

Winnipeg Free Press - PRINT EDITION

Industry giants and local outfits already vying for Papa George's location

By: **Geoff Kirbyson**

Posted: 1:00 AM | Comments: 0 (including replies)g



JOE BRYKSA / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS [Enlarge Image](#)

Papa George's intersection sees some of the highest vehicle and foot traffic in the city.

After Papa George's closes its doors in October, the restaurant's high-profile location won't be dark for long if initial interest is any indication.

Multinational and local restaurateurs and are already kicking the tires of the 3,000-square-foot space in

the heart of Osborne Village.



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Crews demolish the old Movie Village building on Osborne Monday. (BORIS MINKEVICH / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS)

"We've had extreme interest in the site," said Graeme Rowswell, the broker handling the property.

The intersection of Osborne Street and River Avenue is one of the city's busiest for both vehicles and pedestrians alike, so Rowswell said he isn't surprised by the interest.

"This is very definitely a significant (space). The advertising potential of that corner is magnificent. It's a unique area," he said.

Teresa Sanderson, interim executive director of the Osborne Village Business Improvement Zone agreed.

"You're getting so much recognition and almost free advertising with your signage with the amount of traffic that goes by the village. (Papa George's) would get as much recognition as the MLCC store across the street and more than the Safeway store," she said.

One problem with the Papa George's site, she added, is the lack of parking in the immediate vicinity.

There is no timeline for a new tenant to be signed or when that tenant might take occupancy.

Some of the parties rumoured to be interested include McDonald's and Tim Hortons. Representatives from both industry giants were not available for comment Monday.

One that has confirmed its aspirations is Salisbury House. Earl Barish, president and CEO of the Winnipeg-based institution, said it would love to take up residence in Osborne Village. He said he believes "Sals" -- which would open a 24-hour location there should it be the successful applicant -- would be the best fit.

"We have our history in the city and that's a very historic location. It lends itself to a restaurant where you can come in 24 hours a day and sit and chat. That's the nature of the people who live in that area," he said.

"People who live in Osborne Village are very concerned about what happens in the area, whether it's condos, a church, Safeway or Shoppers Drug Mart."

Moving into the space, however, wouldn't be possible until after a six-figure renovation, Barish said. The building is "old and rundown" and little of it is up to code, he said.

"It would take a complete interior renovation plus an exterior one for it to work," he said.

Nick Kontzamanis, the owner of Papa George's, an Osborne Village mainstay since 1977, recently decided to retire and close the restaurant.

geoff.kirbyson@freepress.mb.ca

Movie Village fades to black...

ONE of Osborne Village's most recognizable buildings will soon be nothing more than a pile of rubble.

The demolition of the Movie Village location -- home to independent and hard-to-find movies since 1984 -- began Monday, as the multimillion-dollar expansion of Shoppers Drug Mart took another important step. Last week, the former home of Vi Ann Restaurant was bulldozed to facilitate the expansion, too.

Shoppers Drug Mart is planning to nearly double the size of its Osborne Village store and build an enclosed walkway to the nearby Safeway location.

Movie Village moved down the street into a sister retail outlet, Music Trader, earlier this summer.

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