

Merrick Community Services purchases new property and buildings on Saint Paul's Eastside

Written by

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Looking to build a brighter future for children, families and residents of Saint Paul's East Side, Merrick Community Services (MCS) recently purchased new property located at 600 Lafayette Road, Saint Paul, MN, which is now slated to become the fourth home for the 103 year old organization.

The four-acre property, which housed the Capitol Supply Company for several years, and most recently, J. H. Larson Company, is conveniently located just five blocks from downtown Saint Paul. Located on the site is an existing warehouse and office building (approx. 30,000 sq. feet) with a separate distribution building (9,400 sq. feet), currently available for lease. This acquisition will triple the building space of Merrick's current Edgerton facility and quadruple the property footprint.

Based on the organization's strategic plan, a recently completed community needs assessment, and the growing needs in Saint Paul's East Side and, in particular Railroad Island, the existing main building will be redesigned to offer a continuum of services and programs including: Meals on Wheels; Kids Café; Food Shelf; Senior and Family Services; Literacy, Academic and Youth Development Programs, and Employment Training and Job Services. The Merrick Center was founded on Saint Paul's East Side in 1908 as part of the Christ Child Society's national model of settlement houses, which provided essential services to "settle" new arrivals (immigrants), families in transition, and anyone in need of basic or emergency services.

For more than 100 years, Merrick Community Services has been committed to its mission to improve the lives of East Side residents by empowering individuals, strengthening families, and promoting their independence. Today, MCS annually serves over 30,000 children, families and residents of Saint Paul's East Side with programs addressing immediate and long-term needs.

For the past 50 years, Merrick Community Services has operated the Merrick Community Center, located at 715 Edgerton Street in Saint Paul, MN, along with two food shelves (Hudson Road and Roosevelt Homes Food Shelf). Administration and additional programming has also taken place at the East Side Community Center on East Sixth Street, which adjoins Harding High School. (MCS Community Needs Assessment, 2011).

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Due to the building's deterioration and a growing demand for upgraded and enhanced services, Merrick Community Services for some time has been seeking to replace its existing Edgerton facility. The Lafayette Road site is approximately six blocks from its current facility and is conveniently located near major highways and is easily accessible by public transportation. Merrick closed on the new site on September 2, 2011.

Matthew Warzala, Chair of Merrick Community Services Board of Directors noted, "We are excited about the future and Merrick's ability to better serve the East Side of Saint Paul with a new facility in this location. Our commitment to the East Side and Railroad Island is stronger than ever. The new site will also create the capacity to develop new partnerships and opportunities to co-locate programming with additional service organizations to compliment the services provided by Merrick."

Throughout the process, the architectural firm of Anderson Dale Architects, Incorporated, led by Architects William Anderson, and Kurtis Dale, have been working closely with Merrick Community Services in the redesign of the existing building to meet programmatic and service needs. Occupancy by Merrick Community Services is projected for 2013-14.