

The District Five Planning Council: A History of its Impact in Payne-Phalen

Conducted on behalf of
District 5 Planning Council

Prepared by
Rubrick Biegon, Undergraduate Research Assistant
University of Minnesota

September 2002

September 2002

Neighborhood Planning for Community Revitalization

(NPCR) supported the work of the authors of this report, but has not reviewed it for publication.

The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and is not necessarily endorsed by NPCR.

NPCR is coordinated by the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs at the University of Minnesota. NPCR is supported by grants from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's East Side Community Outreach Partnership Center, the McKnight Foundation, Twin Cities Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), the St. Paul Foundation, and The St. Paul.

Neighborhood Planning for Community Revitalization

330 Hubert H. Humphrey Center

301 - 19th Avenue South

Minneapolis, MN 55455

phone: 612-625-1020

e-mail: nelso193@umn.edu

website: <http://www.npcr.org>

Table of Contents

Introduction	5
A History of the Planning Council's Work	7-24
<i>Needs Assessment Survey</i>	
<i>The Intensified Treatments Areas</i>	
<i>Housing and Redevelopment Authority</i>	
<i>Lake Phalen Water Quality Restoration</i>	
<i>The District Five Planning Council and Trees</i>	
<i>Recycling</i>	
<i>District Five as an Outreach for City Officials</i>	
<i>Arlington Hills Library</i>	
<i>District Five and the East Side Neighborhood Development Company</i>	
<i>Crime Prevention</i>	
<i>Community Gardening</i>	
<i>Neighborhood/County Composting Project</i>	
<i>The Swede Hollow Buying Club</i>	
<i>Shoreline Work on Lake Phalen</i>	
<i>East Side Improvement Coalition</i>	
<i>Neighborhood Clean-Up and Beautification</i>	
<i>The Gillette Site Saga</i>	
<i>The Johnson Achievement Plus School</i>	
<i>Youth Programs</i>	
<i>The Payne Reliever</i>	
<i>Phalen Corridor Initiative</i>	
Conclusion	25

Acknowledgements

Thanks to the NPCR staff and everyone who granted interviews. Special thanks to Alex-Edmund DaHinten for his guidance, Jenny Keyser for her emails, and Andrea Hoekman for the gracious use of her car.

A Note on Methodology

The following was compiled based on a number of interviews done with persons who have been involved with District Five, in one capacity or another, since the organization's inception. Personal accounts were checked, confirmed, corrected, and expanded through archival research done in the Eastsider, East Side Review, Minneapolis/St. Paul Star Tribune, and St. Paul Pioneer Press newspapers, and through the organization's internal documents.

Introduction

St. Paul's Fifth Planning District

With the impetus of the federal government, the City of St. Paul, Minnesota's state capital, divided itself into 17 citizen participation planning districts in the mid-1970s. District 5, located on the city's near northeast side, is the largest in terms of population. The area is bounded by Interstate 35E on the west, Larpenteur Avenue on the north, and the Ramsey County Regional Trail on the south and east (following the old Burlington Northern Railroad tracks and English Street). Known as Payne-Phalen, it has a number of major thoroughfares, including Payne, Arcade, and Edgerton running north/south, and Maryland and Larpenteur running east/west. The district contains a number of important St. Paul localities, including (most of) Lake Phalen and surrounding Regional Park, Swede Hollow Park, Johnson High School, and a historic stretch of Payne Avenue.

In recent decades district 5 has been home to a host of neighborhood and community groups and organizations, the majority of which are still in operation. Referenced frequently throughout the following discussion, they have had a profound effect on Payne-Phalen. They have also strongly impacted the work of the District Five Planning Council, and the ways in which District Five has shaped developments in the area. These organizations include the Phalen Area Community Council (PACC), the Payne Minnehaha Community Council (PMCC), the Lower East Side Association (LESA), the Payne Arcade Business Association (PABA), the East Side Neighborhood Development Company (ESNDC), Merrick Community Center, the Case Payne Community Council, the East Side Arts Council, and others.

The Winds of Change

The composition of the Payne-Phalen community has changed drastically in the years since the formation of district 5. According to the 1980 census figures, at that time there were 25,749 people residing in the area. 24,507 of them were white- over 95 percent. The near Eastside is known for its ethnic roots, a reputation reflected in the population figures. A large number of area residents identify as having German, Swedish, Polish, Irish, and Italian ancestry. By 1980, though, only about 3.5 percent of Payne-Phalen was foreign-born. The 1980 census revealed that 56 percent of area men and 48 percent of area women were married at that time, and that about 66 percent of households were family households. In 1980 about 10 percent of community members lived at or below the poverty level, with about 30 percent of those under the age of 18.

Numbers for 1990 reveal considerable changes- trends that continued and strengthened in the years between 1990 and 2000. There were 31,531 people in district 5 in 2000, representing a growth of 18 percent since 1990, compared to 5.5 percent in St. Paul as a whole. There was growth in all age categories except one- elderly adults. The statistics showed dramatic increase in the amount of school-age children, and especially in the overall racial and cultural diversity of the neighborhood. Between 1990 and 2000 the white population decreased from 82 percent to 49 percent of total residents. The Asian population grew from 7 percent to 24 percent. Both the Black and Hispanic populations grew from 5 to 11 percent, while American Indians declined slightly from two to one percent of the total. About 76 percent of children attending public school from the area are children of color. There are more persons per household now than in the immediate past and the district's vacancy rate, as one would expect, has plummeted from 6.6

percent to 3.7 percent. Following many national trends, crime rates dropped substantially from 1996 to 2000. District 5 has more violent crime, but less property crime, than St. Paul as a whole.

The numbers above illustrate a recent revitalization in the impact of immigration on the Payne-Phalen area. Whereas previous waves involved mainly immigrants from European countries, the contemporary influx is composed primarily of newcomers from Southeast Asia and Latin America, with increasing numbers of East Africans, as well. Hence the proliferation in heterogeneity. Other macro-level forces have drastically impacted Payne-Phalen in recent decades. The area suffered a number of major economic blows in the '80s and '90s. In 1984 the Whirlpool Company moved its St. Paul production to Indiana. Its factory on Arcade was closed, leaving 740 local residents jobless. The brewery on Payne and Minnehaha, originally belonging to Hamm's before being operated by Stroh's, shut down for good in 1997, costing around 365 jobs. Also in 1997, 165 Eastside jobs were lost with the closing of the Canon Conveyor plant on Johnson Parkway. In 2001 Globe Building Materials (next to the 3M plant on East Seventh Street) closed, leaving 400 employees out of work. In February of 2002 3M announced that it was going to cut back production at its Eastside factory by one third. As a result, 500 more jobs left the area.

Within the last couple of years St. Paul's near East Side has enjoyed a bit of an industrial renaissance. Most of the renewal stems from the Phalen Corridor Initiative, which is part of a broad citywide strategy shaped by the St. Paul Port Authority. New activity has generally revolved around the Williams Hill Business Center, a 27-acre industrial park developed on once-polluted land a few blocks northeast of downtown (just east of district 5). Six new factories, that employ a total of 653 workers making average wages of \$14.34 an hour, located there in the years 1999 through 2001.

