

VANDALIA TOWER

TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

PROJECT SUMMARY

The 5.5-acre Vandalia Tower redevelopment includes the restoration of seven vacant factory buildings into retail, office, artist studio and small manufacturing space. An iconic 100-foot tall water tower known as Vandalia Tower serves as a visual anchor for the site. The Metropolitan Council Livable Communities program provided support for this project.

The developer, First and First, has secured tenants that include woodworkers, artists, yoga studios, brewers, mechanical engineers, film makers, and marketing firms. The tenant mix is consistent with the area's [Creative Enterprise Zone](#) brand and vision "to be a recognized center of creativity and enterprise, a place where people make a living by their creative capacities."



Saint Paul, Vandalia Tower. Public plaza at the center of the development

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

Connect: The project improves connections to the METRO Green Line and Raymond Station area by providing sidewalks and bike paths in an industrial area where such infrastructure did not previously not exist.

Intensify: The project fully restores the seven factory buildings and orients them into a campus arrangement around a 30,000-square foot outdoor plaza. The applicant anticipates that upon full occupancy the project will include approximately 290 full time jobs. This project is an opportunity to provide jobs that are close to public transportation and accessible to all skill levels.

Demonstrate: Vandalia Tower is a model for adapting outmoded buildings to serve an emerging market and community vision. In this case, industrial buildings were renovated to serve creative professionals, artisans, and small manufacturers.

FAST FACTS

PROJECT FACTS

Developer:

First and First

Total Development Cost: \$4.6M

Total Public Investment: \$650K

Commercial Square Feet:

185K sq. ft.

TOD METRICS

Stories: 3

FAR: 0.8

Commercial Parking Ratio:

1 space per 860 sq. ft.

STATION AREA

Transit:

METRO Green Line Extension

Station: Raymond Avenue

Station Area:

Mixed use corridor surrounded by industrial uses; strong employment focus with opportunity for adaptive reuse of industrial buildings.

Metropolitan Council Livable Communities Grants

Applicant: City of St. Paul

Year: 2014

TOD grant amount: \$650,000

Funded elements:

Public plaza, stormwater management, sidewalks, landscaping, demolition, pedestrian lighting, excavation, utilities, and public bike storage

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Challenges

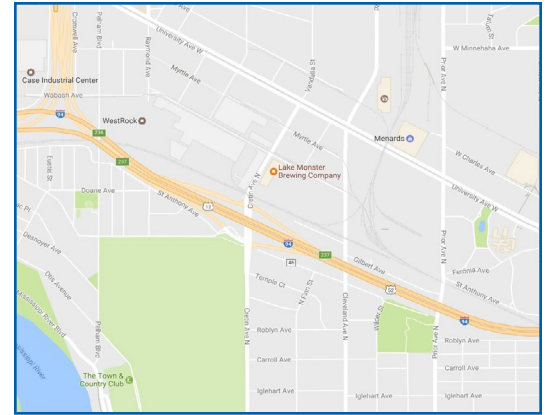
This was the first project in St. Paul for developer First and First. Although the project has been successful in attracting tenants, challenges included lower market rents in St. Paul compared to Minneapolis, a large development footprint, and site conditions that the developer characterized as “deplorable”.

Costs for the project were also higher than originally forecasted. These included unexpected costs associated with City code compliance. In addition, as with many infill and adaptive reuse projects, space for adequate stormwater ponding was limited. Underground tanks needed for stormwater storage and infiltration were twice as large as anticipated.

Lessons Learned

As with many adaptive reuse projects, City code compliance can add cost and complexity to the redevelopment. Due diligence by the various parties, and a close working relationship between the City and developer, are important to anticipate issues that can impact project feasibility and outcomes.

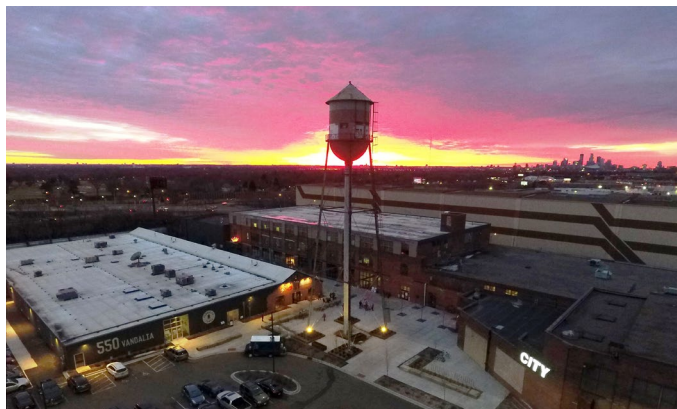
The developer addressed challenges in several ways. They prioritized the redevelopment of buildings and spaces based on committed leases, which increased feasibility. They also collaborated with the City to obtain LCA-TOD grants from the Metropolitan Council to address extraordinary costs, as well as to incorporate features that increased the appeal of the development to prospective tenants



Click on image for an aerial view of the project.



Courtyard and seating area



Looking west from Wabash Avenue.

FEEDBACK

Did you find this information useful? Do you have questions or suggestions for improvement? Contact us at TODGuide@metc.state.mn.us

LEARN MORE

Project Web Site

<http://first-first.com/places/vandalia>

Creative Enterprise Zone

<http://www.creativeenterprisezone.org/content/about-creative-enterprise-zone>

Staff Contact

Dave Gontarek, Project Manager

City of St. Paul

dave.gontarek@ci.stpaul.mn.us

Developer Contact

Peter Remes, Chief Executive Officer

First and First

612-334-9434 x104

peter@first-first.com