



Project scope, context, and background

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The Project:

- **Working Title:** *The Payne-Phalen Community Plan: Collaboratively Creating a Shared Vision for a Bright and Equitable Future*

PPCC Mission and purpose:

The Payne-Phalen Community Council exists “To improve our Payne-Phalen neighborhoods by engaging, educating and empowering all residents in our diverse community.” As one of 17 district councils in St. Paul, PPCC exists to engage the community in advancing physical, social and economic development within our neighborhoods and commercial areas. Our organization is committed to advancing equity, reducing disparities, and improving access to district, citywide, and regional planning activities. We’re a MN 501(C)3 non-profit, charitable organization with a voluntary, unpaid board of directors composed of 17 community members elected by neighborhood residents.

The work of the organization has recently been reorganized around four key themes:

- (a) Building relationships through active and continuous outreach;
- (b) Nurturing ideas and developing resources;
- (c) Running effective projects and programs; and
- (d) Operating the organization in a systematic, efficient, and effective manner.

About the district:

Amongst St. Paul’s 17 districts, Payne-Phalen has the largest population (31,000) and the most racial diversity (70% people of color). That diversity and cultural vibrancy is ever-present in the ethnic groceries, restaurants and specialty retail/services along our streets. It’s found in the variety of education/training institutions/programs in our schools and parks, and in the variety of community non-profits and faith-based organizations. It’s a testament to the strength and resilience of our population despite some very serious realities: Payne-Phalen has the highest level of concentrated poverty in St. Paul with longstanding and present-day disparities in health, wealth, housing, education, and economic investment. Median household income is \$43K, 43% of

our households live below the federal poverty guideline, and many households in our district struggle with low levels of educational attainment and homeownership coupled with high levels of unemployment and transit dependency

Background to the work:

The issue: Payne-Phalen is in a liminal “moment.” Recent investments point toward a brighter future. The City/Port Authority has built-out the Phalen Corridor. The County is planning the Rush Line BRT. New restaurants, art and music venues are opening along Payne. This year, a for-profit developer is breaking ground on the district’s first mixed-use, transit-oriented development. On the other hand, many small businesses – particularly those owned/operated by people of color - struggle to stay open. Despite the many positive characteristics of a culturally rich, racially diverse district, the hard reality is that Payne-Phalen has many of the most economically challenged households in St. Paul. So, while change is generally welcome, fears of gentrification run high, especially in communities of color. The nascent urban renaissance hailed by some is considered a harbinger of displacement by many more.

The challenge: Unlike the 1970’s when Payne-Phalen was 70% white working-class, the district is now a majority-minority community with almost 70% people of color from many different backgrounds and cultures. While there’s an overall sense that cultural diversity is an asset – by both whites and people of color – many in the current white population have a longstanding sense of ‘ownership’ in neighborhood proceedings. Newer, more recent members of the community have not necessarily had the same access or utilized the same venues to share their voice and ideas. Community decision-making practice hasn’t been stretched to recognize or accommodate important cultural variations in civic participation and communal decision-making. In many cases, and for many reasons, many community members are either unfamiliar with, mistrustful of, or feel excluded by what may seem to be a subtly coded bureaucratic process.

The need: The need within the community is to begin to grapple with and address such challenges. Who reaps the benefits of growth and how can they be shared? Who bears the burden, and can that be mitigated? There is a strong need to develop a communal understanding and sensibility - within and across the diversity of our many racial, cultural, and income groups - to take stock of the possibilities and consequences of this “moment” and, more explicitly, to work together through a common project to address the inherent complexity.

The opportunity: District Councils are required by the City to update their plans once a decade. Once adopted, each plan is incorporated into the City’s Comprehensive Plan. As such, the policies and objectives within each plan becomes embedded in decision-making about local and regional planning, development, and infrastructure investments.

