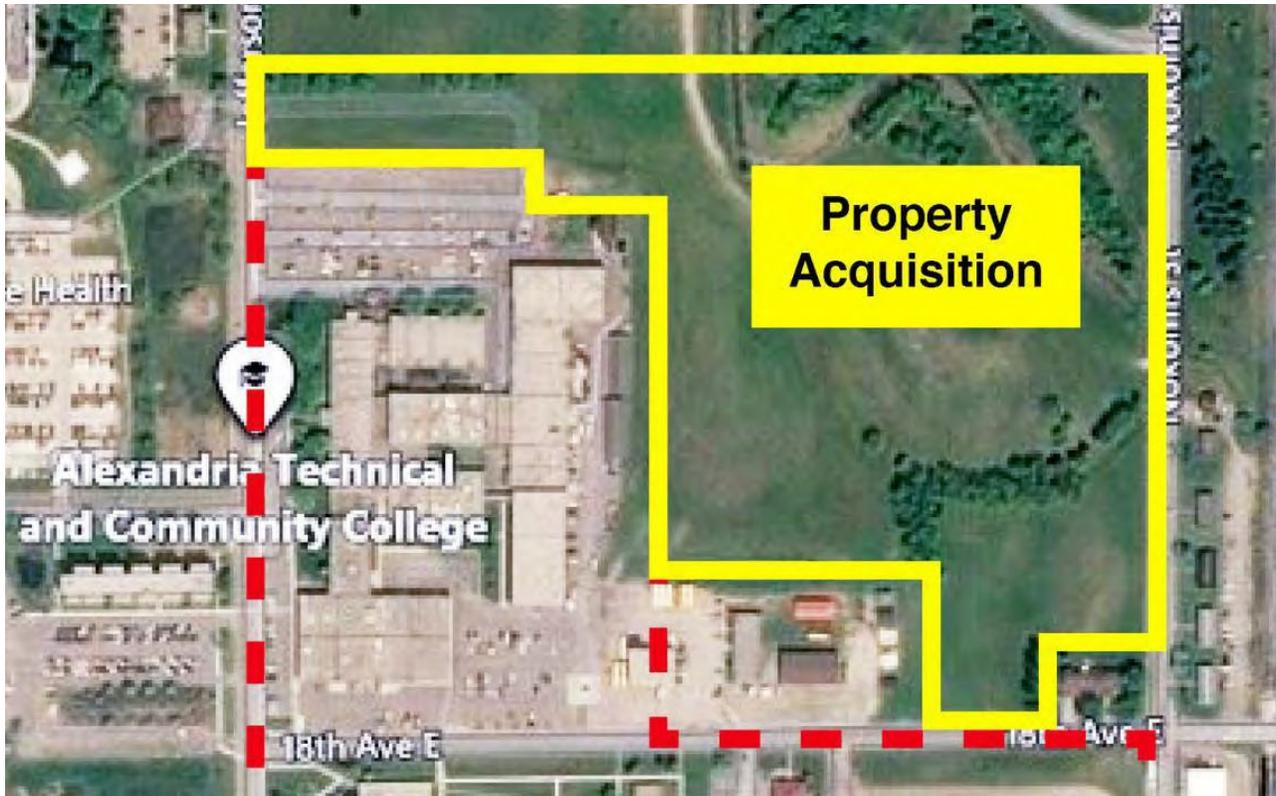


In the Know: Stars align for ATCC's land purchases

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Property purchased by the Alexandria Technical and College will ensure that no development will occur between the campus and Nokomis Street (the far right of the map). (Contributed map)

By Michael Seymour, ATCC President

In over 20 years as a college administrator, I have been involved in less than a handful of once-in-a-lifetime business decisions. These are strategic opportunities that campus leaders years from now are able to leverage for the good of the college and community.

Alexandria Technical and Community College is currently involved in multiple once-in-a-lifetime transactions. Prior to my tenure, the college received Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (Minnesota State) board approval to surplus land adjacent to Foundation Hall. The sale of this parcel is complex in that it involves a government entity, a 501c3 and a third party. 3M gifted the property in 1971. In order to surplus the property, 3M needed to agree that a sale is in line with its intended use. Despite the complexity, we anticipate a sale of this parcel by June 2020.

The college is also finalizing purchase agreements with two other neighbors. Last month, the Minnesota State Board of Trustees approved the sale of approximately eight acres to Douglas County for the expansion of Pope/Douglas Waste Management. This college-owned property provides a more ideal site plan allowing for critical expansion of the 30-year-old waste management facility. It also allows Pope/Douglas Solid Waste Management to meet its future obligations. This land use allows businesses currently located south of the facility to remain in place and on the tax roll.

The college has been interested in acquiring the former Alexandria School District land contiguous to the east and north/northeast of the main campus building since the higher education merger in 1995. The land offers needed outlets to manage storm water and provides additional land for parking, expansion of buildings, athletic fields, green space, or other future uses. Owning the property ensures that no development occurs between the campus and Nokomis Street.

As many of you know, for years the Alexandria School District operated the subject property as its high school and athletic fields. The school district and college maintained ongoing discussions about the parcel, which intensified as plans for a new high school developed. After a failed state bonding attempt, the college determined it lacked the financial resources necessary to make the acquisition at that time – around 2012. After informing the school district of the situation, the district sold the entire former high school parcel (40 acres) to a private entity.

The result of these collective transactions will provide adequate resources to afford the 20-acre purchase price of the former high school site without having to use college operating funds or any financing. It is seldom in an academic lifetime where the stars align in a way that provides a college such a strategic opportunity. All it would take is one person within the five entities involved in these transactions to keep this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity from happening. I am learning it is not by chance there are no detractors in this group. Alexandria community leaders support and look out for one another to the benefit of all. That private entity mentioned above that purchased the school district property to make this all possible is our friend. I won't call him out by name, but you my friend have helped improve ATCC's future for generations to come.

Speaking for the ATCC community, we are thankful for friends and good neighbors.

Michael Seymour is the president of the Alexandria Technical and Community College. In the Know is a rotating column written by community leaders from the Douglas County area.