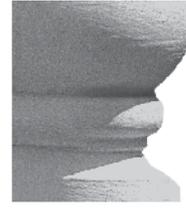
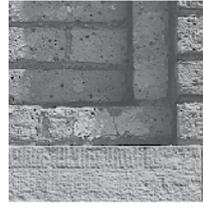
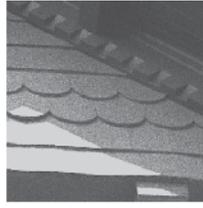


PRESERVATION JOURNAL OF SAINT PAUL

A PUBLICATION OF HISTORIC SAINT PAUL



CELEBRATE HERITAGE | RENEW NEIGHBORHOODS | STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY

FALL 2007

www.historicsaintpaul.org

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 2

VACANT HOUSING IN ST. PAUL AN OPPORTUNITY FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

BY PAUL SINGH

The number of vacant residential properties in Saint Paul has more than doubled over the past year. There are currently more than 1,200 vacant single-family homes and duplexes in the city. This trend is fueled by foreclosures and the recent decline in the housing market. These vacant homes are overwhelmingly concentrated in Saint Paul's core neighborhoods: West Seventh, Summit-University, Frogtown, the North End, Payne-Phalen and Dayton's Bluff (see map on page 6).

Abandoned homes pose serious challenges to Saint Paul's neighborhoods. They can diminish the value of adjacent homes, pose public health and safety risks, impose substantial costs on taxpayers and negatively impact community morale. They also threaten the historic fabric of Saint Paul's neighborhoods. Vacant properties are antithetical to a well-preserved housing stock. Additionally, the specter of demolitions endangers the character of the city's oldest residential neighborhoods.

Demolition is the last resort employed by the Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) to dispose of an egregious vacant property; the city has demolished just a handful of homes over the past year. However, many of Saint Paul's vacant homes suffer from physical obsolescence; their poor condition and dated features necessitate reinvestment that exceeds the market value of the property. Needless to say, the city

lacks the financial resources to purchase and rehabilitate all 1,200 vacant homes. City-mandated demolitions may increase as blight spreads. Alternatively, private owners or investors may demolish homes to scrap unprofitable properties and/or make way for contemporary structures.

In response to the vacant homes epidemic, the city and neighborhood groups, including Historic Saint Paul (see President's Letter), are exploring new strategies to help neighborhoods cope. One response is Mayor Coleman's new Invest Saint Paul initiative. Invest Saint Paul will channel city and private resources into revitalization strategies and redevelopment projects in neighborhoods that have been challenged by persistent disinvestment. Under Invest Saint Paul, targeted blocks in the Dayton's Bluff, Lower East Side, Frogtown, Aurora/St. Anthony, and North End neighborhoods are slated to undergo physical and social transformation by the end of 2008.

While the reinvestment envisioned by Invest Saint Paul is much needed, it too poses challenges to the historic fabric of Saint Paul's neighborhoods. Rehabilitations that do not respect the neighborhood fabric will permanently alter that character. Likewise, the demolition of historically and architecturally significant buildings to clear land for redevelopment will detract from a neighborhood's sense of place.

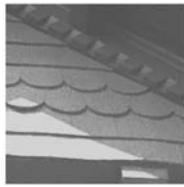
According to Alan Mallach, author of



Bringing Buildings Back: From Abandoned Properties to Community Assets (2006), "the ultimate goal of any abandoned property strategy is to reuse properties in ways that enhance and improve the properties, the neighborhood and the community as a whole." Mallach advises communities struggling with vacant properties to market their assets to encourage existing residents to invest and attract new migrants to the city. The historic housing stock is a prime asset in Saint Paul's core neighborhoods that can be used to leverage investment. Efforts to target enforcement and rehabilita-

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

DEAR SUPPORTERS:

Thank you for your generous contributions to Historic St. Paul. Your support has allowed Historic Saint Paul to continue our work of preserving, protecting and enhancing the historic character of Saint Paul Neighborhoods. We strongly believe that preserving historic assets and connecting residents to their history will help create a sense of identity and pride in the community.

This year has been a flurry of activity for us at Historic St. Paul. Most notably, The National Trust for Historic Preservation held their conference in St. Paul at the beginning of October. Board members and staff had a busy week of conducting tours, attending and leading workshops, and staffing the HSP booth in the exhibit hall where we showcased the St. Paul Cube, which is still available for purchase (see last page of

journal). The conference drew more than 2,000 people, all of whom had the opportunity to see first hand the important work that your contributions enable us to do!

