

**Planning and Implementation of 2002 Old Town Payne Avenue Antique  
Fair & Neighborhood Tour Payne/Phalen Neighborhood  
City of St. Paul**

Conducted on behalf of  
East Side Neighborhood Development Company

Prepared by  
Michelle Noha, Graduate Research Assistant  
College of St. Catherine

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### **Becoming a Stakeholder in the Payne/Phalen Neighborhood**

Prior to being hired as a part-time marketing and event planner with the East Side Neighborhood Development Company (ESNDC), I was active in the Payne-Phalen neighborhood as a resident and official ambassador of the Payne Arcade Business Association through the Harvest Festival Royalty Program. In addition, my previous experience as a newspaper reporter for the *East Side Review* awarded me the opportunity to meet key people and service organizations in the community, including ESNDC. As a student in the Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership program at the College of St. Catherine, I have had the opportunity to refine my leadership skills and identify my strengths and weaknesses. Finally, my experience in radio advertising taught me the importance of building trusting relationships with people.

### **Old Town Payne Avenue Antique Fair and Neighborhood Tour Overview**

Each of the aforementioned components contributed greatly to the outcomes of the third annual Old Town Payne Avenue Antique Fair & Neighborhood Tour, the event in which I was hired to research, plan and implement. While the larger goals of increasing event attendance and retail traffic and sales along the avenue were realized, the Antique Fair & Neighborhood Tour did not dismantle the neighborhood's negative image. And despite incredible exposure from both print and radio media, the event failed to produce the same excitement and crowds from previous years. Poor weather and competition from other weekend events, most notably the Festival of Nations, Cinco de Mayo and the Scottish Festival at Macalester College, also played a part in the poor attendance of this year's event.

## **Sponsorships and Publicity**

In accepting the role of part-time marketing and event planner, my personal goals included building strong, meaningful relationships with people in the community and fulfilling the sponsorship goal set by my supervisor—to raise \$5,000 for the event, which in turn would cover the cost of my salary. Immediately I discovered that many organizations need at least six months to review and consider sponsorship requests. In some situations, request deadlines had already passed by the time I came on board. Because I came up \$4,700 short of the sponsorship goal, it was necessary to prove to ESNDC staff that I was still capable of planning the event with limited financial resources. And after just a few short weeks of working with staff, I knew I wanted to continue working with ESNDC provided there were projects at which I could offer my expertise and yet continue to develop economic and community development skills.

What we lacked in sponsorships, I made up for in publicity with help from one of the local antique dealers. My knowledge of the radio industry proved to be worth tens of thousands of dollars in free publicity. A one-hour on-air interview with *WCCO's* Tim Russell, an antique collector and enthusiast, and two antique appraisers who appeared at the Antique Fair, reached our target group across the state and even into parts of Iowa and Wisconsin. A *WLTE* Lite Break visit with radio host Orly Knutson the first day of the Antique Fair further promoted the event. In terms of getting attention in print, sending personal e-mails to *St. Paul Pioneer Press* and *Star Tribune* staff proved to be the most effective as the Antique Fair was listed as one of the “Top 10 Things To Do” that

weekend in the entertainment section of the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*. Press releases were sent via fax, mail and e-mail to other Twin Cities monthly and weekly publications as well.

### **Community Support and Buy-In**

My experience in radio sales and newspaper reporting taught me that success in just about every field of work greatly depends upon the quality of the relationships built with those around you. Trust and respect come by way of time, frequent encounters, and a genuine concern of people's self-interests and bottom line. A sense of "we're in this together" should emerge. Of the tools and resources I had to work with (information about past Antique Fairs, the Main Street Marketing and Promotions Committee, Event Organizer Ron Maddox of Capitol City Partnership, visual merchandising expert Michele Jansen, and the Payne Arcade Antique Dealers Association), the monthly meetings with the Main Street Marketing and Promotions Committee and Payne Arcade Antique Dealers Association were instrumental in shaping the vision and goals of the Antique Fair. Follow up phone calls and drop-in visits further allowed antique dealers to recognize my face and voice, and provided me the opportunity to identify the dealers who more interested and willing to contribute to planning efforts.

### **Visual and Cross Merchandising**

Another creative way the Marketing & Promotions Committee promoted the Antique Fair and the historic architecture of buildings along Payne Avenue was through the services of visual merchandising expert Michele Jansen. Together, Jansen and I approached antique

dealers and asked them if they would be willing to donate various items to be used in a window display at the renovated G. A. Johnson building, a turn-of-the century retail/residential building owned by ESNDC. At the time, the street-level retail portion of the building was vacant, which would have added to the poor neighborhood perception we were trying to change. Instead, Jansen created vignettes in each of the four display windows using antique furnishings and other items from businesses on the avenue including a shoe store, clothing store, floral store and pharmacy. All items used in the display were identified in terms of where they could be purchased, further promoting each business that participated. In addition, Jansen met individually with each of the antique dealers and retail storeowners to show them cost-effective ways to enhance their merchandising displays by means of visual merchandising and store layout. The antique dealers were especially excited to see their furniture, china, lamps, framed art, and other accessories arranged in a dining room and library/study vignette, ultimately giving them new ideas on how to create their own interesting displays.

