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Von Trier Eyes Reinvention Amidst Milwaukee's East Side Renaissance

Drawing from the location's century-old heritage, the historic bar vows to return to its upscale roots

Milwaukee, WI (August 15, 2017) –For nearly four decades, the corner of North Avenue and Farwell has been the home of Milwaukee's premiere German-centric bar, Von Trier. In early 2018, Von Trier will undergo major renovations to better serve the evolving East Side neighborhood and re-open as an upscale, classic cocktail lounge with a mid-century vibe.

Prior to 1978, when German-born Karl Lotharius first purchased the bar and transformed it into a German-inspired pub, the Von Trier location was home to Rieder's—a high-end, East Side institution which made North Avenue a Milwaukee drinking destination. Current Von Trier owners John and Cindy Sidoff, are looking to once again re-invent the legendary location with a nod to the bar's mid-century roots.

"The North Ave. neighborhood has been going through a period of change for the last five years," said John Sidoff. "While our original intent was to maintain Von Trier through retirement, the reality is, despite discussions with many Milwaukee bar/restaurant owners, there is little interest in taking over the bar and continuing the tradition."

Sidoff soon discovered that for his business to not just survive, but thrive, the bar needed to undergo a bold change, but not without paying homage to roots than run even deeper than the German-themed Von Trier.

"I have a deep connection to roots of North Ave and Milwaukee's east side, which is why I want to focus on re-inventing the bar by bringing it back to an upscale cocktail lounge concept, just like the one I spent time in during my formative years, said Sidoff. "This new evolution of the bar will better support the evolving clientele and businesses of the North Avenue district."

Mike Vitucci, East Side BID board member and owner of a number of downtown establishments, including the forthcoming East Side restaurant, Izzy Hops Swig and Nosh, also sees promise in the next generation of North Avenue residents and businesses.

"North Avenue is definitely going through a transition. Luxury apartments and more amenities are bringing in a new population looking for new experiences," Vitucci said. "They are spending more on their homes and are loving the area for its vibrancy, the theater and the proximity to Lake Michigan. I believe area businesses are already witnessing an upswing in foot traffic and sales."

Von Trier will remain open through the holiday season, showcasing its popular Christmas Village one last time. Before undergoing extensive renovations, Von Trier will host an online auction with Gerlach Auctions listing the bar's world-class collection of memorabilia, including authentic beer steins, one-of-a-kind wood carvings and the historic Colnik chandelier.

With major changes on the horizon, Sidoff remains optimistic about the bar's future and the resurgence of east North Avenue as one of the premier bar restaurant districts.

"I'm thankful for all of our dedicated patrons and for everyone who made Von Trier a truly special place. Cindy and I have tried to maintain Karl Lotharius' original concept for Von Trier during our tenure as owners, said Sidoff. "At the same time, the neighborhood is evolving in some exciting ways. I'm focused on writing the next chapter of this building's history and remain committed to maintaining a friendly atmosphere and serving outstanding drinks."

Details for the Von Trier auction as well as future renovation plans will be released this fall. For more information on the Von Trier auction, please visit www.vontriers.com.

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A longtime bar and restaurant staple on Milwaukee's East Side, Von Trier is a German establishment that serves a carefully curated list of European and local beers. Von Trier's interior is decorated with custom-made stained glass, wood carvings and antlers hailing from the German town of Trier, the former owner's hometown and bar's namesake.