This historic warehouse building on Seventh Street, which now houses Slumberland furniture, may open as a bar sometime next summer. Slumberland and Larkin & Jones Appliance Co., also a downtown business, will move to a building near Rushmore Mall.

Longtime downtown merchant will move stores to mall area

- Appliance, furniture retailers moving to new building on Maple Avenue; historic structure may become nightclub.

By Dan Daly
Journal Staff Writer

One of Rapid City’s oldest Main Street retailers is moving to the mall, sort of.

Larkin & Jones Appliance Co., 819 Main St., and its sister company, Slumberland, will move early next year to a new building now under construction at 3220 N. Maple Ave., just north of the Rushmore Mall.

“We’re going to miss being downtown. I’ve been down here since I was 16 years old,” said co-owner Dave Jones. He and his brother Steve Jones own both businesses.

The brothers recently sold the stately Slumberland building, 321 Seventh St., to the partners in the Firehouse Brewing Co. They plan to turn the building into a tavern, confirmed partner Bob Fuchs.

Jones said the Seventh Street building is no longer suited for Slumberland. The furniture store’s business has grown, he said, and Slumberland needs more space. In the furniture business, more display space means more sales. Also, the warehouse building’s space was on three different floors. Jones said a lot of customers, especially the older customers, did not want to climb the stairs.

The three-story Italianate warehouse building is one of downtown Rapid City’s historic gems. Constructed in 1891, it originally was home to Black Hills Mercantile, a wholesale grocer. It later served as a warehouse and railroad for the old Rapid City, Black Hills & Western Railroad, known as the First Crouch Line.

Three years ago, the Joneses did extensive restoration work to the building’s facade.

Fuchs said his group, which includes Pete Lien, Mark Polenz and Roger Hodson, had been working this spring to open a tavern named Phatty McGee’s across the street at 320 Seventh St.

“While we were trying to put that together, the Slumberland building came up for sale, and it would actually be a better fit for us,” Fuchs said.

Firehouse Brewing and the city of Rapid City are still working to resolve parking and other regulatory issues, Fuchs said. Until it is settled, Fuchs said, he doesn’t want to say much about the plans. He hopes to have the bar open sometime by early summer.

Meanwhile, Jones said the new Rapid City Slumberland/Larkin & Jones Appliance Co. will be a better fit for furniture sales. It will have 30,000 square feet of floor space, 20-foot ceilings, track lighting and good display area.

Slumberland is a chain of 65 Midwest furniture stores, and all but 16 of them are franchised to independent owners. Jones said Slumberland stores are suited to have an interchangeable furniture inventory. Someone in Rapid City could buy a chair for his parents in Aberdeen; the Rapid City Slumberland would make the sale, and the Aberdeen store would make the delivery.

He said a market study showed the Rushmore Mall area had the best retail traffic of all the places they researched. He is also banking on local government plans to turn Mall Drive into a four-lane road.

The Jones brothers had been leasing the Main Street building from their predecessors, “Lark” Larkin and Bob Jones, their father. Larkin & Jones kept the building through the years. Now, Larkin and his family bought out Jones’ share of the building and will offer it for lease. Larkin and Jones has been at that address since 1956, making it one of the oldest Main Street retailers in Rapid City.

“We have so many great neighbors like Bob and Lori Wessel at Bob’s Shoe Repair. I go over and drink pop with them every once in a while,” Jones said.