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business

## "Real World" exposure

With Denver the backdrop of the reality-TV show this fall, businesses hope to capitalize on the spotlight

By Julie Dunn,  
Denver Post Staff Writer



MTV will film the 18th season of its reality show The Real World in LoDo. The cast will be housed in the 1900 block of Market Street, which is reflected in the fender of a scooter parked across the street. (Post / Brian Brainer)

With "The Real World" set to start shooting this month in Denver's Lower Downtown, local businesses and tourism boosters are scrambling to get their piece of the reality-TV pie.

Owners of the building that will house the cast and crew have sold it, and other neighboring businesses are plying the show's production company with a wide variety of offers - from a complimentary wine tasting at Table 6 to free team-building classes at Cook Street School of Fine Cooking.

"We've received an enormous amount of interest from local businesses who want to participate in the show," said MTV production spokesman George Cabico.

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He declined to say which will be featured when the 24-episode reality series airs this fall.

The show films the daily lives of a houseful of young strangers who live together for the show's duration.

"Real World" representatives have met with several LoDo bars - including LoDo's Bar & Grill and The Tavern Downtown - to discuss shooting scenes there.

Participating bars must agree to limit their crowds on certain nights to ensure space for the seven-member cast and camera, sound and security crews. Two managers said they have been told that could total more than 40 people.

"That's one of the challenges - is it going to boost sales, or is it going to make it more difficult for us to do the same volume with all the cameras in people's faces?" asked George Mannion, managing partner of the LoDo Restaurant Group. "We're certainly going to do our best to accentuate the positive."

Representatives from Philadelphia, San Diego and Austin, Texas - three past "Real World" host cities - said it had minimal direct economic impact on their cities but called the show's media exposure "invaluable." The Austin Convention & Visitors Bureau estimates the show's promotional value was worth \$25 million.

"It certainly captured a lot of national attention and prompted interest in Austin," spokeswoman Cynthia Maddox said.

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The famed El Chapultepec Cantina is at the north end of the block where The Real World will be filmed. Businesses in other cities have benefited from the show. (Post / Brian Brainerd)

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eatery across the street from "The Real World" house in Philadelphia, said the show boosted its business by 5 percent.

"It helped out a little bit, but not like we were expecting," said Anastasia Vangelis, the owner's daughter. "But people do still come in here looking for the house."

In Denver, the cast will live at 1920 Market St., a 21,000-square-foot building that formerly housed B-52 Billiards. In March, Heritage Bank acquired the building, assessed at \$2.2 million, from B-52 Real Estate LLC in lieu of foreclosure, according to city documents. It changed hands again last month, about the time MTV announced it would film the 18th season of "Real World" in Denver.

Bill Mitchell of Heritage Bank wouldn't reveal the name of the buyer.

Mark Stewart, general manager of The Tavern Downtown at 1949 Market Street, said construction crews working to renovate the property are already helping to boost his food sales.

Several tourism and business organizations - including the Downtown Denver Partnership and the state's Office of Economic Development - hope to capitalize on the exposure.

"We've got to take advantage of this opportunity," said Richard Scharf, head of the Denver Metro Convention & Visitors Bureau, which also participated in the discussions. "This is what creates buzz, and good PR is worth a thousand ads."

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