



Bill Buth

50th Anniversary Celebration

Greater Saint Paul BOMA is excited to be celebrating its 50th Anniversary during 2021. As part of this celebration, we'll be visiting with Bill Buth, BOMA's original President, and noted historian of the organization's lore. Joe Spartz caught up with Bill in December.

Spartz: Hey Bill. Thanks for taking the time to share with me your memories of St. Paul BOMA. I want to talk with you for a few minutes about the very early years of the association. St. Paul BOMA was founded in 1971. When did you start working with the organization?

Buth: I started with St. Paul BOMA in 1974. For the first few years, they had a part time person running the association. In 1974, the BOMA Board felt it was time to hire a full time Executive Director.

Spartz: How did that process work?

Buth: The hiring process was run by Gene Rancone, board member and owner of the Northern Federal Building, circa 1973, which was eventually renamed, Ecolab University. While I didn't have commercial real estate experience, the board had faith that I could get the job done, so he hired me. I had no job description and a sparse office in Rancone's new building. I had a desk, a chair, a typewriter and phone, and that was it.

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Spartz: Do you know what was the motivation to establish St. Paul BOMA in 1971?

Buth: Downtown St. Paul was changing, and commercial building owners weren't being heard. They needed a voice. Buildings felt that by creating a BOMA affiliate in St. Paul, this would help them to have an advocate for their interests.

Spartz: What did the membership look like in those early years?

Buth: It was all downtown buildings. There were 5 buildings in 1974. The first Service Providers came on in 1985.

Spartz: What were some key accomplishments in the first decade or so?

Buth: We had some real solid initiatives. Probably the biggest was helping to create a new energy system in downtown St Paul to replace the N.S.P hot water system. Watt Davidson, owner of the Pioneer Midwest Endicott Building, came to me to encourage BOMA to help make this a reality. BOMA also worked to get SPPD patrolling the skyways. We led the effort to get AEDs installed (Automated External Defibrillator). And we also pushed for skyways to have automated door openers to help disabled individuals.

Watch for more conversations with Bill Buth in upcoming 2021 newsletters as we continue to look back on BOMA's history over the past 50 years.