In September, many of you were able to join us for our annual fundraiser at Dove Hill, the home of Dick and Nancy Nicholson. Our gracious hosts and historic setting made the event one of our most successful fundraisers ever. Our fundraiser also coincided with the launching of our overhauled website, www.historicsaintpaul.org. The website has a new look, lots of images, back issues of this Journal and our neighborhood guides, and up-to-date information on preservation issues in the city.

There's still a lot of work yet to do. One of our top priorities continues to be the issue of vacant housing in St. Paul. We anticipate developing additional forums on this

and other issues in the coming months and encourage you to attend these informative sessions.

All of our work at Historic St. Paul depends on your contributions. As this very productive year comes to a close, we ask that you consider giving a tax-deductible donation to Historic St. Paul to enable us to continue our mission. Thank you for your support. Thank you for working with us.

Best,

Philip

**VISIT OUR NEW WEBSITE
TODAY AND MAKE A
DONATION THROUGH PAYPAL:
WWW.HISTORICSAINTPAUL.ORG.**



AN EVENING AT DOVE HILL



Delicious drinks were served at the round bar in the solarium.



Many thanks to the Nicholsons for hosting our annual fundraiser!

BY RUTH DANTUMA

More than 120 guests joined hosts Richard and Nancy Nicholson on September 14 for a fundraiser to support the work of Historic Saint Paul. Although the event was billed as *An Evening on the Veranda*, cool weather forced the partygoers inside Dove Hill. No one complained, however, as the remarkably restored home on Summit Avenue proved a fitting backdrop for a celebration of Saint Paul's historic buildings.

Music by the Parisota Hot Club entertained guests as they enjoyed appetizers and drinks and socialized prior to remarks by Saint Paul Mayor Chris Coleman and Thomas Fisher, the Dean of the College of Design at the University of Minnesota. Both Coleman and Fisher remarked that the city's unique architecture contributes to our high quality of life. Fischer related

the College of Design's preservation work across the globe, but stated that Saint Paul is distinctive in its commitment to preservation.

Carol Carey, Executive Director of Historic Saint Paul, then remarked that through its programming, Historic Saint Paul empowers property owners to preserve and restore the historic character of their buildings. She noted that Historic Saint Paul does not work exclusively with architectural showpieces in the city's hallmark historic districts. More typically, the organization assists owners of modest vernacular homes and commercial buildings preserve the fabric of Saint Paul's lesser-known, but historically significant core neighborhoods.

Historic Saint Paul thanks those who attended and contributed to the fund-raiser. We especially thank our event sponsors.

Thanks to everyone's generosity, Historic Saint Paul raised more than \$12,500 to support its programs.

Major Sponsor:

- Leonard Street and Deinaud

Supporting Sponsors:

- Authentic Construction
- Close Architects
- Collaborative Design Group
- David Heide Design Studio
- Design for Preservation
- John Erler Contracting and Cliff Carey Carpentry
- Landmark Contracting
- Legal Video
- Mary Hardy, Edina Realty
- Rafferty Rafferty Tollefson Lindeke Architects
- Winery Associates



Preservationists have something/lots to talk about.



Local acoustic band Parisota Hot Club featured the music of Django Reinhardt, swing jazz of the 30's, 40's and 50's. www.parisota.com

SAINT PAUL

HOSTS THE NATIONAL PRESERVATION CONFERENCE



More than 2,000 historic preservationists descended on Saint Paul during the first week of October for the National Trust for Historic Preservation's National Preservation Conference. The Trust is a nonprofit organization dedicated to saving historic places and revitalizing America's communities. The annual National Preservation Conference allows historic preservation professionals and enthusiasts to exchange information, ideas, inspiration, and contacts. This year marked the first time that any Minnesota city had hosted the National Preservation Conference.

HISTORIC SAINT PAUL BOOTH

Historic Saint Paul board members and staff were on hand in the conference exhibit hall to greet attendees and talk about the work of the organization. Visitors to the booth remarked how impressed they were with the city, Historic Saint Paul's education and neighborhood preservation work, and the general friendliness of Saint Paulites. The Saint Paul Cube—a memento created by Historic Saint Paul to commemorate architectural landmarks in Saint Paul (see back page)—was available at the booth and proved to be a big hit with conference attendees.

