



*The Landscape Impact of the  
West Seventh Federation:  
A Neighborhood Tour*

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Published by the West 7<sup>th</sup>/ Fort Road Federation (2016)

# TOUR MAP



GABRIELLE ANDERSON | APRIL 12, 2016 | SOURCES: RAMSEY COUNTY, NAVTEQ, US CENSUS BUREAU

In 1973, a dozen community members banded together and with a \$5,000 start-up grant from the Christian Sharing Fund created the West 7th/Fort Road Federation. The organization operates on the principle that citizens acting together can maintain and improve the quality of life in their neighborhoods and help commercial endeavors prosper once again.

This tour will take you through a little-known but fascinating part of Saint Paul, the residential district that borders West Seventh Street to examine the accomplishments of the West Seventh Federation and to sample a very historic set of neighborhoods.

Already settled in the 1840s when it was called Upper Town (after the upper levee), the neighborhood included elegant mansions around Irvine Park and working class housing on the street to the west. Left practically undisturbed by later nineteenth-century urban renewal, the neighborhood has been cared for by four generations of residents. Beginning in the 1970s the West Seventh Federation, a resident's organization, has steadfastly worked

to create a neighborhood that functions. This tour will illustrate the results of the Federation's efforts in the built environment. The narrative will present a brief overview of the conflicts and compromises that produced the present cityscape. Although this tour features the work of the Federation, many other individuals and organizations played important roles. These actions will be described but we will not present a comprehensive history of the neighborhoods.

West Seventh is a very diverse area. Its buildings include some of the oldest in the city as well as some of the newest. Once an important industrial district and transportation hub, it is now largely residential and commercial. Its population has declined from the early twentieth century but remains home to a mixture of middle and working class households.

***The tour begins at the Schmidt Brewery near the corner of West 7<sup>th</sup> and Jefferson.***

The intersections of West Seventh, Oneida, and Jefferson

streets is where the modern golden arches of McDonald's contrast with the nineteenth-century industrial landscape of the Schmidt Brewery. However, even the McDonald's restaurant shows a sense of place by exhibiting old photographs of the neighborhood on its walls while affording a very nice view of the old brewery.



Figure 1: Schmidt Brewery, 2015

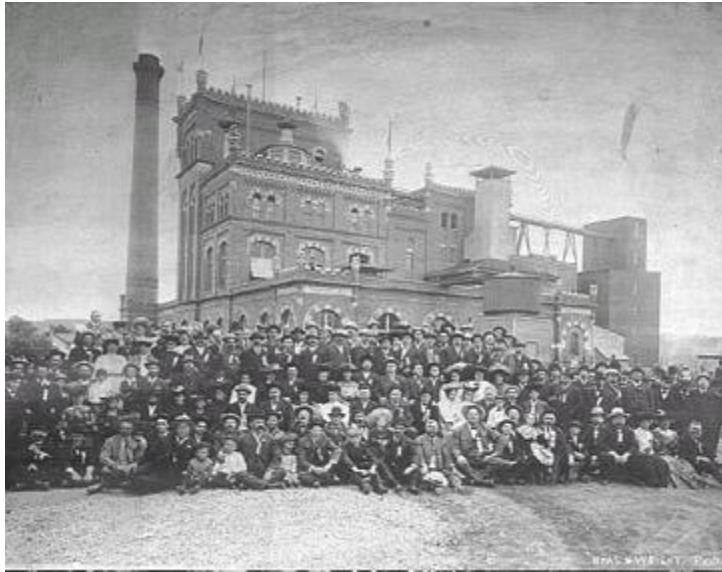


Figure 1: Schmidt Brewery, circa 1920

***Proceed southwest on West 7<sup>th</sup> to West Palace.***

On the west side of the street across from the brewery complex there are two large and impressive houses built about 1880; the larger of them, the stone house at 855, is now called the Marie Schmidt Bremer house. Both it and its next-door neighbor were built in the Italianate style by the Stahlmann family, the first owners of the Schmidt Brewery across the street. Italianate houses were characterized

by round-headed windows, a low-pitched roof often topped by a cupola, and eaves decorated by brackets. The brewery owner lived in close proximity to his establishment, possibly because the work required close and constant supervision. The houses contrast markedly with humbler cottages of the artisans who worked in the brewery and drank the beer. At the intersection of West Seventh and Webster

Street, you can see one of the old 1880s brewery warehouses on the left side of the street. The roughly coursed stone is limestone from the local riverbank quarry.

***At the intersection of West 7<sup>th</sup> and Palace turn left and enter the brewery complex.***

In 1855 Christopher Stahlmann moved to St. Paul, Minnesota and opened the largest brewery in Minnesota, originally known as the Cave Brewery. In 1900 Jacob

Schmidt, a Bavarian-born brewer, purchased the bankrupt Stahlmann's Brewer, and relocated his operations from St. Paul's east side to this site. He hired the architect Bernal Barthel to design the expansion and add the castle-like façade. Upon his death the brewery was transferred to his partners Otto and Adolf Bremer. Under their guidance the brewery developed a strong regional market. It claimed to be the seventh largest brewery in the United States. The brewing industry underwent a period of large-scale consolidation in the last half of the twentieth century. Between 1972 and 1987 it was owned by the Heileman Company of LaCrosse, which closed the operations and put the buildings up for sale. The firm advertised for bids to demolish the structures and make way for low-density commercial use, while rejecting an offer to buy the complex and make another brand of beer, despite the Federation working with the city government's attempts to convince Heileman to accept the offer. One of their tactics was to prepare an extensive document showing how much it would cost to mitigate the environmental impacts of demolishing. Members of the City

government and the Federation drove to La Crosse with the intention of seeking an appointment with top management and convincing them to sell. While en route they received word that the bargain had been made, so they happily returned to St. Paul. In 1991 it was owned by Midwest Brewing Company, which launched two new beers, Landmark and Pig's Eye Pilsner, and an updated version of Grain Belt. The new company did not need all the buildings and with the Federation explored the possibility of finding a new use for the former warehouse and delivery building located across West Seventh from the main buildings. In 1992 The Federation discussed a wide range of ideas for the structures, including a museum on the history of brewing in Minnesota, a restaurant, an exhibition center and a business incubator. However, they were not able to implement their ideas since Midwest Brewing experienced a brief but fruitful period of success. Unable to compete against large national brands, the company transformed into the Gopher State Ethanol Company in 2001. The process of making ethanol produced a strong

and very objectionable odor which resulted in many complaints and lawsuits from the surrounding neighborhood. With the lawsuits and substantial annual losses, the bankrupt ethanol plant was forced to close in 2004.

During the foreclosure auction the Federation worked with a developer named George Sherman and the city made an offer to buy the land. However, because the land was not owned by the brewery company, the owners rejected their offer of \$4,000,000.

Two investors from the Twin Cities, Bruce Hendry and Glen D. Nelson, owned the property but did not intend to develop it themselves. They did, however, negotiate a purchase agreement with the Cohen family from New Jersey. The Federation formed a partnership with the Cohens and submitted a variety of studies to determine the cost of cleaning and repairing the buildings. In addition, they began to prepare a master plan. Although the Cohens paid to extend the purchase agreement, they were unable to arrange the financing necessary to purchase and develop the property. In 2008 the Federation proposed

that the city buy the property and commission the Cohen/Federation partnership. The city declined the offer, but the Federation did not relinquish the dream and kept making offers to the owners. As an intermediate step, the Federation got a STAR grant from the city to reopen the water well building. The facility enabled people to buy water from the deep wells for a modest fee. The Federation's grant provided the financing and it received a share of the sales.

The Federation continued to press forward the dream of redeveloping the buildings. The leadership encouraged the Dominion Corporation, an award winning developer and manager of residential real estate, to consider the potential of the Brewery. The corporation was convinced and the two groups worked on a plan to split the property. The Federation closed in April of 2011 and Dominion closed on its section in December of 2012. Dominion received the old Schmidt bottling house, the grain silos, and the brew house – commonly known as “the castle,” a set of newer buildings, as well as eight of the 15 acres making up the complex. The

federation received a \$2 million interest free loan from the city to purchase and repurpose the administration building and the keg house. Both buildings were built after the repeal of prohibition in the 1930s. Because Dominion's closing was delayed so long, the Federation could not go forward and incurred costs of holding the property. With permission from the City, the Federation sold the keg house to Jeff Cohen. The project has proven to be more expensive than original estimates and therefore tax increment financing has been awarded to the project. In addition to office space, the Administration building includes a large Rathskeller which will be restored to a location for community events. However, the Federation will not restore the taps that poured free Schmidt Beer to those using the space for meetings and other events. The Federation will relocate its offices and conference room to the restored office space seeking a tenant.

