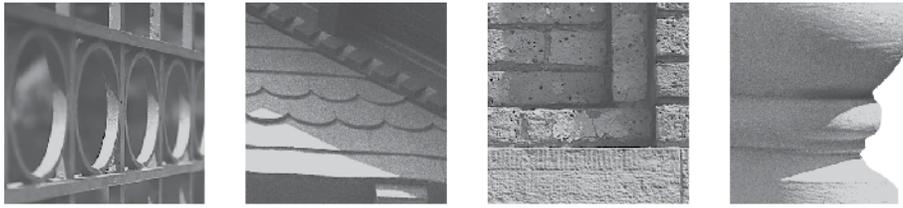


PRESERVATION JOURNAL OF SAINT PAUL

A PUBLICATION OF HISTORIC SAINT PAUL



CELEBRATE HERITAGE | RENEW NEIGHBORHOODS | STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY

FALL 2008

www.historicsaintpaul.org

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4TH STREET, POSITIVELY

BY BECCA HINE

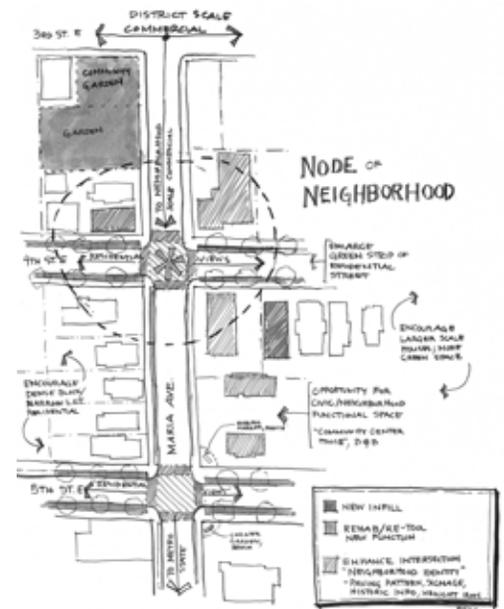
Historic Saint Paul and Dayton's Bluff Urban Partnership are partnering with Council President Kathy Lantry and the City to target revitalization efforts in a six-block area of Dayton's Bluff. Spurred by the vacant housing crisis, Saint Paul's Housing and Redevelopment Authority has purchased several vacant properties in the area and plans to offer them for redevelopment. East 4th Street from Mounds Boulevard to Maple Street has been selected due to a large number of vacant houses and a high percentage of neglected rental properties. The focus area is also within a historic district and features a variety of late 19th-century structures.

The 4th Street Preservation Project is designed to develop and test strategies for reversing decline, preserving the historic fabric, and guiding development efforts. Workshops led by SiteLines Education have focused attention on the characteristics, community assets, and development opportunities in the 4th Street area. Workshops for residents have addressed neighborhood needs and desires, as well as possibilities, implementation strategies, and long-term goals.

In September, Historic Saint Paul, in partnership with the St. Paul chapter of the American Institute of Architects, hosted a 4th Street tour and design charrette. Architects and landscape architects graciously volunteered their time, expertise, and graphic illustrations which will help shape redevelopment in the project area.

A final document will be published in January 2009, along with preliminary scope-of-work statements for each of

the City-owned properties. The City will include these documents in their Request for Proposals, which will go out in spring 2009. Historic Saint Paul is planning to coordinate a neighborhood event that will showcase city-owned properties to prospective developers and homeowners.



On left: tour of 4th St. area. Above left: working on sketch. Above right: a concept sketch for the 4th Street Project, produced at the AIA and HSP design charrette, September 2008.





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318 LANDMARK CENTER
75 WEST FIFTH STREET
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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Supporters,

I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your generous contributions to Historic Saint Paul. With your help, we have continued our work of preserving, protecting, and enhancing the historic character of Saint Paul neighborhoods. Preserving historic assets and connecting residents to their history helps to create a sense of identity and pride in the community.

Over the last year, the HSP Board and Staff have realized more than ever how important our programs are to the community. Our Restore St. Paul loan program, which provides low-interest loans and grants along with design assistance to homeowners and business owners, has been retooled and become more effective. Even in our current economically troubled times, this program is on track to have a very successful year. One of our top priorities this past year has been to closely monitor the effects of vacant housing on the community, a problem that has reached unimaginable proportions. We are currently working with City staff to help identify historic resources that are vacant

and develop plans for their future use.

