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The magic of Mozaic

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Tags: [Ackerberg Group](#), [BKV Group](#), [Jack Boarman](#), [JoAnna Hicks](#), [John Ryan Performance Inc.](#), [Marc Fortney](#), [Metro Transit](#), [Midtown Greenway](#), [MoZaic](#), [Nancy Radermecher](#), [Stuart Ackerberg](#)



The 10-story, \$45 million MoZaic building is 57 percent occupied. A whimsical reproduction of a wood-sided streetcar dominates the south end of the art park. (Staff photo: Bill Klotz)

Developers typically try to lure office tenants with amenities — food facilities, copying services, express mail collection, fitness centers or child care centers.

But who needs amenities in a mixed-use building if it's plunked down in the heart of Minneapolis' vibrant, hip Uptown area?

The Ackerberg Group's MoZaic project, adjacent to a Metro Transit hub and the Midtown Greenway, and within walking distance of restaurants, bars, shopping, fitness centers and Lake Calhoun, doesn't even need frontage on nearby Hennepin or Lagoon avenues. The 10-story, \$45 million project, at 1320 Lagoon Ave., towers over nearby buildings.

Its lower floors are tucked away behind LifePower Yoga, William's Pub and Fusion, whose storefronts are on Hennepin Avenue, and behind Drink, the Lagoon Cinema and Bar Abilene, who face Lagoon Avenue.

The main entrance, behind Bar Abilene, features a playful, contemporary art park. An 11-foot-tall clay reproduction of a human head and a pair of pillars with winged statues perched on top dominate the park. Other features include an undulating row of red metal seats adjacent to a gray metal railing that doubles as a waterfall-like fountain.

A giant, royal blue arrow, whose point is embedded in the ground, offers water fountains for humans and dogs and a spout for filling water bottles. A whimsical reproduction of a wood-sided streetcar dominates the south end of the park, which is separated from the remaining 120-space surface parking lot by a series of rectangular metal sculptures, each holding several colorful glass squares.

A longtime Uptown landlord, The Ackerberg Group has done the unthinkable on two counts with MoZaic. It built post-recession office space on speculation when thousands of square feet of office space sit vacant in the city, and built MoZaic in a neighborhood otherwise bereft of office buildings. It left 11,000 square feet on the first floor for retail space and filled the top three stories with 65,000 square feet of open-floor-plan, Class A office space. Sandwiched between those floors is a six-story, 434-space parking ramp.

The parking placement mimics a design long employed in Chicago, where proximity to Lake Michigan makes underground parking construction expensive, according to architect Jack Boarman, CEO of Minneapolis' BKV Group, which designed MoZaic.

"The idea of doing retail then the parking and then doing the three office floors has the benefit of being able to put the spaces that you wanted to have views on a higher podium," Boarman said.

MoZaic's office tenants have spectacular views of the city, according to Nancy Radermecher, president of John Ryan Performance Inc., a retail marketing agency that moved June 1 into 12,400 square feet on the eighth floor of MoZaic.

"We can see the Greenway all the way down; we can see the lake," Radermecher said. "We have a downtown view and we can see the Twins' scoreboard."

John Ryan executives wanted an open floor plan to promote collaboration among their 50 employees. They didn't have that at their former space at 700 S. Third St. in downtown Minneapolis.

"We wanted a great location in the city so this one was a double whammy for us, because who doesn't want to work in Uptown?" Radermecher said. "Here, people are actually biking and walking to work and that's better for you anyway. There's an LA Fitness right across the street. We've got it all."

The Ackerberg Group and Greco Real Estate Development Group jointly funded a bike and pedestrian ramp from the Greenway up to the level of Greco's Flux apartment building as well as an adjacent bike/pedestrian bridge across the Greenway from Flux to MoZaic. Hennepin County transit-oriented development funds helped with the ramps and bridge.

La Crosse-Wis.-based Fortney Hospitality Group is expected to open Bar Louie, a franchise restaurant, in 7,200 square feet on MoZaic's first floor in mid-September. Fortney also operates Brothers Bar and Grill in the city's Warehouse district and about 20 bars and restaurants under various names in 10 states. This will be the first of what could be several Bar Louie locations in the Minneapolis area.

“What we want to do is to really introduce Bar Louie with a ‘Wow!’ and MoZaic says ‘Wow!’ in a really big way,” said Marc Fortney, who owns the business with his brother, Eric.

In addition to main-floor seating, Bar Louie will have mezzanine seating for 99 and an outdoor patio adjacent to the art park. “We put together a design that will lend itself for a great environment for folks to dine,” Fortney said.

With the recent addition of advertising agency mono, which is taking 20,000 square feet of office space, MoZaic is 57 percent occupied with a goal of being fully leased by the end of 2012, according to JoAnna Hicks, Ackerberg’s director of development.

“We are finding a lot of success with creative industries because of the floor-to-ceiling glass, the opportunities for open, collaborative space,” Hicks said.

Office rents range from \$18 to \$22 per square foot. The retail space’s gross occupancy costs are about \$45 to \$60 per square foot, commensurate with the neighborhood, Hicks said.

When the first building reaches 80 percent occupancy, the developer will begin seeking tenants for a second building, which will replace the remaining surface lot and have two underground parking levels.

“To get people there and to start the ball rolling, to create this mixed-used synergy, it’s important that the first offices maximize the potential to be outstanding, and that’s what the views do,” said architect Boarman.

BKV has been working with Stuart Ackerberg, chief executive officer of The Ackerberg Group, on a variety of designs for the property as the market changed over the past several years. It has already designed the second MoZaic building.

“Stu’s a very inspiring client to work for,” Boarman said. “He’s very design-oriented and very forward-thinking and very artful and very urban, and those are the types of clients that we focus on. ...Urban, infill, mixed-use projects are really what we specialize in and that’s all about MoZaic.”

See below for a slide show of MoZaic by photographer Bill Klotz:



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