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Felicita's gets a quarter-million-dollar facelift

by Deena Kinarthy

The total costs of the Felicita's Pub renovations were revealed this month, and the first major changes to the campus pub in 10 years are receiving mixed reviews from students and staff.

It's a project that has cost the students of UVic a significant chunk of change. The budget estimated construction and design fees at \$271,600. New LCD flat screen and widescreen plasma TVs cost \$18,692 and sound and lighting equipment was about \$2,812. The total price of the pub's transformation was \$297,154.

Renovation work took place over the summer and finished just before school began.

CHF Contracting and Island Flooring worked under a tight deadline and over the long weekend to finish their job on time.

"It was in need of a change ... more and more people are using it, and so we wanted to give them something back by investing in it," said Mark Chandler, University of Victoria Students' Society (UVSS) director of services. The idea of upgrading the pub had floated around for years but was finally voted into action by the UVSS board of directors at a committee meeting last spring.

Developed by Warner James Architects and designer Fran Willis, the changes to the pub aimed to create a brighter, more welcoming atmosphere, a better spatial flow and included upgrades and increased electrical capabilities.

The project drew on funds from student fees, using the Major Capital Fund, which is available for such renovation projects.

"Since the whole scandal with Vertigo ... there was basically a freeze on the major expenditures, but that fund has been able to grow," said Dale Robertson, manager of UVSS Business Operations. "That [fund] has been basically untouchable for the last four or five years. It is in a very healthy position."

The UVSS has used the money to redesign the pub's entire layout, including the seating, bar and



Photo courtesy of Mark Chandler
Felicita's during its 270,000 dollar renovation.

entertainment areas. They have added permanent booths and cushioned chairs, a new bar with three service stations, a raised stage for bands and performers, and state-of-the-art sound equipment. Along with the new televisions, there's also a small dance floor, a new pool table, a bright red and turquoise colour scheme and new carpets.

Many students are unsure whether it was worth the money, saying the pub basically looks the same as before. Others were excited about the changes. Still, some students said they think the UVSS should have invested the money in Vertigo, a nightclub in the SUB that has long been under-used. Second-year student Laura Pawe was among those who really wanted to see Vertigo improved.

"[The money] could have been better used," said Pawe. "They should have knocked down the wall between Felicita's and Vertigo ... they should have expanded it."

But Robertson said student attendance at the pub this September is at an all-time high. September is typically a time of year that is much slower for Felicita's, but lunch business in the first week has already improved.

The renovation has created new jobs, according to Robertson. This year they have hired a new bar manager, an extra bartender and two new servers. With three bars, service is also 33 per cent faster than before, Robertson said. The pub capacity remains the same.

But even detractors think the new set-up is better. "You don't have to wait as long at the bar," said Pawe.

From a security perspective, Marcel, the bouncer, concedes that the increase in student attendance may make his job a little harder but as far as he's concerned, "it's beautiful."

One of Felicita's old big-screen televisions will be given away at the pub's official grand opening on Sept. 30.