

St. Paul Sears From Vacancy to Vitality: Navigating Growth and Community Concerns in St. Paul

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA, UNITED STATES, May 14, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Sears redevelopment project embarks on a journey through its rich history, addressing community concerns, and exploring viable solutions. Central to this endeavor is the adaptive approach and unwavering openness to community input demonstrated by AMA and AABRN.

Sears, once the world's largest retailer by the 1960s, established a large store and parking lot, pioneering the concept of "big box" retail in the 1960s.

According to a CBS News article, titled "Sears Got Its Start In Minneapolis, Grew To Be The World's Biggest Retailer", the company once had around 350,000 employees. At its peak in 2012, it had 4,000 stores. However, despite its historical significance, the Sears building has remained vacant since 2019. Formerly a bustling shopping center for all, it was a cherished community hub where people enjoyed spending quality time with their families and friends. St. Paul resident Mary Ann Burns articulated her frustration to CBS News on October 16, 2018, stating, "I'm very, very upset. I've shopped here since I was a little girl. My mother brought me. My mother is 92 years old, and I'm 70. I think this is terrible."

Currently, the Sears building is empty, surrounded by large parking lots. It used to be bustling inside, but now it's quiet, and there are many empty parking spaces, about 500 of them. The area it covers is huge, about 17 acres, and it has the potential to be changed and improved. However, there are concerns that some people might have. If the redevelopment project starts, some could be worried about increased traffic, which might cause problems for the neighborhood. So, as this project progresses and improves the area, careful traffic management and addressing any arising issues are planned. It's essential to strike the right balance between enhancing things and addressing challenges for the redevelopment to be successful.



A bird's-eye view captures the Sears building, parking lot, and surrounding area

AMA and AABRN are currently paving the way for green development, envisioning an interconnected network of parks, plazas, pathways, and streets adorned with lush, sustainably cultivated greenery. The ongoing site plan aims to reintroduce nature into the area, creating vibrant public spaces that enhance community livability, health, wellness, and recreational opportunities. This includes integrating multi-use paths and walking trails to connect seamlessly with the regional trail network. The plan also focuses on transit-oriented development and accommodating the parking needs of visitors and residents, considering multi-level parking structures to ensure convenient access to the site's various amenities, enabling community members to park once and explore the area on foot.

Another temporary plan involves subdividing the expansive surface parking area into smaller blocks. AMA aims to divide the Sears site into nine lots, each designated to accommodate amenities tailored to the community's needs. These amenities may include residential mixed-use developments, various housing alternatives, parking ramps, hotels, retail or office spaces, parks, amphitheaters, and soccer fields. While these possibilities have been discussed, they remain part of ongoing planning efforts and are subject to further refinement.

Lastly, AMA and AABRN understand the historical significance of the Sears building to the community. Therefore, we plan to preserve the building and remodel the interior to create a community hub. The first floor will feature a food court with a commercial kitchen, a 3D immersive museum, a center for wellness, a Zen garden, and an event center. The second floor will house a sports, technology, and arts charter school, a community and business center, and a kids zone with a daycare center.

We remain in the planning phase and are actively listening to the voices of the community. This involves hosting community meetings and carefully reviewing survey feedback. To learn more about the St. Paul Sears Redevelopment project and stay updated on developments, individuals are encouraged to visit <https://searsstpaul.info/news/>. Please contact us at aabr@amamedia.org or 612-376-7715.

John Yang
Asian Media Access
+1 888-907-2284
[email us here](#)

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