



GOODWILL · EASTER SEALS
MINNESOTA



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Ground broken for Saint Paul housing and job training initiative

Initiative provides construction training and housing for low-income households

SAINT PAUL – Dirt flew on December 3 for a new housing and job training initiative to construct new, affordable homes in Saint Paul’s Frogtown neighborhood. Mayor Chris Coleman and City Councilmember Dai Thao joined leaders from Goodwill/Easter Seals and Urban Homeworks to officially kick-off construction at a vacant lot on Edmund Street. Crews trained by Goodwill/Easter Seals’ construction program will build two single-family homes that will be sold by Urban Homeworks to income-qualified households.

“One of Saint Paul’s most defining characteristics is how people across organizations and industries pull together for the betterment of our city, and this initiative is a perfect example of that,” said Mayor Chris Coleman. “The hard work of this partnership will revitalize one of our most crucial communities and bring city-owned properties back on the tax rolls – a benefit to the entire city.”

“This is an exciting day for Frogtown and an important milestone in the city’s efforts to strengthen this important neighborhood” said City Councilmember Dai Thao. “I especially want to thank the Frogtown Neighborhood Association that played a key role in getting residents to participate in the construction training program and all of the other partners for their dedication to this project. It’s exciting to see all of the local participation that is helping rejuvenate our neighborhoods.”

The City of Saint Paul Saint Paul’s Human Rights and Equal Economic Opportunity (HREEO) Department provided \$200,600 to expand the Goodwill/Easter Seals Minnesota construction training program. This helped to increase their program to 200 participants annually. The program includes 12 weeks of combined classroom and hands-on instruction to prepare participants for a career in the construction trades. The training program targets income-qualified women and minority residents who face various obstacles to gainful employment. At the conclusion of the program, participants graduate with an OSHA 10 safety certification, earn lead abatement worker certification, and earn 36 continuing education units from Saint Paul College.

“This partnership is truly a win-win for Saint Paul residents,” said Dr. Michael Wirth-Davis, President and CEO of Goodwill/Easter Seals. “Not only will our students build new homes, but Saint Paul will gain 100 new skilled carpenters, roofers and finishers who are ready to hit the job market running. We are looking for students who want to experience the professional production expected from employers with this real-world paid training.”

The Saint Paul Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) is selling two vacant lots to Urban Homeworks that will market and sell the finished homes to income-qualified households. The Saint Paul HRA is also providing homebuyer assistance incentives of up to \$5,000 depending on household income. Construction and gap financing is being provided by Twin Cities Community Land Bank and the Saint Paul HRA. The new homes will conform to the Energy STAR and Minnesota Green Communities standards for new construction.

“We are grateful for the chance to deepen our existing collaborations with our partners to the multidimensional benefit of our community,” said Chad Schwitters, Urban Homeworks President. “We hope this might energize many more collaborations across our region that consciously and deliberately weave the economic investments in housing with the economic self-determination of our neighbors.”

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About Goodwill/Easter Seals Minnesota

Goodwill/Easter Seals Minnesota provides family strengthening, education, workforce development and employment services for people with disabilities and other barriers to education, employment and independence. In the past year, over 15,600 individuals received 70,280 services, including job skills training (automotive, medical office, banking/finance, construction and retail), job placement and free medical equipment loans. Revenues from its 30 retail stores, along with other contributions, support these programs at 32 service locations in Minnesota. For more information visit www.goodwilleasterseals.org

About Urban Homeworks

Since 1995, Urban Homeworks has been responding to the voices of our neighbors by providing dignified housing opportunities, creating space for construction training, intentionally weaving together a network of engaged neighbors, and mobilizing volunteers. Our focus on stability and connecting resources so that individual and communal assets emerge, thrive, and invigorate our neighborhoods has resulted in more than 200 redeveloped properties and a network of 17,000 volunteers, 1,200 construction trainees, and over 400 Urban Neighbors. For more information visit www.urbanhomeworks.org