**PROJECT SUMMARY**

The 163-unit Gallery Flats project is located along 8th Avenue in Hopkins. Eighth Avenue is an important quarter-mile link between Mainstreet and the future Downtown Hopkins station on the METRO Green Line Extension. The project introduced both market rate and affordable rental units along 8th Avenue, with the possibility of converting ground floor residential space to commercial uses. The corridor along 8th Avenue is branded as “The Artery”, which reflects plans to incorporate public art along the street. Gallery Flats responds to the demand for urban-style living in a historic suburban downtown, where residents are within walking distance of local shopping, transit, recreation, and entertainment.

**HOW DOES THIS PROJECT SUPPORT TOD (AND LIVABLE COMMUNITIES)?**

**Connect:** The City of Hopkins envisioned that the 8th Avenue Corridor would become a more walkable and inviting connection between the Downtown Hopkins LRT station and Mainstreet. Using a grant in the amount of $875,000 from the Hennepin County TOD grant program, the City of Hopkins purchased a large portion of the Gallery Flats site, which they saw as an opportunity to set the tone for future development and a better pedestrian experience along 8th Avenue.

The project includes two separate buildings with an interior landscaped plaza above underground parking. The City had hoped the design would create a visual connection with the nearby Downtown Park, thereby expanding the inventory of open space in the downtown environment.

**Intensify:** The project replaced a one-story medical clinic and small commercial building with a multi-story residential development with underground parking. The project has a residential parking ratio of 1.1 space per unit, lower than many new developments in suburban settings. Parking includes one space for each unit plus a small amount of shared parking for guests. The project makes efficient use of the site, with 163 units on roughly 1.2 acres of developable land.
Demonstrate: The project demonstrates development in a market that is evolving to a more pedestrian- and transit-oriented character. The development includes units on the ground floor that can be accessed from the exterior. This accommodates flexibility in use, as market conditions allow, for residential, commercial, or live/work space.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Challenges for Project Developer
This project was the first time the developer used public funds in a development. Grants administration added complexity, including subcontractor documentation and invoicing for grant-funded activities. While these funds were critical to allowing the project to move forward, the developer found them complicated to manage.

Challenges for City Staff
Developers told the City that retail along 8th Avenue would not be feasible until after the METRO Green Line Extension was operational. Nevertheless, the City wanted to preserve opportunities to generate activity and visual interest along the 8th Avenue frontage. The City worked with the developer to create walk-up “flex space” on the ground floor that could be used as either residential, commercial, or live/work units. The units were initially leased as residential, but the City’s goal is to support the eventual conversion of these spaces as the market allows. The developer sold the building to a company that was concerned about the low parking ratio. The City responded by leasing an additional 34 spaces in a nearby city-owned parking facility. The City speculates that this additional demand for parking will subside after light rail transit service begins.

Lessons Learned by Project Developer
The landscaped plaza was a component of the project that was important to the City, but it added additional cost to the project. However, the plaza is a key selling point and amenity for the apartments, and it has become a well-used gathering place for residents.

Lessons Learned by City Staff
The City worked with the developer to allow for public access through the landscaped plaza to build a green connection between 8th Avenue the Downtown Park. However, the design does not feel as “public” as the City anticipated. The walkways are not well used. In the future, the City would work with a landscape architect or urban designer to ensure that such a concept would function better.

LEARN MORE

Project-related web sites
City project site: www.hopkinsmn.com/development/current/galleryflats
Marketing web site: www.galleryflatsapts.com
Marketing video: www.vimeo.com/78235071

Staff Contact
Kersten Elverum, Director of Economic Development & Planning
City of Hopkins
kelverum@hopkinsmn.com

FEEDBACK
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