

Vertical Endeavors, Blue Door pub, coming to 26th and Nicollet Avenue

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The former ice house, circa 1900s, is about 10,000 square feet and 65 feet tall. (Photo: Bill Klotz)

A Minneapolis real estate team is going to new heights to redevelop the languishing northwest retail corner of 26th and Nicollet Avenue.

Vertical Endeavors, a St. Paul-based operator of large, indoor rock-climbing facilities, plans to open shop by next summer in what will be the renovated former Cedar Lake Ice & Fuel Co. building, according to architect Dean Dovolis and real estate broker Mark Krogh.

Vertical Endeavors "is one of the top rock-climbing places in the nation," said Dovolis, a principal at Minneapolis-based DJR Architecture, which is involved in

redevelopment project for First & First LLC, which recently purchased Theatre de la Jeune Lune. The former ice house, circa 1900s, is about 10,000 square feet and 65 feet tall.

The so-called "Ice House Development" will also have a trendy burger joint called the Blue Door Pub and a retooled Azia restaurant as tenants. The Blue Door will be adjacent to Vertical Endeavors, occupying about 6,500 square feet, while the new Azia restaurant, in a separate building, will occupy about 5,700 square feet.

The multimillion-dollar redevelopment project will span two buildings and is also expected to include 13 apartments, a coffee shop, a property management firm, an internet company and another restaurant. The project will total about 41,000 square feet.

Krogh, a principal at Java Properties, expects Vertical Endeavors to be the star attraction at that corner in the Whittier neighborhood.

"This will be a destination" that will likely enable the 26th and Nicollet intersection to become "the next Uptown for Minneapolis," he said, referring to the trendy area centered at Lake and Hennepin in south Minneapolis.

Nate Postma, founder and president of Vertical Endeavors, said Friday that he's excited about the Minneapolis site, noting that the former ice house's tall walls make it "a perfect fit" for a rock-climbing facility.

"We have always wanted to do something in Minneapolis and have been searching for the right site for many years," Postma said. "We think this is it." The estimated project cost is \$2 million, he said.

Founded 18 years ago, Vertical Endeavors has locations in St. Paul, Duluth and Warrenville, Ill. It is also currently looking for a Twin Cities suburban site.

According to its website, Vertical Endeavors operates some of the largest indoor rock-climbing facilities in the world. Each of Vertical Endeavors' centers boast specially designed artificial rock walls intended to give climbers the feeling of outside climbing. The facilities include hundreds of rock-climbing routes as well as locker rooms, party rooms and retail pro shops.

Meanwhile, Krogh and Dovolis said they expect the Blue Door Pub to open next spring.