

The Newport Daily News

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Wednesday
February 14, 2018

Star turn



Dave Hansen | Staff photographer

Owner Amanda Roderick has transformed the former Star Bar above Starbucks on Thames Street in Newport into Queen Anne's Loft, a venue to host small weddings, rehearsal dinners, cocktail parties or any other type of gathering.

Events venue to open at former Star Bar on Thames Street

By Sean Flynn
Staff writer

NEWPORT — The former Star Bar on the third floor of the Starbucks building at 212 Thames Street has been totally transformed by a member of the extended Kilroy family that has such deep roots in the city's hospitality industry.

The new Queen Anne's Loft, owned by Amanda Roderick, is a setting for small weddings, rehearsal dinners, cocktail parties or any other type of gathering.

"What sets us apart is that we are catering to smaller groups in a completely private space in the center of downtown overlooking Queen Anne Square," she said.

Roderick has been the events

coordinator at The Landing restaurant at Bowen's Wharf for the past eight years.

"I wanted to branch off and start my own business," she said.

"At the Landing, we were constantly sending people away because the calendar was full," she said. "I saw firsthand the demand for weddings, corporate and other private events. The city needed another space."

This side of the hospitality business has significantly expanded in the past few years, she said.

The hospitality and restaurant business in Newport is part of her family's heritage.

Her grandparents are David and Bonnie Kilroy, who have owned and operated The Landing for more

than 40 years and more recently the Lobster Bar in the restored Aquidneck Lobster Co. building next door.

Her father, Al Roderick, is a chef for The Landing and her mother, Kerrie (Kilroy) Roderick, is a server there.

"I grew up working in The Landing," she said.

"Everyone in my family works there," said Roderick, who has two brothers and two sisters.

David and Bonnie Kilroy have seven children, including restaurant entrepreneur Patrick Kilroy, so when the extended family is included the Kilroy family also owns One Pelham East, Zelda's restaurant on lower Thames Street and the Surf Club in Perry Mill.

Patrick Kilroy also is co-owner

of the Midtown Oyster Bar on lower Thames and the now-dormant Rhumblin Restaurant on Bridge Street.

Roderick is renting the space for her Queen Anne's Loft from David Kilroy Jr., another uncle.

"I always wanted to stay in Newport and work in the hospitality industry," she said.

Roderick grew up in the Fifth Ward neighborhood and went to Underwood Elementary School, Thompson Middle School and Portsmouth Abbey School, where she graduated in 2006. She graduated from Endicott College in Beverly, Massachusetts, where she studied hospitality and event management.

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Middletown

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plan publicly. The proposal is expected to be brought to the council at its Monday, March 5, meeting at 7 p.m. at Town Hall.

Should the concept win approval from the council, the proposal then would need to be approved first by the state, and later by Middletown voters in November.

Under the plan, taxes would be boosted by adjusting the tax rate. According to proponents, what makes the proposed system different is it would eliminate the reliance on market values determining how much a property owner would pay in taxes.

The proposal would limit the maximum annual tax increase in Middletown to 2 percent; anything more would have to be approved by Middletown voters.

"We want to normalize the tax system so every third year (during property revaluation season), there's not a huge spike for some people," Heaney said. "The last two assessments more than prove our point. Most people don't realize that the way it is now, 35 percent of households paid for almost 100 percent of the tax increase, meaning 64, 65 percent paid the same or less. Is that really the fair way to do this? We don't think so. My point is it's only gotten worse, something we're definitely going to see with this revaluation.

Anticipating questions from critics, they said the proposal is not a scheme to let wealthier property owners off the hook at the expense of others.

"Right now, someone could build a \$1 million house across the street from you and that increases your taxes now, and

could force you out," Turano said. "Our scenario helps people stay and enjoy their homes."

As for the term "major renovations," that would be defined as projects that expand the footprint of a building or add more than \$100,000 in total value. The same standards would apply to residential and commercial properties, they said. The starting baseline would be either the 2016 or new 2018 property assessment, they said.

When a house or business property sold, that's when the current revaluation would go into effect and set the new base assessment rate.

As part of the process, the subcommittee also talked about sending out a new itemized tax bill that would better explain how money is allocated, whether it is for emergency services, water, schools or other expenses.

"I can't tell you the number of times people have come up to me and said, 'Hey Dennis, I thought (the council) balanced the budget, so why are my taxes going up?'" Turano said.

"We're getting to the point where I'm hearing, we're all hearing, that the taxes are going up to the point where people have to move just because Middletown is a desirable community. It shouldn't be that way, and we want to try to change that without costing the town a dime."

"What we're doing with this is treating everyone equally," Viveiros added. "When you have a revaluation system that's redistributing money from some property owners, it's not right. This way, everybody gets the same thing. It's not zero for some and 15 percent for others. The way we're doing it now isn't fair."

Sheley@NewportRI.com



Dave Hansen | Staff photographer

Queen Anne's Loft owner Amanda Roderick said Tuesday that the first event at the venue in Newport will take place on March 3.

Venue

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"It's a totally different look," Roderick said of her new meeting space. "The Star Bar was a dark bar."

The room now is filled with light from the new three full-length glass doors on the west wall that overlook Thames Street, the increased number of windows, the off-white walls and the mirrors.

There is a golden chandelier above the room.

"I picked out the chandelier before we did the demo," she said. "It has an organic feel with the golden branches. It's a statement piece that stands out and goes with most events."

The room has a bar with a glass tile front and an electric fireplace. There is a projector, screen, sound system and wireless microphones for special events.

"I've been meeting with all the planners and have been getting a great response," she said.

The space was designed by Jeff Moniz and Melissa Breen of 2Hands Studio, Newport. Paul Ripa of PRR Construction of Portsmouth was the contractor who handled both the demolition and construction,

which began in January 2017.

Roderick received the certificate of occupancy and permits just last month, so it was a yearlong project.

There is space for 120 people if it is a cocktail party. The capacity for seated dinners would be about 90 people, she said.

Roderick has the whole third floor for event space in the Victorian building constructed in 1870, and half of the second floor where there is a full commercial kitchen. The other half of the second floor is the mezzanine of the Starbucks cafe.

"I don't have a chef yet, but I'll have the staff from The Landing," she said. "They are really good."

Bookings and information can be requested by email at events@queenannesloft.com or by calling 524-0286.

People can check out the space, menus, prices and booking form at the website, queenannesloft.com There are choices such as three-course dinners, luncheons, breakfasts, stations and hors d'oeuvres. There is no room rental fee and the tables and chairs come with the room.

The first event for Queen Anne's Loft will take place on March 3 and Roderick has 10 other events scheduled so far.

Flynn@NewportRI.com