

# *Phalen Corridor Development Strategy Summary*

## **Amendment for Phalen Atlantic**

Addendum to The Comprehensive Plan for Saint Paul

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Recommended by the Planning Commission – January 27, 2006

Adopted by the City Council – February 15, 2006

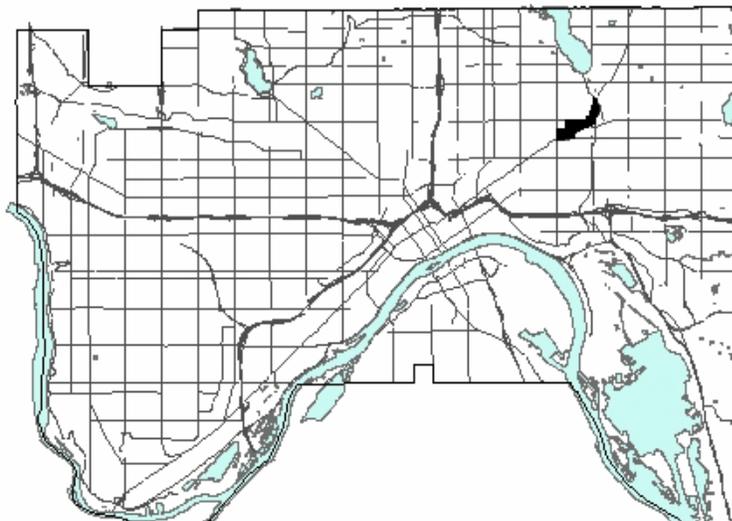
*This summary appends to the Comprehensive Plan the vision and strategies of the Phalen Corridor Development Strategy Phalen Atlantic area. The Phalen Atlantic Plan further refines the land use concepts outlined in the Summary of the Phalen Corridor Development Strategy, which was adopted by the City Council on April 4, 2001.*

### **The Phalen Corridor Development Strategy**

The goal of the *Phalen Corridor Development Strategy* is to enhance, stabilize and sustain the economic, social and physical prosperity of Saint Paul's East Side. Its focus is industrial development and jobs. Construction of a new road, Phalen Boulevard, in the rail corridor that stretches from I-35E, near downtown, to the Lake Phalen area will open up approximately 100 acres of under-utilized land for industrial development.

### **Location**

The area addressed in the *Phalen Corridor Development Strategy* includes land within approximately 1/4 mile either side of Phalen Boulevard, which runs along a rail corridor between I-35E and Phalen Village on Saint Paul's East Side. The Phalen Atlantic amendment encompasses the area between Earl Street on the west and Johnson Parkway on the east, in an elliptically shaped area generally north of Phalen Boulevard.



### **Neighborhood Development Objectives**

The *Development Strategy* includes development strategies for neighborhoods in the Phalen Corridor. These strategies provide details on how the overall objectives of jobs, housing, environmental enhancement and neighborhood connections can be met. The strategies reflect the land use strategy and corridor-wide concept plan, as well as the design principles, in the *Development Strategy*.

As construction of Phalen Boulevard proceeded from I-35E and Williams Hill eastward to Johnson Parkway and Phalen Village, the City (PED and Port Authority) met with affected neighborhoods to develop strategies for commercial and industrial development and redevelopment in the area included in this amendment. Amendments are refinements of the *Phalen Corridor Development Strategy* that are adopted by the Planning Commission and City Council as addenda to the Comprehensive Plan. They will be the framework for implementation.

Implementation of the strategies may be influenced by conditions unique to each site, including soils and pollution, as well as current market conditions. Therefore, implementation will include discussions with neighborhood residents regarding specific site development issues.

### **Phalen Atlantic - Neighborhood Development Objectives**

Objectives of redevelopment for the Phalen Atlantic area, included in the adopted *Phalen Corridor Development Strategy*, are:

1. to be compatible with the park-like character of the area, which includes Lake Phalen, Johnson Parkway and Ames Lake, with an arrangement of storm ponding
2. to achieve a mix of existing businesses and new light industrial uses in the development of industrial sites
3. to retain and enhance the buffering of homes on the west side of Johnson Parkway
4. to strengthen the mixed use area on the south side of East Seventh Street

### **Issues**

Since the Phalen Corridor was first conceived in 1987, the core issue has been economic redevelopment and job creation. The objectives of the *Phalen Corridor Development Strategy* and the strategies for the Westminster Junction and Williams Hill business centers reflect both of these goals.

To achieve these objectives, the City and the Port Authority seek federal and state funds to clean up polluted industrial sites, known as “brownfields,” so that new businesses can be developed on the sites. The requirement for award of these funds is tax base revitalization and job creation. Cleanup of polluted lands is followed by development of businesses that meet the standards set by the Port Authority for numbers of jobs related to the size of the development and for wages.