RESTORE SAINT PAUL TOUR

Historic Saint Paul's Executive Director Carol Carey lead a tour of Restore Saint Paul projects. The tour of the Dayton's Bluff and Payne-Phalen neighborhoods featured residential and commercial historic restoration projects sponsored by Historic Saint Paul through the Restore Saint Paul loan program.

The tour focused on the role of historic preservation in promoting local community development. Tour excursionists learned about the challenges and opportunities of promoting historic preservation in low to moderate-income neighborhoods and among diverse communities. The tour also highlighted the history of Saint Paul's East Side and historic neighborhood landmarks including Swede Hollow Park and Hamm's Brewery.



BICYCLE TOUR OF SUMMIT AVENUE

Bicycle tours have become a popular feature at most National Trust conferences. In fact, Historic Saint Paul had planned on conducting the same tour twice during the conference, but the second day was rained out. Thursday's tour, however, was blessed with a sunny sky and temperatures in the mid-70s. HSP board member Michael Koop and HSP staffer Paul Singh led a group of 20 intrepid cyclists on a 17-mile loop on Summit Avenue and Mississippi River Boulevard from the Cathedral to Minnehaha Park. The tour highlighted designs by architects Cass Gilbert and Clarence Johnston, the bold row of mid-century modern houses along Stonebridge Boulevard, and recent preservation contro-

versies, including infill construction along Summit Avenue and the town/gown conflict at the University of St. Thomas. The tour would not have been possible without the generous loan of bicycles and a "sag" wagon by the Sibley Bike Depot in downtown St. Paul.

NATIONAL TRUST TOUR FEATURES LOCAL DAKOTA INTERPRETIVE SITES

HSP and Ramsey County Historical Society (RCHS) hosted a field session at the conference on interpreting Dakota history. More than 30 attendees took part in the tour, which focused on sites at the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary and the Gibbs Museum.

Wakan Tipi (spirit house), a cave in the bluffs at the Sanctuary, is a sacred Dakota site, known in the 19th century as Carver's Cave. As the sanctuary was being created in 2002, HSP and other partners worked with Dakota tribes to shape the treatment of the site. Leonard Wabasha, acting Cultural Resources Director for the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux (Dakota) Community, led the tour and described how partners addressed contamination issues on adjacent land, and captured the spring water that still flows from the cave to create a wetland that prevents unwanted foot traffic.

Tour leaders at the Gibbs Farm Museum included Yvonne Leith, a descendent of Cloud Man, who led a Dakota band in the area in the mid-1800s, and Gwen Griffith from MSU Mankato. They described how an advisory committee worked with RCHS to develop interpretive features such as a tipi and bark lodge that allow visitors to explore Dakota lifeways.

TOUR OF WEST END

The West End tour originated at the RiverCentre, from where Mr. T. Brock of Garfield Street and HSP Board Member Andrew Hine led the unsuspecting visitors, on foot, to the Armstrong-Quinlan House. After a circumnavigation of the house, they walked into Irvine Park where Kathleen Lindenberg of the Alexander Ramsey House gave them an informative tour of the Park. They also got a peek in-



side the famed Ohage House, now home to Historic Irvine Park Association President Dirk Dantuma and First Lady Ms. Ruth Dantuma. One splinter group got to witness the historic weekly bocce ball game hosted by Mr. D. Cossetta, free of charge.

From Irvine Park they walked up to Exchange Street and then moved on to the commercial-medical district. Boarding the bus there, the tour proceeded up Shepard Road, past the Upper Landing, Island Station, and the recently decommissioned High Bridge Plant. The results of a straw poll were “save the chimney.” After a quick drive-by of the Schmidt Brewery and surrounds, they alighted at 151 Goodrich Avenue to meet local architectural legend Mr. J. Yust, who with his son Charles had recently completed a renovation of this bluff-top home. Mr. Yust also led a tour of several blocks of Uppertown to McBoal Street. Here the tourists could see more of his work—an award-winning porch renovation at the Ms. A. and Mr. T. Schroeder House, and a work-in-progress at Yust’s own Martin Weber House next door.

