

House of Bedlam development back on track

by Brianna Bailey

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A rendering of the proposed House of Bedlam boutique and cafe. (Courtesy Photo)

OKLAHOMA CITY – House of Bedlam owner Chris Johnson plans to move ahead with an aggressive construction timeline for his new retail development on the Bricktown Canal after overcoming several designs hurdles for the project.

The city's Bricktown Urban Design Committee on Wednesday approved plans for the two brick buildings on the Bricktown Canal and an adjoining parking lot after months of qualms from committee members over everything from landscaping to window design.

"It's been aggravating at times, but the project has gotten better because of this – that's the silver lining," Johnson said.

Johnson plans to break ground on the project within the next few months and

wants to have his new sports memorabilia boutique and cafe on the Bricktown Canal open in time for summer 2012. He anticipates the new development will cost about \$5.5 million to build.

The development, which includes 30,000 square feet of new retail space on the canal, came before the committee four times over a period of seven months. It was revised several times before winning approval this week.

The latest plan for the development includes new arched brick design features around some of the windows, decorative exterior light fixtures and four-foot-tall planter boxes topped with three-foot-tall hedges to hide the parking lot from view along the canal.

The entire project will consist of a three-story, canal-level brick building that would house the House of Bedlam boutique and cafe across from the Bricktown Ballpark on Mickey Mantle Drive, a parking structure to the west, and an additional 20,000 square feet of retail space at canal level. A pedestrian bridge spanning the canal would link the two buildings.

Members of the Bricktown Urban Design Committee had voiced opposition to using what they considered prime real estate along the canal as a parking lot. Many have hoped over the years to see the land developed as condominiums or a hotel.

Johnson responded by adding more retail space to the development along the canal that he plans to either lease out or develop as some sort of family-oriented entertainment business. Additional floors can be added to the parking lot structure that can eventually house more retail space or housing when the project becomes more economically viable, he said.

"I have had a lot of objections to this being a parking lot, but that has been diminished by the attention to detail that you have provided here," committee member Bob Bright said at Wednesday's meeting before moving to vote for approval of the project.