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Land rush



■ Homebuilders are scouring depressed markets for deals on ready-to-build lots as they prepare for a rebound.

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Remembering Kennedy



■ Edward Kennedy knew how to make a friend, both nationwide and in Minnesota.

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Lots of clunkers

■ The Cash for Clunkers program generated nearly 700,000 new car sales during the past month.

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CITY VS. NEIGHBORHOOD



Neighborhood activists Nancy Ward and Aaron Rubenstein at the site of a new apartment development in Uptown that they opposed. Both feel city representatives paid too little attention to area residents' concerns about the project's height. (Staff photo: Bill Klotz)

City zoning trumps small area plans, much to chagrin of citizen activists

BY BURL GILYARD
Staff Writer

A few years ago, when the local condo market was sizzling, developers floated numerous plans for redevelopment in the Uptown area of Minneapolis.

Projects on the drawing board included the Mozaic mixed-use/condo tower, the 2626 West Lake condo project near Lake Calhoun, the Edgewater condo development and an extensive overhauling of Calhoun Square, which called for adding more than 100 housing units to the site.

At the time, many Uptown area residents worried about the potential impact of the new projects would have on the neighborhood. Out of those concerns, the city and neighbors undertook work on the Uptown Small Area Plan, which was meant to guide future neighborhood development.

After 18 months in the pipeline, the city council approved the Uptown Small

"The city council has hoisted itself on its own petard by allowing neighborhood planners to actually think they have a legal say in development review. That is just not the case."

— Steve Minn, principal, Lupe Development Partners

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Griffin grows in tough times

BY BURL GILYARD
Staff Writer

The commercial real estate sector is experiencing its worst downturn in decades, but at Minneapolis-based Coldwell Banker Commercial Griffin Companies, president Bill Ostlund is presiding over a growth spurt of sorts.

Ostlund says the firm has added six new people since the first of the year. The latest additions, Dale Severson and Bob Bayer, joined as vice presidents in the firm's Special Asset Solutions division. Both Severson and Bayer work with court-appointed receiverships,



Bill Ostlund, center, is leading a growth spurt of sorts at CBC Griffin, thanks in part to the firm's hiring of bank-owned properties management experts Bob Bayer, left, and Dale Severson, right. (Staff photo: Bill Klotz)

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TWIN CITIES TENANT

- Office condos: Is now a good time to buy one?
- Renegotiating, shopping around, and other ways to make the most of the down market with your lease
- Clockwork Active Media digs its new digs - a remodeled auto garage in the Southeast Como neighborhood of Minneapolis

Griffin: Management of properties in receivership a booming business amid tough economy

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a booming business line amid the tough economy.

"It's strategic," Ostlund said of the new hires. "We've added folks in different areas of our team to respond to the shift in the market. It is strategic because we're serving more bank-owned kinds of assignments. You just have to have the right people in the right places to deploy."

Ostlund said CBC Griffin now has 24 brokers and 15 staffers in property management.

Ostlund acknowledges that things are sluggish on the brokerage side of the business: "Transactions are down considerably...no one can hide from that."

But for CBC Griffin, the flip side of that market reality has been a strong uptick in handling court-appointed receiver-

ships or otherwise managing bank-owned properties.

"Where we're finding new opportunities in delivering services to banks on

properties that they've taken back: the keys have been handed back," Ostlund said.

Severson and Bayer previously worked for, and helped

to found, Eagan-based Management Resolutions, a division of JBL Companies.

Noted Severson: "There's a lot of pressure on the banks right now. The banks simply can't handle all of their troubled assets and are looking to find some pro-

professionals with the expertise and the resources that we have to take that off their plate."

Severson said the wave of troubled properties is hitting every

market sector: office, industrial, retail and multi-family residential, and added that, "The receivership work will contin-

ue to grow for a period of time."

Since the beginning of 2007, CBC Griffin has worked on 130 assignments that were either bank-owned or where they were acting as court-appointed receiver. Severson and Bayer joined the firm at the beginning of August.

Griffin Companies is now celebrating its 40th year in business. In May 2008, the firm became an affiliate of Coldwell Banker Commercial. CBC Griffin remains locally owned and operated, but the deal strengthened the company by adding national reach and muscle to its toolbox.

"I've had to be thoughtful so I can deliver service around every asset class. We have a history of helping banks and acting as receivers. We're kind of on the front end of it," Ostlund said. "This isn't going to go away anytime soon."

"The receivership work will continue to grow for a period of time."

— Dale Severson, vice president, Special Asset Solutions division, CBC Griffin

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