

# The High Winds Fund Strategic Plan 2005-2015

*A program to maintain and improve the beauty, serenity, and security of the area surrounding the campus of Macalester College.*

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# Executive Summary

## The High Winds Fund

The High Winds Fund was established in 1956 through an initial gift to Macalester College from DeWitt Wallace. The mission of the Fund is to maintain and improve the beauty, serenity, and security of the area surrounding the campus of Macalester College.

Over nearly 50 years, the Fund has grown in both assets and activities while maintaining its original purpose. Many Fund ventures have focused on real estate around the College. Current staff has responsibility for management and maintenance of the off-campus properties owned by Macalester. The High Winds office also has responsibility for acting as Macalester’s liaison to neighbors of the College and to local government representatives. The Fund is engaged in numerous partnerships which support the livability of the neighborhoods surrounding the campus, often providing direct financial support in addition to management leadership.

Macalester College is a unique institution – a nationally respected liberal arts college in the heart of a thriving urban environment. The High Winds Fund helps to support and improve that critical environment for the benefit of Macalester’s students, faculty, staff, and neighbors.



## Process to Develop the Strategic Plan for 2005-2015

In the spring of 2004, with the assistance of planning consultant Dan Cornejo, the High Winds Fund Committee and staff completed a strategic planning process that examined the multi-dimensional nature of decisions and actions being contemplated by the Committee, and explored different possibilities and roles for High Winds Fund initiatives.

Through individual interviews and two workshops, the High Winds Fund Committee reviewed the previous work of the High Winds Fund and its impacts on surrounding neighborhoods. The Committee considered the larger driving forces within which the Fund will operate over the next ten years, as well as the issues and opportunities in the neighborhood, urban, and regional context. The Committee members also considered their own values and the mission of the College. A third workshop was conducted with neighborhood stakeholder representatives to ascertain their perceptions of the impacts of High Winds Fund initiatives and thoughts on possible future directions.

## Strategic Plan Goals

The following goals support a program of building College-community connections by emphasizing civic responsibility and educational innovation. Each of these goals will be implemented through a range of tactics that are presented in the full Strategic Plan.

### Goal 1:

Seek opportunities to transform and upgrade the privately-owned properties on Snelling, Grand, and St. Clair Avenues, that are in close proximity to campus, to produce commercial and mixed-use corridors of economic vitality and distinctive character.

### Goal 2:

Improve the quality of the public realm on the campus perimeter and in the areas surrounding the campus to produce more welcoming, transparent, and permeable campus edges.

### Goal 3:

Facilitate the increase of attractive housing choices for students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

### Goal 4:

Work to reduce and resolve traffic (cars, pedestrians, and cyclists), transit, and parking concerns affecting neighborhood vitality, quality, and safety.

### Goal 5:

Support the plans, initiatives, and programs of neighborhood organizations that advance the mission of the Fund.



# The High Winds Fund Strategic Plan 2005-2015

## The High Winds Fund Since 1956

### Establishment of the High Winds Fund by DeWitt Wallace

The High Winds Fund was established by DeWitt & Lila Wallace in October, 1956 with an initial contribution of \$300,000. The Fund was named after the Wallaces' estate in Mt. Kisco, New York. In the years that followed, the Wallaces continued their support of this fund. Other friends of Macalester College added their support with contributions to the fund.

As of June 30, 2005 the growth from High Winds Fund investments was approximately \$10 million.

### Purpose and Scope

The High Winds Fund is an attempt by a farsighted donor to provide the College with a means to prevent the problems of urban blight with which a number of other institutions around the country have had to cope. The High Winds Fund was envisioned as a perpetual catalytic agent to help in maintaining and improving the environment around the campus.

To achieve that end, the purpose of the High Winds Fund is set forth in a formal agreement with Mr. Wallace in a single sentence:

*The purpose of the High Winds Fund is to maintain and improve the beauty, serenity, and security of the area surrounding the campus of Macalester College.*

### The High Winds Fund Committee

The Macalester College Board of Trustees appoints the members of the High Winds Fund Committee, on recommendations from the president of the College. The principal function of the HWF Committee is to establish the policies and to provide direction on individual projects that are most effective in carrying out the primary purposes of the High Winds Fund.

