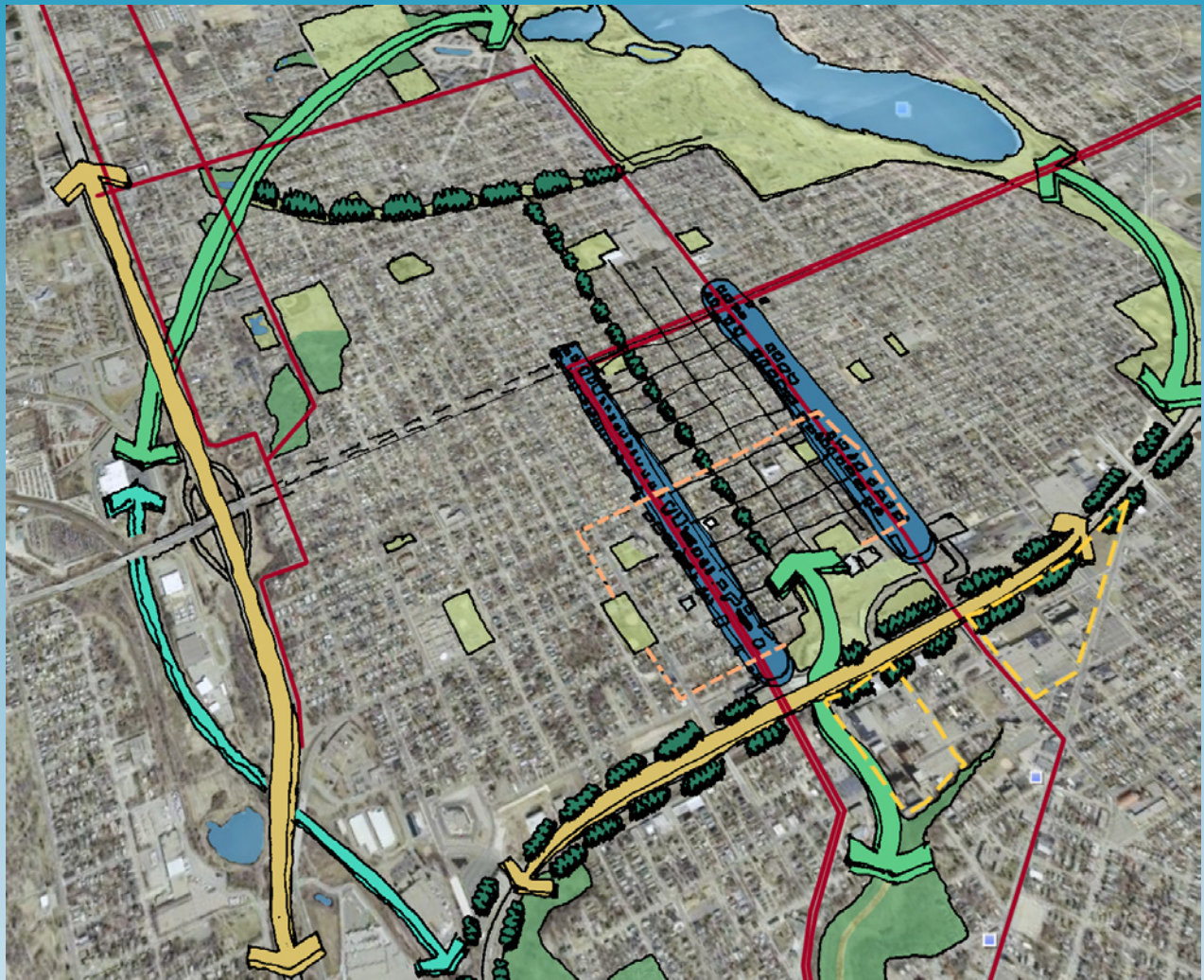


REVISIONING SAINT PAUL'S EAST SIDE

CREATING A WALKABLE TOWN CENTER



Urban Greenewal: Revitalizing communities through “green” and sustainable strategies

Prepared by

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Introduction



Resident housing workshop

The Payne Phalen neighborhood has been disproportionately impacted by the mortgage foreclosure crisis. With the second largest number of foreclosed homes in Minnesota and the highest number of vacant properties in Saint Paul, some blocks have seen as many as twelve vacant homes, while the commercial district has struggled with increasing business failures. With so many vacancies, the market appeal of the neighborhood for new home buyers has diminished, while zoning and building code barriers complicate the reuse of available commercial properties.



