

# around the metro

## A Hopkins project is honored for being green

● A developer won national recognition from the Sierra Club for redevelopment of a defense plant and its parking lots. The firm recycled most of the materials from renovation of the property.

By KEVIN GILES  
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A Hopkins developer who recycled an old torpedo factory into a business center, and sprawling parking lots into 66 housing units, has won a first-ever Sierra Club award.

The developer, The Beard Group Inc., converted the former defense plant complex into space for light industry — including a fruit-juice bottling company — and for small businesses, such as an entrepreneur who makes tear-away shoes for softball players and another who prints with vintage letterpress equipment.

The Excelsior Tech Center and Regency Development is one of 12 projects the Sierra Club is recognizing nationally as “America’s Best New Development Projects.”

“We’re probably better known for challenging development than applauding it,” said Joshua Houdek, land use organizer for the club’s North Star Chapter in Minneapolis. The Sierra Club decided to showcase projects that demonstrated innovative redevelopment and environmental improvement of property in urban areas,

he said. “It’s quite an honor, to have one of the projects recognized in our state,” he said.

Bill Beard, one of the principal partners in the Beard Group, said his firm recycled most of the materials that came from demolition and renovation of the property, formerly owned by Honeywell and later, Alliant Tech.

For example, concrete and asphalt were crushed and recycled for nearby Excelsior Boulevard. The developers sold steel joists for reuse in a new building, and salvaged everything from door jams to transformers.

“Who’d have thought that doing it in a green manner was cost efficient?” Beard said.

He said that the 430,000-square-foot business center isn’t “the most colorful or sexy” on the outside but that the inside has been given a first-class business touch. “We tell people we put lipstick on the pig,” he said.

The firm invested more than \$16 million, he said, with the only public subsidy going to clean up asbestos floor tiles.

In some ways, the long-term development plan in Hopkins, a city of 18,000 about 13 miles west of Minne-



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Bill Beard, left, and partner Paul Gamst developed parking lots adjacent to an old torpedo factory into housing that resembles older “factory” houses once built in Hopkins by farm machinery maker Minneapolis Moline.

apolis, harks to an urban style of many decades ago when residents worked within a mile of where they lived, said Rick Getschow, the city manager.

To develop the housing area, the Beard Group worked with Ryland Homes to create a combination of Victorian-style rowhouses and town-

houses within walking distance of downtown and employers.

Said Ryland president Chris Enger of the project: “This is a real poster child for a wonderful way to do development.”

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### WHERE DREAMS WERE MADE

**What:** The Excelsior Tech Center and Regency Development grew from a public planning process in Hopkins involving neighbors, planners, city officials and the developer, the Beard Group Inc. The original warehouse, built in various stages in the mid-1950s, covered 537,000 square feet.

**Where:** The 18.1-acre redevelopment is near Hwy. 169 at Excelsior Boulevard.

**Who:** Major tenants include Minnikahda Mini Storage, Suga Incentives and Citrus Systems Inc. Smaller spaces are rented to entrepreneurs such as a maker of gift baskets and a software engineer.

**Other cities where the Sierra Club recognized projects:** Milwaukee; Tacoma, Wash.; Portland, Ore.; Salt Lake City; Albuquerque, N.M.; Manchester-by-the-Sea, Mass.; Greensboro, N.C.; Atlanta and three California cities: Windsor, Oakland and San Mateo.

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