

## **U of M buys Northside Plymouth Penn Shopping Center property to use for new Urban Research and Outreach/Engagement Center**

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MINNEAPOLIS / ST. PAUL ( 2/15/2008 ) -- The University of Minnesota has purchased the Plymouth Penn Shopping Center property at 2001 Plymouth Ave. N. in North Minneapolis. The property was acquired from the Northside Residents Redevelopment Council, Inc. (NRRC) on Feb. 6 at a cost of \$1,125,000. The property comprises 2.19 acres and features a 21,374 square foot structure.

The existing building on the property will be renovated and house the university's newly created Urban Research and Outreach/Engagement Center (UROC). Expected to anchor the university's presence in the community, the center will coordinate and facilitate new and existing university research, outreach and engagement activities related to North Minneapolis, such as the University Northside Partnership, and provide residents easier access to university programs and services.

Three years ago, as part of launching its Urban Agenda, the university identified North Minneapolis as an urban neighborhood with which it could partner to enhance the area's social and economic environment. The University Northside Partnership (UNP) was created as a mechanism to convene the following partners: university representatives, community organizations and residents, and city and county government officials to see how they might leverage their resources to "build healthier families and stronger communities together" in North Minneapolis. The UNP sponsored a series of listening sessions to seek community input into the kinds of activities the UROC would include.

"The purchase of this strategic location on the Northside is the foundational piece of the university's vision to create new and support successful existing partnerships between the community and the university," said Robert Jones, senior vice president for system academic administration. Irma McClaurin, associate vice president for system academic administration and executive director of the Urban Research and Outreach/Engagement Center added, "by investing university resources to address real world issues like education, economic development, employment, poverty and health -- while affirming and supporting community strengths and assets -- together we hope to enhance the quality of life in North Minneapolis."

Current plans call for renovating the exterior of the building, including new landscaping, parking lot, roof, heating and air conditioning system, wood siding, store fronts and glass and painting.

The existing interior will be gutted and replaced. In total all exterior and interior renovations are expected to cost up to an additional \$2.1 million.

Renovation work will start after two remaining tenants have vacated the building over the next two months. It will take approximately three months to design and program and up to another six months to complete the renovations. Occupancy is tentatively scheduled for December 2008.