Historic commercial core



Quality residential structures

Prompted by these challenges, the residents and business community in the area bounded by Phalen Boulevard, Edgerton Street, Lawson Avenue, and Arcade Street, have come together since early 2008 to create a new vision for the neighborhood's future. Working with East Side Neighborhood Development Company (ESNDC), over 160 residents and business people from the area participated in a process of community engagement, community-based research, and planning workshops. The outcome of this work is a plan to begin a creative reversal in downward trends. Despite limited resources, the desired impact could be achieved by concentrating a variety of resources in a few blocks.

This document suggests a demonstration project that would test new methods and financing, with a mix of residential and commercial strategies on select blocks, to both revitalize the commercial district and re-establish a desirable residential neighborhood. Woven intrinsically into this renewal is the commitment to a "green" and sustainable future.



Payne Avenue farmers market

Community Assets



Vacant buildings (red), vacant lots (yellow), in foreclosure (blue), or for sale (green).

Existing Conditions

The section of Payne Avenue between Phalen Boulevard and Lawson Avenue encompasses the more dense historic section of the commercial district and some of the hardest hit residential blocks. These blocks offer a rich mix of sought after community building assets and provide a solid base for a rejuvenated community.

- The residential neighborhoods offer affordable home-ownership and rental opportunities
- The multi-ethnic commercial district offers a rich mix of businesses and a variety of daily needs
- Parks, open space and recreational opportunities are close by
- The neighborhood is well served by bus transit



Park and open space in green, transit in red, job creation in yellow, Invest Saint Paul in orange

Neighborhood Assets

The Payne-Phalen neighborhood offers a rich mix of sought after community building assets. These provide a solid base for a rejuvenated community.

- Parks and open space include Lake Phalen, Bruce Vento Trail, Heritage Park, Wheelock Parkway and numerous neighborhood parks
- Community institutions include Metro State University, and Arlington branch library
- Redevelopable land for job creation include the old Hamm's brewery site, 3M site, and other sites along Phalen Boulevard
- Located a few minutes from downtown and freeway access
- The walkable commercial areas of Payne and Arcade Avenues
- Focus area includes 3 public schools; J.A. Johnson Achievement and Elementary, Farnsworth Cleveland Junior High, and City Academy Senior High Charter School



