

Cowley's Expansion Plans May Take Shape This Spring

By MARISSA THOMPSON
Northwest Gazette

The three brothers who own Cowley's, an Irish pub on Grand River Avenue, may expect a lot more green in their future, and not just because their establishment is decorated for St. Patrick's Day.

Shamrocks aside, the Cowley brothers may be seeing more green in the form of increased revenues, if their plan to expand their pub is approved by the Farmington Planning Commission this spring.

"We plan to double in size from 2300 square feet to 4600," explained Patrick Cowley, the youngest of the three brothers. "We have done some redecorating in the past, but it has been the same size since we opened."

The additional space will help Cowley's accommodate those who already pack the Pub each weekend.

"On weekends, we already have enough people to fill the additional space," Patrick said. "It would be great if we could fill both upstairs and down, wall to wall, but realistically, that probably won't happen. But I'm sure we'll have additional people (with the expansion)."

Drawing larger crowds is great for business, however it adds to the parking concerns already present in downtown Farmington.

"Everybody on this block knows that parking has always

been an issue," Patrick explained. "The city has talked about doing some traffic structures ... the parking needs to be expanded for the whole area downtown. That would attract more businesses to come down here."

About six months ago, when the Commission first met with Cowley's to discuss its expansion plans, the Commission seemed open to the Pub's expansion, but it also asked Cowley's to develop potential solutions to the increasing parking problem.

"The preliminary discussions (with the Commission) have been favorable," Patrick said. "We have to work out parking issues, but it does look favorable."

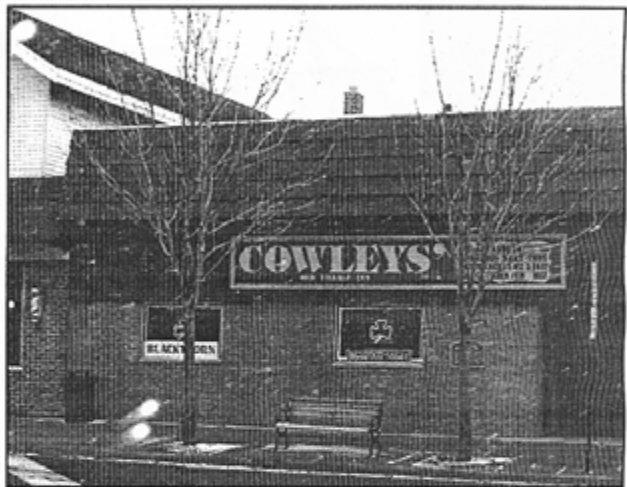
One of the Pub's ideas is to

"...the parking needs to be expanded for the whole area downtown. That would attract more businesses to come down here."

*-Patrick Cowley
Co-Owner of Cowley's Irish Pub*

offer valet services to its guests.

"We are going to offer valet parking," Patrick said. "We've got some preliminary spots in mind for the cars to be shuttled



to."

According to Patrick, this expansion and renovation project will cost anywhere from \$750,000 to \$2 million, depending on how many details are approved and completed. However, he said, this expense will not be passed onto the Pub's patrons.

"It won't be reflected in the prices," he said. "Hopefully, we'll just increase business."

Based on past performance, that shouldn't be a problem.

Established by John and Marie Cowley, the Pub has been open since 1972. Since then, Patrick and his brothers Greg and Mike have assumed responsibility for the business.

According to Patrick, Cowley's popularity over the years has been constant, evident by the crowds that continue to come every weekend.

"We've done a good business and stayed in business," he said. "We love Farmington. We think it's a great area, and we think our concept goes very well here. We're pretty widely known as one of the best Irish places around. It's only natural to spend a little money and make it look better."

Patrick said the new look of the Pub will be patterned after Old World Irish Pubs, which

showcase imported Irish knick knacks and use a lot of wood, metal and stone in the building of their structures.

The main floor will be separated into various areas.

Some of the sections will include a dart area, a bar area, an elevated dining area near the front windows, and snugs-secluded booths that can seat up to 12 people.

The second floor, which would make the Cowley's building about the same height as its neighbor, The Civic Theater, is where the live bands will perform.

"Upstairs, it will be a more wide open atmosphere," Patrick said. "We will have music up there, some seating with tables and chairs, but mainly wide open, like a small concert setting."

If the expansion project is approved, and renovation begins in late summer as planned, patrons of Cowley's can also expect to see more menu options and increased hours of operation.

"With the new concept, we would serve more food," Patrick explained. "We would expand the kitchen and the menu and serve more dinners. We will be open on Sundays, and the atmosphere will be a lot better for eating. It will be a nice setting."

The increased square footage and hours of operation will also mean more employment opportunities. "We are expecting to at least double the staff," Patrick said.

Patrick feels that Cowley's success is a result of its friendly atmosphere and live music.

"Over in Ireland, the pubs are the social place for everybody to go, so we have an atmosphere that is friendly and a lot of people talking, sporting events, things like that."

Continuing, he said, "We're still one of the only places that has live music. The bands are generally local and mainly Irish, but we do put in a couple of local bands that play oldies rock and roll, because they generate a good crowd."

Cowley's is located at 33338 Grand River Avenue in Farmington. Its current hours of operation are Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 a.m.