Back on the bus, the riders were shown Mancini’s, the CSPS Hall, the Lauer Flats, the tracks of the Empire Builder, and the Dahl House. The entire brewery neighborhood was given special attention, and soon they arrived at the James Street Gate to the Schmidt Brewery, where they were shown around by Mr. P. Gagner, Brewmaster, and Mr. C. Cohen, Developer. Beer was sampled. The bus was reloaded for the last time and its occupants transported back to the RiverCentre.



HISTORIC SAINT PAUL

The Henry F. Herrmeyer House



The Olaf Lee House



A Front Porch Restoration



Commercial Restoration on East 7th Street



NEIGHBORHOOD
PRESERVATION



Vacant Homes in Saint Paul: October 2007

Legend

○ Vacant Homes and Duplexes

Neighborhoods

Number of Vacant Properties

0 - 14

15 - 32

33 - 102

103 - 197

198 - 289

Interstate

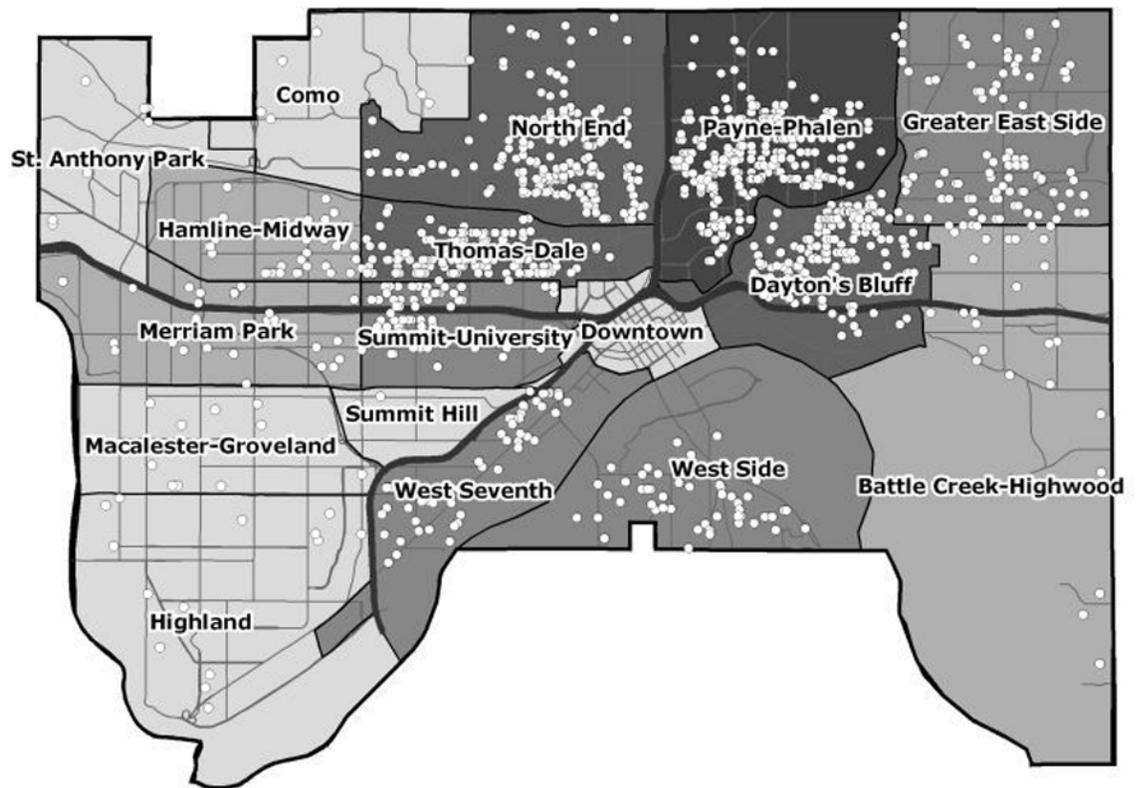
Major Roads

1

Mile

Sources:

City of Saint Paul DSI,
Community DataWorks,
MetroGIS.



MAP: PAUL SINGH

VACANT HOUSING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

tion activity to properties with great architectural and historic character will bolster the neighborhoods' character and potential attractiveness.

