

Group setting stage for bingo production

A group of well-heeled actors and businesspeople are raising money for an interactive theater production in St. Paul, a sort of Hey City Theater for the east side.

The investor group, launched by an alum of the long-running *Tony & Tina's Wedding* in Minneapolis, has so far raised about one-third of the \$150,000 needed to produce the new show, *We Gotta Bingo!*

The bingo production has already drawn stakes from developer Rich Pakonen, whose St.

Paul firm, Pak Properties, owns the Lowry Building, where the show will be staged; Father John Malone, a lawyer and pastor of Assumption Catholic Church in St. Paul; and Chet Taylor, former chief legal counsel for Stockwalk Corp. in Minneapolis.

Bill Collins, a veteran of the original run of *Tony & Tina's Wedding* and managing director of the St. Paul-based Actors Theater of Minnesota, said the show deliberately cast a wide net for investors when it launched its private placement.

"Each investor becomes a sort of marketing tool for the show, so it's good to have a diverse base," he said.

Pakonen is helping to revamp the Lowry site for the theater and adjust rent depending on ticket sales. Victory Ramps is offering guaranteed parking (a crucial factor during hockey

season, now that there will be one) and is adding a new skyway entrance to the building.

The show combines dining with lots of interaction between cast and audience during the performance. Those ingredients were part of the *Tony & Tina's* model, which paid off handsomely for its investors.

The story follows the story of two small churches, one Irish and one Italian, forced to hold joint bingo sessions.



Mark Reilly

Staff writer

WE GOTTA BINGO!

City: St. Paul

Top official: Bill Collins

Business: Theater production

Founded: 2005

Web site: www.wegottabingo.com