

Final Survey Report:

Heart of the Ville

to the City of St. Louis Cultural Resources Office
of the Planning and Urban Design Agency
and
Saint Louis Development Corporation

Submitted by

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Background

The "Heart of the Ville" survey is the result of the successful St. Louis Cultural Resources Office (CRO) application for a Historic Preservation Grant to survey the Ville neighborhood, a local historic district with outstanding significance and uneven integrity. The original application was for a survey of over 700 properties. In final grant negotiations, CRO and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) agreed on a more manageable project of 300 properties.

The survey was designed as a cooperative effort between the City of St. Louis CRO and consultants Lynn Josse and Michael Allen. In November, 2009, Lynn Josse signed a contract with the city to provide a reconnaissance survey of 300 properties within the boundaries of the Ville neighborhood. Because this number would include fewer than half of the potentially historic residential and commercial properties within the originally identified survey area, Cultural Resources and the contractors targeted a much smaller set of blocks within the Ville. The new boundaries were selected based on the level of threat to the targeted resources.

This survey differs from many others because the neighborhood has already been the subject of intensive study over three decades. In 1983-84, Landmarks Association of St. Louis conducted a reconnaissance survey of the Ville. In 1987, the City of St. Louis designated most of the Ville neighborhood as a local historic district. Two years later, the National Park Service rejected certification of the Ville Local Historic District due to extensive building loss in parts of the district. Consequently, the *Historic and Architectural Resources of the Ville* MPS was developed by Landmarks Association of St. Louis and approved by the National Park Service in 1999. The MPS offers three contexts under which individual buildings or groups could be listed in the National Register. The contexts are: "Black Settlement in the Ville, 1865-1910" and "The Ville as a Center for African-American Culture, 1910-1950". The MPS establishes registration requirements for Institutional Buildings but no other types, stating that this is "the first phase of what is hoped to be a long-term project of evaluating and registering properties in the Ville."

The established registration requirements do not allow for listing of housing and commercial buildings. Thus, in 2009, the Cultural Resources Office

submitted a third context: "The Ville Neighborhood as a Result of Local and National Racial Segregation Policies, 1915 – 1950." This context outlines the demographic changes embodied by the remaining architectural resources of the Ville from that period. The context has never been approved by NPS.

In the survey area, three buildings have been listed in the National Register under the *Historic and Architectural Resources of the Ville* MPS. Antioch Baptist Church at 4713 North Market Street (NR 9/17/99) and Marshall School at 4342 Aldine Avenue (9/17/99) are both listed under the Institutional Buildings registration requirements. The Herman Dreer House at 4335 Cote Brilliant Avenue (2/20/09) was included in the National Register under a Supplemental Listing Record (SLR), meaning that the nomination provided enough context to include the building even though its property type was not documented in the MPDF.

Objectives

The overall objective of the survey was to identify and evaluate residential and commercial properties for listing in the National Register of Historic Places within the context of the *Historic and Architectural Resources of the Ville* MPS and proposed amendments, and to identify potential expansions to the MPS to include significant resources that would otherwise be excluded.

Methodology

In a series of meetings, the consultants and the City of St. Louis Cultural Resources Office identified the blocks within the Ville to be surveyed. A contract, signed in November, 2009, called for 300 of the properties within these boundaries to be assessed.

Primary photography was conducted by the consultants between December 4 and December 11, 2009. With the Microsoft Access database provided by the Cultural Resources Office in January, 2010, the consultants entered and verified descriptive data over a period of several months. Within the survey boundaries, 368 resources and 49 outbuildings were assessed. Omitted from assessment were properties related to the National Register-listed Antioch Baptist Church and Marshall School. The NR-listed Herman Dreer House at 4335 Cote Brillante was surveyed since it is part of a residential streetscape which is recommended for listing as part of a district.

