



**Greater East Side
Community Council**

2022-2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

Approved by Greater East Side Community Council's Board of Directors May 18, 2022





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Overview

In April 2021, the Greater East Side Community Council (GESCC, also known as District 2 Council) entered into a strategic planning process with the aim of building on its successful 47-year history by crafting a thoughtful plan for the next three years. This process was focused on helping the council fulfill its role of ensuring that residents have a voice in development activities that affect their community, including city planning, community land use and development, and transportation. GESCC's service area includes ten neighborhoods in the Northeast corner of St. Paul, Minnesota: Beaver Lake, East Phalen, Frost Lake, Hayden Heights, Hazel Park, Hillcrest, Lincoln Park, Parkway/Greenbrier, Prosperity Heights, and Phalen Village.

The Greater East Side is one of Saint Paul's largest, most populated, and most diverse districts. While 54% of the population is English-only speakers, 46% speak a language other than English and 26% speak English "less than very well."

Approximately 28% of Greater East Side residents identify as "foreign born."

The Greater East Side's boundaries are the city limits on the north and east, Minnehaha Avenue on the south, and Johnson Parkway on the west.

"The Greater East Side originally developed around several industries based in the south portion of the area, including 3M, Whirlpool, and Hamm's." In past years, many people moved to the Greater East Side of St. Paul for jobs with Canadian Pacific and the Burlington Northern Railways. Greater East Side neighborhoods continue to include residential areas with concentrations of retail and service industries on White Bear Avenue and in Phalen Village. White Bear Avenue has been described by its business association as the Main Street of northeastern St. Paul and the eastern portion of Maplewood. Located along this thoroughfare are churches, schools, small shops, shopping centers, homes, restaurants, bars, nursing homes, medical offices, community centers, a library, and fraternal organizations that serve more than 31,000 community residents. The East Side community is reported to have the highest homeownership rate in the City of St. Paul.

During the planning process, GESCC's Strategic Planning Committee answered the following fundamental planning questions: Who are we? Who do we want to be? Who do we serve? How do we do what we do? What are we good at? What are our challenges? Is our operating model the right one?

Although operating under new work roles associated with COVID, the planning process persisted, delayed only by holiday schedules and board elections. Consultants hired to assist this process conducted interviews with key informants, met with a few GESCC partners and GESCC's Strategic Planning Committee and Board of Directors, and reviewed community trends, demographics, and new development projects.

This completed plan is intended to guide GESCC's future work through 2022-2025. GESCC's community development work is particularly important at this time because of new developments in the community and the necessary work of championing and embedding diversity into board and community engagement activities and addressing concerns about housing, aging infrastructure, and the need for improved recreation facilities. The plan commits GESCC to maintaining excellence in fundraising, communications, marketing, and governance. Accomplishing the goals in this plan will help position GESCC well for the future.

Staff and board invite all members of St. Paul's Greater East side to read this strategic plan and support and engage with GESCC to make it a success.



Greater East Side Community Council (GESCC)

The Greater East Side is one of 17 planning districts in St. Paul, Minnesota. The Greater East Side Community Council (GESCC) is the administrative home for the district. The district council system in Saint Paul comprises autonomous 501(c) (3) non-profit agencies such as GESCC that provide residents in each district with opportunities to become involved in city planning. These community councils were created to help the City Council develop closer relationships with individual St. Paul neighborhoods and to more closely involve neighborhoods in planning and community development.

Primary funding and technical support for GESCC and other community councils are provided by the City

of St. Paul. City departments have created systems for early and frequent communication with district councils regarding proposed public developments and investments. These interactions are designed to ensure that community members have a better understanding of city departments' neighborhood priorities. The boards of directors and volunteers of all of these councils include members of all the major demographic groups and interests in the community. GESCC provides many opportunities for district residents to be involved, connect with neighbors, and help build community. Such opportunities include participating in community engagement activities, serving on the GESCC Board of

Directors, participating in block clubs or block party activities, raising awareness of upcoming events, volunteering at events or on taskforces, and taking photos or writing articles for GESCC's website, social media pages, or e-newsletter. GESCC's board, committees, and task forces are made up entirely of volunteers.

All district council activities, including board meetings, are open to the public to allow the greatest possible community participation. The founding principles of the district councils maintain that a commitment to inclusion and equity is central to community connectedness and engagement.





Strategic Planning Process

The Greater East Side Community Council’s strategic planning process included seven Strategic Planning Committee meetings and one strategic planning retreat with the entire District Council’s Board of Directors. In these meetings, Strategic Planning Committee members responded to questions and engaged in strategic discussions about District 2’s history and demographic changes over the years, including increasing racial and ethnic diversity; identified the community stakeholders who would participate in the assessment process; affirmed the opinions of the internal and external stakeholders; and identified goals, strategies, and key performance indicators to guide GESCC’s work over the next three years.

The external strategic plan assessment that was completed by the consultants during GESCC’s planning process asked participants about the council’s mission, strengths, challenges, opportunities, partnerships, and collaboration; what it should focus more or most on; and trends in the environment that may impact its future. The assessment process gathered input from 19 external stakeholders, who included business leaders; parks, recreation, and school staff; City of St. Paul staff and elected officials; and housing development, community organization, and faith leaders. Internal assessment data were also gathered through meetings and a retreat with the Strategic Planning Committee, Board of Directors, and staff.

