



Turning a Corner: Frogtown Square

An historic St. Paul neighborhood finally gets its corner showplace

Mayor Chris Coleman of St. Paul, a former Frogtown resident, doesn't like to think about all the criminal activities that went on at Frogtown's University and Dale intersection over the years—prostitution, pornography, drug dealing.

He'd rather focus on the unflinching efforts of Frogtown residents to replace that dangerous corner with a showplace entrance to their community—long known as the heart of St. Paul. This corner is also slated to be one of the stops along the [Metro Transit Central Corridor light rail line](#), which will start running in 2014.

Thirty years in the making, the Frogtown Square project is a testament to the power of grassroots-driven community development and the collaboration of four resourceful CDCs—[Model Cities](#), [Greater Frogtown Community Development Corporation](#), [Neighborhood Development Center](#), and [Aurora Saint Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation](#).

Supporting those developers has been Twin Cities LISC, which made a \$734,000 investment in this project—from land acquisition loans and predevelopment grants to COACTION operating grants to all four of the CDCs. In fact, one of LISC's early grants spurred the formation of that four-partner coalition several years ago.



Frogtown Square: Artist's Drawing

Scheduled to be finished in late 2010, the four-story, mixed use project will crown the revitalized corner of University and Dale, adding 50 affordable apartments for seniors and 10,500 square feet of first-floor commercial space. The commercial space is already rented out to or bought by small businesses run by entrepreneurs of color. The apartments for active seniors will be managed by Episcopal Homes.

On the other side of the corner sits another recent landmark of community development—the [Rondo Community Outreach Library](#) and University Dale Apartments, finished in 2006. This innovative blend of affordable housing for 98 families attached to the largest branch of the St. Paul Library helps encourage children's academic progress and offers many services for adults as well. It serves a wide range of the Asian, African, Latino, American Indian, and Caucasian residents in the adjacent Rondo and Frogtown neighborhoods. Key development partners for this project were



Frogtown Square groundbreaking

Aurora St Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation, Legacy Management and Development Corporation, and the St. Paul Public Library.

Together these two large-scale developments have forever changed the infamous corner people used to avoid. And both have been the products of the community's own vision for itself.

“Over all these years, the people of Frogtown, both old and new, have struggled, fought, picketed, taken risks, and still held on to their homes and businesses with a shared pride in their community,” says Mark Voerding, spokesperson for Ramsey County Commissioner Janice Rettman.

Commenting at Frogtown Square's groundbreaking about the long sometimes contentious history of this effort, Anthony Fernandez, District 7 board chair, said: “For some of us here this is the beginning. For some of us here this is the middle. But for no one here is this the end. We're in a long-term partnership to make Frogtown flourish for years to come.” □