The Internal Happenings of District Five

This paper explores the history of the District Five Planning Council's impact on the Payne-Phalen area. Therefore, the organization will be treated as a whole rather than as a conglomeration of personalities. Individual names have been purposefully left out. Credit is assigned to the Planning Council as a separate entity, even in instances when one or a few individuals, either staff or board members, were wholly or largely responsible for a project's success (or failure). There is no doubt that personalities have had a tremendous impact on the organization's history, for better or for worse. This can be said of most organizations, especially those based in the community and at the grassroots level. That being said, the focus of this examination is on the ways in which a particular organization has interacted with its constituents, that is, the Payne-Phalen community, as well as other organizations and local government. Inquiry and description of the role of specific people is both beyond the scope of this paper and external to its main concerns.

It should be pointed out that District Five has persevered through a number of controversies. Mainly minor in scope, they generally did not expand beyond the realm of community and neighborhood organizers in and around district 5. For a period of time, though, the controversies did give the Planning Council an image that negatively hampered its ability to do its job to the fullness of its capabilities. Often it was personalities and personal differences that seemed to fuel the conflicts that would come to give the Council a bad name through much of the 1990s. This was a significant part of the 1990 controversy, in which the staff ousted the board president, as well as the most recent scandal, in 2001, in which District Five temporarily lost its funding after hiring a controversial local activist as its new executive director. The

Planning Council was mired in bad press for much of 1996, due to allegations of harassment on the part of a board member by someone on the staff. The year 1997 saw District Five bogged down by a check signing controversy, in which staff had been found illegally authorizing their own pay checks. Because the controversies affected District Five's ability to impact the community, they merit a brief mention. Consistent with the above discussion, however, further detail will not be added, as the events revolved around individuals. The scandals stemmed not from District Five per se, but from those persons involved with the organization.

Furthermore, other internal happenings of the District Five Planning Council, such as its committee structure and the elections that provided it with its volunteer board, will also not be addressed in detail. Suffice it to say that District Five is composed of a number of board members that live or own businesses in the district and are elected by members of the district. This number has changed over the years, and so has the Planning Council's paid staff, those who work to carry out the community dictates made manifest by the board. The number and scope of committees within the Planning Council has varied considerably as well, evolving as seen fit by staff and board members. Though these changes have been an important part of the history of the District Five Planning Council, they are not relevant to purposes here.

A History of the Planning Council's Work

The Creation of the District Five Planning Council

In May of 1976, the City Council of St. Paul, through an open public forum held at the East Consolidated School in Payne-Phalen, recognized the District Five Planning Council as the official planning body for the newly restructured district. With the inception of the Community Development Block Grant program in the mid-1970s, St. Paul was divided into 17 planning districts, each with their own council. The original boundaries for district 5 encompassed the area from I-35E on the west to the Burlington Northern railroad tracks on the east, and from Larpenteur Ave. on the north to Case Ave. on the South. The City decided in 1976 to expand the southern border to include residents south of Case and the entire Railroad Island neighborhood in the district, forming its present constitution. This somewhat controversial step was settled through the establishment of an Ad Hoc Council that was comprised of representatives from Payne-Phalen's preexisting neighborhood and community organizations. Officers from the Phalen Area Community Council (PACC), the Payne Minnehaha Community Council (PMCC), the Lower East Side Association (LESA), and the Payne Arcade Business Association (PABA), as well as approximately 100 members of the community who attended an Ad Hoc meeting mediated by then State Rep. Bruce Vento, came to the consensus that the area south of Case should remain with district five.

The purpose of the Planning Council in 1976 was twofold: to develop a comprehensive long range plan for the district, and to submit proposals to the city for Community Development Funds to be spent on public improvements in the area. The General District Planning process was to benefit neighborhoods in a number of ways: as a catalyst for organizing efforts (thereby demonstrating the people's concerns for the future of their neighborhood), to assist the community in making realistic proposals through clarity of organization and understanding of the limits of City resources, and by uniting the City's professional staff with community organizers in order to formulate and implement influential planning.

When the District Five Planning Council was created, the Payne-Phalen area was rich in community and neighborhood organizations. The fact that the City felt it necessary to create a new entity to fulfill the role of official planning body was a point of some contention, especially within the well-established PACC. As a result, District Five made it explicit during its formative years that it was not intending to diminish the roles or capabilities of the other community organizations. Rather, District Five intended to work together with other Eastside associations to define goals and objectives, and promote cooperation and communication, to jointly address the district's problems and needs. This was reflected in the structure of the early Planning Council- a structure that would evolve extensively over the years. Originally, 60 percent of the 30-seat membership was made up of elected residents-at-large, while 40 percent was comprised of representatives from other community organizations.

Needs Assessment Survey

In order to map out a coherent plan for the future of Payne-Phalen, one of the District Five Planning Council's first tasks was to help conduct a survey to assess the perceived needs of the community. Directed by the City's Community Services Department, the survey was conceived as a rationale for public spending on human service programs and as a means to evaluate existing programs. District Five created a Task Force Subcommittee to work on the questionnaire, which was basically designed to gauge how well community members were aware

of services and the degree to which they needed to be cut back or expanded, and to identify areas which mandated the development of new programs.

Between October of 1977 and February of 1978, written surveys were sent out randomly to 350 households in the district. About 85 percent of the surveys were returned. District Five went on to conduct 100 home interviews in order to get a more in depth sense of the human service needs of the area. The Planning Council used the findings in its work with housing improvements and infrastructure development in the years ahead.

The Intensified Treatments Areas

A significant portion of District Five's work in the 1970s and early 1980s revolved around coordinating Intensified Treatment Area programs, or ITAs. The City-sponsored initiatives were aimed at revitalizing certain low-income (or otherwise targeted) neighborhoods in need of public attention. If an area was bestowed ITA status it basically received official priority in an attempt to bring it "up to par" with its surroundings. The major components of ITAs included low interest rehabilitation loans and grants for home owners and occupying residents, as well as public improvements for things like streets, curbs, sidewalks, and lighting. Emphasis was also placed on preservation of the area's older, more historic, neighborhoods. Numerous projects were carried out in the Payne-Phalen community under the axiom of ITAs, and exhaustive examination of all them would be redundant. For purposes here, ITAs will be looked at unto themselves.

Though ITAs were most fundamentally projects of the City of St. Paul, district councils had important organizational roles to play. It was up to District Five to make sure the ITA programs were received in the community. This meant that the availability of loans and grants needed to be publicized and that citizens were generally made aware of ITA benefits. The boundaries of Intensified Treatment Areas in Payne-Phalen were set by District Five, and the Planning Council also evaluated the success and progress of programs, in order to measure when they were ready to be closed out. All in all, many of the improvements in housing and public infrastructure that took place in district 5 from 1976 to 1982 were made possible through the ITAs and District Five coordination.

The first ITA that District Five played a part in encompassed portions of Case Street. Ensuing Intensified Treatment Areas, and related projects, included Burr St., from Case to Collins, a Cook St. paving project, and all of Railroad Island, the predominantly low income section in district 5's southwestern corner. One example of the programs that were offered to Railroad Island residents was the "Exterior Improvement Grant Program," in which homeowners were awarded between 500 and 1,500 dollars for esthetic and/or safety improvements. Another example was the "Energy Rebate Program," which provided qualifying residents with up to 500 dollars to make energy related improvements to their homes. The Railroad Island ITA was the most extensive example in the Payne-Phalen area, and it should be noted that District Five was not alone as far as neighborhood groups that sponsored and oversaw its implementation. The PMCC, Merrick Community Center, and later ESNDC (which in fact grew out of the ITA program) all contributed to the ultimate success of the Railroad Island ITA's renewal efforts.

