

# Transit Oriented Development

PROJECT PROFILE

## Vandalia Tower Saint Paul, Minnesota



Vandalia Tower, public plaza at the center of the development

### 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 THIS PROJECT SUPPORTS 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.

**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.

**CATALYZE** → 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.

### TOD GRANT INFORMATION

**Applicant:** City of St. Paul  
**Funding Cycle:** 2014  
**Grant Amount:** \$650,000  
**Other LCA Funding:** \$29,100, TBRA, 2016

### Funded Elements:

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

### FAST FACTS

**Developer:** First & First  
**Project Type:** Mixed-use, live/work units  
**Acres:** 5.5  
**Estimated Total Development Cost:** \$4.6 million  
**Jobs:** 290, 120 temporary

### TOD METRICS

**Stories:** 3

**FAR:** .8

**Commercial Parking Ratio:** One space per 860 SF

### STATION AREA

**Transit:** METRO Green Line

**Station:** Raymond Avenue

**Station Area:** Mixed use corridor surrounded by industrial uses; strong employment focus with opportunity for adaptive reuse of industrial buildings

## RISKS AND OUTCOMES

### FROM PROJECT DEVELOPER

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.”

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.



Before

### FROM CITY STAFF

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.

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.



After

## ABOUT TOD

The 1995 Livable Communities Act (LCA) funds community investment that revitalizes economies, creates affordable housing, and links different land uses and transportation. The council awards 4 types of grants to communities. The Council's TOD grants promote moderate to high density development projects located within walking distance of a major transit stop that typically include a mix of uses such as housing, jobs, restaurants, shops, and entertainment.

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## LEARN MORE

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