

## Adopt a Planter partnership is

# BLOOMING

## Downtown beautification a top Envision 2020 priority

RETAIL EFFORTS: City budget cuts put annuals in jeopardy until retailers stepped up with watering cans

By Edie Schmierbach

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Purple, pink and white petunias have been added to the industrial landscape of Minnesota Iron and Metal. The Riverfront Drive business is one of 15 to enter a “flower-power” partnership with the city’s parks department.

“ They supplied the big cement boxes and the flowers — we supply the watering,” said Lisa Geller, coowner of Urban Escape salon, also on Riverfront.

Beautification for the downtown area was a top priority during Envision 2020 meetings, recalled Malda Farnham.

Farnham, constant gardener for a Mankato park near her home, had an idea of the amount of work required on hot, dry summer days to keep blossoms beautiful in the planters. “I suggested we needed additional volunteers,” she said.

Budget cuts had dried up funds to maintain the tender annuals provided by the city.

It could have been a no dollars-no flowers situation, but the neighborhood’s retailers stepped up to provide the man hours and watering cans.

Farnham agreed to stop by the shops near where the planters — about 6-by-3 foot — had been placed and discuss caretaking arrangements.

So far, water duties for Abby Porisch have been light. “I’ve only had to a couple of times early on,” she said. “Now, I usually just water in the morning.”

Porisch, office manager at Minnesota Iron and Metal, also serves as a plant watchdog. She can contact the city if plants get ripped out and need to be replaced.

The Adopt a Planter program is a terrific example of government and business working together to enhance the community, said Tami Paulsen, chairwoman of the City Center Partnership’s Aesthetics and Livability committee and director of business at Paulsen Architects.

Paulsen hopes the pilot plan can be expanded next year.

Urban Escape’s Geller offered an endorsement for the partnership.

“We recently remodeled, and the flowers add to that newness and freshness. We really enjoy them.”

*“ They supplied the big cement boxes and the flowers — we supply the watering.”*

LISA GELLER, co-owner of Urban Escape salon on Riverfront Drive

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Pat Christman

Abby Porisch on Wednesday afternoon watered flowers planted in front of her workplace. Minnesota Iron and Metal is one of 15 Riverfront Drive businesses participating in an adopt-a-planter/city beautification program.

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