

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

Historic name Gravois-Jefferson Streetcar Suburb Historic District Boundary Increase I

Other names/site number n/a

Name of related Multiple Property Listing South St. Louis Historic Working- and Middle-Class Streetcar Suburbs

2. Location

Street & number 2644-54 Gravois Avenue
City or town St. Louis
State Missouri Code MO County St. Louis (Independent City) Code 510 Zip code 63116

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria: X A B X C D

Signature of certifying official/Title Toni M. Prawl, Ph.D., Deputy SHPO
Date 05/18/2016

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
determined eligible for the National Register
determined not eligible for the National Register
removed from the National Register
other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Gravois-Jefferson Streetcar Suburb Historic District  
Boundary Increase I  
Name of Property

St. Louis (Independent City), MO  
County and State

### 5. Classification

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only **one** box.)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	District
<input type="checkbox"/>	Site
<input type="checkbox"/>	Structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	Object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
4	1	Buildings
0	0	Sites
1	1	Structures
0	1	Objects
5	3	<b>Total</b>

**Number of contributing resources  
previously listed in the National  
Register**

4,643

### 6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling

COMMERCE/TRADE: business

COMMERCE/TRADE: professional

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling

COMMERCE/TRADE: business

COMMERCE/TRADE: professional

### 7. Description

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century American Movements

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Limestone

walls: Brick

roof: Other: Composite

other: Terra cotta

**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION ON CONTINUATION PAGES**

Gravois-Jefferson Streetcar Suburb Historic District  
Boundary Increase I  
Name of Property

St. Louis (Independent City), MO  
County and State

### 8. Statement of Significance

#### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

#### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE ON CONTINUATION PAGES

### 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

#### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

#### Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: NPS

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

#### Areas of Significance

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

ARCHITECTURE

#### Period of Significance

c. 1880 – c. 1940

#### Significant Dates

n/a

#### Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

n/a

#### Cultural Affiliation

n/a

#### Architect/Builder

n/a

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### 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** Less than one acre

#### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1	<u>38°36'15.23</u> Latitude:	<u>90°13'28.03</u> Longitude:	3	<u>38°36'13.38</u> Latitude:	<u>90°13'32.08</u> Longitude:
2	<u>38°36'12.2</u> Latitude:	<u>90°13'28.4</u> Longitude:	4	_____ Latitude:	_____ Longitude:

#### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)  
\_\_\_\_\_ NAD 1927 or \_\_\_\_\_ NAD 1983

1	_____ Zone	_____ Easting	_____ Northing	3	_____ Zone	_____ Easting	_____ Northing
2	_____ Zone	_____ Easting	_____ Northing	4	_____ Zone	_____ Easting	_____ Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (On continuation sheet)

**Boundary Justification** (On continuation sheet)

### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Michael Allen/Director (Section 8; Editor) and Audrey Woika/Research Intern (Section 7)  
organization Preservation Research Office date 13 November 2015  
street & number 3407 S. Jefferson Avenue #207 telephone 314-920-5680  
city or town St. Louis state MO zip code 63118  
e-mail [michael@preservationresearch.com](mailto:michael@preservationresearch.com)

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:**
  - A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
  - A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Photographs**
- **Owner Name and Contact Information**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Gravois-Jefferson Streetcar Suburb Historic District  
Boundary Increase I

St. Louis (Independent City), MO

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## Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

## Photo Log:

Name of Property: Gravois-Jefferson Streetcar Suburb Historic District Boundary Increase I

City or Vicinity: St. Louis

County: St. Louis (Ind. City) State: MO

Photographer: Michael R. Allen

Date Photographed: May 22, 2015

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 6: The building at 2644 Gravois Avenue looking southeast.
- 2 of 6: The 2600 block of Gravois Avenue looking southeast.
- 3 of 6: Detail of the buildings at 2648-52 and 2654 Gravois Avenue, looking southeast.
- 4 of 6: Looking northwest at the alley sides of the buildings at 2654 (left) and 2648-52 Gravois Avenue (right).
- 5 of 6: Looking northwest at the nominated block.
- 6 of 6: Looking southwest at the rear of the building at 2644 Gravois Avenue.

## Figure Log:

Include figures on continuation pages at the end of the nomination.

1. The block as it appeared on *Pictorial St. Louis* (1875).
2. The nominated block in relationship to the existing Gravois-Jefferson Streetcar Suburb Historic District, shown on a detail excerpt of the district map.
3. The nominated block as it appeared on the Sanborn fire insurance map updated in December 1951.
4. Photo key for boundary increase.
5. Detail of the 1951 Sanborn fire insurance map page for the block within the Gravois-Jefferson Streetcar Suburb Historic District bounded by Jefferson, Miami, Texas and Winnebago streets.
6. Google Map view of the block within the Gravois-Jefferson Streetcar Suburb Historic District bounded by Jefferson, Miami, Texas and Winnebago streets, with an imagery date of 2012.
7. The non-contributing lot at 2640 Gravois Avenue.
8. The non-contributing lot at 2646 Gravois Avenue.
9. The contributing lot at 2656 Gravois Avenue.

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Gravois-Jefferson Streetcar Suburb Historic District Boundary Increase I
Name of Property
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State
South St. Louis Historic Working- and Middle-Class Streetcar Suburbs
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

## Summary

The Gravois-Jefferson Streetcar Suburb Historic District Boundary Increase I includes all of the city block bounded by Gravois Avenue, Lynch Avenue and Texas Avenue in St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri. Within the boundary are located three primary and two secondary buildings built between c. 1871 and c. 1931. The three primary buildings are two and two-and-a-half story mixed use buildings with commercial spaces on the first floor and residential units above; two were rebuilt with new primary elevations following the widening of Gravois Avenue around 1931. These buildings are located at 2644, 2648-52 and 2654 Gravois Avenue. One primary building is non-contributing due to an addition outside of the period of significance. There are two contributing secondary buildings that are garages on the alley. The block includes three non-contributing open lots (two sites located at 2640 and 2646 Gravois Avenue and one structure located at 2633-37 Lynch Street) and one contributing open lot located at 2656 Gravois Avenue. There is a non-contributing object, a billboard advertisement structure, located at 2640 Gravois Avenue. Overall the preponderance of contributing buildings and the contributing lot provide sufficient historic character for the block to retain integrity. All three primary buildings fit the typology of the two-part commercial block, and the two contributing fit the sub-typology of the "artistic front commercial property" identified in the *South St. Louis Historic Working- and Middle-Class Streetcar Suburbs* MPDF.<sup>1</sup> The buildings embody the definitive traits of two-part storefront buildings noted in the same MPDF: prominent first-floor storefront with bulkhead walls, transoms and visual termination; upper floors marked by parapet or cornice and windows; and the architectural composition defined by the commercial storefront.<sup>2</sup>

## Setting

The nominated block is located in the southern part of Saint Louis, Missouri outside of the existing boundary of the Gravois-Jefferson Streetcar Suburb Historic District. The site is bounded by Gravois Avenue on the north and west, Lynch Street to the south and Texas Avenue to the east. The block is surrounded by the Gravois-Jefferson Historic District to the south, St. Francis De Sales Historic District the northwest, and Benton Park to the east. The site consists of three buildings all facing Gravois Avenue to the northwest. The surrounding area is largely commercial with shops and restaurants within eyesight, especially along Gravois Avenue. Gravois Avenue's physical character is derived from commercial buildings placed on or close to the side walk lines on sidewalks with small tree lawns (see photograph 2). There is residential property to the south and east of the block. St Francis de Sales Oratory looms nearby at the intersection of Gravois and Lynch Street (see photograph 5). A large billboard stands just north of the building at 2644 Gravois Avenue. A chain link fence within the block encloses a small parcel of land just south of the buildings, separated by a through street which connects Lynch and Texas. The appearance of this fenced area is consonant with the appearance of other lots fronting Lynch Street to the east that are within the existing historic district (see photograph 5).

