

St. Paul offers guide to building in the corridor

by Matt M. Johnson

Published: October 18th, 2011

Pitching developers on making a bet on mass transit

Putting up a building along the Central Corridor light rail line may not be the easiest task at the moment, but the pictures in the brochure are pretty.

As part of a multi-pronged effort to redevelop the commercial district along University Avenue, the city of St. Paul feted the first printing Tuesday of a guidebook that encourages developers to build along the yet-to-be completed passenger rail line. Unveiling the "St. Paul Transit-Oriented Development Guidebook for Developers" at the new Frogtown Square, city officials and several nonprofit organizations sent this message: Build here and we'll help you every step of the way.

"I view this guidebook as an invitation for everyone to invest," said Ann Mulholland to a crowd of about 60 people gathered in an empty retail bay at Frogtown Square. Mulholland spoke on behalf of the Central Corridor Funders Collaborative, the organization that paid for the writing and publishing of the book.

In production for the past year, the 84-page spiral-bound book gives advice to business and property owners already in the Central Corridor; summarizes St. Paul's development strategy for the corridor; and lays out design standards that will be applied to new building projects in the area.

More a primer on the city's development intentions, the book is not a step-by-step guide to building along the Central Corridor. What it does best, said one developer at the event, is to help developers understand city requirements before they start filing for permits.

"So it's less of a guessing game up front," said Steve Cramer, executive director for the Minneapolis affordable housing developer Project for Pride in Living.

The guidebook is also a gateway for additional development assistance. The St. Paul Riverfront Corp. — one of the organizations that contributed to the content of the guidebook — is hiring an intern to help developers work in the Central Corridor zone.

With the completion of the Central Corridor line set for 2014, the book may be an inducement for developers to build before the trains start running. One project in particular, the Lyric apartment complex, is an example of the egg following after the chicken.

"The Lyric wouldn't be there if the light rail wasn't coming through," said Colleen Carey, president of the Cornerstone Group, the Richfield developer that built the Lyric.

Placing emphasis on diverse land uses, setback building design and pedestrian-friendly streetscapes, the guidebook could even become a component of future light rail corridor development. John Kari, a planning analyst for the Metropolitan Council, said he will take the book both to work and to his Prospect Park neighborhood.



Haila Maze, a principal planner for the city of Minneapolis, and John Kari, the Met Council's planning analyst, discuss development issues during a release event for St. Paul's new Transit-Oriented Development Guidebook for the Central Corridor. (Photo: Matt M. Johnson)

“So St. Paul will have influence in Minneapolis,” he said.

Haila Maze, a principal city planner for the city of Minneapolis, said she was most impressed with the collaborative effort that produced the book.

“The bar we’re setting for public involvement is pretty high,” she said.

The Central Corridor Funders Collaborative gave the Riverfront Corp. a grant of \$105,000 to pay for 2,750 hours of Central Corridor planning and study in the past year. Janelle Tummel, media specialist with the city of St. Paul, said part of that grant paid for the book.

Get the guidebook

Copies of the “St. Paul Transit-Oriented Development Guidebook for Developers” are available at the St. Paul Riverfront Corp. offices at 25 W. Sixth St. in St. Paul, or by contacting Tim Griffin at 651-293-6864. Copies will be printed as needed. The guidebook is also [available here](#).

Complete URL: <http://finance-commerce.com/2011/10/st-paul-offers-guide-to-building-in-the-corridor/>