Dominium's \$123 million development plan called for 147 rental units in the brew house and another 100 rental units in the bottle

house. All of the units are reserved for low-income artists. A wide range of artists are eligible for the units, and a selection committee, made up of artists, reviews each rental application. In addition, Dominion built 13 new three-bedroom townhouses adjacent to the bottle house. The corporation used a variety of funding sources to create a workable community. The Saint Paul City Council authorized \$69.3 million in tax-exempt bonds for the Schmidt Artist Lofts project which Dominion will have to repay. The city, county, and state together contributed about \$4 million to cover the costs of cleaning the site. In addition, Dominion received about \$70 million affordable-housing tax credits and state and federal historical tax credits for the restoration of a historical building. The age and design of the buildings provided a set of challenges for the architects. The results are an impressive set of living spaces with massive windows, soaring ceilings and unusual floor plans. The historic preservation of the original Schmidt Brewery was crucial in the renovation process. The brewery has been noted by

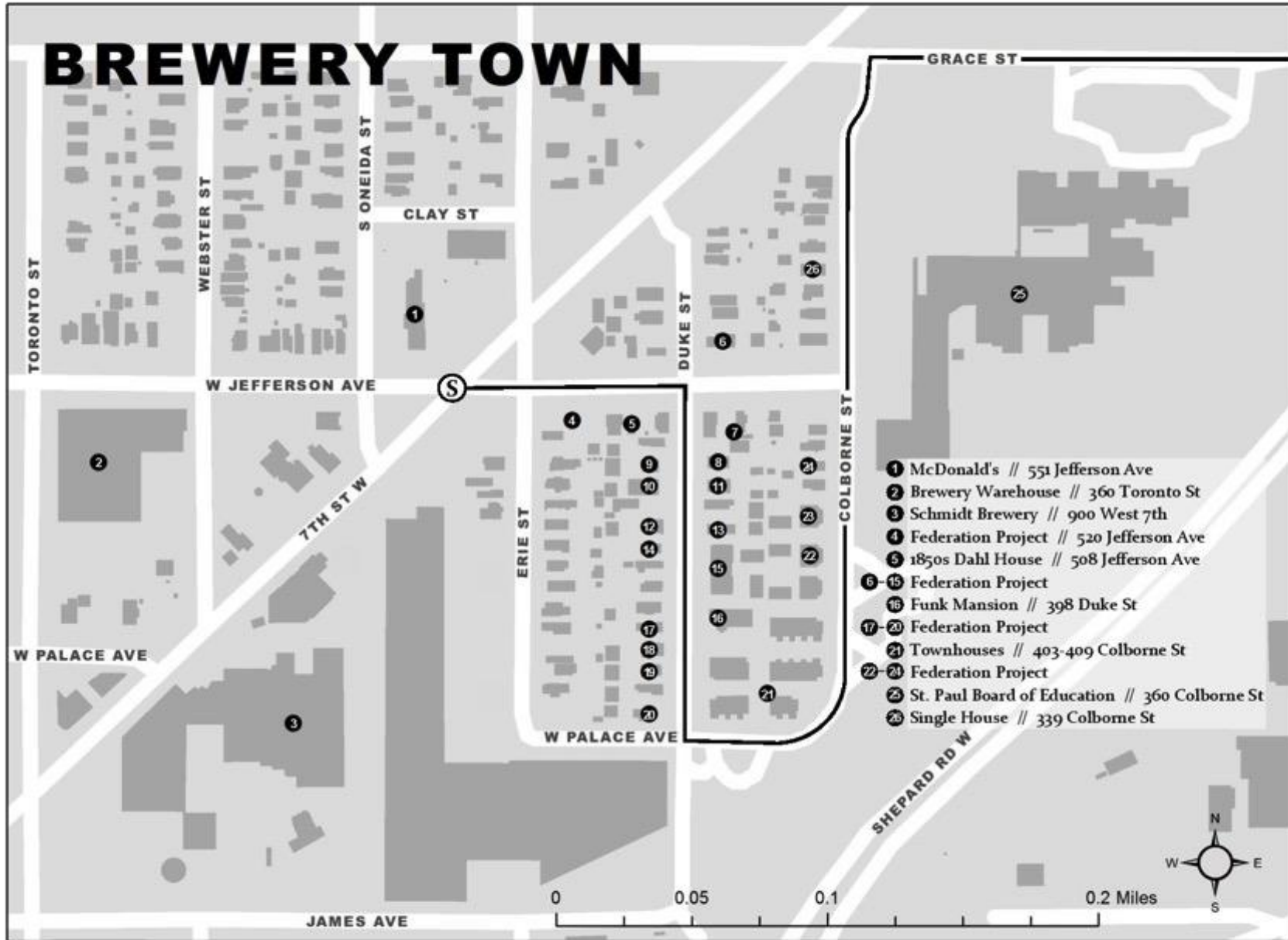
architectural historians for its crenellated towers and gothic designs, both of which are still intact today.

***Return to West 7th. Turn right on West 7<sup>th</sup> and go one long block to Jefferson. Go right on Jefferson to Duke Street.***

## **Entering the Brewery Town Neighborhood**

### **Overview**

Brewery Town, a small neighborhood adjacent to the Schmidt Brewery, experienced almost a complete cycle of construction, disinvestment, decay, blight, reinvestment, rehabilitation and new construction. The later phases were the result of complicated political and economic processes that eventually resulted in the Federation developing a new community. In 2007 the 1000 Friends of Minnesota awarded the Federation a Smart Growth Award for creating the new neighborhood. Originally developed as a neighborhood for the families of workers at the brewery or other



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nearby industries, it consisted of a mixture of very small to modest sized single-family housing and duplexes. In contrast, there was one grand mansion and lawn built by Funk, one of the brewery executives. The population was of mixed ethnicity but families of German descent were in the majority. In 1887 the first City and County Hospital was built here. Named Ancker Hospital in the 1920s, it was continually enlarged and modernized until 1965 when it was replaced by an entirely new complex on the northeast side of the Central Business District. The vacated site was sold to the St. Paul School District for its administrative center.

Through the first half of the twentieth century the neighborhood had all the features of St. Paul's working class neighborhoods; large families in small houses, nearby commercial establishments, easy access to mass transit, and pollution caused by coal fired furnaces and industrial power plants. As suburbanization and changes in employment patterns occurred in the last half of the twentieth century, the neighborhood experienced disinvestment. When Ancker Hospital was demolished some local

residents wanted new housing built on the site. However, the City sold it to the School District for a new administration building. Eventually the neighborhood was dominated by absentee landlords.

A change in Minnesota's policies toward large state-run hospitals for the mentally ill had a dramatic impact on Brewery Town. The policy change involved closing down the large hospitals and transferring patients to community treatment facilities. The facilities were expected to be group homes integrated in a variety of neighborhoods where a small number of patients could receive more personalized treatment surrounded by a supportive community. Entrepreneurs wishing to create these facilities focused on purchasing large and/or inexpensive properties in older neighborhoods. As a result, in a short time many inner city neighborhoods experienced a high concentration of group homes. Most neighborhoods did not welcome group homes of any sort. Eventually the City passed a zoning ordinance requiring group homes to be spaced a minimum distance apart.

The Brewery Neighborhood was an exception because one corporation, Hillman Homes Incorporated, began buying houses in 1970 and eventually owned about one third of the houses in the neighborhood, which were then transformed to a set of group homes. In the view of some local residents this former working class neighborhood had been turned into a "mental health ghetto." The presence of the large number of group homes depressed the housing market and resulted in widespread disinvestment. Like other neighborhoods with high concentrations of group homes, local residents sought some form of relief from the State Legislature and the mental health administration. Their efforts to inform political and medical leaders had very limited impact. Hillman Homes was providing facilities needed by the mentally ill population all across the state. There was a critical difference between the operations of Hillman Homes and other residential treatment facilities. Although there were about twenty-five homes in the Hillman Homes system, there was only one kitchen and dining facility.



All the other houses had been turned into the equivalent of dormitories. This arrangement was clearly not what the lawmakers envisioned. Finally, in 1981 when investigative reporters from WCCO TV released a scathing report on the operations, the political community responded. After more testimony and negotiation, Hillman Homes exited the mental health business, but maintained ownership of the houses. The buildings were then leased to FAMILYSTYLE HOMES, which took over the health operations of Hillman Homes. The new corporation was led by psychologist named James Janecek who managed both the corporation and the treatment of the patients. FAMILYSTYLE did not de-concentrate its clients, however, and the community continued to report problems. Finally, in 1996 as a result of continued communications with the Federation, the Ramsey County Board, led by Commissioner Raphael Ortega, concluded that FAMILYSTYLE HOMES was a "mini-institution." Ortega said, "It seems a contradiction to downsize state institutions and then allow institutions to happen on the private

side." Following state policies that called for the de-institutionalization of mentally ill, the Board voted unanimously to cease funding of patients in FAMILYSTYLE HOMES. By July 1997, the 152 patients were to be transferred to other facilities where it was believed better services would be provided. Because the county support was the only income of FAMILYSTYLE HOMES, the firm went bankrupt and returned the houses to Hillman.

The collapse of FAMILYSTYLE HOMES Inc. provided an extraordinary opportunity for the Federation. In July of 1997 the Federation applied to the Neighborhood Sales Tax Revitalization Program of the St. Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development for a capital grant of \$200,000 and a loan of \$200,000 to fund the "Brewery Breakthrough" Project. The project's goal was to demonstrate the potential of an inner city neighborhood to offer new urban living options with a range of affordable housing by carrying out highly targeted but comprehensive redevelopment of a three-block area. The Federation was careful to ensure

that their ideas were in full conformance with the Randolph/Brewery Small Area Plan that was approved by the community in 1995. The three-year plan was based on the acquisition of twenty-five houses from Hillman Homes. Once that was accomplished the Federation proceeded to acquire, rehabilitate, and sell a total of thirty houses, as well as to construct and market twenty-two new residential townhouses. In addition, twelve structures too dilapidated to be restored were to be demolished. The result would be an increase in the level of home ownership up to fifty-five percent and an increase to tax base of the area of one hundred percent. By this time the Federation had extensive experience in developing residential properties and was able to develop successful partnerships with a variety of organizations. Therefore the Brewery Breakthrough project was the result of experience and a dash of enthusiasm.

The project's costs totaled \$12,473,080 - significantly more than the STAR funds. The additional funds came from a Minnesota Housing Finance Agency grant of \$300,000,

Metro Council's Livable Cities program grant of \$700,000, PED Housing to Homes project grant of \$900,000, PED's New Construction grant of \$880,000 a loan from Western State Bank for \$5,460,000, and \$100,000 in equity. Because the neighborhood contained a mixture of house types the renovation process responded to several different contexts. Historic preservation was one of the goals of the program.

