

2011 Saint Paul Historic Survey Project

SURVEYING PORTIONS OF PAYNE-PHALEN, THOMAS-DALE AND WEST 7TH NEIGHBORHOODS

St. Paul neighborhoods, residents and other stakeholders have a valuable tool to use regarding the city's history, thanks to a unique research project that concluded in 2011. The research focused on historic resources that exist in portions of Payne-Phalen, Thomas-Dale and West Seventh neighborhoods — all areas that developed around downtown between 1849, when St. Paul was incorporated, to 1900, when these neighborhoods were fully developed.

VALUE

This survey gives us an accurate view of what historic resources exist in these areas. This is important for several reasons.

- **The survey fills in a sizable gap that had existed in our understanding of St. Paul's history and its historic resources.**
 - These are the remaining near-downtown areas that needed updated surveying; some of these areas hadn't ever been surveyed or they were done so long ago that they are out of date. (Surveys like this need to be redone periodically.)
 - As part of the project, a separate report on "Neighborhoods on the Edge of the Walking City" was written. This is a theme that can be used to better understand several neighborhoods, not just these three; it can also be the basis for decisions about historic resources.
- **Neighborhood residents and groups need accurate information to be able to make good decisions.** This is valuable for HPC staff, city officials, developers and other stakeholders. For example, the survey results could be used to guide steps being taken in the city's Invest Saint Paul and Neighborhood Stabilization Program efforts.
- **Steps to preserve eligible historic resources can now be considered.** There are many possible responses that would promote preservation of historic resources in these areas, including efforts to prevent demolition or attract reinvestment. An additional option would be the creation of new historic districts. If designation is pursued additional evaluation would be required and would need to be recommended by the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission and approved by city leaders.

PROCESS

This survey project involved many partners, from the many neighborhood residents who contributed their ideas to the state Legacy funding that supported this work. It was managed by three collaborators: Historic Saint Paul, the local nonprofit preservation advocate; the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission; and the Ramsey County Historical Society. The Minneapolis-based firm of Mead & Hunt conducted the analysis.

Conducting the survey involved asking for community input, driving through the neighborhoods, reviewing previous research and using mapping tools.

FINDINGS

Each of these neighborhoods has a rich array of historic resources that merit consideration for preservation, including buildings that best reflect St. Paul's early history. There are many buildings in these neighborhoods that may be eligible for designation and there are other areas where additional research is warranted. When we compare these results to earlier survey work, in some areas significant historic resources have been degraded or lost.

There is a great deal of detail in the survey results for the neighborhoods. Here are few general points.

PAYNE-PHALEN

Fifty homes, commercial buildings and other properties in this neighborhood north of downtown were inventoried¹. Along with tracking the evolution of the neighborhood, the survey found:

- Three potential new historic districts, where there are concentrations of buildings that have good integrity that could meet standards for local or national designation. One of these is a commercial area along Payne Avenue; the other two are residential areas to the east and west of Payne Avenue.
- Two areas for further study were identified, where more research would be helpful: Railroad Island and a stretch of Payne and Greenbrier Avenues from Jenks to Wells Street.

THOMAS-DALE

Forty-six homes, commercial buildings and other properties in this neighborhood west of downtown were inventoried. Along with tracking the evolution of the neighborhood, the survey found:

- One potential new historic district, where there are concentrations of buildings that have good integrity that could meet standards for local or national designation. This area is bound by Kent Street to the east, Sherburne Avenue to the south, Dale Street to the west and Edmund Avenue to the north.
- Two areas for further study were identified, where more research would be helpful: a block bound by Rice and Marion streets and Sherburne and Charles avenues, as well as commercial buildings throughout the neighborhood.

WEST 7TH STREET

Seventy-two homes, commercial buildings and other properties in this neighborhood southwest of downtown were inventoried. The area surveyed is bound by I-35E, Shepard Road and stretches from the edge of the Irvine Park Historic District to the

¹ These properties were inventoried because they were believed to have historical, cultural, architectural, archaeological or engineering significance and to meet at least one of the criteria for designation.

south, just past St. Clair Avenue. Along with tracking the evolution of the neighborhood, the survey found:

- One potential new historic district, where there are concentrations of buildings that have good integrity that could meet standards for local or national designation. This Uppertown potential district is to the east of West 7th Street area and would include portions of McBoal, Leech and Banfil streets and Goodrich and Smith avenues.

NEXT STEPS

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION

Residents and other stakeholders in these neighborhoods can start reviewing the results and talking about what they might mean to them. What do people think about these historic resources? How would preserving them fit with what else is going on in the neighborhood? What steps should be taken to help with preservation?

DECISION MAKING

The results of the survey can begin to be used in the decisions that are made that shape these neighborhoods, both in the buildings that are allowed to be torn down and the ways reinvestment is encouraged.

RESEARCH

Several areas for additional research have been suggested by the survey. These include studies of citywide resources tied to specific themes, such as limestone dwellings, alley houses and Queen Anne pattern book houses. Specific areas for additional study within the neighborhoods were identified as well, as noted above.