Current HWF Committee members are:

President (*ex officio*)

Trustee

Friend of the College

Friend of the College

Friend of the College/Trustee Emeritus

Brian C. Rosenberg

Susan M. Haigh, '73

Stephen B. Wellington

James P. Gardner

F. T. Weyerhauser

Staff to the HWF Committee:

Director	Tom Welna, '86
Department Coordinator	Lorie Schaible
Macalester V.P. for Admin. and Treasurer	David Wheaton

## **Highlights and Accomplishments Over the Past 50 Years**

In the early years of the High Winds Fund, most of the initiatives and projects were administered under the general policy of acquiring available properties adjacent or near the campus, maintaining and improving them, and (if not subsequently acquired by other funds of the College for campus expansion or other College use) renting them to faculty, staff or other suitable tenants. Thus, accomplishment of the Fund's purpose was being sought through a general policy of property ownership, maintenance, and improvement.

By the early 1970s, over one hundred homes had been purchased. Most of these were upgraded and rented (at less-than-market-rental rates) to Macalester College faculty and staff members. Several were sold to faculty members. At about this same time, the College began receiving complaints regarding maintenance of some of the HWF rental properties. The HWF Committee also became more aware that the rental subsidy worked against operating the High Winds Fund on a reasonable financial basis. Rental rates were changed to reflect a market-rate policy, to ensure funds for proper upgrading and maintenance and payment of taxes, and to ensure the fiscal stability of the Fund. Several homes outside the prime neighborhood area were sold, as the HWF Committee moved away from being a landlord and focused more on generating capital funds to support projects closer to the campus proper.

More recent accomplishments include:

- The purchase and renovation of several properties on Lincoln Avenue between Macalester Street and Cambridge Avenue.
- The house at 1576 Summit Avenue was incorporated into the official campus boundary to become the International Center.
- The Walk to Work program has assisted 36 faculty and staff with purchasing and/or renovating 39 houses near campus.
- The High Winds Fund owns and operates three major commercial properties on Grand Avenue, including a newly-constructed mixed-use development that provides two stories of dormitory units leased to Macalester College students, along with a ground-floor restaurant.
- Through a partnership with the Macalester Groveland Community Council, the Fund assisted with home improvement loans to 58 households in the neighborhood for a combined total of over \$500,000 in value.
- The HWF also sponsored the Home Improvement Fair and the Housing Condition Survey of the neighborhood.

- Lastly, after a several month test of a median island on Grand Avenue between Snelling Avenue and Macalester Street, the Saint Paul City Council approved the construction of a permanent median island. In late 2004, the Grand Avenue Median Island was completed, with trees and decorative lighting, providing a much-needed pedestrian safety feature as well as an amenity for the neighborhood at large.



As significant as the many varied individual projects, the administration of the Fund has also included a staff function to act as Macalester’s liaison to neighbors of the College and to local government representatives. The Fund is engaged in numerous neighborhood partnerships which support the livability of the neighborhoods surrounding the campus, often providing direct financial support in addition to management leadership.

## **Neighborhood Context and Trends**

Macalester College is located at the geographical center of the Twin Cities – Seven County region. Located between the three major centers of commercial and social activity of downtown Saint Paul, the Bloomington strip to the south, and downtown Minneapolis, residents of the Macalester neighborhoods enjoy easy access to all the cultural and economic features of the Twin Cities.

Macalester’s neighborhoods, primarily located in District 13 – Merriam Park-Lexington-Hamline and District 14 – Macalester-Groveland, is a combination of single-family homes and small-scale commercial and apartment districts based on the old streetcar lines. These middle and upper class neighborhoods enjoy the local convenience of shopping on Grand Avenue, the Selby-Snelling area, and Highland Village. Historic Summit Avenue forms the northern edge of the campus and the Mississippi River, a mile to the west, provides abundant recreation land. Also nearby are the campuses of the College of St. Catherine, St. Thomas University, William Mitchell College of Law, Concordia College, and Hamline University. Saint Paul Central High School is less than two miles away to the northeast, Ramsey Junior High School is adjacent to the campus on Summit Avenue, and Groveland Elementary School is less than a mile away to the southwest.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the population of Saint Paul increased by 5.5 percent since 1990. The population in District 13 (Merriam Park-Lexington-Hamline) increased by 2 percent, with greatest increases in school-age children and working-age adults. However, the population of District 14 (Macalester-Groveland) decreased by 3 percent, reflecting the decrease in household size in single-family homes; the greatest declines were in preschool children and seniors.