<sup>1</sup> Sally Schwenk, Cathy Ambler and Kerry Davis, *South St. Louis Historic Working- and Middle-Class Streetcar Suburbs* (Multiple Property Documentation Form, National Park Service, 2005), p. E-47.

<sup>2</sup> Schwenk, Ambler and Davis (MPDF), p. F-25 – F-26.

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## Integrity

The boundary increase meets the National Register of Historic Places' seven aspects of integrity, despite some building loss and the presence of non-contributing resources. The appearance of the block is consistent with the character of the boundary of the Gravois-Jefferson Streetcar Suburb Historic District through its presentation of historic mixed-use buildings alongside later alterations. The visual character of the block is dominated by historic building stock embodying the district's historic development patterns, sufficient to convey integrity of location, feeling and association. Surrounding blocks are largely intact, and already contribute to the Gravois-Jefferson Streetcar Suburb Historic District or the St. Francis de Sales Historic District. Thus, integrity of setting is present. The extant buildings largely retain designed elevations present during the period of significance, even with some alteration. Integrity of materials, design and workmanship are clearly evident in the contributing resources, and even partially present in the non-contributing building at 2644 Gravois Avenue where the upper half of the front elevation has changed since the period of significance only through window replacement. Generally, the block presents an image of the district's historic commercial streetscapes altered over time while not losing legible visual features that support a finding of the seven aspects of integrity.

The Gravois-Jefferson Streetcar Suburb Historic District's original boundary excludes this block, although the figures that appear in the nomination presenting district boundaries include the block and other blocks on Gravois Avenue.<sup>3</sup> The reason for the exclusion of any blocks from the final boundary is not explicitly stated in the nomination, which lacks discussion of integrity standards and an explanation of the boundary justification. Based on the nomination's own language, increasing the boundary to fit this block would not mark any aberration from the nomination's intention. The block's resources meet the integrity discussion in the Gravois-Jefferson Streetcar Suburb Historic District nomination, which expressly addresses the Gravois Avenue corridor's "modern commercial intrusion" and vacant lots alongside the same pattern found on South Jefferson Avenue:

Because of clustering and locations at intersections, the remaining historic resources on these two major thoroughfares are sufficient in number and density to form a visual boundary that communicates their original orientation to these historic routes and provides distinct gateways into the District.<sup>4</sup>

Throughout the existing District, there generally is a paucity of buildings fronting on Gravois altogether, with many blocks having either no buildings fronting the street or only buildings built after the period of significance fronting Gravois. The blocks that do face Gravois evince the marks of change after the period of significance. For instance, the block just southwest of the proposed boundary increase, fronting between Iowa and Ohio Avenues, features a large open lot at its northeast corner, where a small non-contributing building is located (2700 Gravois

<sup>3</sup> Sally Schwenk, Cathy Ambler and Kerry Davis, *Gravois-Jefferson Streetcar Suburb Historic District* (National Register of Historic Places Inventory Form, National Park Service, 2005), pgs. 7.2 and 7.3.

<sup>4</sup> Schwenk, Ambler and Davis (National Register form), p. 7.5.

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Avenue, see figure 2). One of the longest included frontages is located between Cherokee and Potomac streets, where the resources facing Gravois include five contributing buildings, four non-contributing buildings and four non-contributing lots. The frontage of contributing resources is 38% on this block, compared to 50% on the block in the proposed boundary increase. The proposed increase frontage includes one contributing lot, two contributing primary buildings, one non-contributing primary building and two non-contributing lots.

Another comparable block is located between Jefferson, Miami, Texas, and Winnebago Avenues. At the end of the period of significance for the District, this block contained 14 buildings, and a large empty area on the south where the Concordia Seminary had stood until after its relocation to Clayton, Missouri in 1926 (see figure 5). Of the buildings that stood during the period of significance on this block, only three (or 21%) remained at the time of the district nomination: a wing of the seminary, a two-story brick dwelling, and the Louis Lange Publishing Company building at the southeast corner of Texas and Miami streets (see figure 6). A third building built after 1951, a bakers' union hall, stands on the south end of the block, but it dates to 1951, after the period of significance (although it is considered contributing on the 2005 district map). The District boundary omits part of this block at the northeast corner. Of the ten resources included on the site, only three are contributing resources built during the period of significance (30%), with the baker's union building built after the period of significance an ambiguous resource.

The boundary increase would add a block that retains a sufficient length of concentrated street frontage to match the language of the nomination. At least one lot was part of the built environment of the block during the district period of significance (2656 Gravois Avenue). Other lots were created after the period of significance ended. The vacant lot at 2646 Gravois Avenue and the replacement of the historic building at 2642 Gravois Avenue with a building addition to 2644 Gravois Avenue in 1959 mark the biggest changes to the Gravois face of the block outside the period of significance. The loss of the two residential buildings fronting Lynch Street is a bigger visual change, but one that does not remove integrity sufficient to include this block in a massive historic district associated with canonical movements in south St. Louis' urbanization.

The remaining buildings retain historic character, with some apparent modifications to the storefronts that are allowable under the registration requirements of the MPDF.<sup>5</sup> The modern storefront at 2654 Gravois Avenue and the bulkhead wall infill at 2648-52 Gravois Avenue show reversible changes that do not impair the legibility of the buildings as historic storefronts under the MPDF.<sup>6</sup> However the metal siding across the front storefront at 2644 Gravois Avenue represents the cladding in non-original wall materials that the MPDF states renders a building non-contributing to any possible district.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Schwenk, Ambler and Davis (MPDF), p. F-29.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Schwenk, Ambler and Davis (MPDF), p. F-30.



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## Inventory

### 2640 Gravois Avenue (Site and Object)

*Photographs 6; Figure 7*

#### 1 Non-contributing object

This is an open unenclosed lot at the intersection of Gravois and Texas Avenues with grass and gravel irregularly distributed on its surface. A freestanding steel billboard advertisement stand (object) is located in this lot. The billboard stand consists of three cross-braced steel upright piers supporting two tiers of flat display boards. A catwalk is present at on the higher tier. During the period of significance a two-story residential building stood on the southwestern part of this lot (noncontributing site; shown on the 1951 Sanborn map), while the rest was open after 1931 after a building was demolished. The site and object are non-contributing because they date after the period of significance. The billboard's presence is inconsistent with the appearance of this lot during the period of significance, and has a negative impact on integrity of the site. Due to the lot being a noncontributing site, it has not been counted within the resource count.<sup>8</sup>

### 2644 Gravois Avenue

*Photographs 1 and 6*

Date of Construction: c. 1880; 1959

Style: Late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century American Movements

Type: Two-Part Commercial Block

#### 1 Non-contributing

This building consists of two separate building forms. A one story store was added to the northern part of a two story brick building in 1959, on a parcel that historically contained a two-family dwelling at 2642 Gravois Avenue. The store front also covers the front of the brick building. The store is clad in vertically placed corrugated metal siding which is painted red at the upper part and an off-white. The entrance to the store consists of a wall with four large display windows to the right of the glass door and transom, which is located on the far left of the front. Underneath the glass windows are grey bricks. The front of the store's roof creates a low gable, with the rest of the roof sloping upwards until it meets the brick building.

The original building (2644 Gravois Avenue) occupies the southern half of the site. On the front, there are three similar white 1/1 windows above the store front with a segmented arch and an embellished contrasting key brick (second level). The entrance to the brick building is on the far right side and has concrete steps leading up to the door. On the northern elevation of the brick building there are four windows on the second level which have been boarded in. The roof of the original building is flat and clad in tar with a parapet along the front and sides.