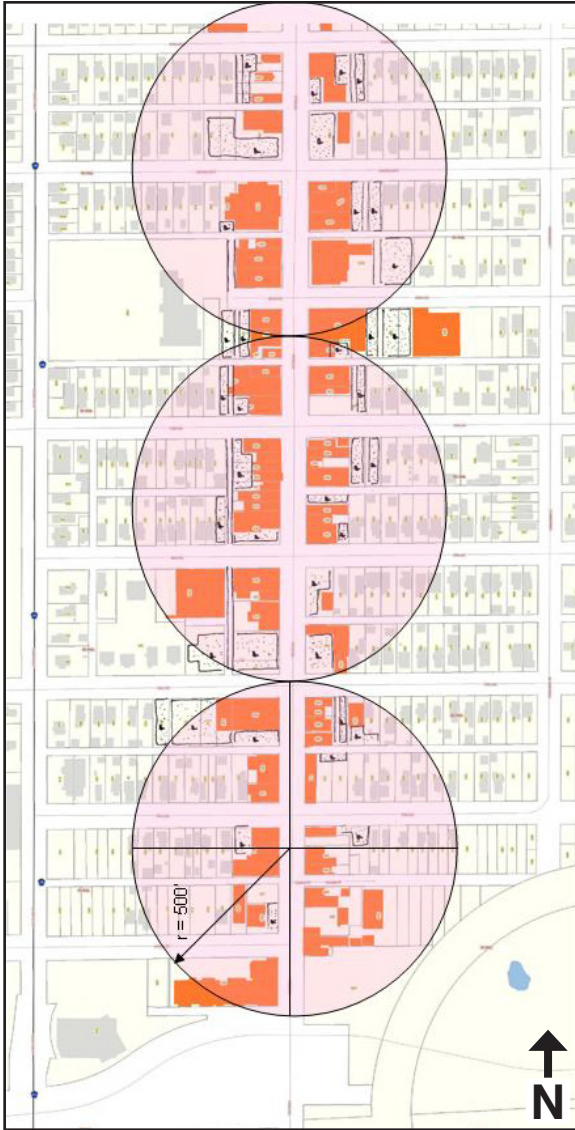
35W and Phalen Boulevard in yellow, connecting trail system in green arrows, commercial areas in blue

Improving Community Connections

By making a few strategic connections, the Payne-Phalen neighborhood can become more connected to the rest of the city and comprehensive in weaving together its park and open space systems.

- Improve Maryland Avenue from 35W to Payne Avenue
- Improve the Payne Avenue connection at East Seventh Street
- Plan for the opportunities to extend the University Avenue light rail system to Phalen Boulevard
- Make additional connections to the existing trail systems, creating a "grand round"
- Create parkways and "green streets" to connect parks and community institutions with pedestrian and bicycle oriented streets.

Work to Date



Recommended conceptual shared parking strategy



For sale buildings

The East Side Neighborhood Development Company has developed a series of investigations regarding the neighborhood's present conditions and circumstances. Each of these community-based workshops and their participatory approach informed the development of the plan.

Resident Workshops

This series of workshops evaluated the existing housing stock and made recommendations for rehabilitation and identified properties for redevelopment. Projects for improving the curb appeal have also been identified and include; front porch lighting, new fencing, yard planting, pocket parks, community gardens and an East Side Pride paint program.

Commercial Parking Study

This effort examined the on and off-street parking conditions for the Payne Avenue commercial district from East Seventh Street to Maryland Avenue. Recommendations have been made to improve the shared parking opportunities in the district and existing parking lots, and to consider re-zoning the neighborhood to a "Traditional Neighborhood Development" zone to allow for more flexibility with the requirements for commercial area parking.

Commercial Building Assessment Survey and Evaluation Study

This survey examined for sale, vacant and under-utilized commercial buildings along Payne Avenue between Phalen Boulevard and Maryland Avenue. While many of the buildings had minor deficiencies, the majority of the buildings can continue to be contributing structures to the commercial district.

Current Projects "In the Works"

The first section of re-paving Payne Avenue is scheduled for the summer of 2010 and would include new sidewalk, curb, pedestrian-scale lighting and street tree replacement. There is planning underway for new development in the southeast corner of Payne and Maryland Avenues. There is a new facility at Heritage Park and a neighborhood connection to the Bruce Vento regional open space system could be provided.

The Need to Work Comprehensively

Each of these efforts will require its own set of tasks. The critical issue is that the rebuilding and transformation of the community is done in a comprehensive and integrated manner.

The community has the opportunity to improve neighborhood connections to the rest of the City, to natural systems, and between the residents and the business community. Taken together these initiatives will provide the neighborhood a view to the future.

Creating an Eco-Community

Opportunity for a new Community Focal Point

The blocks between Payne and Arcade Avenues offer a great opportunity to create a new town center to serve the East Side.