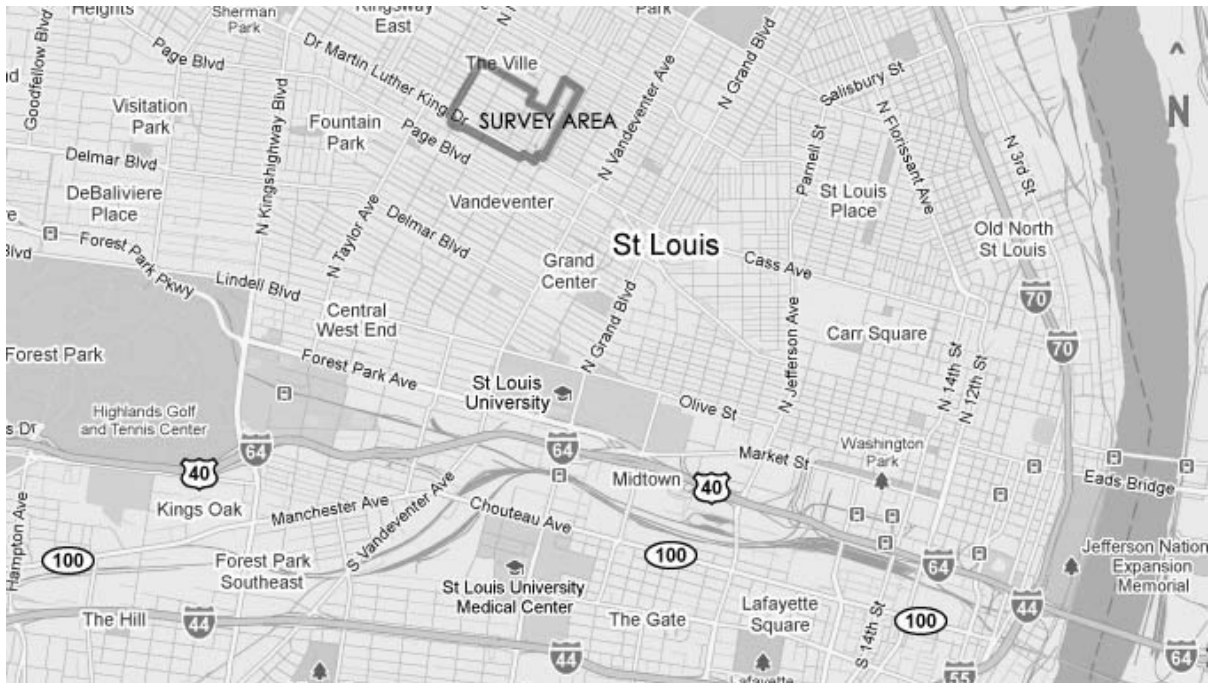
With advice from the SHPO, property types provided by CRO were modified and defined. Starting in January 2010, the consultants began the research phase by looking up building permits and *St. Louis Daily Record* information for surveyed resources. Upon completion of that work, the consultants examined Building Division certificates as well as historic maps and views to narrow down dates of construction and alteration. The consultants utilized the 1920 and 1930 Census records, the 1943 *Metropolitan St. Louis Negro Directory* and various years of *Gould's Red-Blue Book* to fill in the historical picture. This research was supplemented by reading available cultural resource literature on the Ville, including the recent single-site National Register nominations of the Herman Dreer and Homer G. Phillips houses.

After research was completed, the consultants submitted to the CRO completed inventory forms. The consultants then incorporated SHPO review comments to create final inventory forms. CRO prepared the final survey map and corrected mapping discrepancies. The consultants submitted to CRO a draft survey report in June 1; CRO sent the report to SHPO. SHPO review comments have shaped this final survey report.

One important component of the project design was a partnership with two classes at Harris-Stowe State University (HSSU). Created by the

unification of the City's two segregated normal schools, Harris-Stowe today proudly claims its heritage as a historically black university with roots in Stowe Teachers College. (Located at 2615 Billups and listed along with other Ville MPS properties on 9/17/99, the original Stowe building is just outside of survey area boundaries.) Consultants worked with professors of African American History and Urban History, speaking to both classes about the Ville and the survey project. Originally, the consultants and professors hoped that students could conduct research using census records and the *St. Louis Argus* and *St. Louis American* newspapers in order to maximize the research scope of the survey. Students in both classes wrote papers on aspects of the history of the Ville, but none turned out to be useful to the evaluation of individual properties.

Geographical description



The Heart of the Ville survey area plotted on a map of St. Louis.

The Ville neighborhood is approximately five miles northwest of the Mississippi River at downtown St. Louis. The Ville is located in north St. Louis, and the survey area is located in the southern end of the neighborhood. Surveyed properties are located in the City of St. Louis in the area of the Ville bounded by Newstead, Kennerly, the alley east of Belle Glade, and the alley south of Dr. Martin Luther King Drive. The south side of Dr. Martin Luther King Drive is not part of the Ville neighborhood or the Ville multiple property area, but the historical ownership of businesses on the south side is not significantly different than those across the street.

