

New Combine Restaurant Has Appetite for Troost Revival

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Alan Kneeland, operating owner of The Combine, is thrilled to be opening a restaurant not far from where he grew up on Troost.

By Kevin Collison

The Combine, a new restaurant opening at 30th and Troost late next month, is not only a joint business venture, but its owners envision it as a place to bring people together along Kansas City's longtime racial divide.

The restaurant in the historic [Wonder Shops + Flats](#) building is the latest investment along an eight-block stretch of Troost that includes the Wonder renovation, [hundreds of new apartments](#), a [hotel](#) and several other [historic renovation projects](#).

Just to see change come to the area and to be part of that change is satisfying to me," said Combine operating owner Alan Kneeland, who grew up at 75th and Troost.

"I worked up the restaurant industry from dishwasher to owner, and to be an owner on Troost is something I'm proud of. I want to combine both sides of Troost and make it a central location."

Kneeland is teaming with Jason Pryor of Pizza 51 and Jon Gerner of the Milwaukee Delicatessen Co. to open the restaurant and bar located in the Wonder building, once the regional bakery for Wonder Bread.



Wonder Shops + Lofts occupies the former Wonder Bread bakery at 30th and Troost. It's part of a growing revitalization trend along the street.

In fact, the new establishment plans to offer some Wonder Bread inspired dishes including grilled cheese sandwiches and BLTs, using the classic white bread slices with some added culinary twists.

Pryor and Gerner said [The Combine](#) is a direct outgrowth of their seven-year-old partnership at the Milwaukee Deli, a restaurant and bar at Ninth and Baltimore in the historic Cosby Hotel building.

The same deli sandwiches and pizza slices will be on the menu at Combine.

Pryor said he was drawn to the location because of the energy and revitalization occurring nearby, and Gerner quickly decided to join him with another combined food and beverage operation.

The partners began their renovation at the beginning of the year, but the Covid-19 pandemic slowed their plans.

"Throughout the pandemic, as discouraging as it was trying to open a restaurant, whenever I came back, I instantly became optimistic about opening in the area," Gerner said.

The new restaurant, which they hope to open in late September, will feature a menu of deli sandwiches, salads and pizza. The 3,700 square-foot space will include a fast-casual dining area and a semi-private dining room for meetings and other events.

The restaurant is near the offices of the Kansas City Public Schools as well as Operation Breakthrough. It also will be providing catering service to the rooftop event space at the Wonder building.



The new Combine is a direct outgrowth of the food partnership at Ninth and Baltimore forged by the Milwaukee Deli and Pizza 51 in 2013. (Photo from Milwaukee Deli website)

The partners were pleased their liquor license application received support from Operation Breakthrough as well as the Beacon Hill, Hyde Park and Longfellow neighborhood associations.

There will be 14 beers on tap, concentrating on local breweries, as well as a full bar. The hours are expected to be neighborhood friendly, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. seven days a week.

Kneeland and Pryor have known each other since Kneeland managed the now-closed Pizza 51 operation in Fairway. After that closing, he managed the Panera at Oak Park Mall.

His professional career has included being active in the Kansas City Restaurant Association. Kneeland is chair of the education committee, working to provide opportunities for high school students to gain culinary skills, and chairs the Prostar scholarship program.

"Jason knew I wanted to open a bar and decided to invite me to join him," Kneeland said. "I said this is perfect, the building and the concept."