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From the Baltimore Business Journal:

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Mobtown Ballroom operators will revive the storied Marble Bar as a bar, diner

May 17, 2019, 11:56am EDT

Baltimore's iconic Marble Bar — a rock club that hosted acts like Iggy Pop, R.E.M. and the Dead Kennedys in the 1970s and 80s — will start a new chapter later this year as a bar and diner.

Sarah Sullivan and Michael Seguin, the operators of Pigtown's Mobtown Ballroom, plan to renovate the dank basement space at 306 W. Franklin St. in the Congress Apartments building and reopen it to the public in the fall.

They'll be keeping the Marble Bar name as well as the venue's most prominent feature, a 72-foot-long bar made of Italian marble, though their concept will take more inspiration from the room's original life as a rathskellar than from the 1980s punk scene.

Sullivan said the space will be loosely modeled off of a European street cafe, with books and newspapers to read and plenty of nooks and seating inviting guests to settle in. The diner will serve breakfast, paninis, salads and sandwiches alongside an in-depth coffee selection by day, and will offer dinner, bar food and an extensive cocktail list at night.

It will also have long hours, part of Sullivan and Seguin's plan to turn the space into a community hangout near Mount Vernon. They hope to keep Marble Bar open seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 2 a.m., though hours in the business' early days could be more limited.

While the space won't be hosting Iggy Pop, Sullivan said performances by jazz trios and other smaller-scale acts are likely.

"We want it to be consistent, in that any entertainment adds to what you're doing there instead of taking away," she said.

The duo also plan to restore other pieces of the bar's history, such as the intricate crown molding along its ceiling. Before it was a club, the space was a German-style bar for guests of the Hotel Kernan (later renamed the Congress Hotel) as well as two attached theaters, the Auditorium and the Maryland. The hotel drew stars like Charlie Chaplin, Will Rogers and Eddie Cantor, according to Baltimore Heritage.

While the new Marble Bar will take its aesthetic cues from that early 20th century era, Sullivan said she's also thinking of ways to honor its punk-rock history.

"We want to build off of what's there," she said. "We want to make sure that it feels old because it actually is old."



AMANDA YEAGER

Plans for the Marble Bar's revival come amid a wave of new activity on Baltimore's west side. Zahlco Development, which owns the bar space, recently invested \$1 million into refreshing the Congress Apartments upstairs, and also has plans to convert the nearby Mayfair Theatre into a pedestrian-friendly mixed-use concept.

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