In terms of the housing stock, the majority was built between 1900 and 1939, with significant development between World War I and II. For the most part, the housing remains in good condition. The families that have occupied the single-family homes have shown, in the last ten years, a major pattern of renovation and addition. While most apartments remain in generally satisfactory condition, they have not experienced a similar high level of reinvestment. Several apartment buildings on Grand Avenue, just west of the campus and in the St. Clair Avenue and Snelling Avenue area, exhibit deterioration. The overall attractiveness and desirability of these neighborhoods have produced an affordability issue for students, faculty, and staff. Costs have been rising for both ownership and rental accommodations. Nevertheless, the stability of these neighborhoods remains generally higher than the City as a whole (see table below).

<b>Housing Characteristics - Macalester Neighborhoods</b>			
	<b>St. Paul</b>	<b>Dist. 13</b>	<b>Dist. 14</b>
<b>Households</b>			
Total	112,326	7,157	8,234
Owner-occupied	55.60%	50.70%	72.80%
Rental	44.40%	49.30%	27.20%
<b>Owner-Occ. Prop. Values (2002)</b>			
Under \$120,000	51.90%	17.20%	7.80%
Over \$180,000	19.10%	47.80%	51.10%
<b>Length of Tenure-Owners</b>			
Less than two years	9.40%	9.80%	8.90%
Ten years or more	9.30%	10.00%	10.20%
<b>Length of Tenure-Renters</b>			
Less than two years	21.30%	17.70%	23.80%
Ten years or more	6.20%	12.00%	7.00%
Source: Wilder Research Center			

Grand Avenue is an extremely robust commercial corridor. There is an emerging issue of the continuing loss of locally-owned and neighborhood-oriented shops as regional and national chain store operations move in to take advantage of the increased purchasing power and regional demand. The Snelling Avenue corridor has lagged somewhat in responding to the accelerated interest in the pedestrian-oriented neighborhood shopping experience. To the north, University Avenue, which links the State Capitol and Downtown Saint Paul with the University of Minnesota, appears poised to attract significant reinvestment as plans for the Central Corridor light rail development take form for that corridor.

There are significant traffic and pedestrian safety issues on the Snelling Avenue boundary of the campus. This glaring deficiency in neighborhood quality represents a major opportunity for the High Winds Fund to partner with property owners, the development community, and City and State governments to achieve dramatic improvements to this situation.



## Strategic Directions: Mission, Values, and Vision

Over the next 10 years, the High Winds Fund should continue to be proactive in the pursuit of its mission, as well as enhance the visibility of its works within the community. To achieve its overall goal and objectives, the Fund must and will develop partnerships with individuals and institutions within the community already working to maintain the long-term viability of the neighborhoods surrounding Macalester's campus. The thrust of HWF investments should be to leverage its resources to implement high quality projects and to influence decision-makers, both public and private.

More specifically, High Winds Fund initiatives should be directed to:

