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## **HCMC, RiverCentre move forward with stimulus projects to reduce energy use**

*by Bob Geiger Staff Writer*

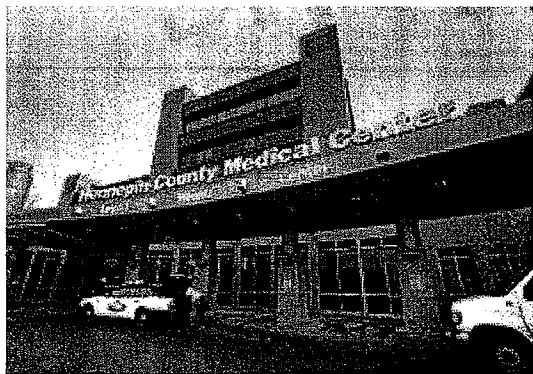


Photo: Bill Klotz

### ***Updated.***

Economic stimulus money is expected to yield big benefits in Minneapolis and St. Paul, where downtown developments are slated to receive energy makeovers.

The Hennepin County Board on Tuesday approved hiring engineering firm Karges-Faulconbridge Inc. (KFI) to determine how Hennepin County Medical Center (HCMC) utility costs can be pared by up to \$1 million a year.

Meanwhile, energy-efficient lighting installed at the St. Paul RiverCentre parking ramp is expected to slash the ramp's annual electricity use by 47 percent, saving about \$66,000, as part of St. Paul's efforts to cut energy costs in downtown buildings. ✓

The larger of the projects is HCMC. The sprawling, 2 million-square-foot hospital costs between \$7.9 million and \$8.2 million a year to heat and cool, said Thomas Bravo, director of facilities services and life safety for HCMC and family medical center clinics.

St. Paul-based KFI is expected to receive up to \$56,100 for its work on the energy-conservation planning project, for which other firms bid as much as \$168,500.

The firm's charge for the project, funded with \$1.1 million in stimulus money from the U.S. Department of Energy, is to analyze lighting, heating and ductwork at five HCMC buildings, a parking ramp and an adjacent Hyperbaric Chamber building.

"We're a 24/7 operation. We've got patients here all the time," said Bravo.

The county is hiring KFI to get the most out of the project, he said. According to county documents, the project could pare HCMC energy costs by up to 12.2 percent by reducing the amount of electricity, steam and chilled water used to heat and air-condition the center.

Energy use could be reduced by using energy-efficient fluorescent light bulbs that require fewer ballasts, which regulate voltage but consume energy.

Bravo said another area being examined is heating and air-conditioning ductwork. Energy could be saved by reducing airflow to parts of HCMC that don't need as much circulation as others.

A veteran of similar energy-conservation projects at Allina and HealthEast hospitals, Bravo joined HCMC about the same time the medical center performed a "re-commissioning" study — a catchphrase government officials use for energy-efficiency efforts.

The St. Paul RiverCentre parking ramp lighting effort is the first project to use some of the \$2.8 million in stimulus money awarded the city in late 2009.

More than 900 lighting fixtures were replaced as part of the \$126,000 project, which combined just over \$44,000 in stimulus money, a \$73,000 energy-efficiency rebate from Xcel Energy, and nearly \$9,000 in RiverCentre Capital Funds to complete.

St. Paul plans to use more than \$1 million of stimulus money to install energy-efficient lighting and make other energy improvements at recreation centers, libraries and other publicly owned buildings.