- Situated between two commercial streets, well served by transit, four blocks apart
- Housing foreclosures present opportunities for higher density development to better support the commercial areas
- Re-create Greenbriar Street as a high-amenity pedestrian / bicycle street connecting Wheelock Parkway and the Bruce Vento regional trail system
- Close proximity to newly developing employment opportunities
- Strong connections to regional open space systems
- Centrally located to neighborhood parks and institutions



Payne Avenue to the left, Greenbriar (green)

What a Walkable Town Center Might Be

A high-quality public realm is at the heart of great cities and neighborhoods. These environments are focused on the experience of the pedestrian, and include the following elements:

- Commercial centers that provide most of one's daily needs
- Storefronts that are welcoming; windows open to the street
- Residences that add life to the street with porches and inviting landscape
- Open spaces that are tranquil and inviting
- Streetscape elements that provide scale, safety and texture
- Interwoven connections to parks and regional open space systems
- Access to transit and a diversity of transportation options



Friendly outdoor spaces encourage people to gather and socialize

Creating a Sustainable Neighborhood

Two key ingredients to creating sustainable places are to build with enduring qualities that retain their value over time, and to reduce use of fossil fuels by protecting and enhancing natural systems and incorporating renewable energy strategies.

- Reinvest in existing building stock when feasible
- Reinvest and modify existing public infrastructure systems
- Investigate district scale systems for energy supplies and waste systems
- Increase energy efficiency in new and existing buildings
- Provide equal solar access for every building
- Retain and cleanse stormwater runoff
- Replant trees to densify the urban forest
- Reclaim creeks and improve watershed systems



Explore the use of renewable energy systems at a district scale

Residential and Commercial Initiatives

Residential Revitalization

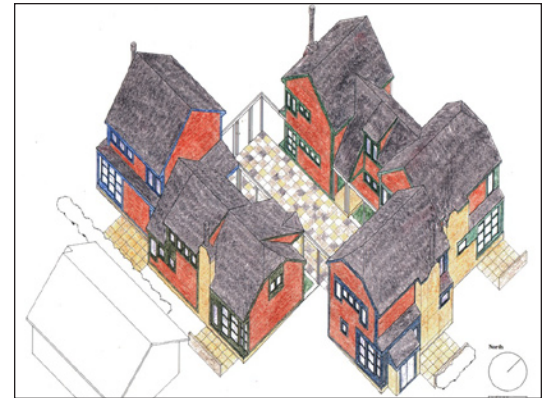
ESNDC's housing committee engaged with area residents to develop strategies which address the abundance of vacant and foreclosed properties. Project components include:

- **Property evaluation** - evaluate existing properties for the potential to remodel or redevelopment
- **Remodel / Rehab** - select high quality or contributing structures for remodeling
- **Redevelopment** - identify opportunities for higher density development adjacent to the commercial area
- **Weatherization** - use Federal and State funds for window replacement, increased insulation
- **Energy improvements** - explore other energy saving strategies such as daylighting, water use, and updated appliances
- **Curb appeal** - develop projects to improve the curb appeal such as a new fences and retaining walls, reclaimed front porches, exterior lighting, and yard plantings

The revitalization project would seek to repair, rebuild and revitalize the residential portion of the block.



Retain and improve housing of value



Develop new forms of housing to increase livability and density

Commercial District Revitalization

Recently, ESNDC's *Commercial Development Action Committee* completed a commercial area parking study and a survey and assessment of vacant and for sale commercial buildings. As a result several key recommendations have been made for improving the commercial district.

- **Redevelopment** - opportunities to redevelop vacant or underutilized commercial buildings
- **Energy improvements** - benefits from implementing a weatherization and energy systems improvements program
- **Storefront improvements** - remodel existing storefronts where needed to improve image and pedestrian realm
- **Second floor housing** - opportunities to develop residential space above existing retail space
- **Parking lot improvements** - opportunities to improve commercial parking including: improved signage, lot layout, maintenance, and control of stormwater runoff

The revitalization project would seek to renew, reuse and relight the commercial portion of the block.