In September, Historic Saint Paul hosted a panel of city and neighborhood group officials to discuss tools to combat vacant houses. One method discussed by the panelists was for the neighborhood residents themselves to develop criteria for determining which properties possess historic character and contribute to the neighborhood fabric. Moving forward, Historic Saint Paul looks to spearhead survey work and the development of a historic property information system to inform targeted efforts to mitigate vacant homes. While the rise in vacant housing is regrettable, it also presents the city with an opportunity to rediscover and capitalize on its historic resources to promote neighborhood vitality.

PRESERVATION TALKS

Historic Saint Paul's *Preservation Talks* panel discussion on vacant housing ("Saint Paul's Vacant Properties: Refuse or Reuse?") on September 6, 2007 attracted a crowd of more than 100 city officials, planners, neighborhood activists, community developers, realtors, architects, and community members. Discussion centered on the threat that vacant houses pose to Saint Paul's unique sense of place and community character. The panelists included:

- Ed Johnson, Executive Director, West 7th/Fort Road Federation
- Bob Kessler, Director, Dept. of Safety and Inspections
- Steve Magner, Vacant Properties Supervisor, Dept. of Safety and Inspections
- Marcia Moermond, Lead Policy Analyst, City Council Research
- Amy Spong, Historic Preservation Specialist, Heritage Preservation Commission

The five panelists stressed that the city lacks the resources to cope with all of the 1,200 regis-

tered vacant properties in Saint Paul. Therefore, the city and neighborhood groups are exploring new tools that can help neighborhoods cope with the onslaught of vacant properties and preserve neighborhood fabric. Suggestions from the audience included:

- Reenacting the "This Old House" legislation which provided tax incentives to homeowners who invested in their properties;
- Enacting a "demolition delay" clause in the city ordinance that would allow the Heritage Preservation Commission to review demolition permit applications;
- Work with banks and investors to acquire vacant housing;
- "Mothball" vacant homes: secure and preserve homes in an abandoned state until the housing market rebounds.

Historic Saint Paul will continue to promote dialogue around historic resources and vacant housing through the *Preservation Talks* lecture series and our website: www.historicsaintpaul.org.

VOTE SAINT PAUL ON HGTV AND HELP CHANGE THE WORLD!

HISTORIC SAINT PAUL PROJECTS FEATURED IN HGTV CONTEST

From November 8 to December 21 you can vote to help win support for three local community improvement projects. Through HGTV's *Change the World. Start at Home*, cities are competing for life-transforming assistance – and viewers will decide.

Saint Paul has three projects in the contest that feature a mix of historic preservation, community, education, and environmental improvement, including:

- **Helping a deserving family with an unfinished home renovation.** After her husband passed away 18 months ago, Kris Nelson's dreams of restoring their three-story

Victorian era home were put on hold. She and her two sons hope to be able to complete their home with a help from HGTV, Rebuilding Together and the National Trust for Historic Preservation;

- **Transforming the grounds of the Wilder Recreation Center/City Academy building,** designed by Saint Paul City Architect Clarence ("Cap") Wigington, the country's first African American municipal architect. Without a much-needed facelift, the growth of the school and neighboring community center is stunted by space and environmental limitations; and

- **Restoring and interpreting the ecological and cultural resources in the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary,** a Mississippi River area open space just east of downtown Saint Paul that includes remnants of our industrial and indigenous history.

YOUR VOTE IS NEEDED TO HELP THESE PROJECTS! Go ahead, really, *CHANGE THE WORLD. START AT HOME.* Log onto: www.historicsaintpaul.org for a link to the HGTV voting website! And please, tell your friends, family, and colleagues to vote as well.

AND VOTE TWIN CITIES!

Change the World. Start at Home is a joint effort of HGTV, Rebuilding Together, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the Natural Resources Defense Council.



MEMBERS OF THE DAYTON'S BLUFF COMMUNITY gathered on November 1 to celebrate a new mural and recognize the artists. Students from City Academy High School volunteered their time and talent to paint the vibrant mural on the side of the Size-Matters Fashion Shop (located at 851 East 7th Street). The students painted the mural in conjunction with a storefront restoration sponsored by Historic Saint Paul through the Restore Saint Paul loan program. The mural represents the interconnectivity of the many cultures found on Saint Paul's East Side—Native American, Hispanic, Scandinavian, Hmong, Italian, and African American. According to the students, their class learned about the history of the neighborhood before starting the mural. They were inspired by the stories of immigration and translated these stories into art. Photo HSP



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Historic Saint Paul



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 **Made in Museum**
Museum Cube Collection