VANDALIA TOWER

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.”

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.

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

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

Looking west from Wabash Avenue.

Courtyard and seating area.