The new and rehabbed houses, street and alley improvements, and increased public park space resulted in a new cityscape that made possible major demographic changes and changed the image of the Brewery Neighborhood. New arrivals and long-term residents alike express pride in the neighborhood. The actual financial impact of the development is difficult to measure. We have no way to measure the increase in income and sales taxes paid by the new residents. Nor are we able to approximate the amount they contribute the local economy. It must have been a considerable increase over the previous population, which contained a large number of wards of

the state with little to no purchasing power. Although it requires complicated calculations, it is possible to determine the increase in property taxes that resulted from the development. A study conducted in 2007 documented a change in the total of annual real-estate taxes from \$24,175 in 1997 to \$109,679 in 2007, an increase of \$85,000 per year. Therefore, if we ignore future tax increases, the public investment of \$2,787,000 will be balanced out in approximately thirty-three years.

### **Beginning tour on Jefferson**

**520 Jefferson:** House rehabilitated by Federation.

**508 Jefferson: The Dahl House**  
Developers elsewhere in the city provided a very rare opportunity to move a historic structure into the development. In 1858 William and Catherine Dahl built a small home at 139 13<sup>th</sup> Street, a site that is now part of the State Capitol Complex. In 1997 the State determined to build a new building for the Department of Revenue in a location that included the Dahl House. Historians lobbied the State to preserve the building as

part of the new complex but their pleas were disregarded. Instead, the State Department of Administration agreed to move the house to its current location at 508 Jefferson and the Federation had it restored to its 1850 configuration.



**Figure 3: Relocated Dahl House**

**496 Jefferson:** House rehabilitated by Federation.



**Figure 4: 496 Jefferson**

**Turn right on Duke Street and proceed on Duke to Palace. The route will take you by several Federation projects.**

The following houses on Duke were all rehabilitated by either the Federation (F) or Habitat for Humanity (HH).

**354 (F)**

**368 (HH)**

**370 (HH)**

**382 (moved to site by F)**

**386 (Townhouse rehabbed by F)**

**398 (F)**

**367 (moved to site by F and given to HH)**

**369 (HH)**

**377 (moved to site by F)**

**385 (F)**

**403 (F)**

**407 (F)**

**417 (F)**

The very large Funk Mansion posed a special problem for the Federation. FAMILYSTYLE HOMES used it as the corporation's kitchen and dining hall. Because it is significantly larger than surrounding



**Figure 5: 386 Duke Street Townhouses**

houses it did not seem feasible to return it a single-family residence. Therefore, it was converted to three condominiums, one on each floor.



**Figure 6: 398 Duke, Funk Mansion**

**Turn left on Palace and go one short block to Colborne Street South. Turn left on Colborne and go two long blocks on Grace Street.**

**403 and 409 Colborne: River Heights Townhouses**



**Figure 7: River Heights Townhouses**

These twenty-two new townhouses were built by a partnership between the Federation and Brighton Development Corporation on land cleared by the Federation. The park across the street was also built on land cleared by the Federation and is now maintained by the townhouse association.



Figure 8: River Heights Townhouses



Figure 9: River Heights Townhouses

### 360 Colborne

This large complex is the headquarters of the Saint Paul Board of Education. It is the former site of the old city and county hospital, later called Ancker Hospital.



Figure 10: Historic Ancker Hospital

On the left side of Colborne Street there are a number of older small houses that are representative of industrial workers' houses built a century ago.

### 339 Colborne

This house once served as home economic laboratory for the School District.

***Turn right on Grace Street and continue east, even though it appears that the road is going to end.***

Looking left across the tracks again, you will see an add-on house,

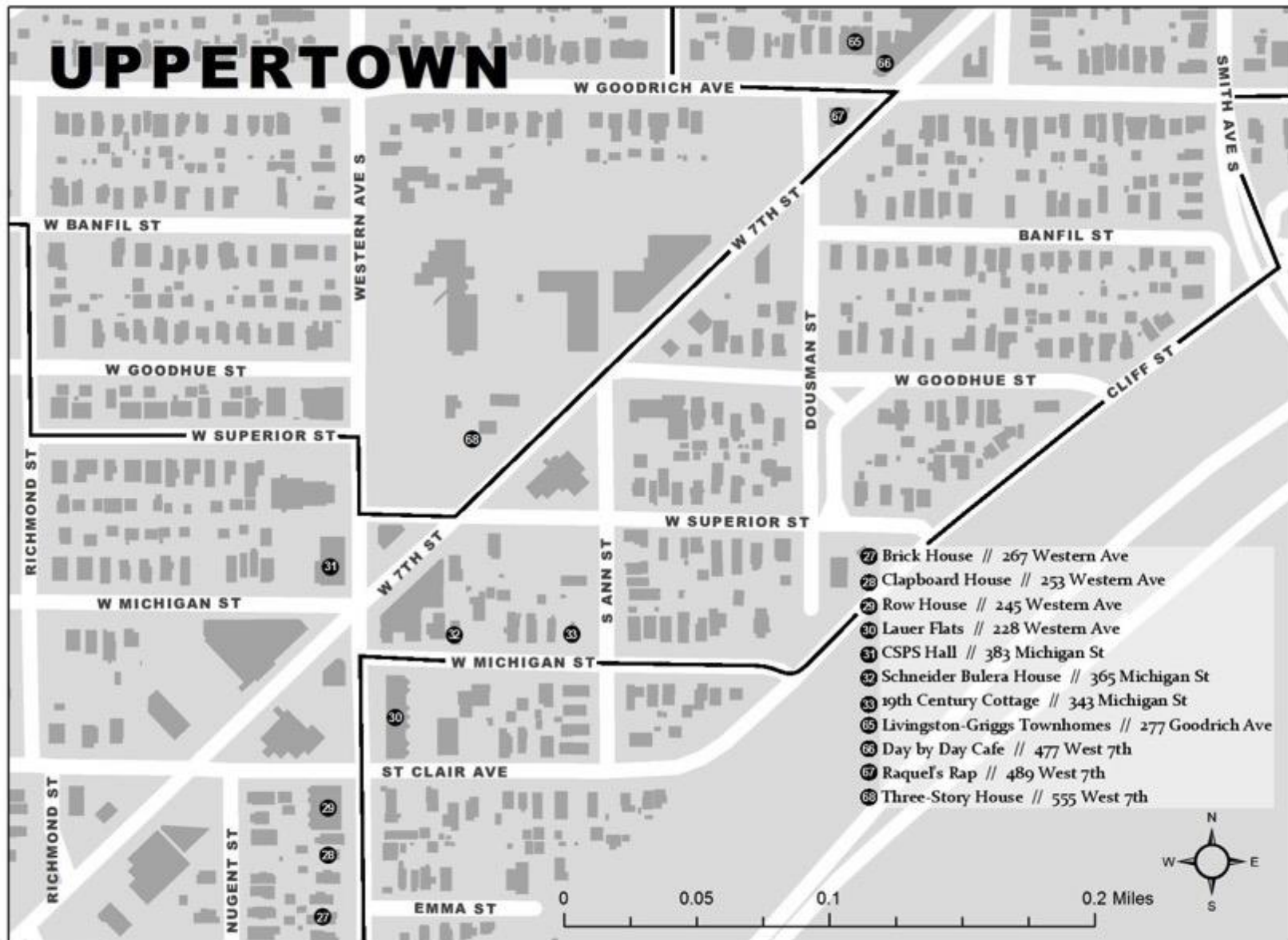
at 284 Nugent Street, built originally in 1889 for \$1100 and added to at least in 1891 and 1901.

***Turn left on Western (you have no other choice) and proceed three blocks to the intersection of Western Michigan and West 7th. This area is known as Uppertown.***

As you ride along Western Avenue, note how re-siding has altered the appearance of some houses, as well as the simple unspoiled beauty of **253 Western**, which is still clad in its original clapboard.



Figure 11: 253 Western



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There is also a nice example of worker brick cottage at **267 Western**.

As you approach Saint Clair Avenue, you will notice an 1889 set of row houses on the left at **229-245 Western** and another larger group on the right, north of Saint Clair at **228 Western**. These latter row houses are called the Lauer Flats, named after their earliest owners, the stonemason brothers Henry and Charles Lauer.



Figure 12: Lauer Flats

As artisans, the Lauer brothers worked on such landmarks sites as the Schmidt Brewery, Saint Clement's Church, and Saint Agnes' Church. The best example of the nineteenth-century stonemasons' skill is their own building. Built in two stages, the

Lauer Flats were completed in 1887. The stone is Kasota dolostone, good weathering sandstone from the Mankato area, and the cornice is made of galvanized iron. The entry steps lead directly down to the sidewalk, a style of construction not often found in St. Paul, which gives the Lauer Flats the look of housing in Chicago or the East Coast. The St. Paul Housing and Redevelopment Authority had plans to turn this building into public housing apartments for low income households with families, however the Federation argued that this plan was not practical because the building has no yards. Children living there would have no choice but to play in the street. Mayor Latimer agreed with the community and the building was redeveloped for market rate housing. The building is now on National Register of Historic Places.

At the intersection of West Seventh, Western, and Michigan pause and look across West Seventh Street and examine **383 Michigan Street**, the CSPS Hall, home of the Czechoslovakian Protective Society, one of the oldest ethnic fraternal lodges in the United States, formed in 1876. Local membership was largely

drawn from the "free-thinking" faction of the Czechs, the more religious organizing their lives around the parish church of Saint Stanislaus, located just north of the CSPS Hall.

The first immigrants from the region of the Austro-Hungarian Empire named Bohemia arrived in St Paul just after Minnesota became a state. The population expanded, prospered, and established a strong local community along West Seventh. In 1887 Czech Lodge No. 12 of the Czesko-Slovansky Podporujici Spolek (CSPS), a fraternal lodge, began construction on their modestly impressive building on the corner of Michigan, Western and West Seventh Street. At that time there were about one hundred members of the lodge, and this location was the center of the Czech neighborhood. The building was designed by the architect Emil W. Ulrici and built by W. J Gronenwald for \$10,000. It is the longest serving Czech-Slovak cultural center in the United States, and oldest fitness center, theater, and immigrant national hall in the State of Minnesota.