Improve the historic building stock



Sketch of housing above commercial property

Infrastructure and Public Realm Initiatives



Improvements would include; district heating and cooling (red), solar (yellow) and stormwater management (blue)



Bioswales to retain and treat stormwater runoff



Improve the public realm



Create new places to socialize

Infrastructure Improvements

The project would demonstrate innovative ways to provide energy and heating to both the residential and commercial uses, along with best management practices for stormwater.

- **District heating/cooling system** - create district-wide heating and cooling systems to serve both the commercial and residential portions of the block.
- **Solar hot water and electric** - use the flat roofs of the existing commercial buildings to create solar installations.
- **Green alleys** - use the existing alley right of way to install the geothermal distribution system for the residences and replace the alley with porous paving and adjacent rain gardens to manage stormwater runoff
- **Green parking lots** - improve with shade and adjacent rain gardens
- **Stormwater runoff** - implement rain gardens, vegetable gardens, and vegetated bioswales to retain and treat stormwater

The revitalization project would seek to reinvent, reconsider and reinterpret the infrastructure portion of the block.

Public Realm Improvements

A vibrant community needs an inviting public realm. The project would include a series of projects for improving the pedestrian environment.

- **Lighting** - new street, alley and parking lot lighting with “cut-off” fixtures to reduce light pollution
- **Park connections** - establish Greenbriar as a “green street” connection from the residential neighborhood to Heritage Park
- **Parking lots** - improve parking signage and expand bicycle parking
- **Reforestation** - replanting of street and alley trees for shade and as a key component to managing stormwater
- **Sidewalks** - replacement to improve the walking experience
- **Public places** - develop new gathering places and outdoor commercial opportunities
- **Alleys** - improve the alley to create an additional pedestrian oriented outdoor space

The revitalization project would seek to replant, re-socialize and re-connect the public realm portion of the block.

Implementation

In discussions with the residents and businesses, a proposal has developed to approach the revitalization of the neighborhood, with a block by block transformation, in a comprehensive and sustainable manner. These projects will include existing buildings, new development, infrastructure improvements and improvements to the public realm. Currently blocks are being evaluated for their potential to address these issues. In addition, work plans are being prepared for 2010 and 2011.



Typical block transformation would include: residential remodel (yellow), Potential new residential (blue), Commercial improvements (orange), Infrastructure and public realm improvements (green).

Block Transformations

The proposed project combines existing and new programs and funding sources to redevelop mixed-use blocks to create a new model for redevelopment on the East Side. The project components include:

- **Residential remodelling** - reinvest in structures with a potential service life of an additional fifty to one-hundred years.
- **New housing potential** - rebuild on lots to increase density and provide new models for urban housing
- **Commercial improvements** - update the commercial properties to improve the customer base
- **Infrastructure** - develop small district systems to address block heating and energy use, and develop better methods to treat and retain stormwater
- **Public realm** - improve the streetscapes to address livability issues

Next Steps

Block and Building Assessments

Workshops will be held with residents and building owners to develop block redevelopment projects.

Energy Audits

Commercial and residential energy audits will be offered during the spring and summer of 2010.

Water Quality

Discussions will be held with the Capital Region Watershed District to identify potential storm water management projects.

Curb Appeal

Community initiated projects through the East Side Pride Program will include; urban gardening, paint the pavement, pocket parks, garden contest, clean-ups, Valspar Paint Program, A Brush with Kindness and Green Fair.

Park Connections

Workshops will be held with residents to discuss a walk and bicycle connection to the new Heritage Park and the Bruce Vento trail system.

Payne Avenue Repaving

Public meetings will be held by the Public Works Department to discuss the upcoming street renovation project.

Commercial Building Redevelopment

Discussions will be held with various business owners to pursue development of vacant and underutilized buildings along Payne Avenue.

Residential Infill Strategies

Workshops will be held with residents to discuss and propose infill development guidelines.