Topics to be addressed:

The district planning process will need to address a series of topics:

8 topics required by the City of St. Paul:

- Land use

- Transportation
- Housing
- Economic Development
- Parks and Recreation
- Historic Preservation
- Water Resources
- Implementation

PPCC intends to improve the holism of our engagement and planning efforts by addressing 5 additional topics:

- Environment
- Human Capital and Community Well-Being
- Art and Culture
- Urban Design
- Public Services/Facilities

Focus Areas:

As a means to help individual participants think through (a) their own needs, ideas, and vision – and to enlarge that to consider, include, and encompass (b) how that connects with other members of their community, and c) how all of that plays out in a real world place (District 5), we are considering the possibility that the topic areas above might be more simply addressed by focusing conversation into three so-called” Focus Areas:

- People
- Places, and
- Systems

The Process:

Artist-led engagement: The intended process will be to update/re-create the Payne-Phalen District Plan through a robust, interactive community engagement process. PPCC intends to partner with a local community arts organization to hire 2-3 Public-Practice Artists with demonstrated experience/capacity for working with diverse communities in a culturally sensitive environment. Artists will work collaboratively with PPCC to design, produce and facilitate project activities through a series of “venues” meant to draw out/build upon community knowledge and experience. A definitive *hallmark* of this project will be the opportunity for the public to take an active role in any or all 5 phases of the actual planning work. We want to create a space to develop understanding and working relationships between cultural communities and to avoid any perception that the public is expected to share their information so that it can be processed by “others” outside the public eye.

The Zipper: This 5-phase project will be constructed and carried out through a process designed to function like a zipper, where 2 sides of 1 whole must be pulled together and attached to function with maximum integrity. Specifically, as the community’s work in each phase is collected up, our Board will take a decision to memorialize outcomes and provide advice offered as a point of information as each next phase starts. This iterative approach is intended to help the project gather steam, consolidate learning, and move forward in a

transparent, timely and productive manner (For example, see Growth.Minneapolis2040.com). Also, it will help strengthen the relationship between our Board and the public who elect them as their representatives.

Project Activities:

Activity Group 1: Finalize pre-planning work:

- Formalizing partnership agreements with partners; Formalize agreement with local Community Arts Organization, conduct call for artists, hire accordingly; Contract with the additional consulting services needed.

Activity Group 2: Conduct the formal district planning process:

All planning activities take place in 5 sequential phases and includes full public participation led by PPCC and Public-Practice Artists:

- Phase 1: Data Collection: Gather input for all plan topics/chapters from quantitative and qualitative sources.
- Phase 2: Data Assessment: Take stock of what's collected, consider through multiple cultural perspectives, and develop shared lenses for proceeding.
- Phase 3: Data Analysis: Embrace and navigate complexity by considering how each topic in the plan is intertwined with each of the other topics. Undertake methodical data analysis with the public through a collaborative approach, illuminate various cultural values/perspectives, forge deeper understanding, and call forth areas of shared purpose.
- Phase 4: Policy Creation: Based on the analysis phase, establish a collective, shared vision for the future and craft policies necessary to bring forth that vision.
- Phase 5: Articulation: Based on collected policies, establish shared priorities, implementation steps, and develop methods for measuring success through regular evaluation after completion.

Activity Group 3: Transition Workshops:

- At the end of each phase and prior to the next, the Community Arts Organization will facilitate a half-day workshop with the Public-Practice Artists, staff, and the PPCC Board to de-brief, consolidate learning, and fine tune as needed for the next phase. The intention is to help the Board take a series of incremental actions throughout the project that consolidate gains, set direction, and keep the project moving forward (instead of backloading all decisions until the end of the 5-phase planning process).

Associated Activities:

- Solicitation and facilitation of widespread public participation in Round 3 of the East Metro Pulse survey and subsequent review and analysis of the resulting Community Data Book created specifically for the Payne-Phalen community.

Data sources:

Three kinds of data will be used in conjunction with one another to illuminate meanings and consider various 'ways of knowing.'

- Qualitative data drawn out through interactive public engagement will help explore the diversity of narratives about our present and concepts for a shared future.
- Quantitative data will be drawn from MNCompass, the US Census and the City's 2040 Comprehensive Plan as a foundation for working through each topic, confronting the statistical realities of inequity/disparity and establishing relevant benchmarks for future progress.
- As a bridge between the qual./quant. data, we'll participate in the East Metro Pulse, Round 3 and subsequently receive a Custom Data Book containing perception data gathered specifically from and about those living in our district.