This urban area is laid on a street grid that has both commercial and residential properties. Demolition has claimed many buildings, and the area is marked by vacant lots, especially on north-south streets Belle Glade, Annie Malone, Whittier, Pendleton/Billups and Newstead. The survey area includes single-family houses, townhouses, multi-family buildings, churches, one branch school, one- and two-part commercial blocks and a few three-story commercial buildings. At the north end of the survey area, but excluded, is Tandy Park and the group of multi-story

National Register-listed African-American institutional buildings, including Homer G. Phillips Hospital (NR 9/23/82), Sumner High School (NR 4/19/88), Antioch Baptist Church (NR 9/17/99), the Tandy Community Center (9/17/99) and Stowe Teachers College (NR 9/17/99). Near the southwest corner of the survey area is John Marshall School (NR 9/17/99).

The streets of the survey area are architecturally diverse. Most buildings are brick, however. There is a wide range of styles and forms, so that there are few unified streetscapes in the survey area. Dr. Martin Luther King Drive has almost exclusively commercial buildings, mostly in one- or two-part commercial block types. Belle Glade Avenue has a wide range of residential buildings, including 2-family flat, townhouse, single dwelling with shaped parapet and other types. Annie Malone Avenue has lost many buildings but has a similar wide range of one- and two-story houses. Aldine and Cote Brillante avenues have a similar range of residential types, but many more two-story buildings than other streets. Cote Brillante has a notable group of Dutch Colonial-style houses on the 4300 block as well as a large Colonial/Georgian Revival residence at 4221 West Cote Brillante. Garfield Avenue has a wide mix of residential buildings, including two Second Empire raised-basement houses and the area's largest number of surviving frame buildings. North Market Street has suffered heavier building losses than the other east-west streets, but retains a mix of residential types. St. Ferdinand Avenue has several unique buildings, including a high-rise Modern Movement apartment building, a large Modern Movement church and a row of raised basement one-story houses, mostly Italianate, facing the rear elevation of Sumner High School. Pendleton/Billups Avenue retains few resources, but has rows of one-story raised basement and shotgun houses. Newstead retains one two-story commercial building but otherwise is lined by vacant lots on the survey side.

Results

Existing historic contexts

Historic contexts for the Ville have already been developed in conjunction with the original Multiple Property registration form and proposed amendments. Two chronological contexts submitted with the original MPDF (registered in 1999) described the transition of the Ville from suburb to multiethnic low-density urban neighborhood to a higher-density African American neighborhood. In the original document, only institutional properties were eligible for listing. A third context, submitted by the City of St. Louis Cultural Resources Office, explained in more detail the factors leading to residential segregation. Intended to support the inclusion of residential resources under the MPDF, this document was never registered.

Research conducted during the course of this survey supported the narrative of the three context statements. Demographic research conducted for the survey area starts with the 1920 census. While the Ville was still a multiethnic community at this time, the neighborhood was strictly segregated from block to block. In the blocks studied, the major integrating factor at the time was the unequal commercial relationship between some of the remaining white families and their black customers. It was not uncommon for the last remaining white families on an otherwise African American block to be the owner-occupants of the corner store. This was the case on the 1900 and 25-2600 block of Annie Malone; the 4300 block of Garfield; and the even side of 4200W Garfield. At least two of these white families were probably Jewish, illustrating the complex relationship between the ethnic minorities of the day. At 2500 Annie Malone, the corner grocer's parents were native Yiddish speakers. At 4206 W. St. Ferdinand, the Cohen family (German-speaking Hungarians) lived above their grocery store.

The closest thing to an integrated street in 1920 within the survey area was Easton (now Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive). A major streetcar corridor, Easton was lined with both black and white families in residential buildings (most of which were subsequently demolished for more commercial buildings) and above stores.

The enforced economic integration referred to in the third context statement is also visible in census research. In 1920, black professionals

such as doctors, teachers and clerks lived alongside porters, chauffeurs, and laundresses. Major employers included the school district, with a growing "separate but equal" educational system to staff, and the U. S. Postal Service. These results can be compared to those of the 1998 "Enright/West Belle" HPF-funded survey which showed that by the 1920s, many black professionals had found ways to buy larger houses on the blocks south of Easton. By the 1930s, the unrestricted "Finney District" or "Enright District" was about as large as the Ville. (See the figure under "Additional Research," below.)

Architecture

While the Ville's institutional architecture has been studied in depth, little has been written about the residential buildings. The suburb of Elleardsville was full of modest dwellings on a developing urban-scaled grid even before it became part of the City of St. Louis in 1876. In Compton and Dry's view, drawn the previous year, the estate and nurseries of Charles Elleard are still intact, but streets have been laid out and the first extant buildings can be identified.

