manager, Donnacha Geary. In Downers Grove, Cullen said, his challenge was to make a new building look old, but here, the building itself will do most of the work for him.

Part of the building housed Dental Art Aurora from 1965 to 2003, and it has also been home to a women's coat factory, two paint shops and a salon.

Most recently, developer Ed White had planned to build condominiums in that space. His project was approved in 2004, but never came to fruition. Cullen said he has arranged a deal with White to buy the property, and is only waiting for the city to come through with incentives.

Those incentives, which go before the council Finance Committee today, include \$2.26 million from the city — \$1.26 million upon the issuance of a certificate of occupancy, and an additional \$1 million over five years out of tax increment financing revenue.

What city officials will get in return, they hope, is a catalyst for downtown development. City officials estimate that the pub could draw an additional 150,000 visitors to downtown each year. In Downers Grove, Ballydoyle helped to bring residential and commercial development to an otherwise stagnant downtown, and Mayor Tom Weisner hopes it can do the same in Aurora.

"We see this as one of the items we've been trying to accomplish for a while, as part of our overall plan for downtown," Weisner said. "It helps to pull people in regionally, and it adds to the ambiance of the city as a great place to live."

The Finance Committee will discuss the city's end of the deal at its regular meeting today at 4 p.m.