Venues:

Rather than asking the public to come to us, we will go out to the public through a varied assortment of venues designed to offer options for involvement through in-person events or through alternative venues for communicating input, ideas and feedback. The alternatives will allow opportunities to participate while being respectful of various constraints such as time (second jobs, family obligations), language barriers, and an individual's facility with technology

Venues for active, in-person community engagement:

- High-profile presence at local festivals
- Community-wide convenings held at partner organizations facilitated in the language of that culture
- Hosting PPCC-sponsored events, planning parties, and drop-in work sessions
- PPCC Board Meetings

Alternative venues for input and feedback:

- Phone number set up for texting input or to leave voice mail input
- Web portal specifically designed for each phase
- Mailers for those not comfortable with technology
- Instagram page to offer visual (instead of written) input

Intended Documents:

Public Planning Document:

Creation, completion, and adoption of a community-centered public planning document (a book and .pdf) for the Payne-Phalen Community that lays out and articulates the policies, proposals, and implementation strategies for 8 topics required by the City (Land use, Transportation, Housing, Economic Development, Parks and Recreation, Historic Preservation, Water Resources, and Implementation) and 5 supplemental topics added by PPCC to improve holism (Environment, Human Capital and Community Well-Being, Art and Culture, Urban Design, and Public Services/Facilities). As a result of this process and document, PPCC will have satisfied its obligation to the City and the community for creating and updating a district

plan every 10 years for the first time since 1979).

Record of community-centered planning and engagement process:

Compilation of a second document (a book and .pdf) that records and illuminates our community-centered planning and engagement process to recount how we went about this work, what data was collected, assessed, and analyzed, and how the policies, priorities and implementation strategies were devised. This compendium is intended to serve as a model for community planning endeavors in the future. As a result of the grant, Payne-Phalen, and for that matter, any other district council or community planning organizations might benefit from seeing the details in the design, trajectory, and intricacies of our project. As a set, we will have demonstrated through both documents how this grant was transformative by simultaneously (a) bringing together our communities to plan for the future by working together in the here and now, and (b) to create a record for future generations about how we went about that work - way back in 2020 - so that they too can help keep positive, equitable transformation in motion.

Sustaining the work:

There are at least five ways in which this project intends to sustain the community and the organization when the specific work of the plan update ends:

1. Implementation chapter: St. Paul requires all District Plans to have a chapter that details when, where, and how the Community Council will follow-through on realizing the policies and objectives set out in their plan.
2. Ongoing assessment and evaluation: Though it's not required by the City, PPCC sees great value in creating a list of priorities to discipline future endeavors so that things don't get lost in a sea of relativity. Our project will establish a process of regular evaluation through a defined set of measurable outcomes, both quantitative and qualitative. PPCC's adopted by-laws already include a provision for such evaluation on an annual basis.
3. Updates every 10 years: The City requires District Councils to update their plans every 10 years. The ED has already sketched out a method for how our PPCC can be more deliberate/synchronized with City processes going forward.
4. By documenting our process so that it is replicable and adaptable for future use.
5. Activating a platform for community action across the next generation: The product of the project will be a document with policies, proposals, priorities, graphics and drawings; but the real legacy of a robust, inclusive process will be the collective, communal learning derived from community members working in conjunction with one another to confront, grapple with, and resolve the issues that come up in each phase of this project. Presently, and for very good reasons, many who live in Payne-Phalen are unfamiliar with or mistrustful of what seems like a governmental process. We seek to demystify the planning process so that over time we might change the paradigm, build additional capacity, and help more people connect and work with one another so that they can be impactful beyond their own voice and circumstance.

Additional Background:

Fall 2017: PPCC Board adopted *The PPCC Equity Investment Rationale/Strategic Action Plan* to ensure focus on “advancing equity, reducing disparities, and improving access to district, citywide, and regional planning for communities experiencing inequities.”

Summer 2018: PPCC Board made the specific decision to hire a new Executive Director with professional experience in city planning; articulating their express interest in creating a robust public engagement process that brings together the district’s various cultural communities. In that process, the new ED brought forward the idea of collaborating with Public-Practice Artists based on his first-hand experience with (a) the NEA-funded Creative CityMaking pilot in Minneapolis and (b) his leadership in artist-led community engagement for Minneapolis2040.

Fall 2018: Our Board adopted a preliminary project scope including 8 topics/chapters required by the City and 5 additional topics that aim to fill-out a durable, holistic plan. At that time, the full Board unanimously established the re-creation/update of our District Plan as the organization’s highest priority work for 2019 and 2020. They adopted an initial scope/timetable divided into three component parts:

1. 2019: Pre-planning activities related to gathering the resources and talent necessary to conduct the plan;
2. 2020: Conduct a robust public engagement program to work collaboratively with partner organizations and the general public in working through a five-phase community planning process
3. 2021-2029: Carry out implementation of the plan over the coming decade.