Like most of you, Historic Saint Paul is in the throes of trying to understand the current global financial situation and its effects on our mission. What we do know is that without your help we will not be able to continue to bring our vital programs to the residents of Saint Paul. As the year comes to a close, we ask you to consider giving a generous tax-deductible donation to Historic Saint Paul. It's a great way to show your commitment to preserving our city's storied past and ensuring a brighter future. Thanks for being our partners—past, present, and future. We wouldn't be here without you. And here's to a glorious 2009!

Best,
Philip Waugh, President
Historic Saint Paul

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ACKERMAN BROTHERS SALOON AND GROCERY STORE BUILT IN 1886

BY MARCIA MOERMOND

Just south of the Oakland Cemetery, at the corner of Jackson and Sycamore Streets, is a two-story building built in 1886 as the Ackerman Brothers Saloon and Grocery Store. In 1886 this working-class neighborhood was home to many immigrant groups, though the largest number were German. Over the years, the Ackerman's owners and uses changed many times, but most recently it was owned by a group of suburban investors and operated as a four-unit apartment building. Besides its lack of maintenance and occasional vacant status, there were drug raids, cockroaches, unsanitary conditions, excessive garbage, periodic gas and electric shut-offs for nonpayment, and finally a water cutoff in November of last year. On November 8, 2007 the property was bought at a sheriff sale by Mortgage Electronic Registration System (MERS) of GMAC Mortgage for \$250,193. It is not an accident that these things happened at the same time. Not paying your water bill for three months will get the water turned off. Not paying your mortgage for three months will initiate foreclosure proceedings. It is now subject to demolition by the City of Saint Paul.

The modern history of the Ackerman building as an investment property in Saint Paul is not unique. In 1978 it sold for \$39,000, in 1999 for \$139,500, and in 2005 for \$295,000. Yes, one wonders what happened to more than double the building's value in just six years. Indeed, in 2005, building and tenant conditions were as bad as usual, and the bill for the Certificate of Occupancy issued by the City had gone unpaid for more than 90 days. Over the next two years, its property taxes went unpaid, leaving a balance due of \$10,700. It had become yet another property whose equity (and then some) had been pulled out, while the property itself had been left to languish.

This brings us back to the current situation where the City has pursued demolition. The City's Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) had been aware of the disintegrating conditions at this property at

the time "Invest Saint Paul" neighborhood discussions were initiated. The community was very clear that this building was not an asset and, in fact, had become a poster child for things that were going wrong. There was consensus between the neighborhood and DSI that something big had to happen, such as acquisition and purchase of the property thorough eminent domain, outright purchase of the property, or an order forcing the building's rehabilitation. But with no statutory authority to exercise eminent domain for the acquisition of this derelict property or a checkbook for either eminent domain or outright purchase, the City faced limited options. The Order to Abate a Nuisance Building was issued last February. This essentially granted the owner 30 days to correct all of the building's safety code violations. Not surprisingly, no action was taken by the owner or the mortgage holder.

By April and May, hearings were being conducted by the City Council to determine whether or not the building should be demolished. The attorney representing the mortgage holder wanted more time for her client to evaluate the prospects of this building. The Council would grant more time if some conditions were met. They asked for the same things they always do when someone wants more time: payment of fees and taxes; posting a \$5,000 performance bond; and a Code Compliance Inspection. None of these materialized by the time of the Council's public hearing on May 21. The Council continued the matter to June 4. Still no action, so they continued the matter again, hoping that the current or a new owner would come through with a sound proposal for the building's rehabilitation. No proposals were forthcoming. On June 11, the Council laid the matter over for six weeks for DSI to evaluate options, and to give more time for a new owner to come forward. Ironically, the taxes were

paid in July, thus preventing the property from proceeding into tax forfeiture, which would have allowed the City to acquire the property and facilitate its rehabilitation. However, the City continued to have no communication from the mortgage holder. On July 23, another six weeks was granted for the same reasons. Finally, on September 3, the City Council ordered the repair or removal of this nuisance building within 30 days. There was hope that something would happen in those 30 days to justify reconsideration of this order. The building was demolished in November 2008.

Note: This article reflects my own assessment of this situation and not those of my employers, the City of St. Paul.