The back of the brick building has one window 1/1 slightly off centered on the second level. There are two now-boarded entrance openings on either side of the window, and three windows which have been filled in with cement and concrete blocks on the first level. A water drain borders the top and comes down the end of the brick portion. The back of the store has one vehicle entrance with a roll up door. The building is built on an uneven surface so the back of

<sup>8</sup> Linda McClelland, *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form*, Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1997, p. 17.

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the store has been leveled off with cement, while the brick portion is uplifted by stone blocks. Because of the slope, there is a garage opening underneath the brick building that now contains double-leaf steel slab doors.

The building appears on the 1903 Sanborn map with a third story and mansard front. The third floor was removed before the end of the district's period of significance. The building is non-contributing due to the occlusion of the historic first floor storefront by the 1959 addition's facade.

**2646 Gravois Avenue (Site)**

*Photograph 2; Figure 8*

This is an open grass-covered, unenclosed lot. A two-story mixed-use building stood on this lot during the period of significance (shown on the Sanborn map). The property is considered a noncontributing site due to the removal of the building after the period of significance.

**2648-2652 Gravois Avenue**

*Photographs 2, 3 and 4*

Date of Construction: c. 1871, c. 1931

Style: Late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century American Movements

Type: Two-Part Commercial Block

Subtype: Artistic Front Commercial Property

*1 Contributing*

The building is two stories and clad in brick with a gabled roof clad in interlocking shingles. The building consists of three identical divisions each with its own entrance on the front of the building. The front of the building dates back to around 1931 when Gravois Avenue was being widened, while the back of the building dates back to circa 1871 (the building appears on the 1875 *Pictorial St. Louis* bird's-eye, see figure 1). Each storefront is two bays wide. The entrances are centered across to each storefront and are surrounded by large glass windows which extend to the edge of each storefront and are surrounded by painted copper. Below the large glass windows is a bulkhead now filled with brick. The dividing piers have limestone plinths. A small concrete step is placed leading up to each of the doors. All three doors are painted four-paneled wooden doors with glass semicircle at the top. Transom ribbons run across each storefront.

On the second floor are two 3/1 windows centered over each storefront, though one has broken and is currently 1/1. The window sills on the second floor are made from a contrasting brick. Above the windows are lintels also made of contrasting brick. Above the lintels is a simple outline of a rectangle made of the contrasting brick that spans each division with decorative floral terra cotta corner blocks. In between each rectangular design are decorative brick lozenges, with a smaller diamond inside of it. There are three gabled dormer windows on the roof, obscured partially by the parapet on the front elevation. The parapet has end steps and terra cotta coping.

The northern and southern walls are clad in painted brick. On the northern wall there is a window on the first and second level. The window on the first level has iron bars placed over it,

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which has rusted. There are 8 star shaped wall anchors placed in-between the floors with one at the roof level. The back of the building has a second story porch with outside access to it via a wooden staircase. The four windows have been boarded over, and there is a screen door in front of a wooden door on the far right of the porch. The railing for the porch is made of metal with the columns having a repeating S pattern and the balustrade is made of bars with a metalwork design centered between columns. The roof over the porch is slanted and slightly lower than the end of the building's roof. The building's roof has two gabled dormer windows made of contrasting brick with a vertical wooden front. The first level porch is supported by painted wooden beams. The lower level on the back has a door which has been boarded over with glass above it forming an arch shape. The building is contributing because it was modified to its extant designed appearance during the period of significance and is associated with the context "Architectural Patterns of South St. Louis Streetcar Suburbs, 1880-1940" in the MPDF. The building retains integrity.

**2648-2652 Gravois Avenue (Outbuilding)**

*Photograph 4*

Date of Construction: c. 1920

*1 Contributing*

In the very rear of the lot is a one story flat-roofed garage made of brick with a painted wooden facade. There are four modern one-car garage doors two of which have a square pattern and the other two are horizontal beams. The building is contributing because it was built within the period of significance and retains integrity.

**2654 Gravois Avenue**

*Photographs 2 and 3*

Date of Construction: 1887, c. 1931

Style: Late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century American Movements

Type: Two-Part Commercial Block

Subtype: Artistic Front Commercial Property

*1 Contributing*

The building is two stories and shares its northern wall with the building located at 2648-52 Gravois Avenue. Similar to the building at 2648-52 Gravois Avenue, the facade was constructed in 1931 due to the widening of Gravois Avenue, while the rest of the building is older. The original building was a two-story brick building with first floor commercial space and upstairs residential flat built in 1887. The original building sat on the sidewalk and was partially demolished in 1931.<sup>9</sup>

The top half of the front facade is constructed of buff brick and the lower half is made of terra cotta. There are four window openings distributed symmetrically on the second floor. The two outer openings enclose smaller 1/1 windows and have small circular terra cotta roundels featuring eagles above them. The two inner openings enclose larger 1/1 windows and have an arch pattern above each of them. A rectangular plaque, now parged but likely historically terra cotta, rests just above the two inner window openings. The roof is flat and clad in asphalt and the front has a parapet that comes to a peak with two steps on either side. Separating the brick

<sup>9</sup> City of St. Louis Building Permit Records.

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from the terra cotta is a course in a crenelated pattern. The terra cotta surrounds a large segmented arch which surrounds the storefront. The storefront has two bare doors at either side within the arch. Between the two doors are windows which form a diaper pattern directly underneath the arch and at door level multiple windows form a straight pattern. The windows contain metal framing.

The side elevation is blind. On the rear elevation at the second floor is an enclosed porch with stucco cladding framing openings containing window ribbons. These openings are shielded by fiberglass awnings, and contain metal 1/1 storm windows. The building is contributing because it was built within the period of significance and retains integrity.

**2654 Gravois Avenue (Outbuilding)**

*Photograph 4*

Date of Construction: c. 1931

*1 Contributing*

There is a one story brick garage with a flat asphalt roof and a contrasting parapet that comes to a peak with two steps on either side over the paneled roll up one-car garage door located on the chamfered corner. Right of the corner is another jack-arched opening containing a plain slab steel door under a wood-filled transom to the left of painted plywood infill. The garage presents a shaped parapet on its chamfered corner, with the downslope and gutter at the alley. The building is contributing because it was built within the period of significance and retains integrity.

**2656 Gravois Avenue (Structure)**

*Photograph 2; Figure 9*

*1 Contributing*

This is an open, unenclosed lot paved with asphalt at Gravois and Lynch Avenues. This lot was an open car sales lot by 1932. A small one-story building appears on the lot on the 1951 Sanborn map, but no longer stands. The lot is considered contributing because its current appearance (despite the loss of the building) and use date to the period of significance.

**2633-37 Lynch Street (Structure)**

*Photograph 5*

*1 Non-contributing*

This is an asphalt-paved open lot enclosed by a chain link fence. Two two-story residential buildings stood on this lot during the period of significance (and appear on the 1951 Sanborn map). The lot is considered non-contributing because its current appearance dates to after the period of significance.

