

## UMAMI by Travail: Asian comfort food eatery

Written by Shaina Brassard, West Broadway Coalition  
Friday, 27 September 2013 10:25

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Before even serving the first course of its ten-course tasting menu when it opened September 18th, UMAMI by Travail had already generated much excitement among the Twin Cities and national culinary communities. Online ticket reservations for the first two weeks sold out within 24 hours. Fortunately, the team at the Asian comfort food-inspired pop-up restaurant at 904 West Broadway has proved itself worthy, dazzling food critics and average customers from its local Northside community alike.

Brian Mogren, a North Minneapolis organizer and resident, dined at UMAMI on the second night and said simply, "It was wonderful." Mogren thoroughly enjoyed the unique experience of a Travailian tasting menu, explaining, "It was so much more than a meal...it was fun to have them keep bringing stuff out that I wouldn't just order off a menu, and I tried everything," even the octopus. "It was so great to be in my own neighborhood; I loved that," Mogren added.

UMAMI opened on West Broadway in North Minneapolis thanks to a partnership between the West Broadway Business and Area Coalition (WBC) and Travail Kitchen and Amusements. The WBC is launching a new initiative to highlight the assets and opportunities along the West Broadway business corridor. One aspect of this initiative is the implementation of retail and gallery "pop-up," or short term events as a strategy for highlighting the potential of vacant

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spaces.

The WBC assisted the Travail team during the city licensing and zoning process and helped negotiate a short term lease at the Hawthorn Crossings location that will serve as UMAMI by Travail's home for at least six to eight weeks.



Travail restaurateurs Bob Gerken, Mike Brown, Kale Thome and James Winberg are enthusiastic about every aspect of this project, from the style of food UMAMI will serve, the restaurant's groundbreaking status as the first tasting menu and takeout-driven pop-up restaurant in Minnesota, and not least of all the chance to bring this unique concept to North Minneapolis.

Travail Kitchen and Amusements first opened in 2010 at 4124 West Broadway in Robbinsdale, only three miles away from UMAMI. The team has experience opening up new restaurant spaces, as this past spring, they replaced their wildly popular restaurant with a pizza place (Pig Ate My Pizza) and are in the process of building the second rendition of Travail as well as a new cocktail and micro plates lounge called the Rookery. While construction is underway, UMAMI is the perfect project for the chefs and their team.



The Travail chefs also saw an opportunity in North Minneapolis. Says Mike Brown, "We were happy to find the WBC wanted to collaborate on this space. We're excited to make food in this

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community; it's been a really warm welcome so far." James Winberg continued, "We're hoping to invigorate the neighborhood and see if there's potential to turn this into something long-term."

Brian Mogren and others certainly hope so. City of Minneapolis Department of Community Planning and Economic Development data shows that there is a great unmet demand for full-service, sit down restaurants among Northside residents, as well among the 500 Minneapolis Public Schools employees that moved into the new MPS headquarters on West Broadway last summer.

Reservations for UMAMI can be made online via Tempo Tickets. Seating is available 5-10pm Wednesday-Saturday; a \$5 a la carte takeout menu is available 5-9pm.

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