

# CVS in old Bill's casino to open in May; other tenants set for summer move-in

By Anne Knowles

The Stateline site known as Bill's Casino, named for Harrah's founder Bill Harrah and purchased two years ago by Mike Laub, will reopen its doors next month.

After a remodel costing more than \$3 million and employing 80 workers, the 40,000-square-foot site is being reborn as a mall.

"Everything is new," said Laub, who bought the property in March 2010 for \$5.22 million. "New parking lot, new landscaping, new windows, new heating system. The only thing left is the foundation and the steel."



A portion of the old Bill's casino will open in May, with the remaining tenants who have signed leases moving in during the summer.

Photo/LTN

"It's looking more and more high-end," said Sam Dufour, owner

of Teaz N Pleaz, an adult lingerie shop and one of eight tenants in the new mall. "It will change the face of the area."

The unnamed mall – Laub told *Lake Tahoe News* he might have a contest to name it – will launch on May 6 with the opening of a CVS store without a pharmacy. According to the Douglas County building permit, the store will be 11,102 square feet.

Michael DeAngelis, a spokesman for the Woonsocket, R.I.-based drugstore chain, said CVS decided to forgo a pharmacy because the Stateline store is expected to attract more tourists and visitors than residents.

Laub said he expects the CVS to employ about 20 people, and for the remaining mall tenants to employ another 60. He said one tenant, the Lucky Beaver Bar & Burger, soon would be having a job fair.

During June, most of the remaining occupants are expected to debut, including Dotty's Casino, Tahoe Diamond District, Lucky Beaver Bar & Burger, Tahoe Ink, Teaz N Pleaz, and Pilates Studio Lake Tahoe. An eighth tenant, The Raw Bar, a bar and seafood restaurant, is expected to open in August, according to Laub.

Teaz N Pleaz is adding to its stores in Fair Oaks and South Lake Tahoe with a 1,500-square-foot store in the new mall, which Dufour hopes to open June 1. He characterizes the store as a competitor to Victoria's Secret, but its website also sells sex toys and adult games, along with apparel.

Pilates Studio Lake Tahoe is opening in late June in a 3,000-square-foot space on the third floor of the mall, said Tara Farrah, the studio's owner. Farrah plans to offer private and group classes taught by four Pilates instructors and three yoga teachers. She may also add Zumba, a Latin-inspired dance aerobic program, and hopes eventually to offer outdoor classes on the mall's rooftop.

"I wholeheartedly believe in Pilates," Farrah said. "I had a ski accident years ago, and it saved my life."

Farrah's husband, Pat, will be opening the Lucky Beaver Bar & Burger, a 24-hour gaming bar serving gourmet burgers, on June 15. The county building permit lists it as 3,105 square feet. It features video-table top gambling, a mini sports book, a grill inside and a fire pit in the back with outdoor seating.

Farrah said there is considerable parking in the back. "It will be a great location for locals and out of towners."

He co-founded Home Depot. On this project Farrah has two partners – Mike Leeper, who ran Bar 24 at Bill's Casino, and Kevin Lane, who owned the Cedar Room in Round Hill.

Tahoe Diamond District, a jewelry store listed as 1,266 square feet on its building permit, and Tahoe Ink, a tattoo parlor with thousands of square feet, according to its permit, are expected to open in early June, according to Laub.

Finally, a 6,500-square-foot Dotty's Casino is scheduled to open in early June, too. The casino will have 100 slot machines, a bar and a restaurant, said Laub.

Dotty's, which caters to locals and women who don't typically like casinos, was the focus of a push by the Nevada Resorts Association to impose stricter guidelines on slots parlors. In August 2011, the Nevada Gaming Commission amended its regulations to require Dotty's and similar establishments to offer bars seating at least nine patrons and restaurants of at least 2,000 square feet seating for at least 20 customers.

Calls for comment to Nevada Restaurant Service, the corporate name for Las Vegas-based Dotty's, were not returned.

Three storefronts remain vacant in the mall, said Laub: a 4,500-square-foot spot on the first floor that Laub is now negotiating with several potential tenants and two spaces on

the second floor that can be flexibly configured for between 1,000 and 3,000 square feet.

“The second floor would be a perfect location for a salon,” said Laub.

Originally, Laub planned to build a strip club at the site, but the Douglas County Commissioners nixed the plan.

The site is also known for a safe discovered in its walls during the remodeling. Some believe the safe may be connected to the unsolved murder of Richard Chartand, the original owner of the casino, when it was known as Barney’s Casino. He was killed in 1968 by a car bomb, believed to have been planted by the mob.

The Oprah Winfrey Network acquired the rights to reveal the contents of the safe on an upcoming series, but has decided not to use the safe in any show, a spokesman for the TV network told *Lake Tahoe News*.