The three story red brick building measures 50 x 100 feet. There is space for two commercial establishments on the first floor and originally one was occupied by Picha's Saloon. The second floor contains a large meeting room with a stage and kitchen. This space was also designed for the exercises of the Sokol, a gymnastics society. The third floor is smaller than the other two and is used for meetings. The basement walls are nine feet high and constructed of limestone blocks two feet thick. In 1917 the hall was remodeled by the architect Raymond Pavlecka and the entrance to the upper floors was moved to the center of the Michigan Avenue façade. Some windows were bricked in at that time. Over the years, the lodge rented the commercial space on the first floor to a variety of businesses. The long career of the Sokol gymnastics society, the language classes, dances and weddings, the famous visit of Anton Dvorak to the hall in 1893 have all contributed to the hall's history and important role in the city.

### **Restoration and Reuse**

However, in the mid-1970s the future of the hall was in question.

The membership of the CSPS was declining, the lodge's financial base was shrinking, the building was gradually deteriorating, and one of the stores on the first floor was vacant. In 1976 the St. Paul Housing and Redevelopment Authority with the support of its local advisory board developed a plan to demolish the building and nearby Country Club grocery store to make room for a strip mall. At the time, the President of the West Seventh Federation, Marlene Herold, proclaimed at a HRA meeting, "No one is going to tear down the CSPS! I will fight it." Having then committed the organization to opposing the HRA and its local advisory group and starting a dispute between two neighborhood groups, President Herold went on a two-week vacation to Alaska. Councilwoman Rosalie Butler and the HRA staff were very supportive of the plan to demolish the Hall and build the strip mall, and did not appreciate the Federation's moves to disrupt their plans. Eventually, the Federation, together with the members of the CSPS lodge led by Marven Heise, an employee of the Minnesota Historical Society who moved into a nearby house on

Michigan, successfully had the building listed on the National Register of Historic Places and designated for preservation by the St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission. After a study demonstrating the feasibility of restoring the building and providing an economic base was produced in October of 1977, the CSPS Lodge secured funding, hired an architect, restored the building, and secured new tenants for the ground floor. Since 2012, bringing a series of infrastructure projects into compliance with ADA standards, including asbestos removal, updating plumbing and heating systems, installing fire suppression sprinkling systems, and air conditioning have been undertaken. The building now serves a community that is widely spread throughout the area.

### ***Turn right on Michigan and go two blocks to Cliff Street.***

**365 W Michigan** is the Schneider Bulera House built in 1849.

**343 Michigan** is a fine example of a nineteenth-century brick cottage, a

virtually unspoiled example of the simplest conceivable single-family dwelling.



Figure 2: 343 Michigan

***Turn Left on Cliff and proceed to Smith. Park and walk over to the park on the north side of Smith.***

In 1973 the staff of the Housing Authority asked the Minnesota Highway Department to conduct a corridor study in anticipation of the greatly needed replacement of the High Bridge. The Highway department responded by saying

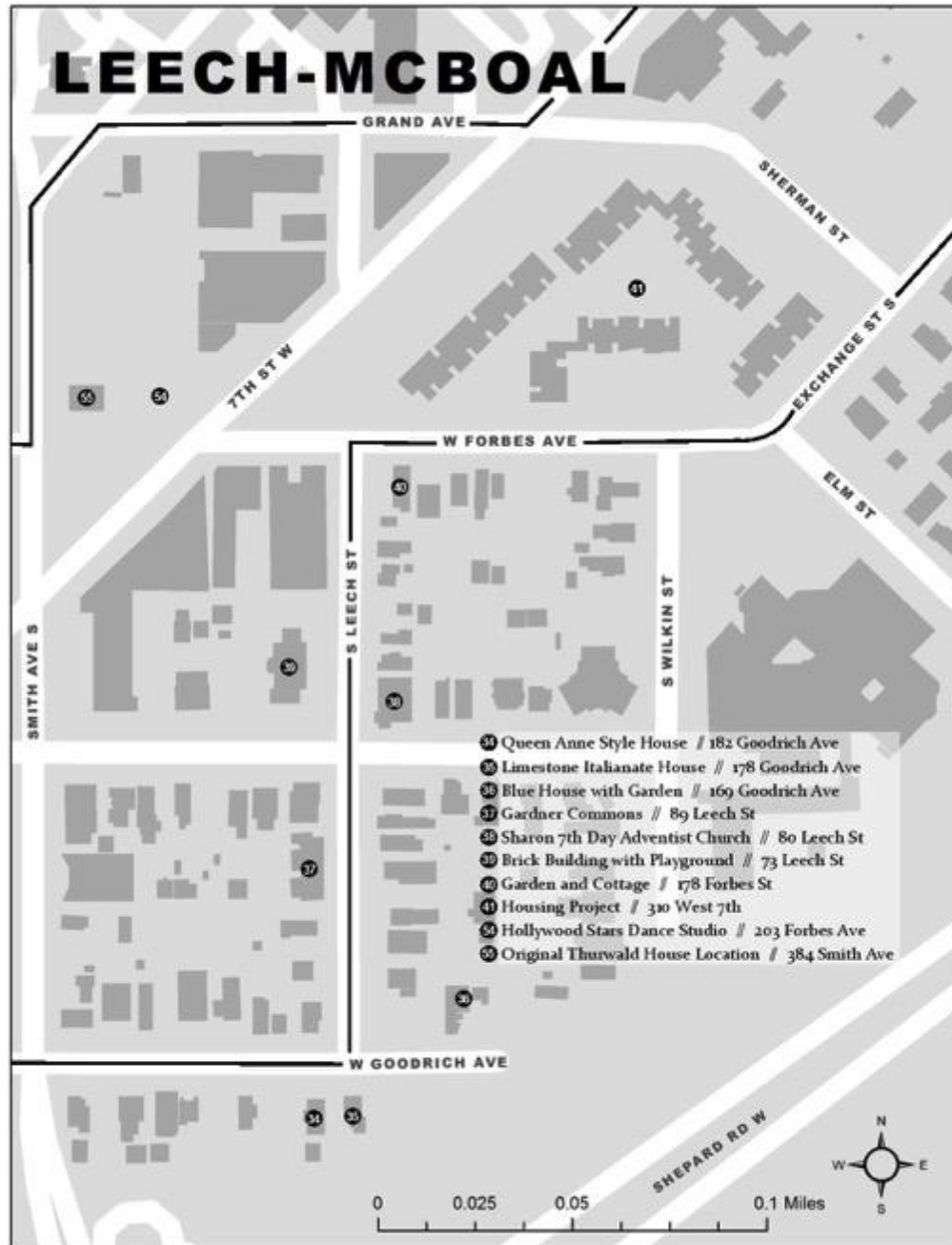
their budget would not permit a replacement of the bridge within the next decade. By the early 1980s the planning process to replace the bridge began and several alternatives for bridge style and realignment were put forth. One of the plans called for the realignment of the bridge so that its access would cut through the Leech-McBoal Neighborhood to the northwest of Smith. Because eighty percent of the costs of the new bridge would come from the Federal Government, the Federation secured the support of Representative Bruce Vento and Senators Durenberger and

Boschwitz when pressing their views that the new bridge should not destroy the neighborhood. In the end their efforts were successful.

In order to build the bridge three houses were acquired to provide a staging area for the contractors. When the construction was completed this area was converted to a park. However, there was considerable controversy over the park design and maintenance. Joe Landsberger, a neighbor of the park, had a vision for landscaping the park

with large blocks of limestone that were excavated as part of a sewer project in the area. Others in the community objected to the plans. In the end the Federation worked out a compromise and even secured a grant from the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council to hire the sculptor Zoran Mojsilov to create a stone sculpture titled *The Watcher (in the Park)* for the site in 1995. Mojsilov said he wanted it to be “a marker for the neighborhood, something people will see as strange or curious.” That sculpture was joined by the giant green chair which was donated by the Green Chair Project. It had previously been exhibited at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis.





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**Turn left on Smith and proceed one short block to Goodrich.**

**Turn right on Goodrich.**

When you reach the intersection of Goodrich and Smith, you may wish to make a short detour and you continue along Smith one half block where next to the alley at **445 Smith Avenue**, you will find the **Waldman House**, built before the outbreak of the Civil War, probably about 1860. In both material and style it represents the earliest conception of a dwelling house in pioneer Minnesota. Its owners are now planning to convert it into a traditional German lager tavern.

Return to Goodrich Avenue and continue one more block east **182 Goodrich** just before you get to the intersection with Leech Street is the attractive Queen Anne style house which was built in 1887 for \$4000. The Queen Anne style is characterized by a high-pitched, irregular roofline, often interrupted by dormers and turrets. The walls were also frequently varied with bays, balconies, porches and towers, and a variety of materials or textures were used in construction.

It has been a carefully restored with an interesting garden and small paddock for sheep.

**178 Goodrich:** A wonderful example of a limestone Italianate House.



Figure 3: 178 Goodrich

**Turn left on Leech.**

At the corner notice the interesting park-like lawn on the Southeast Corner.

On Leech Street you will see an 1891 set of row houses at **89-92 Leech**, which was restored in 1979. Originally built by Elizabeth Gardner for \$19,999 the building stood vacant, burned, and roofless for five years before it was purchased and lovingly restored. Before the fire it

housed ten families, two in each unit using a common bathroom and kitchen. The units were completely rebuilt with a new roof, windows, plumbing, central heat, and a new concrete slab was installed to cover the basement's dirt floor. It is now known as Gardner Commons in honor of the extraordinary woman who built it.

**80 Leech:** Sharon Seventh Day Adventist originally built by St Mark's Lutheran Church.



Figure 15: 80 Leech

**73 Leech**

This large brick building has housed a series of social service agencies. It was built by the Wilder Foundation to serve as a daycare

facility. Subsequently it served as a shelter for battered Native American women. There was a proposal to convert it to a home for “treatment-proof alcoholics.” However, the Federation in cooperation with other local organizations, including the Little Sisters of the Poor convinced the City to deny the developer’s request for a permit. It is once again shelter for women and children.

