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## Burger Time enters the local burger wars

by [Scott Carlson](#) Staff Writer

Hold the pickles. In fact, hold everything: Yet another burger chain is coming to the Minneapolis-St. Paul metro region.

Burger Time, a quick-serve, primarily drive-through burger joint, is bringing its restaurant concept to the Twin Cities, with a first store slated to open this fall in Burnsville — with plans for many more to follow.

“We plan to open 40 stores over the next 48 months,” said Dan Shrader, CEO of Food Shacks Inc., the corporate parent of Burger Time. “We are looking to do both build-to-suit, free-standing buildings and direct-lease deals.”

Food Shacks, in partnership with Minneapolis-based Upland Real Estate Group, expects its planned Twin Cities rollout to cost about \$32 million.

Founded 23 years ago in Fargo, N.D., Burger Time currently operates four stores in outstate Minnesota and six others in the two Dakotas. Burger Time is expected in November to open a store in the food court at the Burnsville Center shopping mall.

Burger Time is the latest among several new chains and local burger eateries to enter the Twin Cities market in about the last year. Other players include Smashburger, Sonic and Five Guys.

Although the burger bonanza seems counterintuitive given the national economic recession, industry observers asserted that the trend makes perfect sense because consumers are looking to stretch their dining dollars and the burger restaurants are giving them that option.

“The burger segment is one of the few segments that continues to enjoy increasing market share,” said Kevin Moll, CEO of Denver-based National Restaurant Consultants Inc. He added that Burger Time’s menu is “attractively priced and with short cook times, (so) it would appear as though the average location should enjoy some outstanding sales.”

### Burgers on a budget

Burger Time touts itself as value-conscience purveyor of big beef: Its smallest burgers are a third of a pound, and the french fries and drinks only come in one size: big. Burger Time’s website ([www.itsburgertime.com](http://www.itsburgertime.com)) lists its one-third pound burger combo meal at \$4.69.

In a press statement, Upland and Food Shacks said the typical Burger Time store is a 620-square-foot building with a double drive-through, one on each side of the building, and no indoor seating.

“This allows us to get the best product possible to our customers in the shortest amount of time,” said Denis Brunk, Food Shacks president and head of real estate. The burgers are cooked in one minute and thirty seconds using double-sided broilers.

Due to the small footprint and focus on efficiency, Burger Time is able to price its food lower than other competitors, company officials contended.

Upland Real Estate said it is working with numerous landowners and shopping center owners to find the right sites for Burger Time stores.

“The smaller size of their buildings allows them to be placed on smaller sites that owners have had challenges finding uses for in the past,” said Keith Sturm, CEO of Upland Real Estate Group.

Moll noted that Colorado-based Good Times Hamburgers has a concept similar to that of Burger Time, with a small footprint, drive-through and lower overhead. “It’s a proven format that works,” he said.

Still, Moll added, “to grow by another 40 stores in four years in such a tight market is quite a commitment. To successfully maximize their brand in Minnesota, they’ll want to fully utilize manufacturer deviations, the opportunities to bulk-buy product, and centralize their training for maximum efficiency.”