The Intensified Treatment Area program was phased out starting in late 1982. To fill the void, the City created the Neighborhood Partnership Program. The NPP was designed for two major purposes: to improve the physical, economic and environmental conditions in certain areas, and to let neighborhoods define their own needs and develop specific programs to meet

them. The broad scope of the NPP distinguished it from the ITAs, but the role of District Five was similar: to publicize the program and assist in developing proposals. By this time (mid-1980s), ESNDC was spearheading the bulk of development projects in the area. Although the Planning Council was involved in overseeing or revising many NPP projects, it was less active at this point than it had been during its work with the ITAs.

Housing and Redevelopment Authority

Closely related to the ITA projects, low-interest loans offered by the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (MHFA), and administered by the St. Paul Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA), were also geared toward neighborhood rehabilitation. Beginning in 1976, loans with interest rates ranging from one to eight percent were made available to recipients depending on income and family size. The program's early focus was on home improvements that fostered energy conservation. In some cases, grants were also made available.

In 1977 the HRA began an "urban homesteading" program, which allowed the City to sell abandoned homes for \$1 to eligible individuals who agreed to rehabilitate them. Participants were automatically qualified for HRA loans to help with the process of bringing the house up to code. The role of the Planning Council was to recommend which properties were included in the homesteading program. As was the case with all HRA activity in the area, it was also up to District Five to do much of the promotional and informational work.

In similar fashion to the ITAs, District Five gave priority for HRA home rehab loans and grants to areas that needed them most. In September of 1977 the District Five Council decided that the area south of Case would receive priority. In conjunction with a non-profit group called the Community Design Center, the Planning Council worked to build up an awareness of land use and housing conditions in the area, as well as the neighborhood's historical significance.

Lake Phalen Water Quality Restoration

In 1978 Ramsey County secured a grant from the federal government for one million dollars to improve the water quality of Lake Phalen. Between the summer of '78 and the spring of '79, representatives and engineers from the office of the County Commissioner met a handful of times with concerned Eastside residents to obtain community input as to how the process of restoration should take place. The meetings were organized by District Five and other community groups and planning councils and resulted in the formation of a citizens' monitoring group, which in turn resulted in changes to the original program.

Much of the controversy revolved around use of the land surrounding the lake, and in areas outside of the district. Initially the County proposed to build two organic soil filtering systems for treatment of Keller Creek water: a 2 acre filter located on the west side of Keller Creek north of Round Lake, and a 15 acre filter just south of the Lake (in district 5). The neighborhood was very unhappy with this latter proposal, as it required a large amount of space for a filter that only treated a fairly small amount of nutrients going into the lake. Modifications were made, with the Round Lake filter being expanded so that the southern filter could be eliminated from the planning. Also, the original plan called for the diversion of the Arlington and Johnson sewer into the mixed southern treatment filter. As a compromise, the modified plan called for the construction of two sedimentation basins near the Phalen Golf Course.

The community meetings also displayed the concern of Eastside residents for the elevation of Lake Phalen. Residents were very adamant about not wanting to see the water level drop, and the engineers were able to take this into consideration for future planning efforts. The meetings also gave county officials the ability to reassure residents that the water level would not be affected by the treatment procedures, as well as provide general information regarding the county's work on Lake Phalen.

Controversy resumed in 1983. In February of that year District Five created a Lake Phalen Task Force to study alternatives for storm sewage systems being proposed by Ramsey County engineers. The Task Force recommended that the Council support the County's plans to construct an off-shore filter system for storm sewage, which it did in April. The plan called for the creation of a pond southwest of Wheelock and Johnson parkways. When residents in the immediate area learned about the proposal, however, many objected to its location. As a result, County engineers and officials, including District Five, went back to examining the possibility of an in-lake filter.

The District Five Planning Council and Trees

In the spring of 1978, St. Paul's Department of Community Services initiated the Shade Tree Program. As part of that project, District Five coordinated a tree buying program, in which local residents were able to buy a variety of trees at bulk purchase rates. In effect, the Planning Council acted as a go-between for district 5 residents and the Margolis Brothers nursery.

District Five conducted similar work during much of the mid-1980s. In 1984 the Capital Improvement Budget Committee approved a proposal to spend \$30,000 of 1984 CIB funds for neighborhood tree planting projects. Residents were to contribute for partial cost of a tree planted on public boulevards, with the City matching up to 50 percent of the total cost. As before, the District Five Planning Council coordinated the ordering and distribution of the trees. Additionally, the Planning Council was largely responsible for alerting area residents to the program. The project continued through 1986.

Recycling

Over the years the District Five Planning Council played a crucial role in realizing the success of recycling efforts in the Payne-Phalen community. In early 1980 a non-profit group called Recycling Unlimited sought out and received the cooperation and support of District Five. Free monthly collection of paper, glass, and metal products began in June of 1980 and was seen as an immediate success. The following spring collection services were expanded to include more areas within the district, and by the summer of 1981 all of Payne-Phalen was serviced by Recycling Unlimited.

Unfortunately, a couple of factors combined to hamper the recycling efforts soon afterward. Financial problems within Recycling Unlimited developed in 1982, due primarily to cutbacks in City support. Also, despite the efforts of District Five and others to publicize the program, participation of district 5 members never reached 25 percent. Funding problems forced the non-profit group to phase back service in areas with relatively low levels of citizen cooperation, and as a result Payne-Phalen lost curbside recycling pick-up for 1983. It was briefly resumed in 1984 on a limited basis before being phased out for years, at least in district 5 and as a project of the non-profit sector.

Monthly curbside recycling pick-ups began again in Payne-Phalen in July of 1987, as a joint program of Ramsey County, the City of St. Paul, the St. Paul Neighborhood Energy Consortium and the District Five Planning Council. Similar to the previous project, this attempt would prove immeasurably more successful, the main determinant being increased citizen participation. A central factor to this jump in resident recycling was a heightened awareness of the program among district 5 members. Much of the credit belongs to District Five. Whereas in the early '80s the Planning Council could not effectively communicate the need for recycling and availability of services, board members and staff learned from the experience and made necessary adjustments. Starting in 1987 District Five distributed lawn signs advertising County recycling services and collection dates to willing volunteers. By 1988 it had become clear that recycling would become a permanent fixture in district 5. In April of 1989, with Ramsey County increasing funding for the program, recycling service in Payne-Phalen was expanded to two pick-ups per month. Curbside recycling in the area has continued virtually unabated since then, and District Five is still involved with the processes of coordination and promotion.

District Five as an Outreach for City Officials

As discussed in the introductory sections, a tenuous portion of the Planning Council's complex identity is that of a "governmental" body. Although it has no official power as such, it is connected to the operation of City Hall, existing to give the community a voice in matters of public policy. For much of its life the Planning Council has been used by politicians and officials to speak with residents directly. Conversely, it has been used by District Five members and staff, as well as local residents, as a way to get to know office holders and seekers on a more personal and salient level. District Five has sponsored or been involved in sponsoring numerous debates, forums, meetings, lectures, and talks that featured mayors, city councilpersons, state representatives, and other local and state officials and candidates. The impact of these encounters is difficult to measure. It can be assumed, however, that without such events policy makers would not have had as strong an understanding of community needs and wishes as they did, and that citizens would have been less informed as to the business of their city, county, and state governments than they were.

