

IV. Why We Are A Livable Community

E. Historic Preservation

Vision

St. Louis Park is committed to being a connected and engaged community.

The City of St. Louis Park appreciates the history of the development of the city and promotes community pride and a link to the community's roots through the preservation of its historic resources. This chapter identifies significant historic assets and establishes the direction that the city will take in preserving and protecting its historic resources.

Where We Have Been

In August, 1886, 31 people signed a petition asking the Hennepin County commissioners to incorporate the Village of St. Louis Park. The City derived its name from the Minneapolis and St. Louis Railroad. The word "Park" was added to eliminate any confusion with St. Louis, Missouri. The community was linked to the railroad because the community leaders believed the railroad would help transform the village into a center of trade and industry.

A considerable amount of industry did develop, but the predominant development in the city was residential use. The extension of the street car lines made it convenient for St. Louis Park residents to reach the large number of jobs created in a booming Minneapolis in the early 1900s.

The street car may also be indirectly responsible for the lack of a "downtown" ever being fully developed in St. Louis Park. Travel to Minneapolis for shopping opportunities was also convenient by street car.

By 1940, the population of the Park had grown to 7,737 people. By 1955, the population had exploded to more than 40,000 people.

Since 1955, the community has fully matured. Most of the vacant parcels have been developed and the city has begun to redevelop. As the city redevelops, it is important to take stock of past development and preserve the significant buildings in the physical and social development of the city.

Where We Are Today

The City of St. Louis Park currently has two structures on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The two St. Louis Park structures on the National Register of Historic Places are the NordicWare tower near the intersection of Hwy. 7 and Hwy. 100 and the restored train station located in Jorvig Park next to the railroad tracks in the historic railroad corridor. These two structures demonstrate our industrial and railroad history.

The "beehives" have been restored and moved to Lilac Park in the southeast corner of the intersection of TH100 and Highway 7. The park dates to the 1930s when TH100, originally called Lilac Way, was developed by the Works Progress Administration to provide immediate employment to thousands of construction and landscaping laborers during the depression. It was the state's first "beltway" which completely surrounded the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area. Special attention was also given to roadside parks and plantings. The landscape plan, designed by landscape architect Arthur R. Nichols, gave Lilac Way its distinctive quality, and remains largely intact. The plan included a significant number of lilacs and elm trees as well as native limestone park structures, including the "beehives" for picnicking and enjoyment within wayside rest areas.



2009: Beehive – before and after restoration

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Lilac Park was one of five parks originally built along the highway. Most of these parks along with the stone structures have been destroyed by highway construction. In an effort to save and restore some remaining historic stone structures the “beehive” and other stone structures were moved to a new location in Lilac Park in 2008. The beehive, hand-made stone picnic tables and a fire circle, all built in 1939, were restored and are now located in the park, which is dedicated to the rest stops and their history.

Other significant features of TH 100 are the bridges at Minnetonka Boulevard, Highway 7 and the railroad bridge south of Highway 7. These bridges, built around 1940, will be rebuilt when TH 100 is expanded.



2008: Restored limestone picnic table

Goals & Strategies

Goal 1

Inventory the City’s historic assets.

Strategy A

- Inventory the following key resources for purposes of designation and preservation:
 - Churches and synagogues
 - Schools
 - Residences of prominent citizens
 - Distinctive residences by prominent architects or builders

- Distinctive commercial buildings
- Railroad history
- Parks and park elements
- Public Works features

Strategy B

- Prioritize and determine if key historic resources could be designated as historic.

Goal 2

Preserve significant historic buildings and districts allowing modifications for contemporary uses consistent with preservation guidelines.

Strategy A

- Consider a preservation ordinance that establishes the municipal procedures to officially designate and preserve buildings and districts.

Strategy B

- Consider a preservation commission to oversee the preservation and restoration of designated buildings and districts.

Strategy C

- Review permit applications for work on designated buildings to assure that new development and rehabilitation is done consistent with national standards for the rehabilitation of historic structures.

Goal 3

Utilize opportunities to educate students and other residents about the historical assets of the city.

Strategy A

- Educate the community on the importance of preservation, in general, and also about the individual designated buildings and districts. Work with the school district to develop classroom curriculum about St. Louis Park history.

Strategy B

- Utilize available historical photographs, maps and artifacts