***Turn Right on Forbes.***

***Proceed one block to Exchange.***

At the corner of Forbes and Exchange streets, notice the beautiful garden attached to the cottage at **178 Forbes**; the Leech-McBoal housing complex is on the left. This is a privately owned low-income housing project. There is an extraordinary add-on house on the right side at the corner of Forbes, Wilkins and Exchange. The Little Sisters of the Poor maintain a large and well-designed home for the elderly that occupies an extensive site between Exchange and the bluff.

**306 Exchange:** Another good example of an add-on house.

**The Irvine Park Neighborhood**

Issues of land use and transportation in the area where Downtown transitions into the West Seventh neighborhood brought the Federation into conflicts with city government over how to best create livable communities. The first major confrontation resulted in the defeat of the HRA plans to clear and build low-income housing projects around the park. The second was the proposed new interchange at Shepard Road and Chestnut Street. The battle was part of an extensive effort to redevelop the downtown riverfront and to rebuild the Shepard Road link between the city center and the airport.

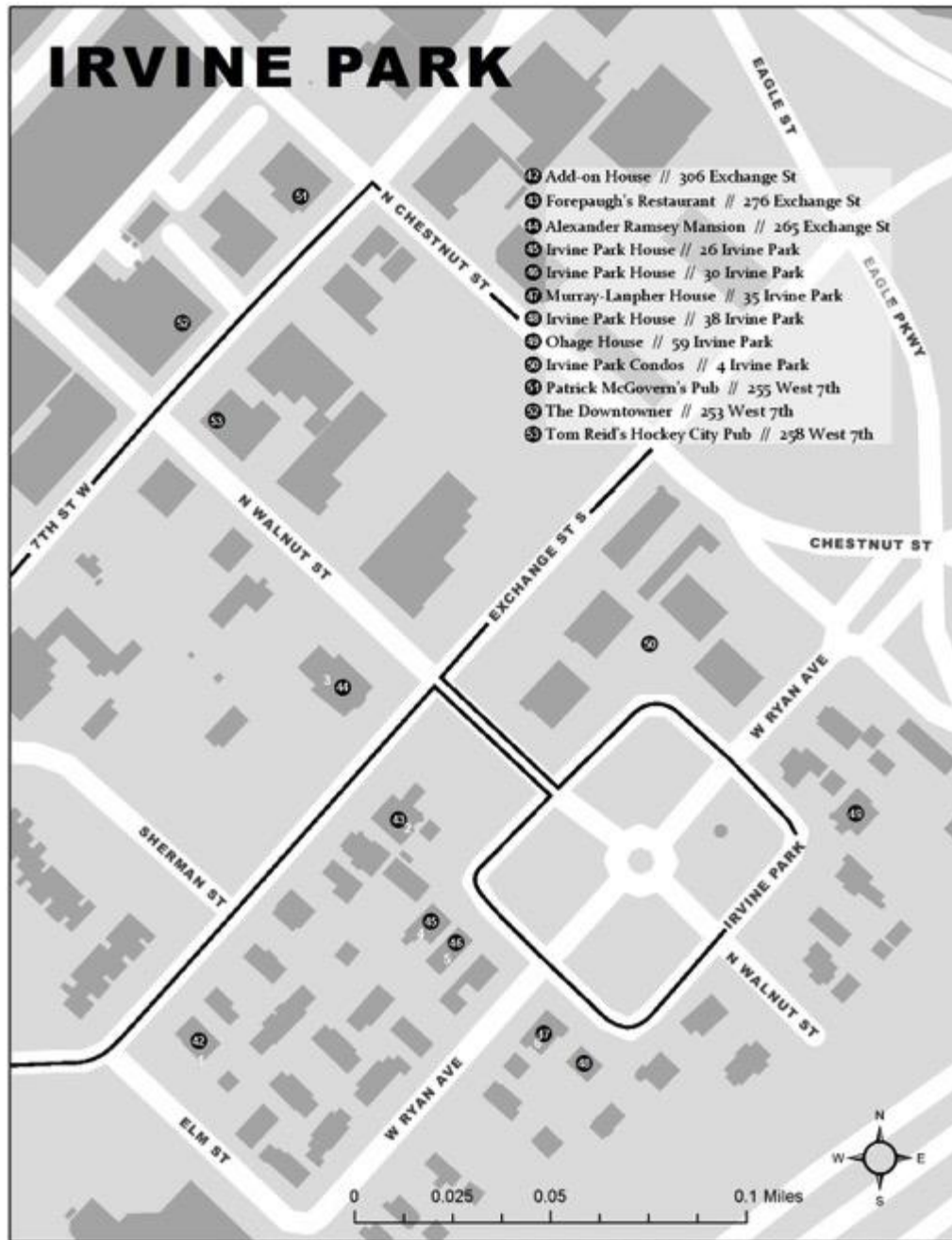
The tour route now crosses the border of the Irvine Park Historical District where Forbes Street veers left into Exchange. Irvine Park, the oldest surviving neighborhood in St. Paul, just managed to escape plans to be razed and cleared and is now on the National Registrar of Historic Places. In 1973 in the face of HRA’s continued program of eliminating low-income neighborhoods close to downtown, the Minnesota Historical Society, which owns the **Ramsey House** historic site located at **265**

**Exchange Street**, sent a nomination for the designation of Irvine Park as a Historic district.



**Figure 16: Ramsey House**

# IRVINE PARK



GABRIELLE ANDERSON | APRIL 12, 2016 | SOURCES: RAMSEY COUNTY, NAVTEQ, US CENSUS BUREAU

The result was the freezing of federal renewal funds earmarked for the redevelopment of the area until a redevelopment plan that protected the historic district could be worked out. In 1973 a Special Redevelopment Committee with representatives of the State Historical Society, Ramsey County Historical Society, the City Planning Department, and the West Seventh Fort Road Federation was created. The Federation replaced the old HRA Development Area Citizens Committee which had approved demolition of the area after two years of tempestuous meetings with the community. The HRA hammered out a plan that removed the roofing company that occupied part of the park frontage and the worst of the decaying tenements, allowed some new construction, while simultaneously preserving the historic character of the park and restoring many historic properties.

During the 1970s several million dollars in public and private investment began to transform Irvine Park from an eyesore into one of the most attractive sites in the city.

***Proceed on Exchange one long block to Walnut Street, turn right on Walnut, and go one block to Irvine Park. Turn right and proceed around the park and return to the intersection of Walnut and Exchange.***

Reflecting the building cycles of the city, the construction dates for houses in Irvine Park tend to cluster either around the decade before the Civil War or the decades of the 1870s and 1880s, with little building during the 1860s when war and business uncertainty slowed down investment.

The most important house in the district is the Alexander Ramsey mansion at **265 Exchange Street**. Owned, restored, and maintained by the Minnesota State Historical Society, the house is open to the public most days of the year. It is one of the finest house museums in the United States. Since the house was occupied continuously by the Ramsey family until the 1960s, when it was given to the state, the furnishings and family memorabilia have survived, allowing the staff to

illustrate a great deal of family social history in the tours of the house. The house was constructed during 1868-72, a period of low building activity, and thus is valuable as illustrating a building style, the Second Empire, which is not otherwise well represented in St. Paul. A variation on Italianate styles, the Second Empire house is marked especially by its sloping Mansard roof.



Figure 17: 265 Exchange

Across the street from the Ramsey House at **276 Exchange** is the well-advertised restaurant, **Forepaugh's**. In contrast to the house-museum approach to historic preservation, Forepaugh's should be described as an adaptive reuse of an old structure. Although the name of

the original owner of the house has been retained, the appearance and function of the building have been completely altered. The restaurant has played an important role in the revitalization of Irvine Park since it has drawn thousands of people into the area and done a great deal to publicize the district.

The most significant investment of public funds in the district has gone to the restoration of the park to its 1881 appearance. The landscaping, lighting, crushed limestone walks, and fountain have all been reconstructed. In addition, a band shell, which was planned but never actually built, has also been erected thus improving a bit on history.

On the west side of the square stand three houses of very early vintage and interesting variety. The two on your left are houses built with the narrow gable end facing the street, while **26 Irvine Park** stands broadside to the street. All of these houses have a simple, open veranda protecting the entrance. They are built in different styles (the house at 26 Irvine Park being probably the only surviving example of board-and-batten construction in Saint Paul),

but they share the same severe, controlled sense of recti-linearity. In contrast, the **Murray-Lanpher house at 35 Irvine Park** exhibits the flamboyance and picturesque outline so characteristic of later nineteenth-century styles. Similarly, the roofs of the three houses of 1850s vintage (**26, 28 and 30 Irvine Park**) are all relatively simple, with a low pitch particularly noteworthy at 26 and 28 Irvine Park (in the Federal and the Greek Revival style the low slope was considered mandatory.) In contrast, **the Murray-Lanpher and Ohage 59 Irvine Park**, exhibit high-pitched roofs of many planes and in addition, towers that increase the picturesque effect.



Figure 18: Ohage House

On the northeast side of the square at **4 Irvine Park**, condominiums were built in a design which, though modern, is intended to fit into the park without seeming anachronistic. These new-style row houses share something with the symmetrical smaller houses of the 1850s, for they too are designed with balanced facades. But they also share something with the picturesque houses of the 1880s, especially in the irregularity of their window size and their jaunty roofline.

***Near the corner of Walnut and Exchange, park your car and walk to the corner of Exchange and Chestnut.***

At Chestnut Street look to the right toward the river. This is the landscape where another major confrontation between the community and central planners took place.