Examples of these kinds of interactions are quite abundant, especially in the Planning Council's first decade. Rather than extended documentation, purposes here call for focus on only the most prominent instances. In May of 1977 St. Paul mayor George Latimer engaged Eastside residents during a question and answer session at district 5's East Consolidated School on Case Avenue. Similar events with Mayor Latimer, part of his Better Neighborhoods Initiative but organized primarily by District Five, took place in September of 1979, February of 1982, and March of 1987. In February of 1980, the Planning Council, in conjunction with PMCC and PACC, held a Meet the Candidates evening to introduce persons running for the offices of mayor, city council, and school board, to interested residents of Payne-Phalen. In September of 1985 the District Five Planning Council co-sponsored a forum planned by a group called Citizens for Excellence in Education that featured candidates running for St. Paul school board.

The Arlington Hills Library

In the summer of 1981, information in the St. Paul newspapers disclosed the likely possibility that the City, faced with budget constraints, would soon be closing a number of branch libraries. Arlington Hills, the district's only library, was said to be under consideration. Two others, it was rumored, were also slated for closing. The rationale for the severe cutbacks stemmed from a Mayor's Task Force Study on the St. Paul Library system, which concluded that

the city had too many full service branch libraries to be effective. The Task Force recommended that the libraries with the lowest level of use be closed. Initially, other options, such as reducing the level of services offered city-wide, were not even discussed as viable alternatives.

Needless to say, members of the Payne-Phalen community reacted quite decisively to the threat of losing their library. Within weeks community groups in the area had mobilized to inform residents of the proposed closing. In many respects, District Five led the way. At a District Council meeting in July of '81, City Councilwoman Schowalter encouraged an alert audience to send letters and make phone calls to the offices of the Mayor and City Council in support of keeping the Arlington Hills branch open. Representatives from the City's Library Administration staff were present at the same meeting, allowing East Side residents the opportunity to challenge the proposal directly. The overall sentiment expressed was a concern that the neighborhoods that needed the libraries the most were the ones in which libraries had been targeted for closure. Overwhelming support for the library, displayed by an attendance at two community meetings that was well over one hundred, proved to be the definitive factor in the satisfactory culmination of the early '80s scare.

At a community meeting in September of 1981 the City informed East Side residents that the Arlington Hills Library would remain in service for 1982. Representatives from the Library Administration told those in attendance that the Mayor's office, upon becoming aware of the increasing opposition in the three impacted communities, directed those in charge of the budgetary revisions to make the necessary cuts while keeping all branches open. As a result of the close call, a consensus emerged in Payne-Phalen that in order to protect the library from future cuts special action needed to be taken. A Library Committee was formed with the avowed purpose of seeing the Arlington Hills branch remain open for the long run. Though formally independent when it was created, the Committee (the Arlington Hills Library Association) was basically an offshoot of District Five, and it came to operate within the Planning Council structure.

It was a seemingly prophetic move by members of District Five. In 1982 the City was again facing substantial budget cuts, and again the Arlington Hills Library was slated for a significant reduction in hours or a possible closing. Once again the community organizations would have to mobilize to protect Payne-Phalen's library services. As before, intense citizen efforts prevented the library from being shut down, and as before, the effort was coordinated primarily by the District Five Planning Council, as well as the newly formed Library Association. After four months of consistent community pressure, in November of 1982 the City Council announced that the Arlington Hills Library would remain open for 1983, with the same level of funding and the same hours as before. Additionally, all the controversy surrounding the Library apparently encouraged more residents to make use of its services. Library staff reported in the winter of '82-'83 that circulation had risen considerably in preceding months.

Similar situations would threaten the Library in the latter half of the decade, namely in the fall of 1987, but none were as serious as those previously experienced, and none received nearly as much attention. Despite the tumultuous history of Arlington Hills in the 1980s, it remained open throughout the decade, and has remained in operation ever since. It is truly one of District Five's greater success stories. Had the Planning Council not been as active as it was, it is very likely that the Payne-Phalen community would not have had a library during much of the last two decades, and may still be without a branch today. As it happened, all the attention the Library received from District Five and other citizen groups more than worked out well for area residents. Not only was the Arlington Hills branch saved, the Library Association was able to

secure over \$400,000 in physical improvements to the building from 1982 to 1988. Also, as alluded to above, circulation rose 34% from '81 to '88 with many more children and families using the Library in the years following the initial threats of closure.

District Five and the East Side Neighborhood Development Company

As touched on in previous sections, District Five's work over the years has often overlapped with that of the ESNDC. The roles of the two organizations dovetail, as the Planning Council generally acts as an "approver" of projects of the Development Company. Occasionally District Five's job as a revisor organization has conflicted with the efforts of ESNDC. The relationship between the two has been tenuous at times, though this has increasingly come to be a thing of the past. One example was the 1992-93 York Village Town Homes project, built on York and Edgerton. A joint venture between ESDNC and Habitat for Humanity, District Five supported the project initially. The support wavered, however, eventually turning into hesitant opposition. The Planning Council had a different vision, insisting on home ownership, which was not feasible from the viewpoint of ESNDC. District Five board members also expressed concern with the concentration of low-income housing.

In an indirect way, District Five was partly responsible for the creation of the East Side Neighborhood Development Company in 1979. The Planning Council was involved in the discussion that gave rise to the idea of a non-profit tax-exempt organization that could effectively address the need for housing in the area. More directly, credit is owed to members of PMCC, the Community Design Center, and the Railroad Island Review Board, the immediate precursor to ESNDC. It can not be disputed, however, that the successful work that was being carried out in the district's poorer southern areas through the ITAs helped to facilitate further development objectives. In many respects, ESNDC can be viewed as an outgrowth of the Railroad Island ITA programs.

The main role of District Five in development projects carried out by ESNDC has been formal endorsement. Three examples exist from 1982 alone: the rehabilitation of a duplex at 716 DeSoto Street, the Eastside Energy Project carried out with the help of NSP, and an eight-unit "empty nester" town house project on DeSoto and Otsego. Another prominent example comes from the summer of 1987, when District Five gave official support to develop moderate and low-income housing on the old Lincoln School site (at Burr and Tedesco) in the heart of Railroad Island.

Crime Prevention

Although not an original function of the Planning Council, crime prevention developed as a concern of District Five soon after its inception. As early as 1981 community members were articulating the need for more local action to prevent criminal activity. District Five's historical response has been the formation of numerous block clubs designed primarily to monitor possible criminal situations. The first block clubs started in the early 1980s. Variations of neighborhood watch groups, some of them also organized lock rebate programs as an additional means of combating crime. By the summer of 1985, District Five, working together with PACC, had helped organize twenty successful block clubs. By 1987 the number was 30. For years District Five has had someone on staff working with issues related to crime prevention and block clubs, and the area remains a focal point of the Planning Council's current operations. Starting in the late 1980s, District Five has been heavily involved in the Eastside's National Night Out celebration, the nation-wide evening of recognition of those working at the grassroots level to

prevent crime. NNO also acts as a preventative measure in and of itself, as it brings residents not normally involved in neighborhood activity out into the streets.