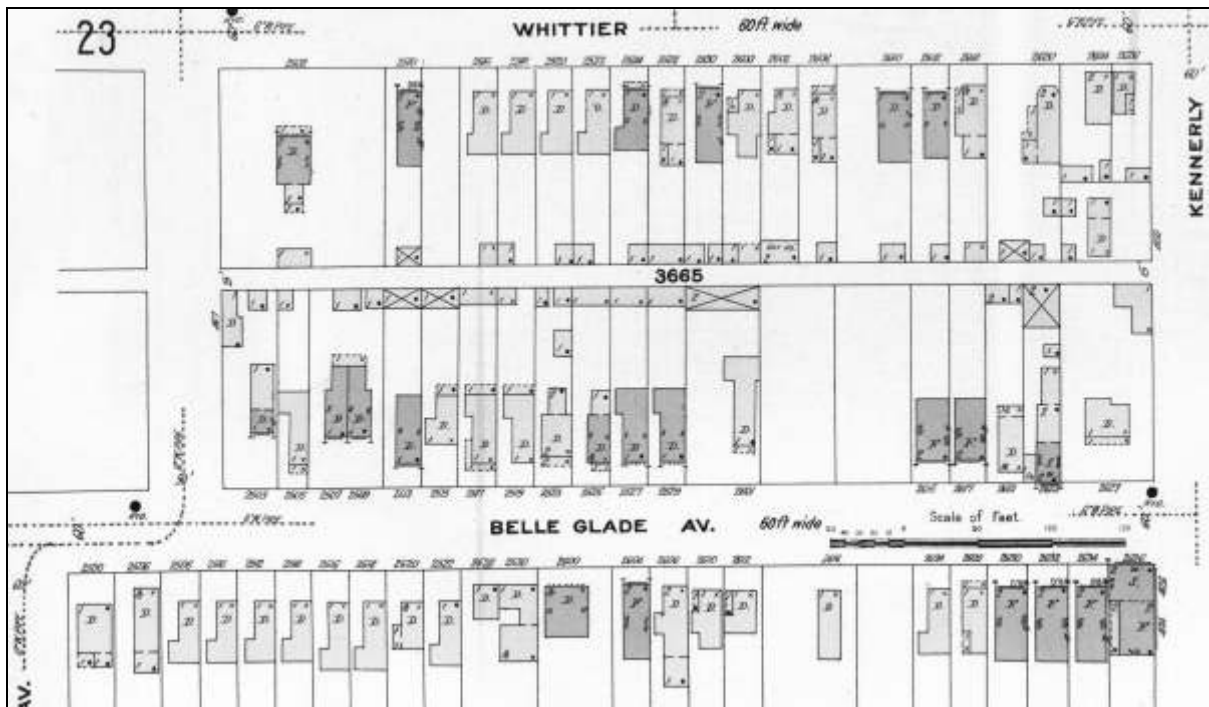


The Ville (Elleardsville), 1875. Compton and Dry's *Pictorial St. Louis*. North is right; Dr. Martin Luther King Drive is at the left, "Wash" is now Whittier, and "Glade" is Belle Glade.

The modest buildings of this period generally do not survive, although some (such as the building at 1901-1903 Belle Glade) are identifiable.

Buildings of the 1880s and 1890s continued to develop on a low-rise urban scale. Shotguns and single story Revival style houses were common; some two-family houses and flats were constructed, and the potential for increasing density as the area urbanized was demonstrated with one surviving four-family and one six-family flat from the 1890s.

Some of the extant buildings from these decades are quite good examples of their styles. The single story Italianate house at 4317 Garfield, although deprived of its original porch, retains a fine bracketed cornice and original window and trim. Several of the raised basement houses on the 1700 block of Billups have similar qualities. 1921 Annie Malone is an intact three-story building in the Second Empire style. On the 1400 block of Newstead, a row of flats demonstrates the Romanesque idiom applied to an urban two-family façade.



Sanborn Map, 1909 – light colored footprints are frame, darker ones are brick. Other blocks didn't have as many frame dwellings. Those that remain should be preserved where possible.

Like many areas of the City that were annexed in 1876, the Ville retains a number of late 19th century frame buildings. The shotgun at 4226 West Garfield and the double house at 4233 Aldine retain integrity and are important examples of a construction method that has disproportionately disappeared from the landscape of the Ville.

The architecture of the early 20th century filled in the street grid, and by the time the 1909 Sanborn map was published, the Ville was a densely built urban neighborhood of single family homes and two-family flats. Many of the single family homes were larger than their 19th century counterparts. Buildings of the Front Gambrel Colonial Revival and

Foursquare types offered more open plans than their predecessors. The concentration of front gambrel houses on the 4300 block of Cote Brillante is a significant example.