This assessment found that nearly all assessment participants believed that GESCC has a clear mission statement. Most of the suggestions regarding areas that GESCC should focus more or most on included addressing societal inequities within the Greater East Side community, including in food security, housing, park usage, investments, transit, and safety. The results of a SWOT Analysis, a strategic planning and management tool that helps an organization identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to its projects and overall operations, are summarized below.

GESCC SWOT ANALYSIS

 STRENGTHS	 WEAKNESSES	 OPPORTUNITIES	 THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership and staff • Volunteers • Community engagement • Community support • Being a trusted information source 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging diverse populations • Losses due to COVID • Staff/board capacity • Limited financial resources • Limited partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal funding • Bringing the old and new community together • Addressing disparities (parks and open spaces, housing, homelessness) • Working with other district councils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing pandemic • Funding

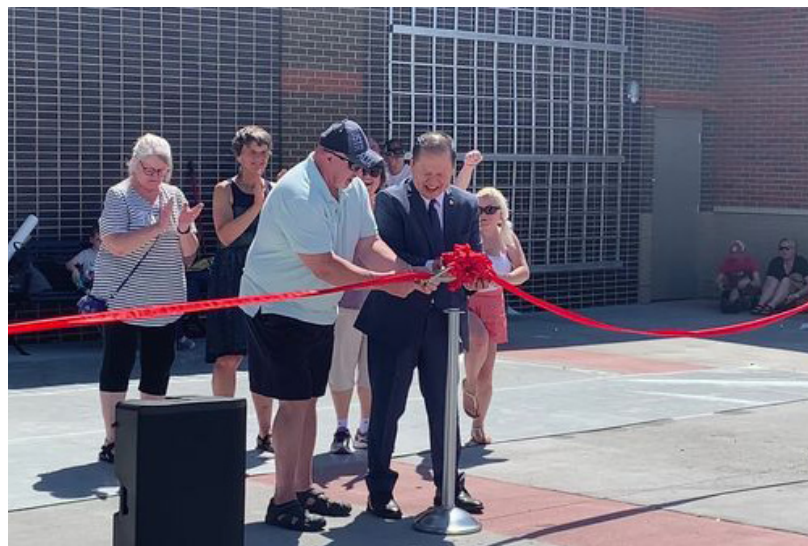
At this juncture in the district's long history, the biggest opportunity in Saint Paul's Greater East Side identified by key stakeholders was the redevelopment of the Hillcrest Golf Course, a 112-acre redevelopment project designed to offer thousands of new jobs and households and to boost the number of customers for White Bear Avenue businesses. The former golf course is a currently vacant site which has substantial soil contamination associated with former use that the site's owner, the Saint Paul Port Authority, plans to remediate as part of site preparation in 2022 or 2023. According to the site's master plan, which is expected to be approved this year, "care is being taken for planned uses to be complementary and not competitive with the commercial community on White Bear Avenue." According to that plan, the development, which was recently named by community residents as "The Heights," is also expected to:

- Recognize the site as a neighborhood node, with a concentration of activity and destinations provided within walking distance of new and existing neighbors, including a new city park with good access from all directions.
- Provide walkability to support public health with sidewalks and trails through the site and connecting it to the surrounding area.
- Include thoughtful transportation connections to the west, with jogs at Howard Street to discourage cut-through traffic across the site.
- Be a net zero project (i.e., greenhouse gases going into the atmosphere are balanced by removal out of the atmosphere) utilizing an all-electric design with solar and geothermal infrastructure.
- Encourage community agriculture to provide healthy food, as the neighborhood is currently a healthy food desert.

community and related factors such as racism; funding that supports community redevelopment; the continuing COVID epidemic; the impact of Minnesota's housing crisis on the Greater East Side community (i.e., while the Greater East Side has the largest homeownership rate in the City of St. Paul, the Twin Cities has the largest Black to White homeownership gap in the nation); and police behavior. Assessment participants also recommended that GESCC expand its reach and impact by doing more partnering with the following:

- Other district councils and local schools.
- Corporations, small businesses, and the East Side Area Business Association.
- Senior, cultural (Hmong, Karen, Latino), and neighborhood development organizations.
- Area schools.

Other identified trends that GESCC should give attention to were changing demographics in the





Mission, Vision, and Values

During the strategic planning process, the existing Greater East Side Community Council’s mission was affirmed and its central vision and values were identified.

MISSION

The Greater East Side Community Council engages the community to create a vibrant and thriving neighborhood for all.

VISION

A cohesive, safe, thriving, and engaged community.

VALUES

Collective action	Communications	Community development	Inclusion	Respect
WE BELIEVE IN...				
Widespread, active participation, community engagement, and action to enhance neighborhood conditions.	Multimedia sharing and exchanging to allow people to understand community information more accurately and quickly.	Identifying and defining issues of public concern and empowering the community to generate solutions.	Providing equitable access to opportunities and resources for all community members, with focused attention on those who have been and continue to be excluded.	Valuing all members of the community and sensitivity to the beliefs, needs, and capabilities of our culturally diverse community and staff.