The main role of District Five has been to assist committed volunteers in their administering efforts. The Planning Council has also worked extensively to foster networking between and within the block clubs, thus increasing the effectiveness of each group. Though crime prevention was generally the immediate concern of those who formed the block clubs, the more successful and long-standing associations branched out into other areas of interest. Examples are widespread, and include things like housing, traffic, cleaning up neighborhood eyesores, co-op babysitting, senior services, and group buying. It is extremely difficult to judge the impact that these clubs have had over the years, as it is nearly impossible to fully quantify their effectiveness in reducing crime. Demonstrating a correlation (let alone a casual relationship) between the formation of block clubs and the reduction of crime rates on the Eastside is well beyond the scope of this examination. Suffice it to say that it is widely accepted among community organizers that block clubs work to reduce certain kinds of crime, even if it is not always reflected in statistical crime rates. It can be assumed that had district 5 not been effectively organized at the block level crime would have been a greater concern for residents.

District Five has also played a role in helping the Payne-Phalen community recover from the often devastating effects of violent crime. A string of murders in the summer of 2000, most notably the stabbing death of a female employee at the Dairy Queen on Payne Ave. during a robbery in which her 7-year-old daughter was critically injured, left the community in virtual shock. As a response to the violence District Five organized a public healing service at East Immanuel Church on Payne. The turnout was immense; around two hundred area residents attended the vigil. Clearly the event was much needed in helping the community through a difficult time.

Community Gardening

Starting in the spring of 1982, the District Five Planning Council began publicizing and planning for one or more community garden sites in Payne-Phalen. Dozens of residents volunteered time and land for the project, and, after a fair amount of work on the soil, the lot near Magnolia and Arkwright yielded a variety of thriving crops. In 1983 the project was expanded, as 60 15'x20' plots were made available to many residents who ordinarily would have had little opportunity to garden in their urban surroundings. Over the next few years the number and size of the plots changed slightly, but the rental fee was always minimal, ranging from seven to ten dollars per plot. From 1984 until 1986, the final year of the project, volunteers bettered the site's rocky soil by bringing in compost from the neighborhood compost site.

Neighborhood/County Composting Project

In the summer of 1983, District Five, with the technical assistance and financial support of Ramsey County, began making arrangements for the development of a large-scale leaf composting site. The idea was to reduce the amount of solid waste going into area landfills, as well as to provide the community with some of the environmental benefits of composting, such as improved soil. Residents would be able to drop off leaves and other organic yard waste at the designated site, the piles would be turned, watered, and heated, and the waste would naturally decompose into compost.

In November of 1983 the Planning Council came to an agreement with Burlington Northern Railroad to accommodate the compost project on land in between Frank and Sims and Duluth and Case, on the district's eastern edge. District Five also hired a site manager for the project, which was free to the public and an immediate success. During its first season of operation vehicles from all over the Eastside and beyond dumped nearly 180 tons of leaves on the site. Finished compost was made available on a first come/first serve basis, to be used by Payne-Phalen residents, and others, as soil conditioner or mulch.

As usual, District Five did much of the publicizing of compost site, altering residents of the need to compost and the availability of the service. Although the site was formally operated by the County, the Planning Council was crucial getting the project off the ground and in securing a successful location. The compost site has been in operation every fall since '83, and continues to serve the needs of the greater Eastside community.

The Swede Hollow Buying Club

At the same time that District Five was beginning to develop the compost site project, members and staff of the Planning Council began gauging community interest in the possibility of an Eastside food cooperative. With enthusiasm initially very high, the Co-op Committee, an outgrowth of the Council, began preparing to see the project through in the fall of 1983. Early effort was put into market analysis, attracting members, dealing with the financial and legal aspects of such a project, and finding a storefront. The primary goal was to provide people with good food for low prices, with the idea that the project would eventually result in a store.

Unfortunately, the storefront never came to fruition. The principal goal of the co-op group was achieved, however, through the creation of the Swede Hollow Buying Club. The volunteer-staffed club offered its working members savings of between 10 and 70 percent, compared to area groceries, through bulk purchases from wholesalers. Initial membership fees were only five dollars, and participants benefited in more ways than one. The Buying Club's administrative work, that is mailings, ordering, and the distribution of food, was done completely by the co-op's volunteers. Members not only saved a few bucks, they also learned the basics of running a small business, gained knowledge and control over the food they purchased, and met some of their neighbors, as well.

Shoreline Work on Lake Phalen

In June of 1985 District Five's Phalen Task Force began meeting with the City Parks Department, as well as members of the community, to make plans to separate the walking and bike paths around Phalen. The City had recently acquired funds to make some improvements, and a public meeting was held to determine what people felt were priority areas of concern. It was decided that path separation was needed most along East Shore Drive. In addition, the path along the south shore was widened in areas, and money was allocated for new signs for the park.

The following year, St. Paul Parks and Recreation began to improve the southern shore of Lake Phalen. Identified in May of 1985 by District Five as a high priority improvement, the work restored and stabilized the eroded areas of shoreline. After it was completed, the corridor was slightly wider than it had been previously, allowing for more separation of bicycle and pedestrian pathways.

The East Side Improvement Coalition

In the wake of economic catastrophes such as the Whirlpool and brewery closings (discussed previously), District Five helped organize an association to try and address issues of unemployment and economic fallout. Called the East Side Improvement Coalition, it was comprised of clergymen, neighborhood council members, businessmen, and other concerned citizens. Aside from dealing with the ramifications of immediate economic troubles, the Coalition expressed an interest in developing long-range strategy for future economic prosperity and security in districts 4 and 5. Formed in 1983, in 1985 the ESIC began working with a professional consultant, an outfit entitled Anticipatory Sciences Inc., to carry out a grassroots planning process that allowed citizens to participate and express their ideas about possible futures for the Eastside. Structured surveys were given, and two large community meetings were held in the fall of 1985. The consultants, often referred to as "futurists," studied economic and employment trends in the area, focusing on ratios of investment versus savings of area residents in developing the surveys.

The fall meetings featured presentations and panel discussions, but more importantly they allowed for further community input into the emerging collective vision. Based on the in-depth surveys of over 400 Eastsiders, the two consultants from Anticipatory Sciences developed a variety of futuristic ideals. Attendees then voted on the diverse visions presented, by spending an imaginary million dollars each as they saw fit. The game resulted in findings that one would expect given the social climate of the Eastside at the time. The majority of money, the results suggested, would go towards education, with economic improvements a close second. Following that would be housing and beatification improvements, image enhancement, and family and community improvements.

The community meetings helped the neighborhood through a difficult time. The futurists, putting the Payne-Phalen reality into a broader, even global, context, demonstrated to concerned residents that their situation was not incredibly unique- that other communities elsewhere were facing similar problems. It was not the community's fault, for example, that the Whirlpool plant was closed, and residents and organizers need not be scared into imprudent action. The events of the fall of 1985 also had a more concrete impact on the area. Even though the spending exercise was only a hypothetical game, it illustrated to a few committed Eastside residents that the community had a profound, and untapped, interest in the arts. As a result, organizers from the ESIC and District Five created the East Side Arts Council, under the auspices of the Phalen Area

Community Council. Though PACC is no more, the Arts Council, now located on Payne Avenue, has continued as a valuable and vibrant Eastside mainstay.