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## Summary

The Gravois-Jefferson Streetcar Suburb Historic District Boundary Increase I is an extension of the original district listed in the National Register on 5/11/05 with an approved amendment dating 6/24/08 that reclassified a primary resource (located at 3019 Chippewa Avenue) as contributing. The increase includes one block located along Gravois Avenue that includes three primary buildings of the two-part commercial form, along with two secondary buildings and four lots. These resources are associated with the development of streetcar routes on the arterial streets bounding and transecting the district, as well as with the development of commercial building types to serve the growing suburban working- and middle-class residents of the District. The nominated resources are associated with two historic contexts identified in the district's associated *South St. Louis Historic Working- and Middle-Class Streetcar Suburbs* MPDF: Architectural Patterns of South St. Louis Streetcar Suburbs, 1880-1940 and South St. Louis Working And Middle-Class Suburban Neighborhoods, 1880-1940. The buildings are consistent with the dominant types of commercial storefronts noted in the National Register nomination for the Gravois-Jefferson Streetcar Suburb Historic District.<sup>10</sup> Two of the primary buildings were reconstructed during the widening of Gravois Avenue in 1930-31, and represent continued investment in the district. The third building is non-contributing due to alterations outside of the period of significance. The three are part of the architectural types that define the character of the Gravois Avenue boundary of the District identified in the nomination. The exclusion of these resources from the listed district boundary is inexplicable based on the registration requirements of the associated *South St. Louis Historic Working- and Middle-Class Streetcar Suburbs* MPDF and the District nomination itself, which discusses significance as it related to the contexts in the MPDF. This boundary increase maintains the period of significance, c. 1880 – c. 1940, as well as the areas of significance under Criterion A for Community Planning and Development and under Criterion C for Architecture. This boundary increase rectifies the exclusion of these resources from the district. One resource, located at 2648-52 Gravois Avenue, dates to c. 1871 before the period of significance; however it is contributing due to its contribution to the contexts' development patterns during the period of significance through its c. 1931 alteration within the period of significance.

### The 2600 Block of Gravois Avenue, 1870-1931

The buildings located on the block bounded by Gravois Avenue, Lynch Street and Texas Avenue demonstrate a development history dating to the post-Civil War era and running through the mid-twentieth century era of professional urban planning. The area around the block began development with the Labadie and Lynch Addition on the south side of Lynch Street from Seventh Street to Compton Avenue in 1856.<sup>11</sup> The block itself dates to 1870, when John Daggett platted his Second Subdivision of the Barsolux Tract.<sup>12</sup> Daggett's addition extended adjacent patterns by platting blocks with long north-south lengths and narrow east-west widths. The addition consisted of nearly four blocks, with one bisected by the diagonal of Gravois. The

<sup>10</sup> Sally Schwenk, Cathy Ambler and Kerry Davis, p. 7.8

<sup>11</sup> Eric Sandweiss, *St. Louis: The Evolution of an American Urban Landscape* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), p. 75.

<sup>12</sup> Sandweiss, p. 79.

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nominated block is the southern part of this split central block, but maintains the extended length on its Gravois-fronting side. The longer blocks were favored at the time by speculators because they offered the largest number of saleable lots.

In the mid 1800's, the city of Saint Louis received a large influx of immigrants from European nations, most coming from Germany. This large increase of German immigrants has greatly influenced the city's trajectory, as they brought their skills and culture into the city, in areas such as food, industry, and ethnic diversity. The areas around the boundary increase were flourishing in the mid 1860's as people continued to move, not only into a neighborhood that was already providing the basic needs, but into a welcoming community of German immigrants mixed with a few native Saint Louisians and other immigrants who sought to make a living in Saint Louis. Within just the surrounding area now called the Benton Park West neighborhood, "there were carpenters, builders, stone masons, dairymen, gardeners, market owners, grocers, saddle and harness makers, a blacksmith, a midwife, and two saloons."<sup>13</sup> In the second half of the 19th century, Benton Park West, was heavily influenced and established by German immigrants and a working class economy. They were working class, but a good many of those living in the neighborhood owned their own business, and some of the residents were even considerably wealthy and prominent in Saint Louis society.

The immigrants flocked to the south, where a lot twenty five feet wide at the front was sold for around \$200- \$300, and fit into the budget of many of the working class immigrants and their families. These open lots also allowed for the formation of a German enclave south of the inner city. Building material was easily procured from local handmade bricks, iron works, and lumber yard. This also allowed for architects to create elegant facades with fancy brickwork and tiles. The influx of German families also created a need for closer and more churches. Founded in 1867, the St. Francis de Sales German Catholic Church was finished in 1868 at the corner of Lynch Street and Ohio Avenue, diagonally southwest from the nominated block, for the families of dairymen who felt that the mother church, St. Peter & Paul's, was too far away. The St. Francis de Sales parish became an anchor on Gravois that endures today.<sup>14</sup>

The earliest of the extant buildings on the block today is the building at 2648-52 Gravois Avenue, which dates to around 1871. By 1875, Gravois Avenue had a horse-car mass transportation line running past this block.<sup>15</sup> That same year, Richard Compton and Camille Dry sketched the block for their comprehensive bird's-eye *Pictorial St. Louis*. The image shows the horse-car tracks running past a block with little development. The rear elevation of the building at 2648-52 Gravois Avenue is evident, showing the original form of the building as side-gabled residential row of flats. The rear of the building today reflects the signs of continuous residential use: dormers with windows on the rear of the gable and a wooden gallery porch providing access to the second floor units. Later this building would be converted into a mixed-use two-part commercial block after the Gravois widening in 1930-31. The two small houses and outbuilding shown in the 1875 Compton & Dry view would be gone by 1900.

<sup>13</sup> Edna Campos Gravenhorst, *Images of America: Benton Park West* (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2005), p. 7.

<sup>14</sup> Gravenhorst, p. 18.

<sup>15</sup> Schwenk, Ambler and Davis (MPDF), p. E-23.

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After the Civil War, development in the area was slowed, and would not pick up to a higher pace until after 1885.<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, the horse-car line's transition to a cable streetcar in 1880 improved the commercial development prospect of Gravois Avenue.<sup>17</sup> The depression of 1873 had slowed the increase in the value of personal property proportional to real estate value, making real estate investment more attractive to investors.<sup>18</sup> Gravois Avenue developed between Chouteau Avenue and Grand Avenue rapidly between 1875 and 1900, with blocks typically giving rise to mixed-use two-part commercial blocks, warehouses or small factories that could take advantage of the transportation line while remaining on the periphery of the developing suburban residential areas.

The development of streets around Gravois was somewhat irregular, however, given the hybrid nature of subdivision and land development. Countless small tracts were subdivided to craft the street's built environment. The growing industry in the neighborhood and surrounding areas, included breweries, glass factories, brickyards, iron factories, and lumber factories by the 1880s. Workers in these expanded industries enjoyed more disposable income and sought retail, services, saloons, barber and restaurants to provide a more affluent standard of living.

The block's second-oldest building likely is the building at 2644 Gravois Avenue, which seems to date to 1880. The 1909 Sanborn map shows that this building was either built as or became a three-story building, with a commercial space on the first floor. However the building was always set back from Gravois Avenue. Henry Heisse obtained a permit on December 31, 1908 to alter the building for use as a nickelodeon.<sup>19</sup> In 1918, Emil A. Billmeyer opened a paint shop in the building, listed variously as "painting" and "auto painting" (as in automobile) through 1930.<sup>20</sup> After vacancy during the Gravois widening project, the building was used by Pieper Heating and Sheet Metal Company after 1933 and Dierkes Plumbing and Heating Company after 1959.<sup>21</sup> Billmeyer's shop and the later heating and plumbing uses all serviced the middle-class residents, who increasingly could afford cars and modern heating systems.

The building at 2654 Gravois Avenue originates with a building permit dated April 14, 1887.<sup>22</sup> In 1918, the building housed Frank Jungenwaelter's bakery, which operated there through the 1920s. In 1930, Walter Wiedemann owned the bakery there. The building was vacant and reconstructed through the widening of Gravois Avenue in 1930 and 1931, and by 1935 housed Otto Buder's radio retail shop through the end of the period of significance.<sup>23</sup> The sale of home radios for home entertaining is associated with the middle-class lifestyles of the surrounding suburban residential areas.

