

**Winnipeg Free Press - PRINT EDITION**

# Restaurant opening on Portage

## Mediterranean eatery replaces Chocolate Shop

By: **Murray McNeill**

Posted: **12/19/2011 1:00 AM** | Comments: **0 (including replies)**



WAYNE GLOWACKI / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS [Enlarge Image](#)

*Cousins Kelvin and Karen Peters plan a complete overhaul of the former Chocolate Shop site on Portage Avenue.*

Winnipeg's oldest operating restaurant may be toast, but there's already a new kid lined up to take its place.

Two local entrepreneurs -- Kelvin and Karen Peters -- have leased the former Chocolate Shop at 268 Portage Ave. and plan to open a Mediterranean-style bistro and lounge this spring.

Their new venture will be called Arkadash Bistro and Lounge. Kelvin Peters says "arkadash" is a Turkish

word for "friend," and they'll be offering a broad selection of Mediterranean dishes in both the restaurant and lounge.

He says they're thrilled to be getting one of the last few empty storefronts along that stretch of Portage. Like other parts of the downtown, the stretch has been taking on new life with the conversion of the north-side Avenue and Hample office buildings into an apartment/office complex, the recent opening of a jazz/blues club on the south side near Fort Street, and the pending opening of a yoga centre in the former Carleton Club building on Fort between Portage and Graham Avenue.

"I think we're riding a really good wave of construction in the downtown now," the 23-year-old said. "And everybody is pushing toward the same goal -- to have more people living and working downtown and really sprucing up the downtown's image."

He said being just a couple of blocks away from the office towers at Portage and Main bodes well for the catering service the restaurant will be offering. And the restaurant and lounge should benefit from being just a block away from the MTS Centre with its many concerts and Jets hockey games.

"We don't want to be a sports bar or anything... but that is definitely a market we've identified as one of our main targets," he said.

The two cousins realize they're stepping into some pretty big shoes. The Chocolate Shop was a downtown icon, having been in operation since 1918. It was even featured in Heritage Winnipeg's annual Doors Open tour.

For its first five or six decades, it was said to have been one of Portage Avenue's most popular restaurants. Although it remained a restaurant until the end, since 2006 the Patal Vocational School had also been using it as a training centre for aboriginal cooking students.

But a number of months ago, the Chocolate Shop quietly closed. A spokesman for Patal could not be reached to comment on the closing.

Although the Peters are aware of the Chocolate Shop's long history, they never had any thoughts of sticking with its traditional look and North American menu. Instead, they'll be spending between \$250,000 and \$300,000 on a complete overhaul of the 3,500-square-foot space.

And Karen, who will be the restaurant's head chef, spent more than a decade living and working in Europe, including Turkey and Spain.

"So she's bringing that first-hand experience onto the menu," he said.

Know of any newsworthy or interesting trends or developments in the local office, retail, or industrial real estate sectors? Let real estate reporter Murray McNeill know at the email address below, or at 697-7254.

**[murray.mcneill@freepress.mb.ca](mailto:murray.mcneill@freepress.mb.ca)**

Other developments in city's core area

NEECHI Foods Co-op hopes to launch an investment-share offering within the next few weeks and use the proceeds to kick-start its stalled Main Street redevelopment project.

Russ Rothney, the Neechi official managing the multimillion-dollar conversion of the former California Fruit Market and an adjoining building into a 31,000-square-foot retail/office complex, said the co-op

needs to raise more money before it can finish the project. Although for weeks there have been no visible signs of work at the Main and Euclid Avenue site, Rothney said the project is nearly 90 per cent complete.

He said Neechi officials would provide a more detailed update when they hold a news conference to launch the share offering. And that could come as early as next week, he said, adding they're just waiting for the provincial registrar of co-operatives to approve the offering.

"What I am comfortable with saying is that construction is temporarily on hold as we move towards launching the investment-share offering," he said. "And that we anticipate that full-scale production will resume again in January."

Rothney said last July that Neechi officials hoped to raise \$1.5 million from the sale of dividend-paying shares in the co-op. The money would be used to help cover cost overruns resulting from unforeseen problems with the project.

Those include having to replace water-damaged bricks on the front of one of the buildings, having to replace a rear annex after mould was found inside the walls, and having to remove an underground structure found buried beneath the parking lot.

Rothney said at that time the problems had added another \$1.5 million to the project's original \$5-million price tag.

A local electrical firm has filed a builder's lien against the property, claiming it is owed \$138,836.

-- -- --

ANOTHER new retail tenant has been added to the revamped underground Richardson Concourse at Portage and Main.

A 300-square-foot Loka Boutique clothing shop opened last week in the 22,000-square-foot mall, which recently received a top-to-bottom makeover as part of a three-phase, \$10-million redevelopment by owner James Richardson & Sons Ltd.

The project also involved extensive renovations to the former Bank of Canada office building at the south end of the concourse, and an expansion of the heated portion of its six-storey parkade on Lombard Avenue.

Shaun Rocan, local vice-president of leasing for Bentall Kennedy (Canada) LP, said half of the retail space in the concourse, or about nine of the 19 spots, remain vacant.

He said many prospective tenants were reluctant to commit until they saw the finished product, and the concourse work wasn't completed until late last summer. "We've probably got about five other deals on the go right now," he said.

The concourse shop is Loka's second in the city. It also has a larger one on Academy Road.

"We wanted something for our downtown clients," said owner Anita Sharma Turner.

-- -- --

THE first signs of Target Corp.'s eventual arrival in Winnipeg appeared last week at city hall when the U.S. retail giant filed an application to revamp the exterior of the Zellers store in Kildonan Place Shopping Centre.

The store is one of five Manitoba Zellers outlets -- four in Winnipeg and one in Brandon -- that will be

converted to Target stores between now and sometime in 2013.

The exterior alterations include replacing the Zellers sign with a Target sign and the U.S. retail giant's familiar red bull's-eye, erecting a new concrete feature wall on the south side of the store, adding a new front entrance and a new canopy, and installing aluminum and stone exterior cladding.

**Find this article at:**

<http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/business/restaurant-opening-on-portage-135845403.html>

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.