Neighborhood Clean-Up and Beautification

Over the years the District Five Planning Council has undertaken a number of beautification projects in the Payne-Phalen area. The Railroad Island Triangle on Tedesco and Otsego has been a prime focus of the efforts. The triangle is one of the gateways into the neighborhood and was originally landscaped by a Youth Corps volunteer from Railroad Island. District Five members, and others, converged on the site in June of 1987 to tear out old plants and rework the soil. Compost was brought in from the neighborhood site, and volunteers continued maintenance of the flowers and shrubs that were planted later that summer in following years.

Sue's Park, a small green space at Payne and Rose Avenues, was also a creation of District Five's Beautification Committee. As with the Triangle, volunteers worked to maintain it and combat acts of vandalism. Both the Tedesco Triangle and Sue's Park received Minnesota Green Community Gardening Awards in the years 1987-91.

District Five's first neighborhood clean-up took place in October of 1987, and was an overwhelming success. Funded by the City, it was coordinated entirely by the Planning Council. Dozens of dumpsters were filled to the brim with general refuse. In all, over 1,200 tires were disposed of. Demand was so high that it was difficult for volunteer managers to keep up. Blocks, yards, and alleyways were no doubt much more livable as a result. By 1989 neighborhood clean-ups were an annual District Five event, and their success continued through the 1990s.

The Gillette Site Saga

A long story of twists, turns, and controversies, the protracted conclusion to the saga of the old Gillette Children's Hospital site represents one of District Five's brightest accomplishments. Gillette Hospital was the first in the nation to provide free care for children of low-income families. In March of 1977, Gillette moved its hospital services downtown, leaving its 13-acre site on East Ivy Avenue, just southwest of Lake Phalen, vacant. Even before the building closed, District Five, along with groups such as the Wilder Foundation and the Community Services Department, began discussing possible new uses for the site. Early on, as facilities were still for the most part in working order, proposals centered on re-use of the building. In October of 1977, District Five voted unanimously in opposition to a group called Familias, Inc., that was seeking a Special Use Permit from the City for the purpose of using the building as a halfway house for recovering alcoholics. The Planning Council was reflecting the wishes of the community, which had turned out one hundred strong to voice disapproval for the proposed project.

In the spring of 1979 District Five worked with City officials and State Representatives to try and get the Gillette property transferred from the state to the City level. The legislation argued that the move would provide better control and oversight of possible re-uses for the site at a more relevant level. It was defeated in the state House because of concern on the part of a few legislators that the City of St. Paul was going to profit from the land transfer. Shortly thereafter, District Five created the Gillette Advisory Committee, which examined possibilities and alternatives for the area. Early focus was on additional park space, housing development, and re-

use of the building. In the fall of that year legislation finally passed turning property over to the City.

In July of '79 the District Five Planning Council submitted a letter to the City asking that the West Wing of the Gillette building be designated as a historic preservation site. In doing so, the Planning Council cited the unique architecture found inside the Wing, which dated to 1907. At the same time, consensus within the community was forming that the land should become a part of Phalen Park. By November, after months of deliberation, the Planning Council recommend that the mayor dedicate the land for park space. Meanwhile, Mayor Latimer was recommending to the City Council that the land be rezoned and used for townhouses.

The Heritage Preservation Commission unanimously approved the Gillette West Wing as a historic preservation site in March of 1980. The City Council went on to approve the Commission's recommendation in July of that year, and, despite the expressed wishes of Mayor Latimer, determined that the rest of the area was to be used for parkland. The same resolution called for the Department of Renewal, Planning, and Economic Development to begin the process of finding a future tenant for the preserved West Wing. During this time the Police Federation emerged as the leading contender for filling the space.

After the Police Federation's proposal fell through, due to problems with funding the rehabilitation of the West Wing, the saga reached its deepest low point. The community consensus in favor of parkland and historic preservation was quickly evaporating, as previously optimistic residents become ever more frustrated. Meanwhile, the City Council, virtually ignoring the status it bestowed on the West Wing, began calling for the remaining structure to be torn down. Changing circumstances led to a new consensus favoring development of housing for the elderly. In a recommendation to the City made in March of 1982, the Planning Council reiterated its desire to see the land used for park space, while recognizing that it may not be possible. In which case, the recommendation called for a portion of the controversial area to be used for so called "empty nester" homes. Crucially, District Five continued to strongly support preservation and re-use of the old West Wing.

The City Council accepted the proposed compromise in September of 1982. No more than 5 acres was to be developed as housing, which was to be for seniors, with the remaining 8 acres preserved as parkland. The rehabilitation of the West Wing was to be included in the total design scheme. In the summer of 1983 District Five's Gillette Site Task Force recommended to the City that the Amherst Wilder Foundation be designated developer of the site. The design called for a nine story mid-rise with 96 condominium units, 24 townhouses, and rehabilitation of the West Wing for senior services. In July the City accepted the proposal, but in February of '84 Wilder withdrew from the project.

District Five persisted. In June of 1985 the Planning Council began working with Brighton Developers, a joint partner of Health Resources, Inc., on a development project that would be known as Phalen Shores. Plans called for the construction of a seven story condominium building and a five story rental building. The West Wing was to be rehabilitated to include several apartments as well as recreational space. Over the next several years, the proposals by Brighton changed slightly, reflecting what the company saw as an appropriate demand for senior housing. In 1987 the first phase of the project was completed; the rental unit was built and operational. Soon thereafter Brighton changed its plans for the second phase of the project, proposing a wood-frame low-rise be built instead of the original high-rise. District Five members saw they new proposal as lower in quality than the original, and, calling the plan a case

of “bait and switch” recommended that Brighton be dropped from further development projects. The City accepted the recommendation, and dropped the company for future projects at the site.

The historic West Wing of the old Gillette Children’s Hospital sat empty until 1996, when it became the headquarters of the Minnesota Humanities Commission. A \$2.5 million renovation turned the building into the Commission’s Educational Center and Teacher Institute. District Five was crucial to the process of successfully locating a tenant. The residency of the Humanities Commission is a source of pride for Payne-Phalen residents, as is the historic building itself. The Commission strengthens the East Side community and represents a triumphant culmination to the Gillette site saga. Though a fair amount of groups and individuals had a hand in seeing the project through, no group was more involved in the entirety of the process than District Five. Had the Planning Council not been as committed through the years as it was, it is very likely that none of the area would have been preserved for park space. It is also probable that the West Wing would have been long gone, and that the Humanities Commission would be conducting its work elsewhere.

The Johnson Achievement Plus School

There are many parallels between the history of the Gillette site and the story of the old Johnson High School, located on York. The building, which was Johnson High before the school moved to its new location nearer Lake Phalen, had been sitting dormant for years. As was the case with the Gillette West Wing, the community had been divided over the issue of preserving the school. Generally the consensus within the District Five Planning Council, and in the community as a whole, was for preservation and re-use. This was not always the case, however. As far back as the early 1980s District Five had a task force working on re-use of the site. During this time the Planning Council favored and proposed demolition of the building and the construction of housing, to be done through the Capital Improvement Budget process. In 1984 the task force was transferred to the Case Payne Community Council, but District Five continued limited work on the issue. Community meetings were held to discuss the School District’s various plans for reopening the building, as an adult learning facility, administrative center, or storage facility. Community input at these meetings showed that residents wanted the school reopened, but as a place of education, not a warehouse.