The Atlantic area of the Phalen Corridor, adjacent to the last segment of Phalen Boulevard to be constructed, presents unique challenges. Its elliptical shape is largely defined by the curve of the railroad right-of-way over which Phalen Boulevard was constructed. Consequently, streets through the area are unlikely to follow a typical grid pattern and development parcels will not be strictly rectangular.

Moreover, the Atlantic area has long been relatively inaccessible and invisible from all but those living and working in the immediately adjacent community. With construction of the last segment

of Phalen Boulevard, its visibility is increased, thus increasing its potential for economic development and job creation. The recommendations in this amendment to the Phalen Corridor Development Strategy are intended to maximize that potential in ways that benefit both residents and employees in the Atlantic area, as well as the entire Phalen Corridor and Saint Paul.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations have been identified as priorities for the Atlantic area that require leadership and/or significant participation by City government, including City departments.

#### Cleanup of contaminated properties

Collaborate with the St. Paul Port Authority in its efforts to secure grant funding for the cleanup of contaminated sites, including but not limited to, grants awarded by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development and the Metropolitan Council.

#### Land uses and zoning

Provide for the redevelopment of properties with commercial and industrial uses that provide significant employment, particularly newly-created employment opportunities.

Change the zoning of property in the area in accordance with Map B – Proposed Zoning (Map A depicts current zoning). Zoning for commercial and industrial uses is intended to attract high-quality businesses and to focus redevelopment in a manner compatible with surrounding properties.

Work with public and private entities to implement the land use plan shown on Map C – Proposed Land Use.

#### Building and site design

Enforce building and site design guidelines, as outlined below, to guide development in the Phalen/Atlantic area and ensure high-quality design. Intensive land uses, more extensive site coverage, and taller buildings are tolerable if the sites are developed with attention to site and building design.

1. **Applicability:** The Port Authority has its own design standards for its industrial developments. These strategies are intended to be separate/additional guidelines for any development that ultimately occurs within the Phalen/Atlantic area, and shall apply to public and private development alike.
2. **Gateways:** Developers and the community should be encouraged to consider the Phalen/Atlantic area as a whole, not just site by site, and to identify “gateway” areas and key intersections where taller buildings and more intense uses would be appropriate. The intersection of Phalen Boulevard and Johnson Parkway may be one such gateway.
3. **Creative design:** Because the developable land is irregularly shaped, any development will have to be designed creatively to maximize the buildable area and to provide access to a development site. The existence of large areas of polluted soils also necessitates careful design in order to maximize development potential.
4. **Building orientation:** Whenever possible, new buildings should be oriented towards Phalen Boulevard to increase the visibility of businesses in the corridor. At the same time, the orientation of buildings toward Phalen Boulevard should not negatively impact the surrounding community, so building design should be sensitive to neighbors on all sides.

5. **Open space:** Open space and landscaped areas are valued amenities, but should also be considered as part of the larger developable area rather than on a site-by-site basis. Because some properties may prove difficult to develop, these properties may have the potential to provide green and open spaces to benefit the larger area and allow other developable sites to be used more intensely. Native plantings are encouraged.
6. **Service areas:** Service, delivery, and storage areas should not be visually intrusive. When possible, these facilities should be inside or attached to buildings. Dumpsters should be screened with landscaping or fencing and should be secured.
7. **Design and construction:** Buildings should be designed to add to community character, and should have features that provide visual interest; large, blank facades and wall surfaces shall not be permitted. Windows should be included in designs wherever feasible. Facades should be broken up and softened whenever possible, whether through architecture, architectural details, landscaping, or other creative solutions. Buildings should have a base, middle, and top as distinct architectural features.
8. **Materials and colors:** Exterior materials and colors should be aesthetically pleasing, of high quality, and compatible with materials and colors of nearby structures. As stated in Zoning Code Sec. 66.343(b)(15)(a), high-quality materials include brick, stone, textured cast stone, and tinted masonry units. Unadorned plain or painted concrete block; tilt-up concrete panels; pre-fabricated steel or sheet metal panels; reflective glass; and aluminum, vinyl, fiberglass, asphalt, or fiberboard siding are generally not acceptable materials. Since the area will likely contain multiple buildings, building materials throughout the development project should be compatible.
9. **Fencing:** The appearance of fencing and walls should be softened with landscape materials, and high-quality fencing should be used instead of exposed chain-link fencing. Vinyl-coated chain link is acceptable for securing the sides and backs of properties.
10. **Sustainable design:** Explore options for green buildings and increased energy efficiency. To encourage creative solutions to site and building design issues that increase energy efficiency and environmental performance, use the site plan review process to consider lessening certain site design requirements (such as lot coverage, height limits, or stormwater requirements) for projects that substantially incorporate elements of sustainable design that exceed industry standards. Any variances for City standards should be in proportion to the benefit provided by the above-standard design.
11. **Parking:** Massing of parking lots should be broken up to reduce their visual impact. Shared parking options should also be considered where appropriate. Lighting of parking lots should be designed to reduce spillover lighting to surrounding neighborhoods. Business should consider using permeable paving materials that allow grass to grow between pavers to reduce the visual impact and massing of parking areas, and reduce stormwater runoff.