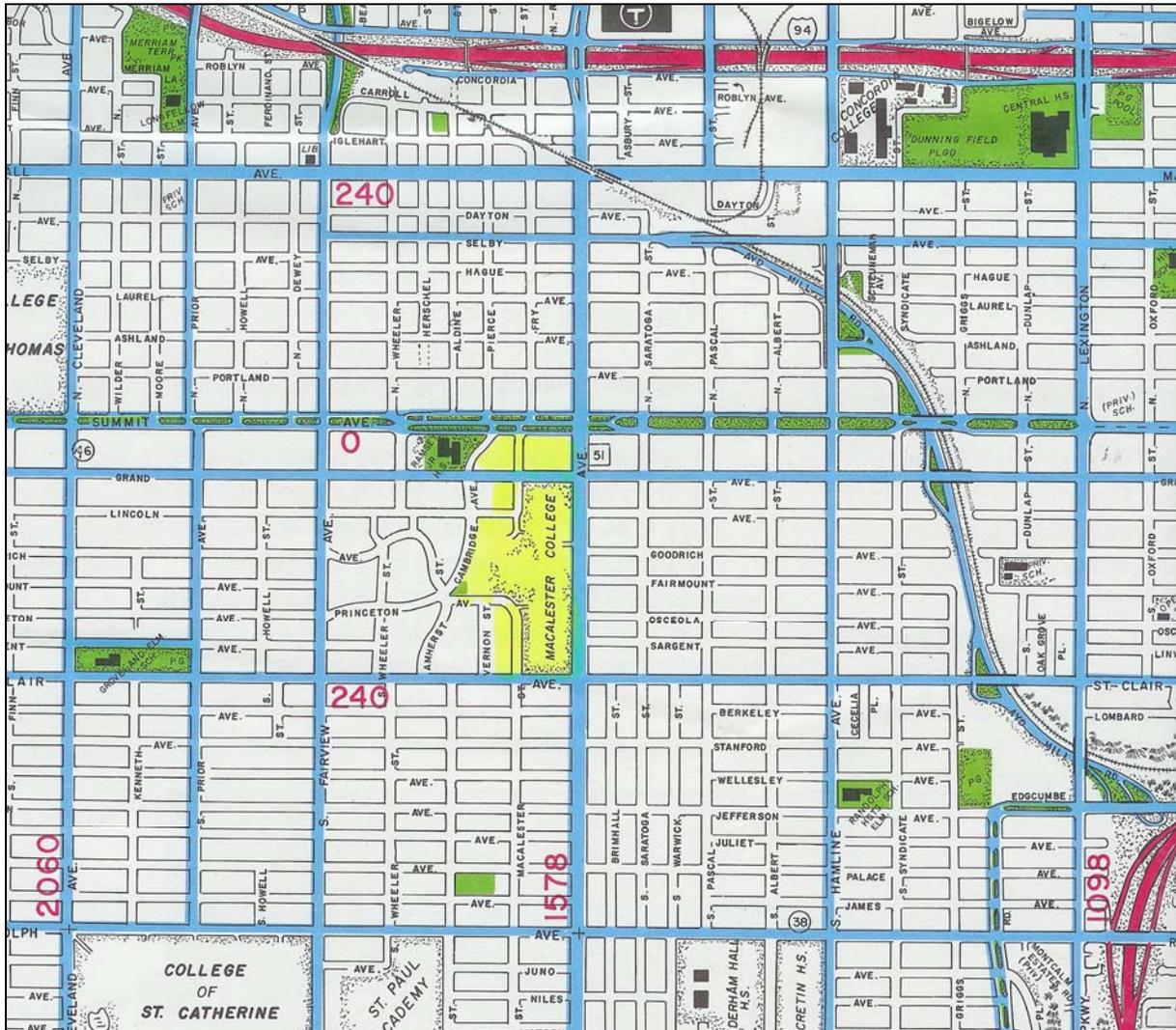
1. Improve "first impressions" of Macalester College.
2. Invest in and diversify housing in surrounding neighborhoods.
3. Enhance the environment by reducing the impact of cars, through traffic-calming and other measures to upgrade pedestrian movement, biking, and transit.
4. Achieve high visibility for High Winds Fund projects when appropriate.
5. Support nearby public schools.
6. Realize multiple benefits ("More bang for the buck") in real estate projects.
7. Conduct Fund activities in concert with the Strategic Plan for Macalester College and in partnership with the Campus Master Plan for facility & grounds development.

## Definition of the "Macalester Neighborhood"

The general geographic area in which Fund activities should be focused will vary, depending on the intended impact of the project. However, the broader area or "Outer Community," roughly a one-mile radius from campus, is bordered by I-94 on the north, Randolph Avenue on the south, Lexington Avenue on the east, and Cleveland Avenue on the west. The primary area for initiatives is a ¼ -mile radius from the campus boundaries.

See map on the following page which illustrates the broader area encompassed by the "Macalester Neighborhood."

# Map of the “Macalester Neighborhood”



## Overall Goal

To support the educational mission of Macalester College, the High Winds Fund will enhance the beauty, serenity, and security of the surrounding area by investing in the physical and social assets of the neighborhood surrounding the Macalester College campus.

