

Guest Article: Restaurant Space Reinvented

By MNCREW Member Stacy A. Woods, Mackall, Crouse & Moore, PLC

Stacy Woods represents several restaurant/bar owners, and discussed real estate aspects of their thriving restaurants with a few of them.



Q&A with Matt Lokowich, owner of The Bulldog Uptown and co-owner of The Bulldog N.E., along with Amy and Chris Rowland.

Does the presence of other nearby restaurants/bars help or hurt business at either The Bulldog N.E. or The Bulldog Uptown? Multiple establishments turn each area into more of a destination spot. As it turns out, The Bulldog N.E. has actually boosted our competitors' business. The N.E. location has developed so much recently, it has really helped the area turn into a nice corner. The Bulldog Uptown, another neighborhood bar on Lyndale Avenue, has been a good addition to the area.

Name some challenges you had in renovating The Bulldog Uptown, which was formerly The Mudpie Vegetarian Restaurant, and is located in a building constructed in 1910. We underestimated the expense and the time required to renovate and bring the space up to code. There was major renovation. For example, it was a challenge to get the handicap accessibility for the bathrooms — the measurements were so tight.

Was much renovation required at The Bulldog, N.E., which is located in a building built in 1891? While the prior tenant had performed substantial renovations, we installed a new tap system and coolers in the basement. At least the kitchen located in the basement already had a hood system.

Was liquor licensing difficult to obtain for either Bulldog? Despite having no off-street parking at The Bulldog Uptown, we still got a full liquor license, in part, because of the tremendous neighborhood support. I've lived in Minneapolis forever, which built the neighborhood trust level. I had an awesome liquor license consultant too, Laura Boyd, who knows all the ins and outs of the liquor licensing system.

The Bulldog Uptown: 2549 Lyndale Ave. S. Mpls.
The Bulldog N.E.: 401 E. Hennepin Ave. Mpls.
www.thebulldogmpls.com



About the Author

As a member of Mackall, Crouse & Moore, PLC, Stacy Woods offers a broad array of services relating to real estate and general business law. The law firm is celebrating its 90th year of serving Minnesota's real estate and corporate legal needs. The firm's historical strengths were built on its preeminence, success, and a reputation in real estate, banking, mining, manufacturing, and corporate law.

Q&A with Hector Ruiz and Erin Ungerman, owners of Indio, Café Ena and El Meson.

List the pros and cons of the locations of your three restaurants. **El Meson**, which opened in 2003, is a funky yet homey neighborhood restaurant. **Café Ena** is elegant and cozy, and in a nice residential neighborhood.

Indio, located in new commercial space with very tall ceilings in a high traffic area, has a more urban feel, and attracts a diverse crowd.



Were there any challenges in renovating Café Ena, which was formerly a convenience store? My (Erin's) grandparents, as newlyweds, shopped at the small grocery store, formerly located in the same space. We basically gutted the interior, installed new HVAC, plumbing, and windows, but left the original brickwork on the exterior and the beam running along the ceiling.

Did you do much in terms of renovating at Restaurant Indio, which was formerly a Pizza Nea? The space was only equipped with pizza ovens, so the kitchen build-out was substantial. We installed stove-tops, fryers, and a hood. We moved the bar and entrance, but otherwise did minimal work on the main space.

Is it three times as difficult to run three separate restaurants? Some days it is! In terms of ordering supplies, there are cost savings by ordering in bulk. Even though they're within in a few miles radius, it is tricky to split our time among them. Great staff is critical. It is a challenge to decide which restaurant we should be at on a Friday night. We have always had a strong owner presence and loyal customers, which has helped in our success.

Indio: 1221 W. Lake St. Mpls. www.restaurantindio.com
Café Ena: 4601 Grand Ave. S. Mpls. www.cafeena.com
El Meson: 3450 Lyndale Ave. S. Mpls. www.elmesonbistro.com