The Ackerman Building, 780 Jackson St.
Demolished November 2008



The Green Stairs. Photo Bob Roscoe

THE GREEN STAIRS STEPS UP AS A CIVIC ISSUE

BY BOB ROSCOE

“As it was, where it was,” declared Cheryl Dickson, referring to the rebuilding of what West Siders call the Green Stairs that once climbed the steep bluffs just beyond Wabasha Street’s crossing of the Mississippi River. Echoing the mayor of Venice, Italy, in his commitment to rebuild his city’s historic opera house destroyed by fire in 1996, Dickson spoke for her community’s devotion to an iconic symbol. For much of the West Side, the Green Stairs, built of steel and wood in 1916, was an essential link between the bluff, the flats, and downtown. The city once had at least 70 public stairs, most of them on the West Side, all of them examples of useful “civic architecture.” It’s estimated that 350 people used the Green Stairs every day, with the number rising to more than 1,000 during special events.

In spring 2008, a rock slide and wind-

storm critically damaged the stairs, necessitating demolition for safety reasons. Bolander Construction dismantled the stairs, including the roof and upper level. This past summer, neighborhood residents met at the West Side Community Organization offices to share memories of the stairs and to note the structure’s importance to the community and the Mississippi River Valley.

Community support is intense to rebuild the Stairs, and a series of neighborhood meetings headed by the Green Stairs Coordinating Committee and the Riverfront and Development Committee has been held in coordination with the City; the process of securing funding will start in early 2009. Construction drawings for a new tower that may re-use some original elements will take several months. The tentative date for construction and reopening is 2010.

WEST SIDE’S RIVERVIEW COMMERCIAL CLUB NEARS THE END

BY CAROL SWENSON

At the intersection of Cesar Chavez and Congress stand the remnants of the building that was long home to the Riverview Commercial Club, once a lively social hall and bowling alley. Built in the 1920s, it was the stronghold of a venerable civic organization that at one time or another was involved in just about everything on the West Side, from the neighborhood hospital to schools to general economic growth. Vacated in

1990, the building has been on a downward spiral and is scheduled for demolition in late 2008 or early 2009.

Its current owners, the Riverview Economic Development Association (REDA), would have preferred to write a different ending to this story. Unfortunately, time and weather have taken their toll. Several sections of the roof have caved in, windows and doors have been broken, and previous owners have stripped the building of almost all of its valuable materials. Wanting to reuse what it could, REDA took the extra step of contracting a specialist in historic stonework to analyze the viability of recycling exterior stonework. The findings were mixed. The limestone facing found on two walls had been assembled out of small stones secured with mortar. The brittle qualities of limestone would make it extremely labor intensive and difficult to reclaim and what could be salvaged would likely be too small for practical reuse. There is more promise, however, for salvaging the building’s polished granite façade and period signage.

The potential bright spot in what is otherwise a sad if predictable story of a once-vibrant institution’s decline is that the site is slated to become home to the Holy Land Middle Eastern Restaurant and Deli, an appropriate place to renew and celebrate the West Side’s historic ties to both the Lebanese and Jewish communities. And maybe, just maybe, the wonderful Art Deco stone signage can be preserved and even find a home in the new building.



Riverview Commercial Club, 2008. Photo Carol Swenson

PRESERVATION 101 WINDOWS

BY ROBERT ROSCOE

Windows generally provide trouble-free operation for 40-50 years, requiring occasional painting of outer sash and frame surfaces. Almost all windows have common components: sash that hold the glass, and frame that encases the sash. The sash is made of slender wood strips that surround the glass. The strips can be narrow—just wide enough to slide or swing within the frame, since the glass, despite its thinness, gives sufficient rigidity to the sash. The frame is also relatively thin, since its stability is provided by attachment to the building's structure. The traditional window frame secures the sash in place with narrow ribs, called stops, within which the sash slides, and crafted with precision so that just enough clearance is provided for operation, yet tight enough to resist weather penetration. Double-hung window units have two sashes, upper and lower, that slide up and down in separate tracks, divided by stops.

Many owners of older houses with worn and troublesome windows seem to think it reasonable to replace the existing sash with new units that would be tighter, easier to operate, and have Thermopane, or more

energy-efficient double glazing. However, in most situations, even window frames that are over 100 years old are typically still solid. The frames can be retained, though occasionally sills—the slightly sloped wood member at the bottom of the unit—need repair. In order to fit original frame openings, custom sizes can be made by most window manufacturers, and the up-charge over “stock” readily-available units is not sizable.