In 1983 the St. Paul Companies commissioned a study of the potential of the riverfront in St. Paul by Ben Thompson, an architect who grew up in St. Paul and practiced in Boston. His vision for the area from

the Cathedral Hill through the valley was very powerful. At the same time the City Planning Department was working out options for development of the valley, Mayor Latimer was enthusiastic about the potential of the waterfront. As a result the Riverfront Redevelopment Corporation was formed and ordered to create and implement a plan to transform the area. In 1986 a pre-development plan was produced by BRW Inc. This plan attempted to address a range of issues identified in the area including the realignment of Shepard Road and its intersection with Chestnut Street. The task of actually creating the detailed plans for the new route fell to the St. Paul Department of Public Works and the Planning Department. The Federation had long been interested in making the riverbank more accessible and looked forward to participating in the planning process. They were very frustrated with the process arguing that there were not many viewpoints considered by the city. They were particularly upset because in their view the downtown interests were given priority over other concerns. Local residents were furious when Public Works, with

support from Mayor Latimer, proposed to create a grade separated interchange. Latimer pointed out that it did not seem reasonable to expect people entering the city core through one of the main portals should have to wait at a railroad crossing when a train passed through. In order to accomplish this separation a very large set of bridges and under passes would be built. Early illustrations indicated the structure would be nearly as high as Irvine Park. The urban pioneers who struggled to reinvigorate what had been the decayed Irvine Park neighborhood believed the proposal would be a disaster for their community. The increased traffic and other problems could mean the end of this fragile neighborhood. They hired consulting engineers who testified that an at-grade crossing could work. Despite the protests of the Federation and the Irvine Park Association, in 1988 the City Council and the Mayor accepted the recommendations of the Department of Public Works and approved the massive intersection design. However, Mayor Latimer chose to leave office in 1989. His successor, James Schiebel, who had served on the City Council with the

West Seventh Neighborhood as his constituent, was opposed to the plan. In addition, the construction and land acquisition costs for the realigning of Shepard Road were higher than anticipated, so many aspects of the Public Works proposals were not implemented. Instead a new at grade-level interchange was built and the area was developed to support major new housing developments, parkland, and the Science Museum of Minnesota.

***Return to your car. Turn right at the corner of Walnut and Exchange, go one block to the corner of Exchange and Chestnut, and turn left on Chestnut and proceed to West Seventh.***

As you proceed toward West Seventh you will pass by major new development that combines housing and commercial space. Its scale and impact set it apart from nearly all other building projects on West Seventh. We are now at the boundary between the central business district and the West Seventh Community.

The construction of the Xcel Center, the Holiday Inn, the development of the United Hospital Complex, plans for future buildings, and redevelopment of the older buildings facing West Seventh have given this section of the street between Kellogg and Grand a metropolitan-wide function. While still in the neighborhood these establishments do not provide neighborhood level functions.

The prospect up Chestnut provides a great view of the Cathedral of St. Paul.

***At the corner of Chestnut and West 7<sup>th</sup> turn left and proceed along West Seventh.***

Before we proceed along West Seventh it is necessary to get an overview of the Federation's activities supporting commercial development. In 1977 and 1978 the Federation formed the West Seventh Area Development Corporation as part of the Federation. The leadership believed they needed to find a way to play a more creative role in efforts to revitalize the commercial functions of the

community. The leadership determined not to create a separate Development Corporation because they wanted to eliminate the possibility of a rivalry developing between the Development Corporation and the Federation.

The goals were to create financing programs, develop guidelines for building restorations, commission a market study, and work for public improvements. In 1982 the Federation worked with the St. Paul Planning and Economic Development Department to secure an Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG) from the federal government Department of Housing and Urban Development. The grant was used to make public improvements along West Seventh including new sidewalks, trees, parks, and lighting. In its first decade the Development Corporation component of the Federation attracted several enterprises to West Seventh Street and helped many others expand. The popular programs of sporting events, concerts exhibitions, and conventions at the Xcel Energy Center have drawn people from across the metro area to this section of West Seventh. The result has been

the replacement of several successful businesses that served the local community with new establishments that serve a broader clientele.

**211 West Seventh**

The Cossetta family with support from the Federation created this multifaceted monument to Italian cuisine and culture. In 1911 the original Cossetta's store and meat market opened two blocks to the east at the corner of Chestnut and S Ryan. The family moved to West Seventh when the Irvine Park development began. Once a store primarily serving the Italian immigrant community of the Upper Levee, the establishment now draws dinners and shoppers from across the Twin Cities.

**225 – 229 ½ West Seventh  
Patrick McGovern's Pub  
(Originally named the Smith Building)**





Figure 19: McGovern's Pub

This commercial block was built in 1888 in the Romanesque Revival style by Robert A Smith, a local businessman and politician. This building was formerly the Brass Rail Bar, which served a working class clientele who cashed their checks at the bar after work on Fridays and returned home later that night. It was renovated to house the current pub restaurant by Pat and Diane Bommer with help from the Federation.

### 249/253 West 7<sup>th</sup>

#### The Downtowner Restaurant

One case where the Federation did not succeed in controlling development involved the building at 249/253 W Seventh. The redevelopment of the downtown resulted in the taking of Alary's Bar for the construction of the World Trade Center. Alary's was a long established bar that featured striptease dancers. The city had recently based legislation to limit the density of bars to no more than four with in a half-mile radius. The neighbors strongly opposed the entertainment license. The owner of Alary's was happy to be able to locate close to downtown, but the city council refused to transfer the liquor and entertainment license. David Thune and Ed Johnson of the Federation were outspoken opponents to the move. However, Ramsey County Judge Harold Schultz ruled the council's action was "arbitrary, capricious and unreasonable" and ordered the licenses transferred. After operating on West Seventh for a number of years, Alary's lost its lease and moved back downtown. This

confrontation re-emerged with an interesting twist a few years later.

### 258 West 7<sup>th</sup>

#### Tom Reid's Hockey City Pub

This pub and restaurant has been voted as one of the best Hockey Sports Bars in the world.

### 264 West Seventh

This brick building was once the location of a tavern called the Bare's Den. The proprietor began offering his customers "negligee shows." According to testimony of the owner the shows drew between 5,000 and 6,000 customers and no one ever complained to the police. However, in order to have live entertainment, dancing, or music, the Bare's Den needed a tavern license. Tavern licenses are hard to secure because according to the law, establishments cannot be licensed as a tavern if one property owner or tenant within 200 feet objects. This owner was only licensed to sell beer. The Federation protested to the shows and the City Licensing Committee held a hearing on the situation. When asked why the owner did not get a tavern license, the License Inspector said there was "bad communication." Because the

Federation and neighbors clearly objected to the shows, the City Licensing Committee refused to give the Bare's Den a tavern license. The owner had no choice but to end the entertainment. However, he was told he could have a jukebox.

### **261 – 277 West 7<sup>th</sup>**

One major project was to assist in the renovation of the **Rochat-Louise-Sauerwein** Block. These buildings were built in 1884, 1885, and 1886 and are some of the few nineteenth century commercial buildings still standing in St. Paul. David Reynolds and Michael Black were the developers of the project which was also part of the private investment needed to secure the UDAG.

***Proceed on West 7<sup>th</sup> one long block to its intersection with Grand Avenue. Turn right on Grand Ave to Smith. Turn left on Smith and go one block to Forbes.***

**Irvine Park Towers and Fort Road Medical Center**

Irvine Park Towers was built by private developers with bonding from the St. Paul Port Authority. It provided a major portion of the private investment needed to secure the UDAG for West Seventh.

### **361 West 7<sup>th</sup> Street (no longer standing)**

The block bound by Smith Grand, and West Seventh has been cleared and rebuilt. It was at one time the site of one of the Federations most contentious disputes over liquor licenses: the case of Playboy Lounge (also known as the Holiday Stars Dance Club) owned by Patrick Carlone. After failing on two previous times to get a liquor license from the City Council's Licensing Committee on December 5, 1979 he applied for a wine and beer license for an Italian restaurant at 361 West Seventh Street. The neighborhood was opposed to the license and turned out in large number to protest. It was argued that the proposed establishment was too close to the Salvation Army, the neighborhood had too many bars, and Carlone's son John had falsified a license application by not declaring that he was guilty of a misdemeanor or

ordinance violation. Carlone pled guilty of disorderly conduct for assaulting David Thune, a Federation Leader. Pat Carlone also filed lawsuits against ten residents and the Salvation Army. Newspaper accounts of the hearing quote Carlone saying, "The West Seventh Street Federation is under heavy lawsuit and they're going to be that way if it takes the Supreme Court to bring them to justice." In addition he called them "the biggest pack of liars that ever stepped into this building [City Hall and County Court House]. They should be upstairs in a court room." The Federation countered by arguing that Carlone had not been acting in good faith. Specific mention was made of the fact that Carlone moved the legal front door of the establishment from West Seventh to the alley. This fulfilled the technical requirement that the front door of a liquor establishment has to be more than 300 feet from a church. Carlone countered that argument by pointing out there was a bar in the location of his proposed restaurant when the Salvation Army bought its property. By all accounts the room was filled with tension. The City Council refused to take action and asked the

two sides to try and work out a compromise. Eventually the restaurant was permitted to exist and for a while featured excellent food.

Apparently the restaurant business was not profitable and Carlone shifted his business to essentially a bar featuring female dancers in very limited costumes. The operation was first called the Playboy Lounge. For obvious reasons the name was changed to the Hollywood Stars Dance Studio. Patrons could buy memberships in the newly rebranded operation. Members of the Federation determined prostitution was occurring in the establishment and in 1986 they convinced the Vice Squad of the St. Paul Police Department to investigate. Sure enough the police sting found enough evidence to convict Carlone of promoting prostitution and in 1988 he was incarcerated in the Ramsey County Jail. The Ramsey County Prosecutor also tried to convict him of permitting an obscene performance where alcohol was served. The case went to trial and after extensive testimony by police officers; the City License Inspector Joseph Carchedi

was called to testify. Before long it was revealed that Carlone actually did not have a valid beer license when the alleged offense was said to have occurred. Therefore, the Judge dismissed the case. This and other events prompted the City Attorney's Office to examine allegations of wrongdoing by Carchedi and the police. The report that was issued cleared Carchedi and the police of any wrongdoing. After the trial the city ordinance was amended to correct the problems of not being able to prosecute violations during the interval between expiration and renewal. This block also included **384 Smith Avenue.**

The Thurwald house, a historic home built by a local merchant in the 1880s, was moved by the Federation to its current home at 29 Douglas St.