By 1920, most blocks in the Ville were dominated by African American households, as restrictive covenants and segregationist real estate practices began to show their effect on the landscape. After 1920, the permit records show construction of more multi-family units and fewer single family homes. While the trend toward multi-family housing is more pronounced in the African American enclave south of the Ville (which had taken more damage from the 1927 tornado and afforded more opportunities for rebuilding), examples in the Ville are significant. The series of stylish two-family buildings constructed by the Gordon-Horen company in 1928-29 (4248 W. N. Market, and 4321-23 St. Ferdinand and 4224 W. St. Ferdinand) are architecturally distinctive, making use of arcaded patterns in brickwork and porches, multiple brick colors, and full-width porches. The pair of multifamily buildings at the southwest corner of Belle Glade and Kennerly (an 8-unit and a 12-unit building) are the survey area's best extant representation of the trend toward higher density housing.

Property types

Residential and commercial buildings in the surveyed area vary greatly in style, type and date of construction. Residential construction is, however, generally consistent in its size and scale. Most residential buildings surveyed are located on lots with 25 to 40 feet of street frontage. Most lots are around 130 feet deep, stretching back to alleys that bisect the blocks.

Property types defined in this survey are derived from the original list provided to consultants by CRO (a list of vernacular types, primarily plan-based), types defined in the city's Preservation Plan, and types suggested by the SHPO. Attempting to take in elements of plan, function, roofline, and sometimes style, there is the potential for overlap. Descriptions in italics are those of the City's Preservation Plan.

Single family residential property types

Common types

Gabled Ell (1884– c. 1890)
Shotgun (c. 1880 – 1940)
Narrow front (c. 1883 – 1914)
Shaped parapet 1-story (1884 – 1926)
One story simple massed plan (1884 – 1947)
One-story with raised basement (1883 – 1905)
Townhouse (c. 1870 – 1925)
American Four Square (1892 -1920)
Front Gambrel Colonial Revival (1912 – 1929)
Bungalow/Bungaloid (1924 – 50)

Uncommon types

Flounder (1884)
Back to Back house (c. 1880)

Gabled Ell (6 examples, 1884 – c. 1890)

Gabled Ell buildings are 19th century frame houses with a front wing and side wing. There are both one and two story examples in the survey area.



2614 Whittier

Shotgun (41 examples, c. 1880 – 1940)

The Ville survey area includes both frame and brick shotgun houses. All but one were constructed in the last two decades of 19th century or c. 1900. The City's Preservation Plan defines the classic shotgun: *Shotgun houses are single-story buildings with narrow front facades. There is no interior hallway: each room leads directly into the one behind it.*



2628 Belle Glade

Narrow Front Houses (15 examples, c. 1883 – 1914)

The narrow front house often features the same plan as a shotgun, but the front door is on a side elevation rather than the front. This is typically a 19th century house form; 13 of the 15 examples in the survey area date from c. 1883 – 1896. In the Ville, this type includes buildings with small rear ells, some with an additional front-facing door. As defined in the Preservation Plan,

The narrow front house type was more prevalent during the Walking City period than is apparent today. Usually brick, with a hipped roof, the facade facing the street was only two bays wide, although the side of the building, which contained the entry, could be of considerable length.



4323 Garfield

Shaped Parapet (27 examples, 1884 – 1926)

The City of St. Louis' Preservation Plan defines the Shaped Parapet house as a single story house. Although they may appear with many different stylistic details, they are classified as an early 20th century American style because the form seems to be specific to parts of the United States. The plan's definition:

The Shaped Parapet Single Family is a brick one-story house type with a front shaped parapet. Popular between 1900 and 1920, it has a narrow two or three bay front façade. The earliest examples have recessed entries and Romanesque Revival detail; later houses

had a small one-story porch. A distinctive feature of these houses is the use of decorative or glazed bricks to enliven the front façade.



1812 Whittier

One story simple massed plan (17 examples, 1884 – 1947)

Many single story houses in St. Louis are not so different from the Shaped Parapet type but lack that distinctive roofline. Simple houses with massed plans that do not fall into one of the established vernacular types are placed in this category. In the Ville there are two main subtypes found: nineteenth and early 20th century houses that are two or three bays wide, often only a bit wider than a shotgun house; and a group of c. 1925 rectangular plan houses with gabled or hipped roofs.



