

## PRECIOUS RESTORATION

### Vibrant urban village emerging from structure that originated in 1894

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There is no more distinctive a structure on the downtown skyline than the Pearl Brewery.

Split from downtown by a highway that intruded on its view over a half-century after it opened, the palatial Gothic towers look more suited to an Austrian mountaintop.

Stretching from Broadway to the San Antonio River, the 22-acre, mostly vacant complex ceased operation in 2001. But it is by no means forgotten.

The San Antonio-based Silver Ventures development firm is painstakingly restoring the complex.

The latest grand opening — Tuesday's inaugural class of the Center for Foods of the Americas — took place opposite the din of men on scaffolding who were restoring the Pearl Stable. While students embarked on culinary careers, tradesmen placed patio block, painted, cut pipe thread and did all the other chores needed to rebuild the 112-year-old draft horse stable. It will find new life when it reopens May 25 as an event hall.

"We're booking it left and right, right now," said Nancy Battram of CE Group, the agency marketing the oval-shaped hall. "We are already booking into 2007."

Old-timers who recall the stable as the Jersey Lilly bar are thrilled with Silver Ventures' concept, said Janet Holliday, co-founder of CE Group. It helps the facility compete with other event halls by offering a full commercial kitchen and easy loading access for caterers. There's state-of-the-art theatrical lighting and sound, a museum



GLORIA FERNIZ/EXPRESS-NEWS STAFF

Workers install a courtyard in front of the new Center for Foods of the Americas as part of rebuilding the historic Pearl Brewery.

section featuring the brewery's history, and even a Web site: [pearlstable.com](http://pearlstable.com).

"The opening week will be reflective of every kind of event Pearl Stable can handle — a bride's reception, business breakfast and luncheon, a graduation," Holliday said.

The 5,525-square-foot main assembly hall leads back to an 1,800-square-foot reception area. Beyond that will be a 12,000-square-foot courtyard featuring a 55-foot-long limestone waterway and a permanently placed locomotive on a section of rail that once hauled products for brewing and bottling.

Pearl Stable is amid creative chaos,

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DELICIA LOPEZ/EXPRESS-NEWS STAFF

New windows manage to maintain an old look on the 112-year-old draft horse stable under renovation.

# Simple materials, sensible design at Pearl

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within sight of the ruin of the Bottling House that burned to the ground in September 2004 and under the shadow of the five-story Gothic towers.

“But the stories are 24 feet tall, so it is almost the equivalent of a 10-story building,” said Bill Shown, the developer’s managing director. “Imagine what the skyline looked like in 1894 when it was built.”

Someday, people will live on the upper floors. There could be up to 700 rental and condominium units.

Housing, an event hall, schools — besides the culinary school, the Aveda Institute beauty school is operating there — and eventually retail and office spaces all are part of a concept for a vibrant urban village.

“We use the term ‘village’ very seriously,” Shown said. “We want to create a strong sense of community, where residents know the shopkeepers, and may have an office at ground level. We want some other educational institutions, then everything else that it would take to have a village: restaurants, shops, studios, a strong arts focus.”

The scale of the project is so leviathan that much of it is still just blueprints and ideas. Including the event hall and the Texas Farm to Table Cafe, all projects done to date total 46,000 square feet out of a dreamscape of 1 million square feet. Completion is about 10 years away.

A concept as broad and culturally promising as this requires intricate planning and the deep pockets that allow for patient execution. Silver Ventures gets that from its owner, billionaire Kit Goldsbury, the man who sold



DELICIA LOPEZ/EXPRESS-NEWS STAFF

The old stable will find new life when it reopens in May as an event hall. Booked for the opening week are a bride’s reception, a business breakfast and luncheon, and a graduation.



GLORIA FERNIZ/EXPRESS-NEWS STAFF

A courtyard featuring a 55-foot-long limestone waterway is being constructed in back of the Pearl Stable.

Pace Foods to Campbell Soup. Goldsbury also is an investor in the Westin Riverwalk and the Hotel Contessa. To reach its potential, the makeover will involve a confluence of events, some out of the developer’s control. The city, for example, is being relied on to



DELICIA LOPEZ/EXPRESS-NEWS STAFF

The Center for Foods of the Americas culinary school opened Tuesday on the Pearl Brewery campus. opening week are a bride’s reception, a business breakfast and luncheon, and a graduation.

bring a River Walk extension.

Some deals require the faith of others who share in the vision. For the culinary school to start with such promise required the presti-

gious Culinary Institute of America in upstate New York to branch out in a way it had never done.

“The CIA was intrigued by Silver Venture’s vision,” said Mark Erickson, the institute’s vice president of continuing education.

A team of San Antonio architectural firms is onboard. Lake/Flato Architects is doing the master plan. Ford, Powell & Carson Inc. is shepherding the historical renovations.

Two other firms are on smaller projects. There have been setbacks, most notably the fire at the Bottling House.

“That building was built in 1897,” Shown said. “We intend to rebuild as much of the original as we can.”

But not without chaos.

“It’s an incredible challenge,” Shown conceded. “But it is also some of the most marvelous building inventory that you will ever see.”