As with the Gillette site, the project that would ultimately prove successful took a while to materialize. In the late 1990s District Five entered into a partnership with the City, the state, Ramsey County, and the YMCA of Greater St. Paul to convert the old Johnson High School into a complex for education, recreation, health, and social services. The partnership, known as Achievement Plus, ambitiously envisioned the site as a thriving community center. The final project was to include not only an elementary school, but also a new YMCA.

The primary work of District Five, by the time the collaboration was up and running, was to plan for the construction and rehabilitation of the site. For example, the Planning Council decided which batch of housing was to be removed. Up until that point, District Five had been crucial to the formation of the project’s vision. The idea to make the site into more than just a school was first put forth through District Five meetings. Discussion between District Five members and persons in the community resulted in a tentative consensus in favor of integrating the school with the suggested community center. The single complex would allow for more efficient use of things like daycare and exercise facilities by patrons of both the school and gym. Finally, all schools in St. Paul are required to have a sight team; the work of putting one together for the Achievement Plus school was done by District Five.

The ambitious vision for the site advanced by the Planning Council was not fully recognized. Some propositions, like the notion of having police officers within the elementary school/community center, never got off the ground. Budget problems plagued the project towards the end of its completion in late 1999. The cost of the school project soared from \$14.4 million to \$21.4 million, spurred on by a hot Twin Cities real-estate market. Other factors in the high price tag included additional site preparation and relocation of those displaced by the development. Prices rose for the YMCA construction as well. Eventually, District Five and the St. Paul School Board were successful in securing the needed funding from the state, and the school opened as promised in the fall of 2000.

In some respects, the original vision for the project, that of a unified complex for education, recreation, and health and social services, was a victim of the budget problems. The innovative idea came to be seen as unfeasible. However, both the elementary school and YMCA are in operation. Though the partnership between the two is not at the level anticipated by planners, both are serving the Payne-Phalen community in very meaningful ways. The existence of both is a testament to the leadership of District Five, as well as the other partners in the Achievement Plus group. Had the initiative not been there on the part of the Planning Council, it is quite likely that district 5 would be without its Old Johnson School and its new YMCA.

Youth Programs

In recent years District Five has gotten involved in running a variety of programs for young people in Payne-Phalen. Providing youth activities has since developed into a prime area of focus for District Five. One prominent example from 1998-99 is a community garden that was organized by and for District Five's Teen Council. Located at 516 Beaumont St. in the Railroad Island neighborhood, the garden provided area teens with an opportunity to come together and do something positive and visible in the community. The adolescents that participated in the program decided how the garden would operate from the beginning. After providing all the necessary labor, the teens then sold the bounty at festivals and to local cafes and restaurants. As a result, they gained accounting skills and other job-related skills, as well as developing leadership skills, a common theme in District Five's youth programs. The garden at Beaumont, as well as four others that District Five administered along with the Community Design Center, helped to diffuse the stereotype that teen-agers were not concerned with, or capable of, doing good deeds for the community.

Another example is District Five's after-school programs, often held at Merrick Community Center. Recent programs have included about a dozen students from a school in the district, usually East Consolidated. Many of the children that participate have academic problems or behavioral problems. The kids are given a safe and productive place to go after school, where they can do homework, learn computer skills, and play sports and games.

The Payne Reliever

The fate of the Payne Reliever, a high-profile bar on Payne and York that featured nude dancers behind glass, was one of the most controversial issues to ever be dealt with by the District Five Planning Council. The bar's location and catchy name had attracted a considerable amount of attention during its years of adult entertainment, and many area residents had long wanted to see the club closed when the controversy intensified in the late 1990s. In 1991, the owner of the bar received a \$110,000 development grant from the city to fix the Payne Reliever's

parking lot, a move that angered many residents and officials who thought that the money was better spent elsewhere.

Over the years many residents used the Planning Council as a means to voice their displeasure with what they saw as a blight on the neighborhood's image. District Five organized meetings specific to the Payne Reliever; meetings that were very well attended and even included input from the women who danced at the bar. The discussion revealed disagreement within the community as to the severity of the strip club. It was pointed out that very few problems were directly related to the club's operation. That is, instances of crime around the Payne Reliever were low compared to other drinking establishments. It was also pointed out that the bar, as a destination business, brought in a significant amount of revenue to the neighborhood, and that a fair amount of jobs were associated with it. Ultimately the discussion, especially by the late 1990s, became one rotating around morality and image. A consensus emerged in favor of getting rid of the nude bar, either because the activity was immoral or because it was not an activity that district 5 residents wanted associated with their neighborhood.

After helping to establish neighborhood consensus, District Five went to work to see that the Payne Reliever issue was dealt with in a manner consistent with the wishes and interests of the community. The Planning Council helped to coordinate the selling of the bar to a new owner, who pledged to transform the site into a bingo hall and deli. It was imperative for members of District Five that the revenue generated by the Payne Reliever not be lost in the transition. Board members wanted to see the money stay in Payne-Phalen, and the agreement reached allowed for this. As of Fall 2002, the building formally known as the Payne Reliever houses a restaurant and a bingo hall. In the summer of 2002 District Five decided that it would run the bingo games, so as to ensure that the revue generated stayed in the district.

The Phalen Corridor Initiative

In the wake of the plant closings, lack of jobs, and slipping property values on the Eastside in late 1980s and early 1990s, a number of businesses and community groups came together to create Phalen Corridor Initiative. Formed in 1994 with the assistance of the District Five Planning Council, the collaboration has grown to include over 60 businesses, labor unions, community groups, development organizations, governmental agencies, schools, foundations, and job development groups. The coalition set out to bring jobs to the area and has wound up creating opportunities for retail, housing, and social services as well as employment.

The Phalen Corridor stretches over a 100-acre area northwest of downtown St. Paul. Bordered by Maryland Avenue, East Third Street, Johnson Parkway, and I-35E, the Corridor includes much of district 5 as well as areas south of Payne-Phalen. The avowed comprehensive purpose of the Initiative is to turn around the decline of the area and bring it back to the vital community it once was. The PCI has five principal elements. The first is industrial redevelopment, as evidenced by the William's Hill Center. Second is workforce development, as displayed by the opening of the Eastside Work Resource Hub at Metro State University, which helps residents find living-wage jobs. Other components include transportation improvements and community partnerships. The final element is wetlands restoration, exemplified by the nation's first demolition of a failed shopping center to reclaim wetland that originally occupied the space (the Phalen Shopping Center at Rose and Prosperity Avenues).

The Phalen Corridor Initiative is ambitious project, one that involves processes of change in planning and in partnership. It has led to an ample amount of progress on the East Side. Because of the Initiative's diverse level of support, it will probably continue to do so. It is up to community groups, such as District Five, to ensure that individuals in the path of the project are not trampled in the name of progress. A centerpiece of the Phalen Corridor is a proposed road, Phalen Boulevard, designed to spur industrial development along the old railway lines running from downtown to the lake. The construction of the road, as well as the construction of new housing developments near it, was originally slated to require the razing of up to 118 homes in district 5's Lower ECON area. In their place, 80 medium-density homes would be constructed. Residents, when they finally received word of the plans, were quite unhappy with the proposal.