4228 W. Cote Brillante



1904 Belle Glade

One story with raised basement (24 examples, 1883 – 1905)

Often similar to shotguns or the other types discussed above, this type includes houses with a high basement. Usually a second front door is under the first at the basement level. Such houses have two stories of living space but are constructed without the expense of adding a full second story.



4254 West St. Ferdinand

Townhouses (41 total, c. 1870 – 1925, with 31 dated 1880 – 1899)

The City's Preservation Plan offers a broad definition of the townhouse type. In the 20th century, this type includes houses that might be typed as "square houses" elsewhere, buildings that have almost the proportions of a foursquare but without a pitched roof.

The most common Walking City house type in St. Louis is the town house. Unlike rural buildings of the time, town houses were built in close proximity to one another, and their front facades are generally taller than they are wide. This narrow front was appropriate for the shape of new urban lots, allowing a house of substantial size to be constructed on a lot with often no more than twenty-five feet of street frontage. Typically, a townhouse could be ... combined with several others to create a row, or be entirely detached, separated from adjacent structures by narrow gangways or sideyards. The town house type was popular in St. Louis until the early 20th century. To a great extent, the development of the City's residential buildings is illustrated in the evolution of the town house form through the 19th century.



4349 Garfield



4343 Cote Brillante

American Foursquare (3 examples, 1892 -1920)

The Foursquare house appeared just before the turn of the 20th century. These two or two and a half story houses were constructed in both frame and masonry; have square plans, and pyramidal roofs. Usually the entry is placed to one side under a small porch, although front verandahs were not uncommon. Foursquares may possess the detailing of any architectural style current at the time of construction; but Arts and Crafts influence was by far the most prevalent. The Foursquare interior has an open floor plan with rooms leading directly into one another - a departure from the multiple rooms connected by hallways that was characteristic of Victorian houses.



4243 West Cote Brillante

Front Gambrel Colonial Houses (13 examples, 1912 – 1929)

Also known as Dutch Colonial, these houses appeared in many parts of St. Louis in the years between 1910 and 1915 and sparsely during other years of the 20th century. Twelve of the 13 examples in the survey area date from 1912-1913. Per the City's Preservation Plan:

A vernacular variant to the Colonial Revival style is the Front Gambrel Colonial, a one and a half story house.... Generally these houses had a two-bay front facade, small front porch and decorative details taken from the Colonial Revival style. The height of the gambrel roof provided nearly a full second floor.



4318 Cote Brillante

Bungalow/Bungaloid Houses (12 examples, 1924 – 1950)

In the Ville, this designation applies to a one or one and a half story house with a composite plan and a full-width porch, and usually a medium or low-pitched roof with or without dormers. 11 of the 12 examples in the survey area date from 1924-1930. According to the City's Preservation Plan,

Bungalows are always one-story in height, with two broad front facing gables, that of the house behind and slightly to the side of the porch. Houses could be frame or masonry; the porch often had tapered posts. Most bungalows expressed Arts and Crafts detailing, with elaborate door and window trim....The Bungaloid house type is a

generic term applied to a variety of house forms which exhibit Bungalow elements without possessing the true double front gable.



4247 W. Cote Brillante

Flounder House (1 example, 1884)

The dominant characteristic of the flounder house is its roofline, which appears to the street elevation as a half-gable or, less frequently a half-hip or even half-gambrel. The City's Preservation describes other common characteristics of this truly vernacular phenomenon:

The flounder is a narrow house, usually two or two and a half stories tall, and one or two bays wide. Entry was most often from the side elevation, which sometimes had a two-story gallery. Since these houses were exclusively working class homes, decoration was limited, confined to segmental arched windows and perhaps a corbelled cornice. Flounder houses were especially appropriate for dense neighborhoods, where space was at a premium....



4229 W. North Market

Back to Back House (1 example, c. 1880)

Although this type (usually side-gabled) may only be one room wide, the city's preservation plan describes it as being distinct from the shotgun type:

A common house type in urban areas of St. Louis from 1830 through 1870 is the back-to-back house. These houses are comprised of two rooms aligned one behind the other. The front entry opens into the first room, which usually leads directly into the second, although there may be a narrow side passage. These houses ordinarily have a gable roof, with the entry at one end of the front facade, balanced by one or two windows.