### Widening Gravois: 1931-1940

<sup>16</sup> Sandweiss, p. 80.

<sup>17</sup> Schwenck, Ambler and Davis (MPDF), p. E-24.

<sup>18</sup> Sandweiss, p. 80.

<sup>19</sup> City of St. Louis Building Permit Records.

<sup>20</sup> City directories.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> City of St. Louis Building Permit Records.

<sup>23</sup> City directories.

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Gravois Avenue's development relied on its function as a major arterial zone crossing much of south St. Louis. Transportation developments in the early twentieth century included extension of the streetcar line south of Arsenal Street in 1910 and the development of many intersecting lines. In 1908, the City of St. Louis widened Gravois from Grand Avenue to the city limits to 98' wide.<sup>24</sup> This widening was possible because most parcels fronting the street in that area were yet undeveloped. The anterior corridor was more densely built, and could not be widened without major reconstruction. Still Gravois became a spine connecting the residential suburbs extending south from the inner-city neighborhoods around downtown to the city limits. Not surprisingly, the then-new City Plan Commission proposed widening the section of Gravois from Chouteau Avenue to Grand Avenue to 98' in its 1917 report, *A Major Street Plan for St. Louis*.<sup>25</sup> The Commission made this recommendation as part of a call to develop a citywide network of arterial streets including both circumferential streets like Grand Avenue and intersecting diagonals like Gravois.

The City Plan Commission's recommendations for implementing the street widening plan received funding in St. Louis' monumental bond issue of 1923, and an ordinance adopting the widening of Gravois Avenue north of Grand Avenue was adopted in April 1923. That ordinance enabled a public commission to oversee condemnation of private property along Gravois, which was constituted in July 1929.<sup>26</sup> The condemnation of private property engendered substantial and spirited opposition, and slowed implementation. In January 1930, a group of business associations issued a statement of support for completing the widening; the group included the St. Louis Real Estate Exchange, the Grand-Gravois Business Men's Association, the Cherokee Business Men's Association and other groups.<sup>27</sup> The message of these groups was that automotive circulation was crucial to maintain the status of Gravois and surrounding arterial streets as a fashionable retail environment. The city's Board of Estimate and Apportionment finally approved \$1.7 million toward condemnation, demolition and construction in June 1930.<sup>28</sup>

In November 1930, the Board of Public Service authorized bids for the Gravois widening project, and demolition activity soon began.<sup>29</sup> No permits for alterations to 2648-52 and 2654 Gravois exist, but the buildings did undergo reconstruction in this period.<sup>30</sup> Whether the Board of Public Service commissioned the reconstructions is unknown, and ownership never reverted to the city. Both buildings lost mass to the widening of the street, but not enough to be demolished and replaced by new buildings. Instead, the owners elected to truncate the buildings and apply new

<sup>24</sup> City Plan Commission, *A Major Street Plan for St. Louis* (St. Louis: Nixon-Jones Publishing Company, 1917), p. 45.

<sup>25</sup> City Plan Commission, p. 45.

<sup>26</sup> "The Gravois Widening," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (8 November 1930).

<sup>27</sup> "Gravois Widening Urged by Groups of South St. Louisans," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (18 January 1930).

<sup>28</sup> "Funds for Gravois Widening Approved," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (26 June 1930).

<sup>29</sup> "Public Service Board to Authorize Bids for Gravois Work Tuesday," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* (14 November 1930).

<sup>30</sup> The Sanborn fire insurance maps show that the footprints of these two buildings diminished between 1910 and 1938. Physical evidence on the buildings support reconstruction, including the use of modern pressed brick on the front elevations. The building at 2648-52 Gravois appears on the 1875 Compton & Dry *Pictorial St. Louis* plate showing this block, so its front elevation could not have originally been built with the 20<sup>th</sup> century building materials it now displays. Unfortunately, the Board of Public Service does not retain records on building alterations that it funded as part of the Gravois widening.



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modern elevations employing modern brick and terra cotta. During the Gravois widening project the building at 2948-52 Gravois Avenue received a decorated façade with shaped parapet that effectively transformed the sidewalk view of the building from gabled row of flats into a modern two-part commercial block. The building at 2654 Gravois Avenue's original appearance is not known but its post-widening front elevation features a terra cotta base and shaped parapet above. The new elevations avoided traits that would place them in definitive stylistic categories, although the storefront at 2654 Gravois Avenue and the interior have Spanish Baroque elements. After the reconstruction, the building at 2648-52 Gravois Avenue began to house retail and service businesses in the new storefronts, which were connected to dwelling units behind. For instance, Bertha Meyer's beauty shop opened in 2652 Gravois Avenue in 1932.<sup>31</sup>

Gravois' reconstruction was complete in 1932, and the new 98' wide street opened on December 7 that year.<sup>32</sup> The news expressway-like street brought other changes. The day after that section of Gravois reopened, a motorbus replaced the streetcar, which was removed during widening. The new Gravois Avenue offered rapid connection into downtown, a major goal of city planner Harland Bartholomew.<sup>33</sup> Gravois before had been an artery serving circulation in and around south St. Louis, but now became a major funnel of cross-city traffic. The two contributing primary buildings in the boundary increase reflect this transitory period, which comes at the close of the Gravois-Jefferson Streetcar Suburb Historic District's period of significance.

The nominated buildings exemplified the type of two-part commercial blocks rising in South St. Louis in the nineteenth century: built of dark red brick, two or three stories tall, situated along commercial arteries.<sup>34</sup> In the *South St. Louis Historic Working- and Middle-Class Streetcar Suburbs* MPDF, Sally Schwenk et al. state that the two-part commercial block is identified first by its form, and secondarily by its architectural style.<sup>35</sup> The architectural significance is collective rather than specific.<sup>36</sup> The three primary buildings in the boundary increase fit the development of hundreds of such buildings along streetcar corridors supporting suburban development of south St. Louis (Criterion A: Community Planning and Development). Furthermore, the two contributing buildings embody the traits of the Artistic Front Commercial Property sub-type identified by Schwenk et al. (Criterion C: Architecture).<sup>37</sup>

The three commercial buildings in the boundary increase extend the historic significance outlined in the MPDF. Their development and uses supported residential life for the middle-class residents of the neighborhood, and (in the case of two of the buildings) their reconstruction after 1931 demonstrates ongoing utility and association with neighborhood development.<sup>38</sup> Schwenk et al make it clear that the small commercial buildings emerge from financial capacity of individual businesspersons to contract for houses for their businesses, as well as for

<sup>31</sup> City directories.

<sup>32</sup> "Widened Gravois to Be Opened for Traffic Tuesday," *St. Louis Star-Times* (7 December 1931).

<sup>33</sup> Sandweiss, p. 225.

<sup>34</sup> Schwenk, Ambler and Davis (MPDF), p. F-25.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Schwenk, Ambler and Davis (MPDF), p. F-27.

<sup>37</sup> Schwenk, Ambler and Davis (MPDF), p. F-34.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

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speculators to anticipate the growth of the district.<sup>39</sup> These buildings demonstrate the viability and principality of commercial corridors like Gravois in bringing goods and services to the residents of the Gravois-Jefferson Streetcar Suburb Historic District.

