

The Palm Beach Post

Lost Weekend, Kapow! spearhead Clematis changeover in West Palm Beach

By Alexandra Clough - Palm Beach Post Staff Writer
Thursday, January 12, 2017

Nightclub and restaurant owners say Clematis Street's west end is primed for growth. Two longtime restaurant and nightclub impresarios are feeling bullish on Clematis Street, despite the turnover taking place in West Palm Beach's downtown dining district.

Scott Frielich and **Rodney Mayo** are set to open two more restaurant/bars in the 500 block of the street in March. They are **Lost Weekend**, a popular pool hall and bar returning to downtown at 526 Clematis St.; and a new location with partner **Vaughan Dugan** for **Kapow! Noodle Bar** at 519 Clematis Street. Kapow! has an existing location at Boca Raton's **Mizner Park**. The new venues would mark the fifth outposts on the block affiliated with one or more of the partners, who also have **Respectable Street**, **Hullabaloo** gastropub and **Subculture Coffee** there, too. Frielich and Mayo are old hands in the hospitality business, and Frielich sees no cause for concern despite the recent closure of **Bar Louie** at 200 Clematis St. Meanwhile, the **Tin Fish** at 118 S. Clematis closed last year, as did **World of Beer** at 101 N. Clematis. "We've been on this street for 20 years. I opened the original **The Lounge** in the 500 block. And **Respectable Street** (at 518 Clematis St.) is one of my favorite places to go," said Frielich, vice president of **Subculture Restaurant Group** in West Palm Beach.

Changes on Clematis Street now are no different from the changes that have taken place over the decades, Frielich said. "It's like any urban area downtown," he said. "With restaurants, there's going to be turnover." But hope springs eternal, and so do ideas from Mayo, a major real estate investor and restaurant innovator for decades. Lost Weekend was a fixture on Olive Avenue from 1995 to 2005 but then moved to 219 Clematis St., upstairs from **Dr. Feelgood's Rock Bar & Grill** at 219 Clematis St. But Lost Weekend's proximity to Feelgood's hurt the pool hall brand, and the place became something of an extension of the rock bar below, Frielich said. Plans to move Lost Weekend to the 500 block of Clematis began in 2014, but an opening has taken longer than expected. The project experienced delays due to contractor and construction issues. When it opens in two months, it will be worth the wait, Frielich said. Lost Weekend will bring back its vintage pool hall feel, old-school video games, laid-back vibe and hand-picked '80s, '90s and indie tunes from a jukebox. There's also something new: Food. A Lost Weekend location on Miami Beach has found a niche with Philly cheesesteaks, but the West Palm Beach outpost will feature a small menu of tacos and Mexican specialties. Lost Weekend also will continue its tradition of offering unusual beer selections from around the world. Upstairs, a new concept might be developed that could feature cabaret shows, Frielich said. But no plans are in the works right now, including bringing back the cocktail-oriented Lounge.

Helping the Mayo/Frielich ventures is the revival of development on Clematis Street's west end. "The 500 block is no longer the dead zone of Clematis," said real estate broker **Rebel Cook**. Indeed, the **Brightline** train station is under construction, new apartments are being built nearby, and the 4th District Court of Appeal's new courthouse, on Tamarind Avenue at Clematis and Datura Streets, is under construction, too. Then there are the three hotels planned for nearby Rosemary Avenue: An **Aloft Hotel**, an **Indigo Hotel** and a hotel for lovers only, dubbed **Prive Suites**, which will feature swimming pools in each room. All these elements will increase customer and foot traffic to bars and restaurants, real estate experts say. The 500 block was expected to receive a major boost with the opening of a theater at 522 Clematis St., but plans for the theater fell apart late last year. The property now is for lease or for sale, said **Cook of Rebel Cook Real Estate** in Palm Beach Gardens. The

522 Clematis St. building has been on the market for just a few days, but Cook said she's already fielding calls from tenants interested in the 6,400-square-foot space.

Meanwhile, those not familiar with Boca's Kapow! will be treated to the unusual Asian fare and craft cocktails that have made the Mizner Park location so popular. Open five years, Kapow! is the highest-grossing restaurant per square foot at the dining and shopping center, Frielich said. In West Palm Beach, Kapow!, in the former **Longboards** restaurant, is a more roomy 3,000 square feet. But it will have the same big bar and booth vibe. Kapow! is next to another Mayo venture, Hullabaloo Italian gastropub at 517 Clematis St. It's also across from another Mayo concept, Subculture Coffee, which is expanding its 509 Clematis St. location, set to be ready any day now. The restaurant business has never been easy, of course, but Frielich points to a factor making it harder than ever: Rising rents. Frielich said high rents were a factor in the closing of **Tryst**, their gastropub in downtown Delray Beach. (A new concept with a tiki-bar theme and Key West vibe is in the works for Delray Beach, Frielich said.) Rents in Delray Beach have hit the ceiling, in some cases the \$100 per square foot mark.

But compared to Miami Beach, where the company has had a Lost Weekend for 20 years, turnover in downtown Delray Beach and West Palm Beach is nothing, Frielich said. Frielich said he can't even remember the names of all the restaurants next to Lost Weekend's Espanola Way location in Miami Beach.

Richard Lackey, a Palm Beach Gardens restaurant broker, said landlords buying properties at inflated prices seek tenants whom they think can afford big rents. But landlords don't consider whether those big rents are sustainable, and thus incur added expenses when the tenants fail and the space must be re-leased.

However, the new eateries in the 500 block of Clematis Street have an edge: Mayo owns the Lost Weekend and Hullabaloo/Kapow! buildings, and thus he controls the overhead and the rent.