## Strategic Objectives and Tactics

### Goal 1:

Seek opportunities to transform and upgrade the privately-owned properties on Snelling, Grand, and St. Clair Avenues to produce commercial and mixed-use corridors of economic vitality and distinctive character.



*(Note: Specific tactics listed beneath each of the major goals serve to illustrate some of the possible strategies for achieving the goal. These specific tactics will likely change over the ten-year life of this strategic plan. As opportunities arise and conditions change, the High Winds Fund Committee will continually refine and modify the specific tasks to achieve its goals. )*

### Tactics

- Work with the campus planning consultants firm to identify key properties on Macalester's borders that should be upgraded.
- Investigate the creation of a Business Improvement District or BID, as a mechanism for the HWF, the City, and private owners of commercial properties to partner in improvement projects and maintenance of the public rights-of-way and larger public realm.
- Purchase 1659 Grand Avenue ("Sitzman property"), combine this property with the "Patagonia parking lot," and possibly the one block right-of-way of Macalester Street between Grand Avenue and Summit Avenue, and redevelop these properties for multi-

story mixed-use to provide additional retail opportunities and housing for faculty, students, and/or alumni.

- Purchase (or collaborate with owners) and redevelop older commercial properties on the east side of Snelling Avenue between St. Clair Avenue and Stanford Avenue. ( 252 to 300 Snelling Avenue, including a parking lot, Sweeney Cleaners, Rosemark Bakery, Lundt Lange garden shop and flora shop, Echelon Hardwood Flooring, Frame-Ups, Brinkman’s Lamp Shop, house, Novick’s Auto Service)
- Purchase (or collaborate with owners) and renovate the buildings on the block of St. Clair Avenue between Snelling Avenue and Brimhall Avenue (Cinema Ballroom and Latin Dance studio at 1560 St. Clair Avenue and the Macalester Apartment Building at 241 Brimhall Avenue with retail/restaurant/shops [Acme Deli, R.D. Hathaway Estate Sales, School of Tae Kwon Do] on the ground floor).
- Work with the College to rehabilitate the College-owned Lampert Building at 32-36 North Snelling Avenue.
- Work with the owners of 1569-1571 Grand Avenue (Dunn Bros. Coffee and the Khyber Pass restaurant) to renovate their building.
- Investigate options for redevelopment of the two parking lots east of Dunn Bros. Coffee, for mixed-use development.
- Purchase and redevelop portions of the east side of Snelling Avenue between Grand Avenue and Lincoln Avenue. Purchase 80 South Snelling (former Insty-Lube property). Investigate possible property-trade/relocation of Stoltz Cleaners/1580 Grand Avenue. Facilitate a mixed-use development.
- Purchase vacant site on the SW corner of St. Clair and Fairview Avenues to either redevelop or hold as a “swap” parcel to achieve other development objectives at other locations.
- Support the efforts to upgrade the visual beauty of Macalester-Groveland/Merriam Park commercial corridors. Do not renew the lease for the billboard that is installed on the HWF-owned building on the northeast corner of Snelling and Grand Avenues.

## Goal 2:

**Improve the quality of the public realm on the campus perimeter and in the areas surrounding the campus to produce more welcoming, transparent, and permeable campus edges.**



*(Note: Specific tactics listed beneath each of the major goals serve to illustrate some of the possible strategies for achieving the goal. These specific tactics will likely change over the ten-year life of this strategic plan. As opportunities arise and conditions change, the High Winds Fund Committee will continually refine and modify the specific tasks to achieve its goals. )*

### Tactics

- Collaborate with campus planning consultants in the expansion/ramp development of the west parking lot to produce a higher quality development that may include other uses. Ensure that the site plan of this development enhances the public realm transition between the campus and the adjacent neighborhood properties.
- Collaborate with campus planning consultants in the design and development of the Fine Arts Building and the new Health and Fitness Center to ensure attractive and pedestrian-oriented facades, as well as open space that can be shared with adjacent neighborhoods.
- Collaborate with Saint Paul City officials in the creation of a “Public Realm Enhancement Strategy” that produces a program of public- and privately-sponsored improvements to dramatically upgrade the neighborhoods surrounding the Macalester College campus into safer, more interesting, and more beautiful environments for walking and cycling.
- Establish a program of designing usable open space/greening into HWF real estate initiatives.