### Conclusion

The addition of the nominated boundary increase to the Gravois-Jefferson Streetcar Suburb Historic District in St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri would support the nomination's assertions about Gravois Avenue's significance as an arterial boundary, and its claims that modern changes to Gravois have not diminished integrity. As noted in Section 7, this nomination seeks to remedy the omission of this block from the original District nomination, using both the contexts of the MPDF and an analysis of comparable blocks included along Gravois and Jefferson avenues. There are three primary buildings, one of which is non-contributing, and two secondary buildings. These buildings exemplify the types of commercial buildings that give the District architectural significance, and embody the development of the commercial corridor along Gravis Avenue as key to the planning and development of the larger streetcar suburb. This block meets the established criteria for eligibility as well as registration requirements found in the MPDF *South St. Louis Historic Working- and Middle-Class Streetcar Suburbs*.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

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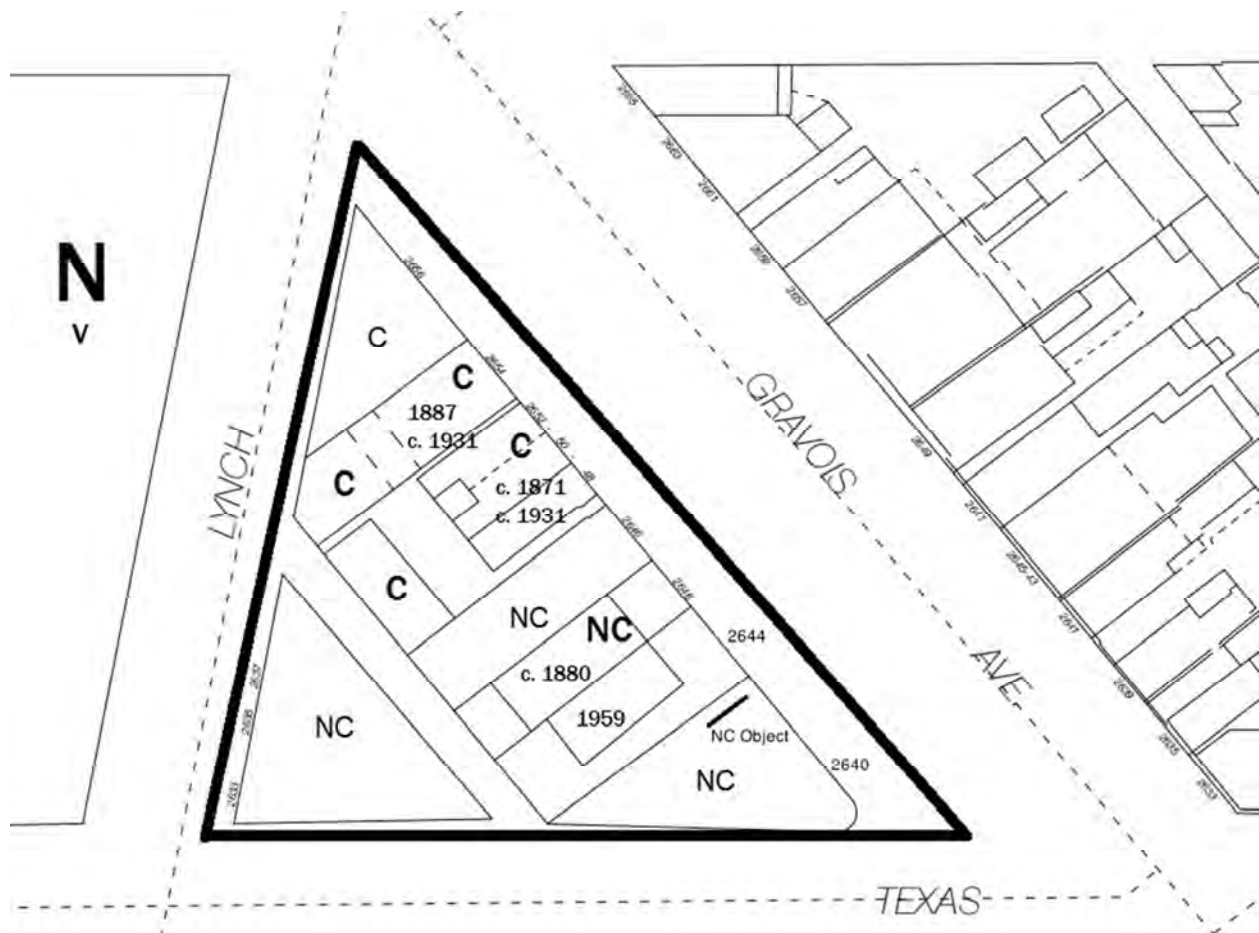
**Boundary Description**

The boundary begins at the intersection of Gravois and Texas avenues and proceeds southwest along Gravois Avenue to Lynch Street, where it proceeds east to Texas Avenue. At Texas Avenue, the boundary proceeds north to the starting point.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary includes the entirety of City Block 2073, whose historic associations fit the significance and themes of the Gravois-Jefferson Streetcar Suburb Historic District.

**Gravois-Jefferson Streetcar Suburb Historic District Boundary Increase I Boundary Map**



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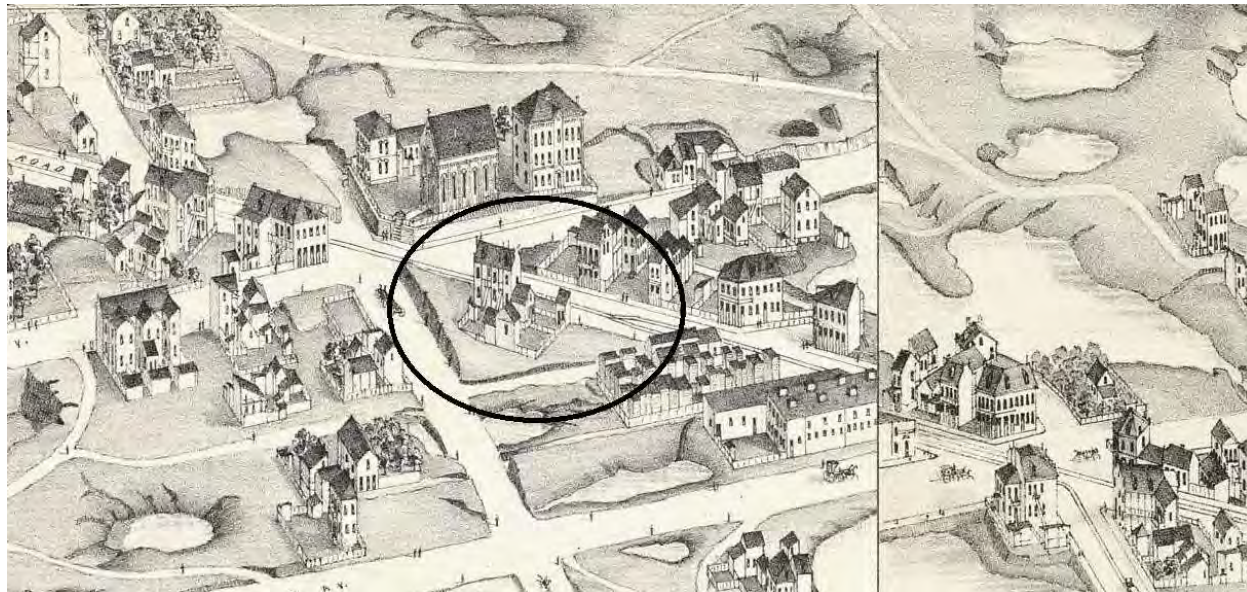
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri

County and State

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Figure 1: The block as it appeared on *Pictorial St. Louis* (1875).