More and more homeowners today are choosing to repair window sash rather than replacing them. Their reasons are the extra measure of authenticity, and often the cost of repair is less than replacement, especially if the original windows have multi-paned sash. Sometimes there is the visual intrigue of the wavy glass that century-old windows sometimes offer.

In St. Paul there are many window repair specialists today who can completely rebuild existing windows. This reconditioning can include weather-stripping that can make the total window unit as weather- and infiltration-tight as new units. In many cases, the deficient part of older window sash is the bottom rail that rests on the sill, affected over time by wet

conditions. Those loose or deteriorated bottom sash rails can be made tight again or replaced if necessary. Although original windows are single-glazed compared to the double-glazing typical of new sash, equivalent efficiency can be gained by installing storm windows, another traditional component returning to use today.



Russ Sehon, of Russ's Old House Window Sash Restoration & Repair, puts finishing touches on a sash in his workshop, 651-645-2396. Photo Bob Roscoe

VACANT BUILDINGS BY THE NUMBERS

The number of vacant properties in St. Paul has increased by 100 percent in less than two years—from 1,041 at the end of 2006 to 2,085 in October 2008. In all of 2006, the City demolished a total of 6 vacant properties; with two months remaining in 2008, the demolition total stands at 71.



826 Edmund Ave., 2008. Photo HSP

VACANT BUILDINGS BY DISTRICT COUNCIL (OCTOBER 2008)

DISTRICT COUNCIL	VACANT BUILDING CATEGORY*			
	1	2	3	TOTAL
1. BATTLE CREEK/HIGHWOOD	20	36	0	56
2. THE GREATER EAST SIDE	71	93	6	170
3. WEST SIDE CITIZENS ORGANIZATION	41	77	15	133
4. DAYTONS BLUFF COMMUNITY COUNCIL	70	227	22	319
5. PAYNE-PHALEN PLANNING COUNCIL	75	332	52	459
6. DISTRICT 6 PLANNING COUNCIL	54	219	26	299
7. DISTRICT 7 PLANNING COUNCIL	26	210	28	264
8. SUMMIT-UNIVERSITY PLANNING COUNCIL	25	84	11	120
9. FORT ROAD/WEST SEVENTH FEDERATION	17	51	20	88
10. COMO PARK	7	12	1	20
11. HAMLIN - MIDWAY	14	38	0	52
12. ST ANTHONY PARK	1	3	1	5
13. UNION PARK	8	27	3	38
14. MACALESTER-GROVELAND	8	12	2	22
15. HIGHLAND PARK	10	12	2	24
16. SUMMIT HILL ASSOCIATION	2	2	0	4
17. CAPITOLRIVER COUNCIL	8	4	0	12
				2,085

*CATEGORY 1 = FEW/NO CODE VIOLATIONS, 2 = SOME > MAJOR CODE VIOLATIONS, 3 = MANY VIOLATIONS, SUBJECT TO ABATEMENT

RASPBERRY ISLAND RENAISSANCE

BY ANDREW HINE

It has been half a century since the U.S. government demolished the Navy Island Reserve Training Facility in downtown Saint Paul. Officially named Raspberry Island, the site has been completely renovated and is now home to one of the city's finest small parks.

Accessible from both sides of the Wabasha Bridge and from E. Water Street, the island now features a terrace, long curving ledges, crushed limestone paths framed by waving rows of granite pavers, two dozen benches and massive cut stones, along with rain gardens, sedge and ornamental grasses, and aspen trees. There are new bike racks and brick parking stalls under the bridge, and new steps lead right into the river. The renovated boathouse, listed on the National Register, now offers public restrooms.

The City, which owns the lower 3 acres, and the Minnesota Boat Club, owner of the remainder, collaborated on the project. The glass-roofed Schubert Club Bandstand, completed in 2002 and designed by glass artist James Carpenter, remains the island's focal point.

History has been preserved and rewritten on Raspberry Island, a welcoming riparian oasis ready for a new wave of park users.



