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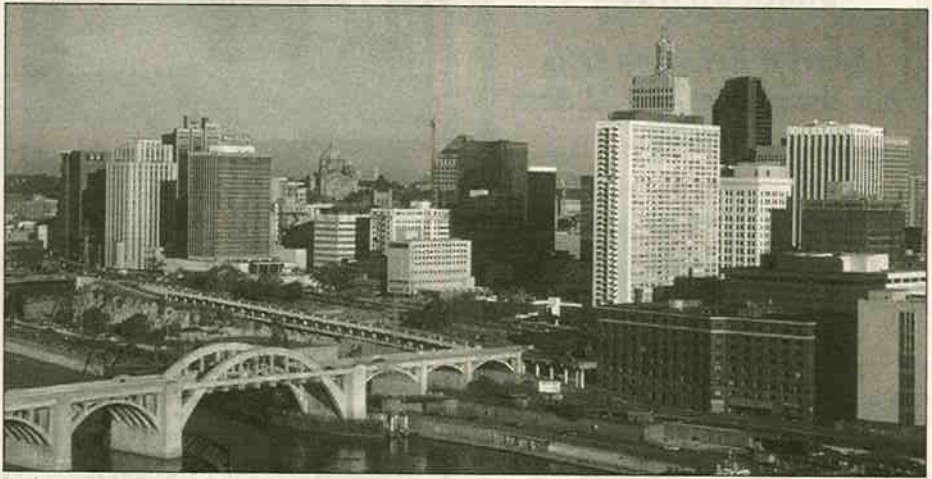
METROPOLITAN
LIVING GUIDE

CITY PAGES SPRING 2006

TAKE A PEEK BEHIND
TWIN CITIES REAL ESTATE

THE CALL OF THE CITY

A MIDDLE AGED COUPLE RETURNS TO THE CITY



Mark and Nancy Karason bought a home on the Snake River in Pine City four years ago with the idea it would serve as a great place to live within commuting distance of the Twin Cities. Weekends were filled with fly fishing, boating and lounging on the home's screened porch overlooking the river and the couple's two acres.

But the commute began to irritate and depress them. The lack of activities the town offered on weekends drove Mark to buy a small apartment in the Ramsey Hill neighborhood of St. Paul. He and Nancy used it as a weekend retreat away from the country, rather than the usual other way around.

Tired of driving and the lack of community, the Karasons started looking for a new home in the city. Mark took virtual online tours of several developments and trudded through a few Parade of Homes showcases before he heard a radio interview with Michael Lander, who developed Wacouta Commons off West Seventh Street in St. Paul. "He spoke about being a green builder and when I heard that I said 'this is someone you want to become successful, you want to put your money into a project of someone like that,'" He recalls.

Today the Karasons live in a condominium in Printer's Row, the newest building in the LanderGroup's Wacouta Commons project. Printer's Row consists of a two building condominium project located on Temperance Street. The east side of the street has a 42 unit, four story structure and across the street the next phase will be built later.

Mark Karason, who works in association management in St. Paul, loves living in the city. His wife, Nancy, now has an easy commute to her designer clothing store in downtown Minneapolis and he is only a short drive to work.

The unit costs \$375,000 for 1,500 square feet, a bit more room than the same price would have gotten in Minneapolis. "I think you get more bang for your buck," he says.

They liked the open layouts of the units, the heated underground parking and the low maintenance. "We can close it (the condo) up for a week without worrying about anything," he says.

The biggest appeal has been the neighborhood. They live in Lowertown, home to hundreds of artists and the St. Paul Farmer's Market. The city's museums, clubs, entertainment venues and trails along the Mississippi River are all within walking distance.

Being in an emerging new community is another attraction. "We wanted to be part of downtown St. Paul and we really liked the fact that this is a developing neighborhood with a great diversity of people," says Karason. "We feel as though we're part of a new community."

Mark and his wife see themselves as part of the fabric of a community, something they never sensed in Pine City. "We're both really behind the idea that there's an urban melting pot thing going on and how we need everyone to get together and be part of some larger thing," he explains. "It's a feeling you get living downtown that we never felt in the hinterlands."