#### Site plan review

It is acknowledged that the Planning Commission, and its City staff designee, shall find, pursuant to Section 61.402 (c) (1), that site plans for proposed developments, whether rehabilitation or new construction, is consistent with the City's adopted Comprehensive Plan and the recommendations of this plan amendment to the *Phalen Corridor Development Strategy*.

#### Public improvements

Provide for an arrangement of streets and driveways that maximizes the creation of redevelopment sites for commercial and industrial uses. It is noted that only public streets are permitted to cross railroad tracks and the right-of-way owned by the Ramsey County Rail Authority.

#### Communications

When development takes place, communications among developers, city departments (PED, Public Works, HRA, etc), the Port Authority, community organizations, and immediate residents should be open and timely. All parties need to be aware of the details of proposed developments and their relationship to the surrounding community as early as feasible. If significant changes are made to the proposed development as design and construction proceeds, PED will inform neighborhood representatives, send them a copy of the plan for their review and give them adequate time to respond to the changes.

#### Ramsey County yard waste site

If the proposed IR Light Industrial Restricted District is adopted and becomes effective for the Phalen/Atlantic area, support granting a nonconforming use permit under provisions of Sec. 62.109 (a) of the Zoning Code for the Ramsey County yard waste site. The nonconforming use permit would memorialize the existing conditions of the yard waste site, located south of Case Avenue and east of Frank Street, with the existing conditions to reflect the provisions of Zoning Files #05-059-402 and #04-033-328, both conditional use permits governing the operation of the Ramsey County yard waste site. Further, amend the Zoning Code, adding Sec. 62.106 (q) to state: "Existing municipal yard waste sites that are legally nonconforming in IR Light Industrial Restricted Districts may expand as a conditional use under the provisions of Sec. 61.501-61.504 and Sec. 65.331 even though new yard waste sites are not permitted in IR zoning districts.

## **Planning Commission Findings**

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The Planning Commission finds that the Phalen/Atlantic plan amendment to the *Phalen Corridor Development Strategy* is consistent with the Saint Paul *Comprehensive Plan* and other adopted City policies.

## **Planning Process**

The Phalen Atlantic Task Force was created by the Planning Commission in March 2005 and began meeting in June 2005. The Planning Commission initiated a 40-Acre Study to consider potential zoning for the Phalen Atlantic study area at the same time. The task force concluded its work in November 2005. (description of the remainder of the process, including Planning Commission public hearing, recommendations and City Council consideration of the plan and zone changes)

Organizations involved in the creation of this plan and zoning include: Planning Commission, Districts 2, 4 and 5 Community Councils, Phalen Corridor Project, East Side Neighborhood Development Company, North East Neighborhoods Development Corporation, St. Paul Port Authority, East Side Area Business Association, businesses, property owners and tenants within the study area, as well as residents of adjacent neighborhoods. City and County officials also participated.

Task Force participants:

- Richard Kramer, Planning Commission co-chair
- Kelly Massey, community co-chair
- Ellen Biales, Legislative Aide, Ward 7
- Chris Born, residential property owner
- Jonathan Carter, East Side Neighborhood Development Company, Inc.
- Judy Chapman, Phalen Village business
- Anthony Coletta, Planning Commission
- Mark Doree, North East Neighborhoods Development Corporation
- Karin DuPaul, District 4, Community Organizer
- Tim Gavin, business representative
- Mitzi Gramling, property owner representative
- Monte Hilleman, St. Paul Port Authority
- George Johnson, Planning Commission
- Julie Johnson, East Side Area Business Association
- Rick Lang, property owner
- Leslie McMurray, District 5, Community Organizer
- Ken Meidlinger, Phalen Corridor Steering Committee
- Curt Milburn, Phalen Corridor, project director
- Eric Mitchell, District 5, board member
- Howard Nelson, business owner
- Scott Renstrom, Legislative Aide, Ward 6
- Chuck Repke, District 2, Community Organizer
- Norm Schiferl, Ramsey County Dept. of Public Health
- John Springman, Ramsey County Dept. of Public Health
- Jill Smith, business representative
- Jerry Steiner, property owner
- Erin Stojan, District 4, board member

- Gary Unger, District 2, board member