### ***Turn right on Forbes and enter Little Bohemia.***

#### **Little Bohemia**

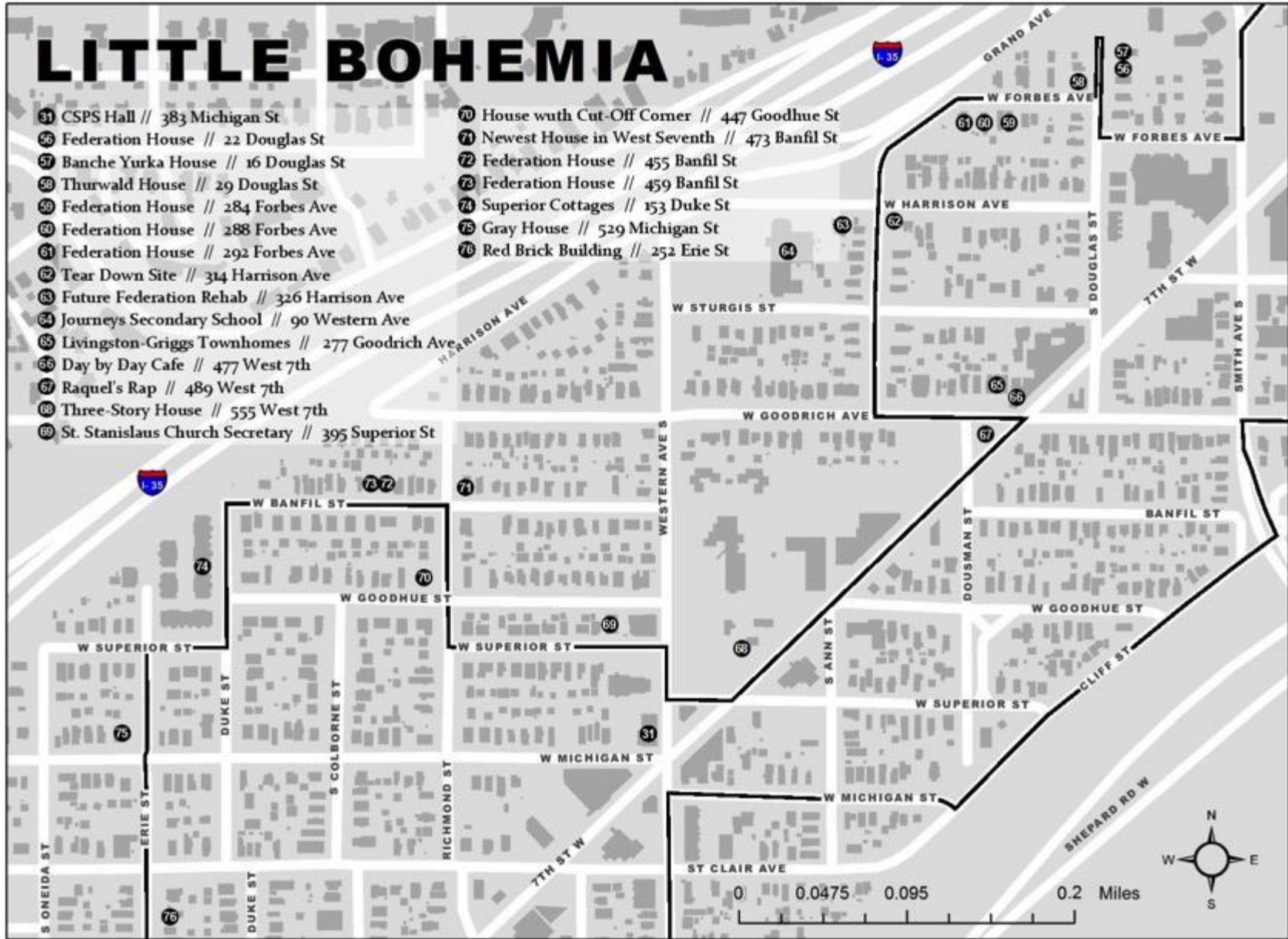
One of the many distinctive neighborhoods in West Seventh is "Little Bohemia" an the area bounded by West Seventh Street to the south, Smith Avenue to the east, Interstate

35E to the north and Grace Street to the southwest. It was originally built with housing intended for working class homeowners. By 2000 the neighborhood had transitioned to an area of low cost rentals and absentee landlords dominated many streets. In fact, most of the area was spot zoned to increase density or under Special Condition Use Permits from the Zoning Authority, which enabled landlords to dramatically increase the number of housing units in the buildings and the population density of the area. The high levels of occupancy and intense use were hard on the buildings and the area quickly deteriorated. Eventually thirty of the houses were owned by one landlord. In 2003 the Federation offered to buy all these properties but the owner rejected the offer. He later supposedly sold the properties to other investors during the housing bubble. During the subsequent financial crisis the properties went to either foreclosure or tax forfeiture. In 2008 several blocks of houses on Douglas and Forbes Streets were in foreclosure, leaving most of them vacant. Suspecting fraud, the Federation requested an investigation by the FBI. After one

# LITTLE BOHEMIA

- 61 CSPA Hall // 383 Michigan St
- 66 Federation House // 22 Douglas St
- 67 Banche Yurka House // 16 Douglas St
- 68 Thurwald House // 29 Douglas St
- 69 Federation House // 284 Forbes Ave
- 70 Federation House // 288 Forbes Ave
- 71 Federation House // 292 Forbes Ave
- 72 Tear Down Site // 314 Harrison Ave
- 73 Future Federation Rehab // 326 Harrison Ave
- 74 Journeys Secondary School // 90 Western Ave
- 75 Livingston-Griggs Townhomes // 277 Goodrich Ave
- 76 Day by Day Cafe // 477 West 7th
- 77 Raquel's Rap // 489 West 7th
- 78 Three-Story House // 555 West 7th
- 79 St. Stanislaus Church Secretary // 395 Superior St

- 70 House with Cut-Off Corner // 447 Goodhue St
- 71 Newest House in West Seventh // 473 Banfil St
- 72 Federation House // 455 Banfil St
- 73 Federation House // 459 Banfil St
- 74 Superior Cottages // 153 Duke St
- 75 Gray House // 529 Michigan St
- 76 Red Brick Building // 252 Erie St



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meeting with the Federation leadership, the Agency indicated that their caseload was very heavy. Since fraud was so widespread and often involved much greater amounts of money, the Agency would not take time to investigate.

After a great deal of lobbying by the Federation the St. Paul City Council and HRA declared the neighborhood "blighted" making it eligible for funding from the City's Invest St. Paul and Neighborhood Stabilization Programs. Designed to help struggling neighborhoods, these programs provided funding to purchase, rehabilitate, and resell some of the abandoned houses.

In the summer of 2009 there were 87 vacant houses in West Seventh Community, 40 of which were in Little Bohemia. With a grant of \$1,000,000 from the Invest St. Paul Program the Federation acquired twenty-one vacant properties. The first plan was to clear the area and build new houses. After listening to residents who indicated they valued the neighborhood and believed it has historic value, the Federation reconsidered its plans. The alternative concept focused on rehabilitating and reselling the

properties as owner-occupied, single-family homes. However, six properties were demolished and fifteen restored. Some of the demolished homes were on lots too small for new construction. Consequently, the Federation had them re-platted and attached to the adjoining parcels. Acting as the general contractor, the Fort Road Federation first rehabilitated once house at a time. As the project gained momentum they eventually developed eight at once. They started at the ends of the blocks and worked toward the middle fifteen properties in the area. The Federation set aside \$150,000 of the grant to be used to match the investments private householders made in their properties. In the end six properties were demolished. Acting as a general contractor, the Federation used a variety of subcontractors from the construction trades to carry out the work which began in 2011. As a result of the Federation's work the neighborhood was rezoned for single-family housing and duplexes, and the special condition use permits were terminated. As a result forty-nine housing units were culled from the area. A local residents'

organization *Little Bohemia Association* watches over the neighborhood and its new parkland along the I35E sound barrier.

***Follow Forbes one Block to Douglas, turn right on Douglas, and proceed to cul-de-sac.***

**22 Douglas:** Rehabbed and sold by federation in 2013.



**Figure 20: 22 Douglas**

### **16 Douglas**

This small house was once occupied by the Antonin Yurka family. Antonin taught Czech at Jefferson school and was a key figure in the programming of music and Czech theatrical productions at the CSPS Hall, including the appearance of Dvorak. In 1900 he no longer

could teach Czech in St. Paul's public schools and he relocated to New York City. His daughter Blanche, born in St. Paul in 1887, had a very distinguished fifty-seven year career in music, theater, movies, and television. While still in her early teens, she began her New York career in a Czech language production of *The Bohemian Girl*.

### **29 Douglas**

The Thurwald house was moved to this location and rehabbed by the Federation.

***Return to the intersection of Douglas and Forbes. Turn right on Forbes to South Garfield; turn left on Garfield to go two blocks to Goodrich. Turn right on Goodrich and go one block to West Seventh.***

### **280, 284, 288 and 292 Forbes**

These four houses were rehabbed and sold to homeowners by the Federation.



Figure 21: 280 Forbes



Figure 22: 284, 286, 288 Forbes

**314 Harrison:** Was determined to be un-savable and was torn down.

**326 Harrison:** Will be in the second phase of rehabilitation.

**277 Goodrich:** Rehabbing of these townhouses was one of the Federation's first projects.

### **489 West Seventh Day by Day Café**

This is one of the businesses the Federation helped get established on West Seventh.

**489 West 7<sup>th</sup>:** The small building on the triangular block (created by West Seventh, Goodrich, and Dousman) was the site of a defining event in the history of the Federation.