Boathouse. Photo William Wesen

Raspberry Island from overhead. Photo Andrew Hine



HISTORIC SAINT PAUL SEEKS FUNDING FOR INTERPRETIVE DISPLAYS AT CITY HOUSE

BY BECCA HINE

The Saint Paul Housing and Redevelopment Agency is currently rehabilitating the “City House”—the old grain elevator on the Mississippi, across from Harriet Island, near the Upper Landing housing development. The site will serve as a historic trailhead and interpretive facility. Historic Saint Paul is currently securing funds for the installation of displays and the restoration of the historic signage.

The elevator site actually has two main structures: the “Sack House” and the “Head House.” Construction on the Sack House, which will house the interpretive center, includes interior restoration as well as new glass garage doors and windows, roofing, and refurbished skylights. The Head House will receive exterior restoration work, including new windows and doors. The project is expected to be complete in spring 2009.



Headhouse. Photo Andrew Hine

CITY’S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TO INCLUDE HISTORIC PRESERVATION

BY CHRISTINE BOULWARE

In less than five months, the City of Saint Paul will have its first Comprehensive Plan chapter devoted solely to historic preservation. State law requires the City to update their Comprehensive Plan every ten years and include a protection element for historic sites. A preservation plan is a document that examines past preservation activities of a community and identifies goals and objectives for carrying out each preservation activity. While much of the activity of the Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) has remained focused on evaluation, designation, and design review of historic sites, the new Plan recommends a variety of policies that address the growing preservation field and best practices from other communities.

The main purposes of the new Plan are: to provide a guiding vision for historic preservation in Saint Paul, to formalize City policy regarding historic preservation, to guide public and private investment to further preservation goals, to advocate for historic preservation, and finally to guide the work of the HPC. The strategies and numerous policies are informed by the following principles:

- PRESERVATION IS A CORE COMMUNITY VALUE
- HISTORIC PRESERVATION IS A PRIORITY FOR THE CITY OF SAINT PAUL
- PRESERVATION IS A CRITICAL COMPONENT OF NEIGHBORHOOD VITALITY AND A SENSE OF PLACE
- HISTORIC RESOURCES ARE UNIQUE AND IRREPLACEABLE, AND SHOULD BE TREATED ACCORDINGLY
- PRESERVATION SHOULD BE INTEGRATED WITH THE BROADER CITY AND NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING PROCESS
- PRESERVATION PROVIDES ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE ALTERNATIVE TO NEW CONSTRUCTION

For many, the City’s first Historic Preservation Plan has been a long time coming, but the collaborative effort produced a final product worth waiting for. This effort was led by City staff, The 106 Group Limited, Stark Preservation Planning LLC, a task force of historic preservation and community leaders, and a core team of City department leaders. The funding was made possible through a grant from the National Park Service through the Minnesota Historical Society, with matching funds approved by the City Council and Mayor’s office.

The Public Hearing Draft of the Historic Preservation Plan is available at: www.stpaul.gov/DocumentView.asp?DID=6403

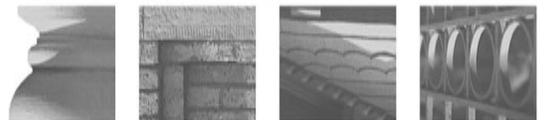
Christine Boulware is a preservation planner with the City’s Heritage Preservation Commission.
HPC Staff: Amy Spong & Christine Boulware



3M Property To Be Sold - The Saint Paul Port Authority has announced that the due diligence period ended on November 21, and that they expect to close on the purchase of 3M’s East Side campus on December 12. With the recent unannounced demolition of the neighboring Globe and Viaduct Inn buildings, neighbors are worried about the fate of this block on the corner of Minnehaha Ave and E 7th St. It is comprised of 3M Buildings 27, 28, and 30, the former site of Sanitary Farm Dairies, Inc.

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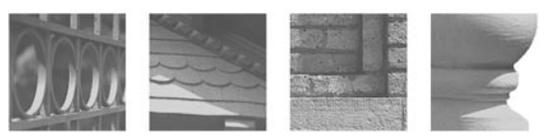
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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 4TH STREET PRESERVATION PROJECT
- HISTORIC PRESERVATION CHAPTER ADDED TO COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
- RASPBERRY ISLAND
- WINDOWS 101
- ACKERMAN BUILDING
- GREEN STAIRS UPDATE
- HEAD HOUSE UPDATE

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