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TAMPA BAY Business Journal

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Crislip Arcade set to reopen as creative industries vortex

Tampa Bay Business Journal - by [Robert Yaniz Jr.](#), Editorial Assistant

ST. PETERSBURG — In late 2008, a collection of businesses along Central Avenue united in an effort to revitalize the historic Crislip Arcade at 641 Central Ave.

Now, the 1920s-style mall and the surrounding block are due for a grand re-opening.

“We didn’t think this would happen two years ago,” said Jeff Zampino, creative director at **Pinstripe Marketing**, which is handling the block’s marketing efforts. “It just shows that when a bunch of people get together what you can accomplish.”

Pinstripe moved its office onto Central in December 2007 and was one of the driving forces behind the online petition that first got the attention of Tom Gaffney, head of **Oldsmar Land Holding Corp.** and owner of the Crislip.

Even then, Gaffney was indecisive on what he wanted to do with the property, said Zampino. However, once the community organized 70 volunteers for its Clean Up Crislip event in July 2009, he began to take action.

Manageable rents

Gaffney even paid an undisclosed sum for the property’s restoration and brought rental rates down to about \$8 a square foot, said City Council Chair Leslie Curran. In addition, a yard sale of the items left behind in Crislip yielded \$2,000 in funding, which will go into its marketing.

“This is a great example of how you can rehab what you have and improve a downtown area without being cookie-cutter,” said Curran, who also owns **Interior Motives** on Central. “You just have to have the creative vision that can carry it through.”

Crislip, which features 10 interior spaces, was originally intended for local artists. Its current tenancy has broadened to include other modes of creative expression, including graphic designers and glass arts, Curran said.

One such tenant is Sara Stonecipher, owner of Misred Outfitters at 615 Central Ave. The store, which buys, sells and trades women’s clothing, opened in late February.

“I grew up in St. Pete,” she said. “So I knew how great Crislip used to be. You’re right on the cusp of downtown but without downtown prices.”

Stonecipher was in search of the right space for her store when the time came for companies to vie for space at Crislip. She signed the lease on Dec. 31.

“Any time you can be involved in a project where you’re one of 20 businesses opening at the same time, it’s good for everybody,” Stonecipher said.

The 600 Block

Stonecipher also assists in organizing events and meetings for the 600 Block, as the media has dubbed the area, she said. The name will be used in branding, including a new logo and the 600 Block’s upcoming Web site.

“I really wanted to be a part of the community, and this is a better way to do that,” Stonecipher said.

Renovations at the Crislip, which include the installation of a 15-foot wrought-iron gate, are

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expected to be complete by the end of March, Zampino said. A ribbon cutting event is scheduled for April 6, and St. Petersburg Mayor Bill Foster is expected to attend.

Other potential plans include a block party in mid-to-late April and monthly gallery walks.

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