### **Goal 3:**

**Facilitate the increase of attractive housing choices for students, faculty, staff, and alumni.**



*(Note: Specific tactics listed beneath each of the major goals serve to illustrate some of the possible strategies for achieving the goal. These specific tactics will likely change over the ten-year life of this strategic plan. As opportunities arise and conditions change, the High Winds Fund Committee will continually refine and modify the specific tasks to achieve its goals. )*

#### **Tactics**

- Purchase (or collaborate with owners) and rehabilitate apartment buildings on the south side of Grand Avenue between Cambridge and Wheeler Avenues, and other selected apartment buildings elsewhere near the campus.
- More aggressively market the expanded Walk to Work program which assists College faculty and staff to purchase homes near the campus and provides grants for home improvements to faculty and staff that live within a mile of campus.
- Continue to strategically purchase homes along the western boundary near campus for rental to faculty and staff members, in order to (1) provide a transition between the campus use and neighborhood residential use and (2) introduce new faculty and staff to new housing opportunities in the immediate neighborhood.

#### **Goal 4:**

**Work to reduce and resolve traffic (cars, pedestrians, and cyclists), transit, and parking concerns affecting neighborhood vitality, quality, and safety.**



*(Note: Specific tactics listed beneath each of the major goals serve to illustrate some of the possible strategies for achieving the goal. These specific tactics will likely change over the ten-year life of this strategic plan. As opportunities arise and conditions change, the High Winds Fund Committee will continually refine and modify the specific tasks to achieve its goals. )*

#### **Tactics**

- In concert with the City of Saint Paul, State MnDOT, and other interested stakeholders, prepare and implement a “Snelling Avenue Corridor Urban Design and Safety Enhancement Plan” for Snelling Avenue/Highway 51, between Selby Avenue and St. Clair Avenue. This Plan would include a landscaped median, enhanced pedestrian crosswalks, trees, underground wiring, bus shelters, and possibly public art and banners, to improve the “first impressions” of new visitors, parents, and students. Advance a program of pedestrian safety through traffic-calming and other measures to improve the pedestrian environment. Because Snelling Avenue is a State highway, seek federal transportation enhancement program matching funds to finance desired improvements.
- Develop new and distinctive bus shelters, in concert with Metro Transit, for Snelling, Grand, and St. Clair Avenues, near the college campus.
- Encourage efforts to upgrade transit in the University Avenue Corridor, and explore ways to enhance the Snelling Avenue bus transit route connection to the Central Corridor light rail initiatives.
- Support parking resource development along the Grand, Snelling, and St. Clair Avenue corridors. Work with the campus planning consulting firm to locate and develop appropriate parking resources (lots or structures) on campus.
- Explore programs for enhanced street lighting and installation of alley safety lighting.

**Goal 5:**  
**Support the plans, initiatives, and programs of neighborhood organizations that advance the mission of the Fund.**



*(Note: Specific tactics listed beneath each of the major goals serve to illustrate some of the possible strategies for achieving the goal. These specific tactics will likely change over the ten-year life of this strategic plan. As opportunities arise and conditions change, the High Winds Fund Committee will continually refine and modify the specific tasks to achieve its goals. )*

**Tactics**

- Work closely with Community Councils (District 14-Macalester-Groveland, District 13-Merriam Park, District 13-Lexington-Hamline, District 13-Snelling-Hamline, District (Summit-University), and the Grand Avenue Business Association (GABA), to advance plans, initiatives, and programs of mutual interest and benefit.
- Encourage community council programs to increase landscaping throughout nearby neighborhoods, especially on thoroughfares.
- Develop new opportunities for beautification (e.g., building façade improvements, public art), in collaboration with neighborhood organizations.

- Continue the community organization grant program that supports the social infrastructure for family-friendly neighborhoods near the campus.
- Encourage Block Club safety programs, Block Nurse programs, youth programs, and pre-schools.
- Map the social infrastructure of the Macalester neighborhoods, working with Wilder Research, the Minnesota Council on Non-Profits, and Macalester's Urban Studies Program in the Geography Department.