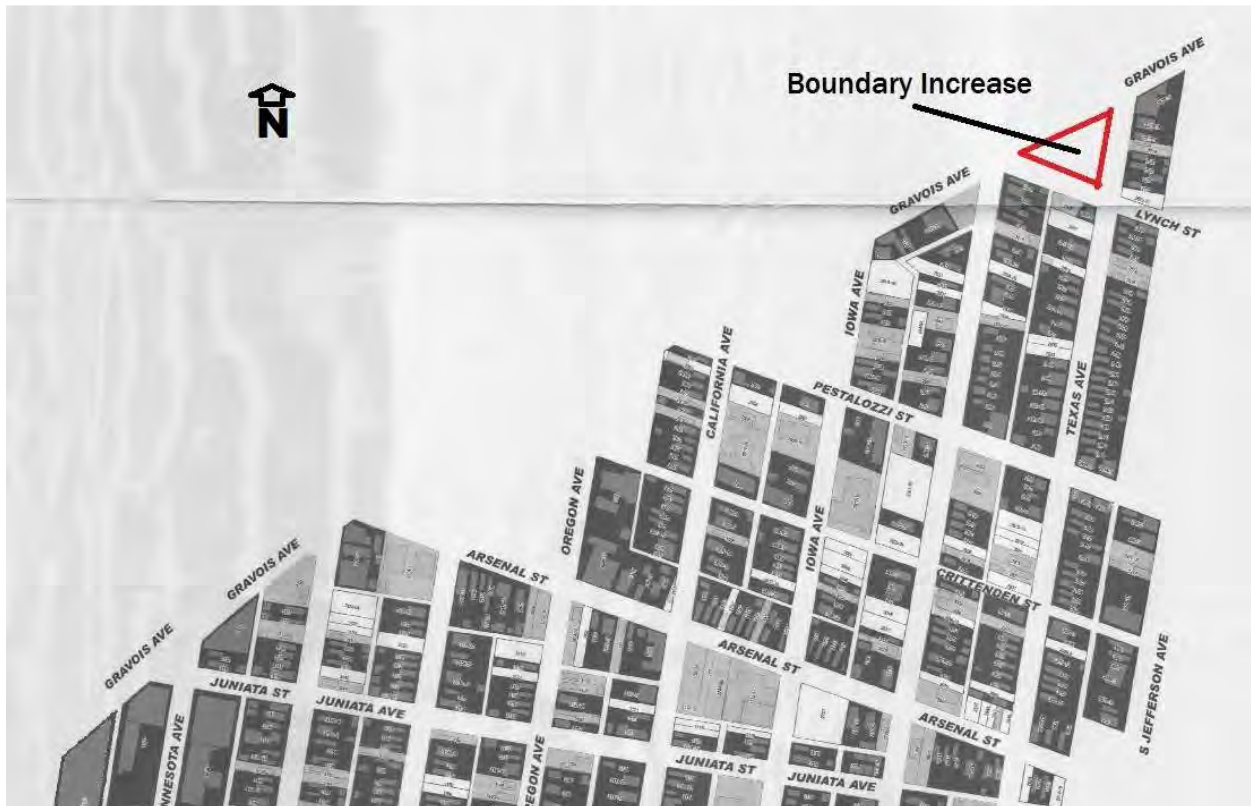
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Figure 2: The nominated block in relationship to the existing Gravois-Jefferson Streetcar Suburb Historic District, shown on a detail excerpt of the district map.



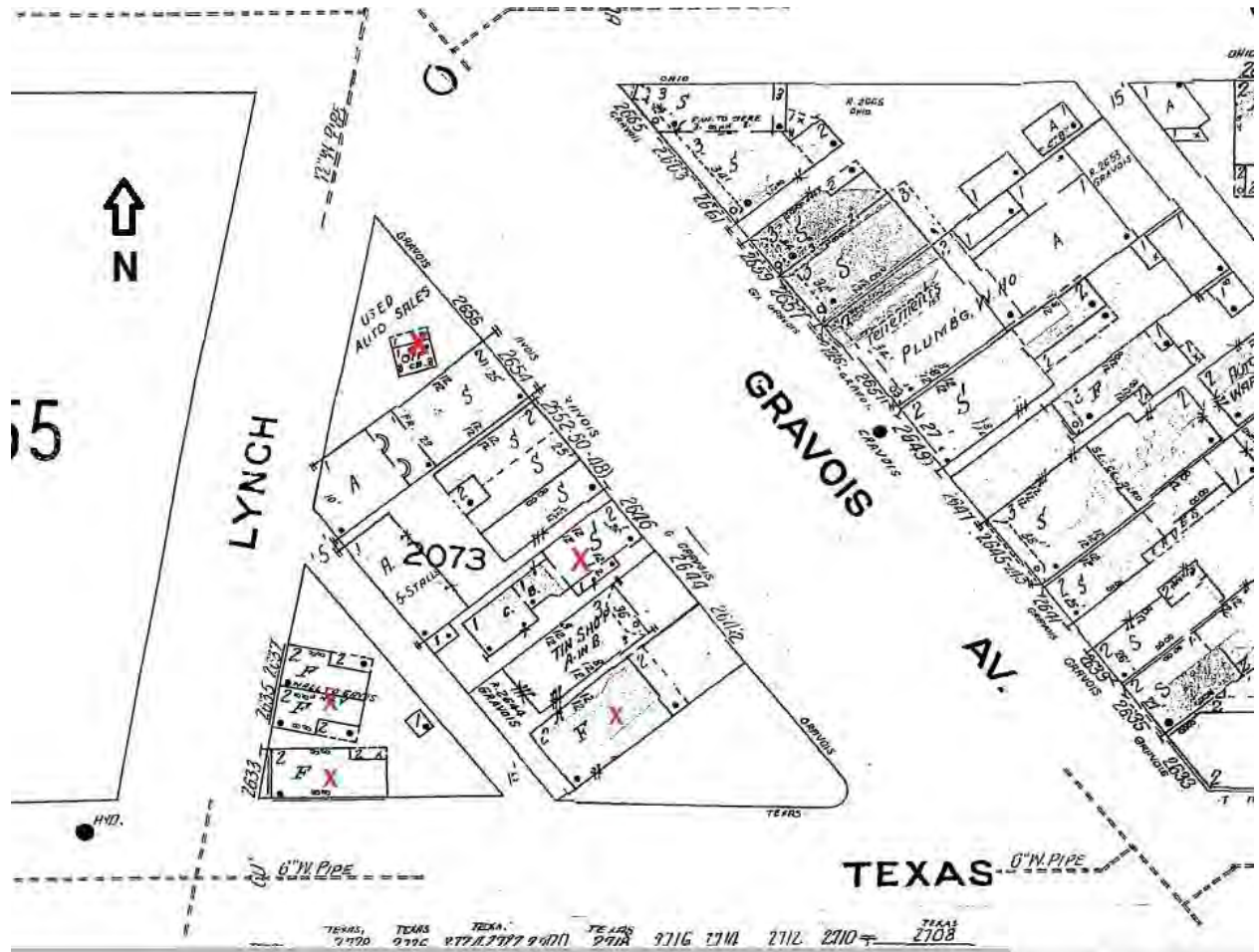
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Figure 3: The nominated block as it appeared on the Sanborn fire insurance map updated in December 1951. Demolished buildings are marked with an "X."