1904 Whittier Street

Multi-family residential property types

2-Family Flat (1882- 1935)
4-Family and 6-Family Flat (c. 1880 – c. 1930)
Duplex (Double House) (1885 – 1963)
Walk-Up (1914-1926)

Two-family Flat (66 examples, 1882- 1935)

This property type is the same as that defined in the City' Preservation Plan, as follows:

A popular house type during the late 19th and early 20th century was the two-family flat. A flat is defined as a residential building with more than one dwelling unit, each having a separate individual entry. In most buildings, a door on the front facade opens directly into the first floor apartment, while a separate door on the same facade accesses the upper floor unit by an interior stair.

Within the survey area, there are examples with a single bay open porch or recessed porch, most common during the late 19th century into the first decades of the 20th, as well as those with a full-width front porch, more common in the teens and 1920s.



1715 Annie Malone Dr.



4321 St. Ferdinand

Four-Family Flat and Six-Family Flat (9 examples c. 1890 – c. 1930)

Multi-family flats may exhibit Craftsman and Tudor characteristics, or may be simple front parapet buildings with minimal ornamentation.



4277 Dr. Martin Luther King Dr.

Walk-Ups (4 examples, 1914 – 1926)

Walk-up apartment buildings were common in St. Louis during the first decades of the twentieth century. In most parts of the city, walk-ups are no more than two stories in height. Four-family examples are typically symmetrical buildings, three bays wide with an entrance at grade and a stair window between stories above the entrance.



4216 Cote Brillante

Duplex (Double House) (3 examples, 1885 – 1963)

Only three double houses were surveyed; 4233 Aldine, pictured below, dates from 1885. The other two examples date from the 1960s. Duplexes can share the characteristics of other styles and types; their major defining characteristic is the presence of two dwelling units on the same story.



4233 Aldine

Commercial property types

One-Part Commercial Block (5 examples, c. 1870 – c. 1930)

For the purposes of this survey, this property type refers to a single story commercial building. It is not uncommon for storefronts to have been modernized. In most cases, integrity is maintained by the retention of original form, exterior materials, and detailing.



4229 Dr. Martin Luther King Drive

Two-Part Commercial Block (26 examples, c. 1880 – c. 1941)

For the purposes of this survey, this property type refers to a building with commercial uses on the first story below one or two floors of office or residential units.



4208 Dr. Martin Luther King Drive

Architectural styles

The following National Register styles are represented in the survey. Notes are only given where the use of the term in this survey might diverge from the commonly accepted usage.

Late Victorian: this style category is used when a building has a form which relates it to any of the major movements of the nineteenth century (specifically those listed below and the Queen Anne), but the house lacks enough characteristics to assign it to a particular style. For example, in the Ville, two-story houses with the narrow form and tall windows of the vernacular Italianate are common, but lack the distinctive detailing required to consider them "Italianate." In such cases, the broader National Register style designation is used.

- Italianate
- Romanesque
- Second Empire

Late 19th & 20th c. Revivals

- Classical Revival
- Colonial Revival
- Tudor Revival

Late 19th/Early 20th c. American Movements: In St. Louis, there is a vast body of architecture that exists outside of any one style as defined in most national style guides. In some neighborhoods, one and two story brick buildings with stepped or otherwise shaped front parapet walls are the dominant building form. Specific architectural details can be related to various revival styles, but these simple buildings are not part of any one revival. In fact, the range of classical, romantic, and Craftsman detailing is virtually interchangeable in many such buildings. Their commonalities in the use of materials, scale, and front parapet point to what may be a unique regional house type that is home-grown by local builders and minor architects. Such houses are considered under the National Register style umbrella of "Late 19th/Early 20th Century American Movements," although the movement (in this case) is not yet well researched or understood.

- Bungalow/Craftsman

Modern Movements

- Art Deco

Recommendations

Multiple Property contexts and registration form

In order to list all of the deserving properties in the Ville, additional context statements should be added to the original Multiple Property form.

The third context statement which was prepared by CRO staff should be pursued, along with related changes to property types, and registration requirements. This is necessary to allow listing of African-American residences in addition to the institutions already listed.

