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Job-trainer Summit Academy expanding to east metro

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Summit Academy OIC, a nonprofit that offers job training and other educational services in poor neighborhoods, is expanding into St. Paul with plans to open its first location there this fall.

The organization's growth is prompted partly by the closure of East Metro OIC, a vocational school in St. Paul that shut down last year, said Louis King, Summit's CEO. East Metro's exit left a void for job-training services in St. Paul. It also presented an opportunity for Minneapolis-based Summit, which primarily trains people for jobs in construction and



King

health care.

St. Paul is likely to see plenty of building activity in the coming years, especially with construction of the University Avenue light-rail line, King said.

Summit has played a key role in matching minority-owned contractors up with builders of major projects in the Twin Cities, including Target Field and TCF Bank Stadium.

Summit already is transporting former East Metro OIC students to its

Minneapolis location. But the organization's leaders believe it's important to have a permanent location in St. Paul, King said. "The key to our success is integrating into the community very early on."

While East Metro OIC's offices were on University Avenue, Summit will scout for space in East St. Paul. King expects the location to initially employ about 10 people.

A struggle to secure funding forced East Metro to shut down. However, King is confident that Summit has the resources to succeed. "Everything's a risk, but we like to believe that we have very smart people who are conservative in their forecast."

Summit has lined up about \$400,000 in state and federal funding and expects to generate up to \$200,000 in revenue through tuition.

Overall, Summit's success in Minneapolis bodes well for its entrance into St. Paul, said Mari Bongiovanni, executive director of the East Side Neighborhood Development Co., which helped recruit Summit to expand there.

Summit is more savvy about marketing and bringing people together than was East Metro OIC, she said. "I think [Summit is] poised to connect many more dots."

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