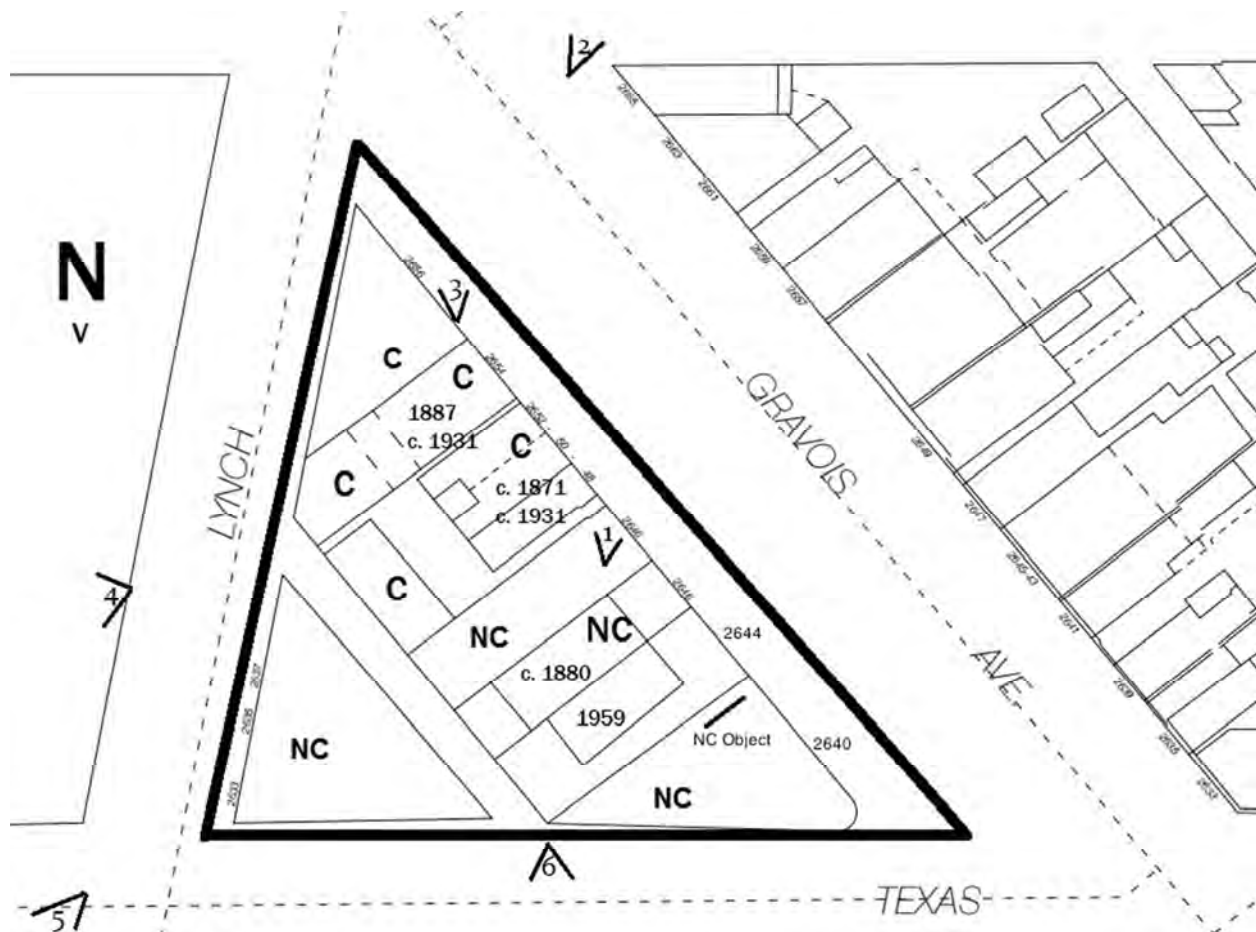
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Figure 4: Photo key for boundary increase.





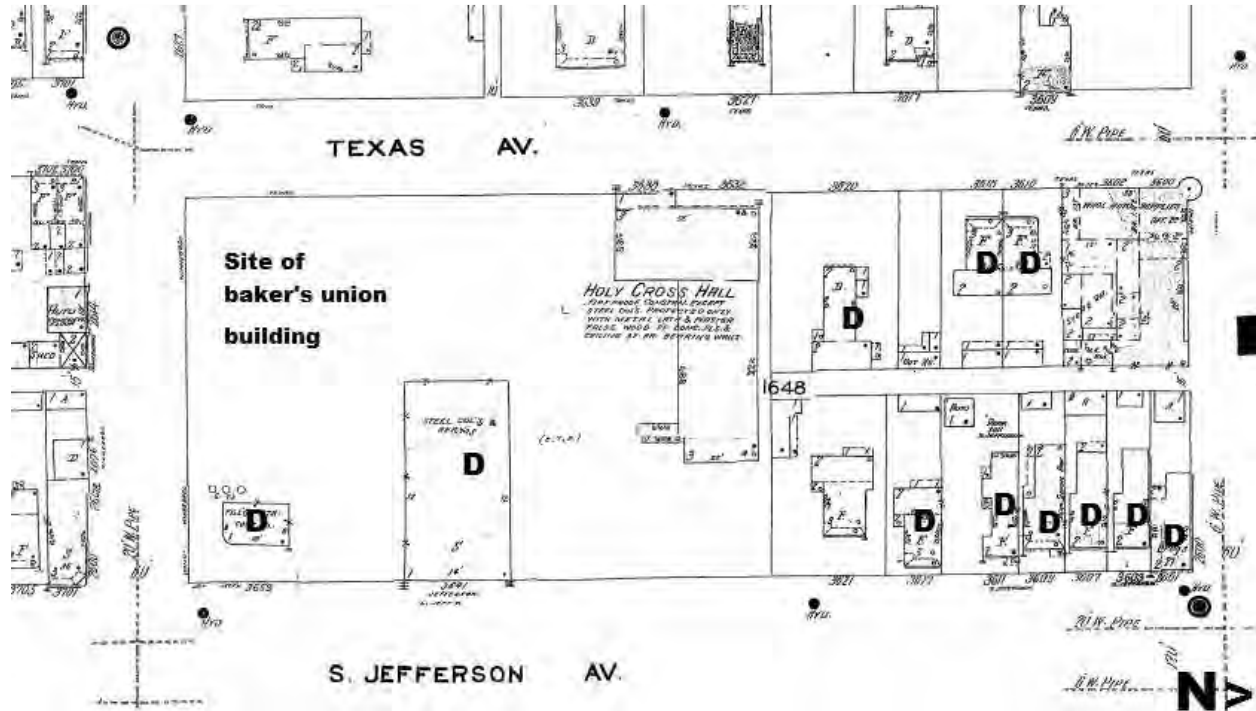
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Figure 5: Detail of the 1951 Sanborn fire insurance map page for the block within the Gravois-Jefferson Streetcar Suburb Historic District bounded by Jefferson, Miami, Texas and Winnebago streets. Buildings that stood in 1951 and that were built before the 1940 district period of significance cut-off, but have been demolished, are marked by a "D."



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Figure 6: Google Map view of the block within the Gravois-Jefferson Streetcar Suburb Historic District bounded by Jefferson, Miami, Texas and Winnebago streets, with an imagery date of 2012. View toward north. Source: Google.



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Figure 7: The non-contributing lot and billboard at 2640 Gravois Avenue. View toward southeast. Photograph by Michael Allen; September 16, 2015.



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Figure 8: The non-contributing lot at 2646 Gravois Avenue. View toward southeast. Photograph by Michael Allen; September 16, 2015.



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Figure 9: The contributing lot at 2656 Gravois Avenue. View toward northwest. Photograph by Michael Allen; September 16, 2015.



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Google Earth Map

Coordinates:

- |   |                    |                    |   |                    |                    |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|---|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | <u>38°36'15.23</u> | <u>90°13'28.03</u> | 3 | <u>38°36'13.38</u> | <u>90°13'32.08</u> |
|   | Latitude:          | Longitude:         |   | Latitude:          | Longitude:         |
| 2 | <u>38°36'12.2</u>  | <u>90°13'28.4</u>  |   |                    |                    |
|   | Latitude:          | Longitude:         |   |                    |                    |





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