The Phalen Corridor's main goal is to bring development and jobs to the area. Those in charge of the PCI's planning have tended to be of the view that in order to accomplish this the Payne-Phalen area must be made more attractive to possible developers and employers. Included in this process was a kind of forced gentrification of homes in lower-income areas of the neighborhood, such as Lower ECON. Residents of the five-block area that was eventually to be bulldozed were furious; at the net loss of homes, that the new homes would probably not accommodate those who needed them, and that they were never consulted in the planning process. The District Five Planning Council offered the community the opportunity to raise its collective voice. Meetings organized in the latter part of 2000 allowed hundreds of affected residents the ability to display their opposition to the destruction of homes.

The effort to revise this controversial aspect of the Phalen Corridor Initiative was a springboard event for the Planning Council. It attracted new volunteers to District Five and augmented the visibility of its work on the Eastside, and it was successful. In 2001 the Phalen Corridor announced that it would go back to the drawing board. The revamped plan was a compromise between community suggestions and the original scheme, and had the city taking only 18 homes. District Five continues to encourage the construction of new homes on existing

vacant lots and restoration in opposition to razing perfectly good homes in a process of de facto gentrification. The Planning Council, and indeed the vast majority of the cognizant Payne-Phalen community, has also continued to support the Corridor Initiative as a whole.

Conclusion

The Difficulty in Measuring Impact

The preceding discussion did not relate the full and unabridged history of the District Five Planning Council and its work in Payne-Phalen. It sought to touch on the most significant events and projects that the organization has been involved in over the years. The vast majority of the Planning Council's day-to-day work, that is, reviewing zoning and land-use concerns for the City, has been left untouched. Though the role and purpose of District Five has evolved notably since 1976, its main function has always been to deal with things like problem properties, business ordinances, traffic flow, and the like. This reactive side of the District Five Planning Council has been, for the most part, taken for granted and pushed aside in favor of examination of the organization's more proactive face. This paper has looked at the revisor role of District Five only in instances when individual properties, businesses, or sites were profoundly relevant to the Payne-Phalen community as a whole. Although clearly a limitation, focus on the reactive side of District Five would have basically constituted this paper as a study of St. Paul's Neighborhood Planning Council District system, rather than an inquiry into District Five specifically.

Other limitations are obvious when attempting to measure the impact or success of Payne-Phalen's official community-input planning body. For one, it is a truism that no nonprofit works alone. District Five, as demonstrated, has a long history of working with other organizations- from neighborhood groups to development firms to local government. To nail down the amount of credit or blame to assign District Five by itself is a near impossible task. Also, to fully appreciate the impact that the Planning Council has had in the community one must reveal what the community would be like had the organization not existed for the past 26 years. Any attempt to do so would obviously be laden with hypotheticals. In addition, because this is not a comparison piece, it is difficult to know how District Five measures up to St. Paul's other Planning Councils. Therefore, it is hard to say whether or not the Payne-Phalen Council has done all that it "should have" over the years when compared to the norm or ideal.

Finally, evaluation, especially in the societal realm, is extremely subjective. Interviews conducted for this paper revealed a diverse amount of competing claims as to the historical effectiveness of the District Five Planning Council. Those that have worked with the organization over the years see it in different ways depending on when they were involved, their own personalities and the context they choose to view their experiences in. That being said, some synthetic generalizations can be made.

Evaluation of Impact

The District Five Planning Council was set up to work with local government, rather than confront it as some neighborhood groups do. In addition to public money, District Five is funded through grants from mainstream organizations. Any planning council's relationship to city government is an important determinant of success or failure. For District Five, the relationship has been tenuous, but on the whole productive. As alluded to in the section on local government outreach, the Planning Council acts as a go-between for officials and residents. It exists as a

nexus that brings together community members, grassroots organizers, politicians, and many others (such as business leaders and law enforcement). Out of this nexus spawns District Five's many roles, both proactive and reactive; as a review board, as a facilitator of community discussion, as a relator of neighborhood wishes and concerns, as an educator of public services, as a sponsor of initiatives, and as a developer of youth and crime prevention programs.

The Payne-Phalen community has benefited from the work of the District Five Planning Council in a number of ways. Concrete examples of District Five's impact abound: the Minnesota Humanities Commission's location in the Old Gillette Hospital, the Johnson Achievement Plus School and YMCA, the closing of the Payne Reliever, and the saving of around 100 homes from unwarranted destruction. Houses are in better shape, neighborhoods are cleaner, park space is more expansive, and streets are safer, both literally and figuratively, thanks in part to the dedication of individuals working on behalf of the Payne-Phalen Planning Council.

On a more general level, District Five has brought people together. The job of the Planning Council is not so much to get things done on its own, but rather to organize volunteers to get things done. One of the central ways in which District Five has impacted Payne-Phalen is as a facilitator of social capital. Bringing people together in meaningful interactions can have positive consequences beyond the immediate product of the encounter. This translates into concrete benefits for the community. A microcosmic example is the block clubs that District Five helped organize, work that the Planning Council continues to be involved in. Many block clubs and neighborhood watch groups have come together informally and independent of the Planning Council. It can be safely assumed, however, that the role of District Five in bringing neighbors together and formulating neighborhood networks has had an indirect effect on the extension of block clubs in Payne-Phalen. Additionally, the fact that District Five gathers people together creates a source of volunteer labor that can be tapped into by other neighborhood associations.

It is all but impossible to quantify the degree to which the District Five Planning Council has served the needs of the Payne-Phalen community. It is clear that its impact has been significant, and that Payne-Phalen would be a different place had District Five not been around to help form its present composition and character. As St. Paul's Eastside continues to evolve and diversify, District Five will have to adapt quickly to keep up. In order for Payne-Phalen residents to realize additional progress in areas such as housing, development, crime, and infrastructure, those working on behalf of the community and at the grassroots level must gain a better understanding of community needs. District Five must continue to work closely with other relevant community organizations to ensure that its efforts are effective. Finally, more consistency in its internal affairs, to whatever degree that is possible, would help the District Five Planning Council become an even more dynamic force in Payne-Phalen.

Bibliography

- Ahern, Don. "Old Gillette Building Free for Restoration." *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, 6 December 1989.
- Baker, Ann. "East Side Businesses Fear Stroh Aftereffects." *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, 23 November 1997.
- Beal, Dave. "Factories Make Return on St. Paul's East Side." *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, 30 May 2001.
- Carlson, Scott. "Whirlpool's St. Paul Roots." *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, 26 November 1993.
- Clark, Ronald. "Far-Sighted Restoration Restores St. Paul Treasure." *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, 22 September 1996.
- The Eastsider. "District Five Planning Council News." July 1976-December 1991.
- Karlson, Karl J. "Proposed Sale Would Transform the Payne Reliever Strip Club." *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, 9 June 1999.
- Karlson, Karl J. and Theresa Monsour. "East Side Economy Dealt Another Blow." *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, 9 February 2002.
- Leslie, Lourdes Medrano. "Residents Wary of East Side Plans." *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, 2 October 2000.
- Nelson, Todd. "Neighborhood Feels Stings of Crime." *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, 17 August 2000.
- Putnam, Robert. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000.
- Tosto, Paul. "Building Costs Soar for East Side School." *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, 21 October 1999.
- Tosto, Paul. "Board Seeks \$5 Million More for York School Project." *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, 10 November 1999.
- Wilder Research Center. "Summary of St. Paul District Five." May 2002.