

Capitol Region Watershed District plans new HQ

By: [Brian Johnson](#) February 1, 2018 7:01 am 0



A design goal for this renovated MacQueen Equipment building in St. Paul is to put responsible water management on display at the new headquarters of the Capitol Region Watershed District. (Submitted rendering: MSR Design)

For its new headquarters, the Capitol Region Watershed District in St. Paul wanted a building that would explicitly show off its mission of managing and improving water resources in portions of the east metro.

District officials think they found just the right place in the former MacQueen Equipment building, a nearly 70-year-old, 18,000-square-foot industrial property at 595 Aldine St. in the Midway area of St. Paul.

In March, the [district](#) plans to kick off a \$7.2 million renovation that will turn the rectangular brick structure into a blueprint for responsible water management and sustainability, as well as an office and community gathering place.

“We didn’t want to just construct another standard office building,” said Mark Doneux, administrator of the Capitol Region Watershed District. About 16 district employees will work there to start, he said.

The district, which currently leases space at 1410 Energy Park Drive in St. Paul, acquired the property last year from Aldine Street Partners, an entity related to MacQueen Group Rentals of St. Paul.

The \$1.35 million transaction also included an adjoining property at 1736 Thomas Ave. The two properties were sold together as a package. The Thomas Avenue parcel will eventually be resold, said Jessica Bromelkamp, the district’s communications and outreach specialist.

MacQueen relocated last year to a new 45,000-square-foot property at 1125 Seventh St. E. in St. Paul. MacQueen provides parts and service for municipal equipment such as snow plows and street sweepers.

Built in 1949, the former MacQueen property includes a 14,538-square-foot office warehouse with 16-foot clear height and nine drive-in doors, and a 3,873-square-foot storage building.

Doneux said the building will accommodate the district's space needs for the next 20 years. Besides offices, the new location will offer community gathering spaces, a "pocket park," and a learning center with displays about the district's work.

From a green building standpoint, the project checks off a number of boxes. A solar array, high-performance building systems, natural lighting, and sustainable landscaping and water management are all in the mix.

The building itself will showcase the district's water management practices. One of the first things visitors will see in the lobby, for example, is a cistern that collects and reuses water from the rooftop.

Project architect Dan Vercruyse, of Minneapolis-based [MSR Design](#), said that's highly unusual because those features are usually hidden away. Besides the cistern itself, visitors will see the piping and other associated equipment to get an idea of how it works.

Vercruyse said the district's choice to reuse an existing building was, in itself, a nod toward environmental stewardship.

"They made the decision to take an existing brownfield building and take that on as a challenge to do a serious renovation," he said.

Doneux said the building has good bones, with solid walls, trusses and columns. Large garage doors will be converted to windows, bringing natural light into the interior and reducing the need for artificial lighting, he said.

The east side of the property will be transformed from a "paved industrial use" to a "very green and pedestrian-friendly environment," Doneux said. The pocket park in the northeast corner will receive storm water runoff.

"It will be a welcoming neighborhood amenity," Doneux said.

On the interior, the building will have "flexible" office spaces with an open floor plan and work stations designed for sitting or standing, Doneux said.

Vercruyse said the project is being designed to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design standards for sustainable design. The project team is aiming for Silver-level certification at minimum, or perhaps Gold, he said.

MSR Design has been working on the project for about a year, Doneux said. Kansas City-based JE Dunn was tapped for construction management after a competitive bidding process. Doneux said the project team is going through subcontractor bidding and procurement.

The goal is to have the building ready for occupancy in September, Doneux said.

Established in 1998, the Capitol Region Watershed District is responsible for managing, improving and protecting water resources in a 40-square-mile area that includes portions of Falcon Heights, Lauderdale, Maplewood, Roseville and St. Paul.

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