Goals, Strategies, and Key Performance Indicators

GOAL 1 / ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Increase the long-term sustainability of Greater Eastside Community Council (GESCC).

STRATEGIES KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs)

1.1. Ensure staff capacity is sufficient to effectively accomplish organizational goals. 2022-2023

- Personnel needs in terms of numbers of employees and desired skills and experience are identified.
- Staff are in place to fill employment gaps.
- Each GESCC staff member has clearly defined job responsibilities.

1.2. Maintain skills needed at board level to deliver on GESCC's operations strategy. 2022-2023

- A skills audit of existing board members is conducted.
- Skills gaps are addressed.
- Board participates in annual refresher education on roles and responsibilities, DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion), etc.

1.3. Make sure DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) are incorporated into every aspect of GESCC's work

(e.g., hiring and recruitment policies and procedures, staffing, volunteers, board, vendors, suppliers, partner organizations) and monitored for progress. 2022-2023

- Board recruitment is periodically conducted to maintain a board that is broadly reflective of the GESCC community.
- Board engages in ongoing discussion about how to continue translating GESCC's DEI commitment into action.
- Board is involved in community engagement to connect with and learn about the diverse community's interests and needs.

1.4. Broaden and diversify GESCC's revenue base. 2022-2025

- New revenue strategies are developed and implemented.
- Ten new donors are recruited annually.

GOAL 2 / COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INVESTMENT

Increase engagement of cultural, racial, ethnic, and socially diverse GESCC constituents

STRATEGIES KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs)

2.1. Plan, engage, and evaluate community engagement activities. 2022-2025

- GESCC actively recruits members of its broadly diverse community to participate in community engagement events.
- Potential impacts of community engagement issues on GESCC's diverse community are assessed.
- Community engagement tools and methods are employed to appeal to a broadly diverse community.
- Community engagement goals and actions are evaluated to set goals for continuous improvement.
- Improvement goals are implemented.

2.2. Grasp new opportunities and prioritize community investments. 2022-2025

- GESCC's priorities and new opportunities are centered on community disparities (housing, employment, education, etc.).
- COVID and related changes are factored into GESCC's work priorities.

GOAL 3 / PARTNERSHIPS

Create new partnerships and sustain existing ones that build on the diversity of GESCC's community and inform GESCC's investment decisions.

STRATEGIES KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs)

3.1. Build stronger partnerships with GESCC's faith, racial, ethnic, and cultural communities. 2022-2023

3.2. Continually evaluate the effectiveness of new and existing partnerships. 2022-2023

3.3. Make needed partnership adjustments to maintain effectiveness. 2022-2023

- Strategic partnerships are identified.
- Mutually beneficial community-based opportunities are leveraged.
- Evaluations are completed and findings used to enhance partner relationships.
- Strategic investment of mutual assets maximizes their impact.

GOAL 4 / VISIBILITY, COMMUNICATIONS, AND PUBLIC POLICY

Continue to raise awareness of the GES community's needs to build strategic relationships and influence public policy and investment.

STRATEGIES KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs)

4.1. Increase and strengthen strategic relationships through attendance and speaking out on GES community needs and interests. 2022-2025

4.2. Increase media attention on the GES community's needs, including social media and better use of GESCC's website. 2022-2025

- Effective use is made of GESCC's website and traditional media such as Pioneer Press, Star Tribune, MN Post, MPR, and local TV.
- Number of Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook followers has increased.

- GESCC continues to be uniquely positioned to raise public awareness of its community's needs.





Resources to Implement Plan

A key component of the Greater East Side Community Council’s work continues to be a strong commitment from Minnesota’s funding community and partners. The City of St. Paul supports the district councils, and many funders provide financial resources. Greater East Side volunteers provide time, help with fundraising, administrative tasks, and community voice. GESCC recognizes this support as substantial and anticipates that it will be available at the appropriate level to support operations and implementation of this plan.



Plan Monitoring and Implementation

The Greater East Side Community Council’s Board of Directors will oversee the accomplishment of the strategic goals, objectives, and key performance indicators as outlined in this plan. The board may assign committees and staff liaisons to track individual goals and objectives as necessary and appropriate. The Executive Director will ensure that the Board of Directors remains focused on the strategic plan over the next three years. The director will provide the board with an operational workplan, periodic reports on the overall progress toward each goal, discussion of what is working, and note recommended changes or additions to the plan. The board reserves the right to amend this plan as needed throughout the three-year implementation timeframe.

Acknowledgments

Contributions to this plan were made by more than 40 people, including business people; parks, recreation, and school staff; City of St. Paul staff and elected officials; housing development, community organization, and faith leaders; and GESCC's Strategic Planning Committee, Board of Directors, and staff. The Greater East Side Community Council's Board of Directors sincerely thanks all of the strategic plan participants!

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Contact Greater East Side Community Council (GESCC) to get involved in the community or council.

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