Figure 23: 489 West 7th, previously Raquel's Rap

### Adult entertainment and neighborhood stability

In the 1970s older neighborhoods in the Twin Cities were served by commercial areas that developed during the streetcar era. These commercial strips are often immediately adjacent to residential areas and have a mixture of commercial and residential land use. As the suburbs continued to grow and draw people and businesses from the inner neighborhoods, West Seventh and other center city communities were stressed. By 1976, most

neighborhood movie theaters were shuttered or showed pornographic movies. Some also offered live strip tease shows. Stores selling a variety of pornographic material moved into the low rent storefronts and a variety of bars began to offer adult entertainment that featured scantily clad women, sometimes labeled lingerie shows. These establishments were focused on male

customers drawn from all through the city and did not serve the local residents. Because the establishments were located close to housing districts, local residents were generally offended by the businesses. It was widely believed that prostitution was associated with all these businesses. However, proving prostitution existed required rigorous law enforcement and police had to be careful to avoid charges of entrapment. The constitutional guarantee of freedom of speech expression protected the establishments. Local government could only regulate entertainment via licensing.

One of the initial and defining victories of the West Seventh Federation was its action against **Raquel's Rap**, an establishment that featured a new form of entertainment located at **489 West Seventh**. Bars featuring strip tease dancers are an established part of the American urban landscape, but burlesque shows normally did not involve full nudity. In the late 1960s cultural norms shifted and there was a growing demand for full female nudity in men's magazines and bar shows. Not everyone agreed with this trend and eventually a law that prohibited nude dancing in establishments that sold liquor was enacted. This prompted entrepreneurs to offer new forms of entertainment. The landlord and an aggressive tenant opened Raquel's Rap in a small, triangular building that previously housed a billiard parlor. At Raquel's, upon paying a fee, men could engage in a frank, adult conversation with a naked female employee in the privacy of one of the small rooms furnished with a bed. No liquor was served; therefore a tavern license that would permit live entertainment was not required. Local residents were

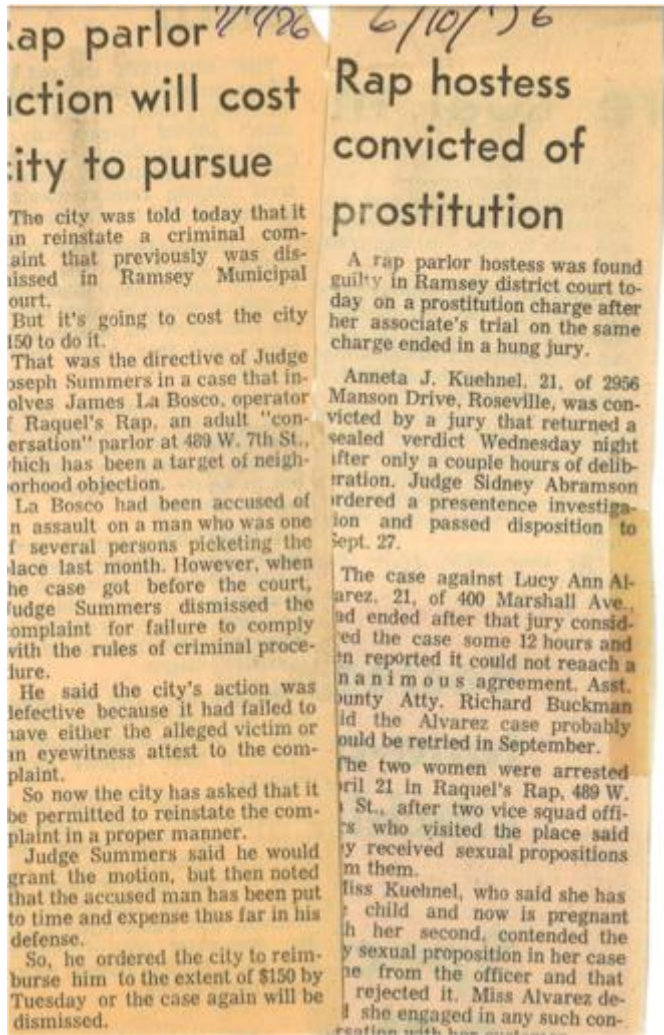


Figure 24: City Council and Fort Road Federation push for the end of Raquel's Rap



Figure 25: Some community members respond



convinced this establishment facilitated prostitution and considered it a blighting factor in the neighborhood.

The action to close Raquel's was sparked by Alice Rivard who was then working for Ramsey Action Programs. She had previously worked with the police department and started challenging people in the neighborhood about exploiting women. Because of her prodding residents began talking about the activities they could see from streets. People that lived nearby constantly complained to anyone who would listen. With the help of the West Seventh Federation in March of 1976 they began to picket Raquel's Rap in the hope of driving its owners out of business. According to the pickets Raquel's Rap was located at a bus stop where children wait to go to school. They believed it created a negative atmosphere and did not serve the local community. The Federation appealed for volunteers by going to the local churches and canvassing the neighbors. Two couples living near Raquel's opened their home to the protester. After that spring's primary election, Ron Maddox, an HRA Board

member, parked his campaign bus nearby and allowed the protesters to use it as their staging base and show family movies.

Working in shifts, groups of men, women and children walked to and fro in front of the building chanting, waving signs and taking photographs of customers and their cars. Parents with young children worked the late shift after their children were put to bed. The protesters were frequently supported by the Salvation Army's brass band playing loud renditions of favorite hymns. At first the Police Department ignored the action but as it continued, the picketers experienced increasing harassment. Guns were pointed at them, obscenities were hurled at them, their cameras seized and broken, and on April 23 they were physically attacked by bullies supporting Raquel's Rap. That prompted the city council to require an officer be posted near the premises. However, as the picketing dragged on through the summer nights pressure mounted on the city leadership to take action. Eventually two undercover agents entered Raquel's Rap and were propositioned by

employees. The women were tried; one convicted, the other released because of a hung jury. Now clear evidence supported the residents' assertions. Two young City Council members, David Hozza and Robert Sylvester took up the residents' cause and authored a new ordinance that required "conversation parlors" to be licensed. Furthermore as a condition of the license "no bed shall be brought into or permitted to remain in the building." At all times, both employees and customers were to keep their clothes on; 'their breast, buttocks, genitals and anus covered by a nontransparent material." This legislation caused the owners to change their business plan and had their employees show clients adult movies in the small rooms. That did not satisfy the protesters and the picketing continued. The attorney for the owner said that he was alarmed the local residents had become "vigilantes" against a businessman. After being cited for showing movies without an entertainment license and being arrested and charged for attacking protesters one Friday night, the owner of Raquel's began to talk about other opportunities he had

outside of West Seventh. By the end of the summer Raquel's Rap closed. The neighbors won.

***Turn right on West 7<sup>th</sup> and continue southwest one very long block to Western.***

On your right you will pass by Mancini's Char House one of the most successful businesses on West Seventh. The Federation worked with the owners to expand the business and the parking lot. Several houses were moved from this site including the building which is now 555 West Seventh.

#### **555 West 7<sup>th</sup>**

This three-story house is part of an office development by David Brooks that involved relocating several houses and converting them into an office park. This house was built in 1891 and was moved in 1977 to this location from 325-27 Banfil Street, one block to the east. Constructed of pressed brick alternating with courses of red sandstone, the building is quite attractive. The third floor balcony and horseshoe-arched window are

the most striking elements in its façade.

***Turn right Western and proceed north one half block to West Superior Street, turn left at Superior Street and proceed west one block to Richmond.***

#### **Church of St. Stanislaus**

The congregation has been a longtime supporter of the Federation's efforts to maintain a strong family oriented neighborhood.

#### **McDonald Montessori School**

This building was built as the school for St. Stanislaus parish. After the school was closed, a variety of service organizations occupied the building including the West Seventh Federation. The Federation had palatial offices in a former boy's bathroom. The room featured a urinal that sported a shelf for books and other important papers.

**395 Superior:** Church of St. Stanislaus Secretary.

***Turn right on Richmond and proceed north one very short block and one longer block to Banfil. Turn left on Banfil.***

#### **437 Banfil**

This boldly designed new house uses a variety of different materials. While it does not conform to historic design principles it seems to be appropriate in this neighborhood.

**455 and 459 Banfil:** Both were rehabbed by the Foundation.

***Turn left on Duke Street.***

#### **153 Duke Street Superior Street Cottages**

These were developed on the former site of the Holm and Olson Greenhouses. The Federation worked with Lyngblomston Homes, a non-profit developer of senior living housing in St. Paul. The project contains twenty-three units and cost \$3 million to build in 1999. The need for new housing for senior residents of the neighborhood was championed by Pastor Walt Wietzke of St. Mark's Lutheran Church. The Federation secured tax increment

financings to help with the construction.

***Turn right on Superior, go one block to Erie, turn right on Erie, and go five blocks of varying length to West Seventh.***

The new houses on the corner of St. Clair and Erie were built on the former site of one of the neighborhood's most notorious rental properties in the area. The Federation was able to acquire and raze the property and facilitate the construction of the new owner occupied houses.

***Carefully follow Erie across West 7<sup>th</sup> and through Erie's intersection with Jefferson. Follow Erie one block to Palace.***

Just after the intersection, notice the small 19<sup>th</sup> century workers' cottages and carefully look at the back of their lots at the bridge structure that holds up West Seventh. This goes over a wetland associated with Cascade Creek that formerly flowed through the area

and through a ravine into the Mississippi.

Further along the way you will see the new townhouses developed by Dominion Development Company as part of the Schmidt Brewery project.

***Follow Palace to Duke. Turn right on Duke, go one block to Randolph, and turn right on Randolph. Return to West 7<sup>th</sup> and end your tour.***

*Contact the Fort Road Federation at [betty@fortroadfederation.org](mailto:betty@fortroadfederation.org) if you have questions or would like to learn more. We hope you enjoyed the tour!*

*Special thanks to Gabrielle Anderson for her work on research and map creation, and to Shelby Maidl for book layout and editing.*