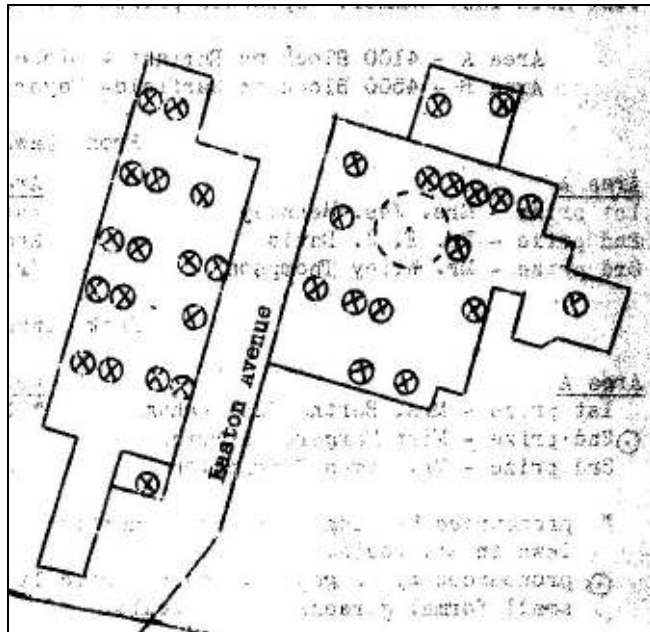
An additional statement should explore the evolution of housing options in the Ville. In some cases, specific property types and styles are part of the story of demographic change. For example, early buildings which survived tend to be modest and suitable for an incoming population of middle and lower income families. As the African-American population increased, squeezed into the Ville by real estate practices, new construction reflected the increased density. After about 1925, most new residential buildings in the Ville were constructed as multi-family dwellings. Under this context statement, intact example of styles, vernacular types, and methods of construction that were typical of the early African-American neighborhood could be listed.

An additional context statement should explore the evolution of commerce in this African-American neighborhood. Part of the story of the Ville is the development of centers of African-American commerce, and the persistence of white-owned businesses in what was otherwise a black neighborhood. (An alternate approach to this issue would be the development of a citywide context for early African-American business ownership in a separate MPDF.)

Additional Research

Many blocks in the Ville were early members of the Federation of Block Units, an early project of the Urban League of St Louis. While the first block units were formed south of the Ville, within a few years, about half of the block units in the city were in the greater Ville. Creation of a block unit

signified a certain level of stability in a neighborhood, with a group of owners or occupants who were willing to invest time in communication, activism and maintenance. Therefore, further evidence of significance for many of the individual blocks is likely to be found in the archives of the St. Louis Urban League at Washington University.



Detail of Block Unit map from the 1935 annual report of the Urban League of St. Louis (p. 7). Outlined areas are those where "Negros represent 75% to 100% of population." Grand Boulevard is shown at lower left (north is to the right). While a much larger geographical area was outlined east of Grand, only one of the 35 Block Units was found there. Of the remaining 34, 17 were north of Easton (now Dr. Martin Luther King Drive) and 17 were south.

Further research could also identify more significant people and the resources associated with them.

Recommended listings

The following nominations have been prepared by the Cultural Resources Office. The single site nominations should be pursued unless the resources are included in a new historic district.

- Davis, Julia House (4246 West North Market)
- Clark, Peter Humphrey House (1907 Annie Malone Dr.)
- Bush, James T. House (4243 West Cote Brillante)
- Easton Commercial District

The following school and churches are believed to be eligible as single sites under the existing MPDF. These nominations should be considered unless the resources are to be included in a new historic district.

- Riddick Branch School, 4146 Garfield, 1953.
- 1726 Annie Malone, c. 1890
- 4249 W. Garfield, 1885
- 1900 Whittier, 1946
- 4301 St. Ferdinand, 1951
- 4370 North Market, 1950

While concentrations of intact resources in the Ville are obvious, it is less obvious how far to take their boundaries to create historic districts. The attached map offers a foundation for discussion of potentially eligible districts and resources. The map does not include the boundaries of the proposed Easton district, which was submitted in 2006. It also does not include buildings which may be individually eligible under a context statement which would allow the individual registration of intact and representative examples of housing types.

The map includes two large districts and also shows the boundaries of the most important core areas of buildings within these districts. At the northern end of Belle Glade at the right side of the map, these resources may be most appropriate for inclusion in a larger district that would include resources north of Kennerly. (This area, which is more intact than the surveyed area, has not been surveyed.)

For the suggested districts, the period of significance could begin with the date of the earliest identified African American occupancy in the district. A reasonable end date would be 1955, the year that the St. Louis Public Schools were formally desegregated.

For the purposes of a multiple property approach with only an Ethnic Heritage area of significance, it may be possible to streamline the property type requirements. Given that every church, recreation center, and school fall under the same property type, a parallel approach to housing should be investigated. Instead of splitting the residential resources into vernacular type and style, it could be more enlightening to use categories based on period and density. In this approach, the property types would be broken down into multi-family units, two-family units, and single dwellings; single dwellings could be further broken down into those built for African American owner-occupants and those which were not. This type of data would not be particularly difficult to acquire, and would provide a fuller picture of how the African-American community took what was already built and added to it to create a unique community.

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