

Hot commercial property: Midway Commons

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MIDWAY COMMONS

1461-91 University Av. W., St. Paul

Type: Retail redevelopment

Parcel size: 49,460 square feet

Owner: Kline Volvo Inc.

Cost: Approximately \$1.5 million

Architect: DJR Architecture Inc.

General Contractor: R.J. Ryan Construction Inc.

Details: The owner of a one-time auto dealership on University Avenue in St. Paul is moving ahead with a plan to renovate three buildings on the site, with one of them to become a new Culver's Restaurant.

The plans were approved last month by the St. Paul Planning Commission. Action had been delayed as the city carried out an extensive effort to rezone the Central Corridor light-rail route along University Avenue. The former Kline Volvo dealership site is right along the route, across from the Midway Center shopping area. The 49,460-square-foot

parcel is situated between Simpson and Pascal streets on the north side of University Avenue.

City officials say they're excited about the project because it will put several vacant buildings and empty lots into active use and could result in higher property values along the corridor.

Under the plans, one of the buildings, which currently houses a Spin Cycle laundromat, would be partially demolished and rehabbed into a 4,938-square-foot Culver's with a drive-through window.

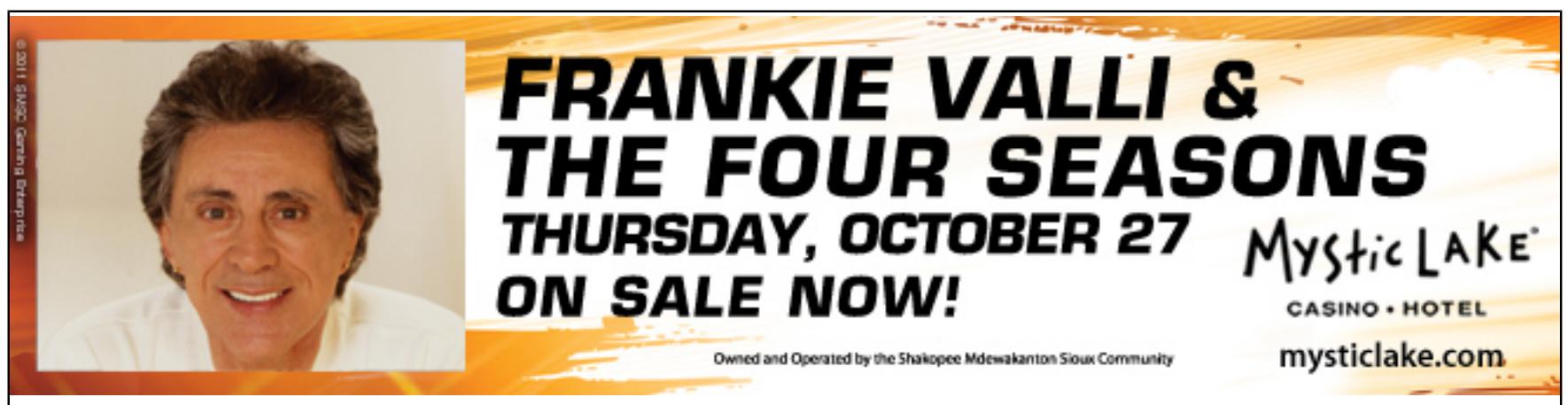
The other part of the project calls for a pair of mostly vacant buildings at the other end of the big lot to be partially torn down, with the remaining structures renovated into 10,091 square feet of new retail space.

The auto dealer moved from the site 17 years ago. Since then, the one-time University Avenue "auto row" on the north side of the street has lost its remaining new-car dealerships. The former lots are mostly vacant now and are being offered as transit-oriented redevelopment opportunities.

"We feel this project could act as a catalyst for more redevelopment along University Avenue," said Chad Blihovde of Java Properties, leasing agent for the property. "The Culver's drive-through will really make that corner go, and it fills a hole in the Twin Cities market for them."

The restaurant would be the second in St. Paul and one of only a few inner-city locations for the Sauk

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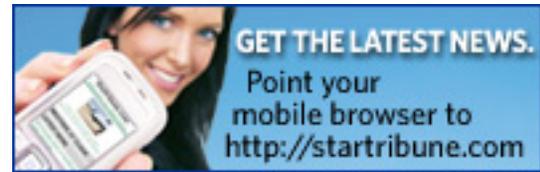
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City, Wis.-based Culver's chain, which boasts 439 restaurants in 19 states.

DON JACOBSON

Don Jacobson, a freelance writer based in St. Paul, can be contacted at hotproperty.startribune@gmail.com.



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