My philosophy was and continues to be to involve as many key players in the planning and decision-making process in order to develop a sense of ownership and responsibility. In addition to approaching the antique dealers to donate items for the window display, Marketing & Promotions Committee members' names and the names of antique dealers were written in meeting minutes next to the tasks they were responsible for, and individuals were acknowledged and praised for their creativity and efforts. The event was not mine to create or destroy; instead it was an existing event with an existing set of challenges and opportunities to be pursued by all those involved.

### **St. Paul Home Tour**

A second element of the Old Town Payne Avenue Antique Fair was the addition of a neighborhood bus tour that visited four East Side homes featured on the St. Paul Home Tour. ESNDC was approached by the Minneapolis/St. Paul Home Tour staff and asked to offer a special tour showcasing four East Side homes and the area's points of interest. In essence, the tour was a way to highlight the benefits of living on the East Side and to dismantle false stereotypes about the East Side. While we had the option of creating a self-guided tour or a bus tour, other neighborhoods such as Dayton's Bluff recommended providing bus service. This way we would be able to provide convenient, safe and stress-free transportation to and from each stop, and staff each bus with a local resident who could answer questions and offer historical information about the area.

Partnering with the St. Paul Home Tour provided incredible publicity opportunities and thus it made sense to schedule the two events during the same weekend. The hope was that those visiting the antique fair would partake in the neighborhood tour, and those on the neighborhood tour would browse the antique shops. Printed, easy-to-read programs highlighting the antique shops and neighborhood tour stops were placed at local businesses prior to the event, and were available at the bus stops and featured homes during the event. (Please see appendix for brochure.)

In order to truly make the event a festive occasion, a variety of other activities took place Saturday and Sunday including free antique appraisals, a recycled art sale sponsored by

the East Side Arts Council, a brass quintet musical performance, and an outdoor ice cream social hosted by a local church. Early on the Marketing & Promotions Committee decided the event didn't have to be huge and spectacular, just executed to the best of our abilities considering our resources and budget. Payne Avenue Main Street Program Manager Katya Ricketts said that in comparison to previous Payne Avenue antique fairs, there was a higher level of commitment and interest on the part of antique dealers and members of the Marketing and Promotions Committee.

### **Evaluation and Feedback**

Following the Old Town Payne Avenue Antique Fair and Neighborhood Tour, the Payne Arcade Antique Dealers Association met to discuss the effects the event had on business. (Please see appendix for evaluation form.) At that meeting, one antique dealer revealed that he would be closing his store in two months, and another resigned from the association. The six remaining dealers said that while they did see an increase in sales and traffic in their stores during the event, they were not interested in planning a fourth annual antique fair. Two of the remaining six dealers are open only one or two days a week, if at all, suggesting that their livelihoods are not depended upon their sales of antiques. As a result of the outcome of the antique dealers meeting, the Main Street Marketing & Promotions Committee met and decided to focus its energy on planning other community events.



## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The outcomes of the Old Town Payne Avenue Antique Fair & Neighborhood Tour have acted as a springboard for discussion. While there is a need to brand the neighborhood and develop a grass roots marketing campaign to draw new people and businesses to Payne Avenue, thus increasing commercial traffic and economic development, there is an even greater need to identify and work with local businesses in discovering what motivates and affects their bottom line. While ESNDC's economic development staff is successful at forming relationships with business owners, there could be a better understanding of their self-interests and what motivates them to act. Understanding these two elements will greatly increase the success factor of future retail events as business owners will be more engaged in the planning and implementation of events if they feel they will directly benefit from their efforts. Whether it's a conversation at lunch or a couple of drop-in visits over the course of a month, increasing face-to-face time with business owners may help ESNDC's economic development staff better understand the individual goals and concerns of business owners and the challenges they face in today's consumer market.

In addition, there is an overwhelming need to understand and promote the factors that make businesses along Payne Avenue, and the entire Payne/Phalen neighborhood, unique. There also exists an opportunity for Payne Avenue to be a destination location for everyone living the Twin Cities metro area as surrounding areas such as the Phalen Corridor, Swede Hollow Park and Ames Lake Restoration/Phalen Lake Shopping Center

develop. But first, the economic development staff at ESNDNC must determine how to help businesses along Payne Avenue communicate their uniqueness; secondly, plan community events that further accomplish this goal; and thirdly, look at ways to garner positive publicity for the Payne/Phalen neighborhood outside of community events. The low turnout from the Antique Fair & Neighborhood Tour helped create awareness of the need for change in the area of marketing, event planning and neighborhood imaging and branding.