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North Park bar makes peace with neighbors

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NORTH PARK — A neighborhood dispute between a bar and surrounding residents in North Park appears to be settled after representatives from each of the parties agreed to mediation.

The owners of the Bluefoot Bar and Lounge, at the corner of 30th and Upas streets, have been battling with a group of residents that live near the pub for more than a year. In March, the bar overcame opposition to get its weekend late-night permit extended for two years, but that was less than the five-year term it had been seeking.

Shortly after the permit was extended, Councilman Todd Gloria's office requested mediation from the National Conflict Resolution Center. After several sessions, Bluefoot agreed to install better noise suppression features and step up security near the bar.

"The mediation process was good," said Gerald Montoya, the area's neighborhood watch captain. "It seems to have made these bar owners more aware of what they're responsible for."

Last December, the city's Development Services Department approved a five-year extension of the bar's late-night permit. On appeal, the Planning Commission reduced the length to two years, a decision that riled both the bar's owners — Adam Cook and Cuong Nguyen — and a group of neighbors.

Under the terms of the current permit, the bar is allowed to remain open until 2 a.m. on Friday and Saturday nights and until midnight Sundays through Thursdays. It also has an outdoor patio area where all drinking must cease at midnight on weekends and 10 p.m. during the week.

Smokers can use the patio as long as the bar is open.

Residents fighting the late-night permit claimed the bar was responsible for noise, litter and extra traffic and wanted it to close by midnight on Fridays and Saturdays. Cook, who lives in the neighborhood, has said those hours would have effectively put the bar out of business.

The Bluefoot Bar and Lounge opened April 1, 2006. A tavern has been located on that street corner since 1935.

For now, at least, the changes seem to have neighbors satisfied. Montoya said he is cautiously optimistic and, if everything stays as is, would no longer push to have the bar's late-night hours restricted in the future.

"I would like the hours to remain what they are now, and I'm pretty sure that's how the neighborhood feels," he said. "Time will tell. We'll see what happens over the next 12 to 13 months. I'll continue to work with Adam. He lives in the neighborhood as well."

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