

Fifth Street Southeast Historic District Resurvey Project  
Community Meeting #1  
April 22, 2024 – 6:30 pm  
First Congregational Church of Minnesota

**Attendees:**

CPED Staff - Rob Skalecki, Erin Que, Andrea Burke  
Consultant - Lauren Anderson, New History  
Members of the public - 19

Staff gave a presentation and took questions from the audience.

**Key Points from Slide Presentation**

- No final documents are ready at this time, but they will be shared in the future.
- History of the historic district: it is one of the earliest developed areas in the city of Minneapolis, predates the establishment of the city.
- The historic district has connections to flour milling and industrial areas along the river.
- The historic district was locally designated in 1976.
- Additional study was done in 1980 for the district to be considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP); it has not been formally listed in the NRHP.
- Documents have not been updated since then.
- For the past few years, City staff have applied for grants to update survey records for our oldest historic districts. We are working to update documentation to make them more useful in current preservation practice.
- By updating the documentation, staff will be able to evaluate projects better. Better background info will help us better understand what changes have happened at a given property.
- District boundaries will not be changed at this time.
- The documentation from the 1980s is brief and doesn't give a lot of info. Documentation as it is done now provides more detailed information. More photos are taken now than were taken previously.
- Next Steps
  - Fieldwork has been done. Consultants are working on writing the inventory forms and writing a district narrative to summarize its history.
  - Consultants will recommend a period of significance and list of contributing and non-contributing properties.
  - Plan to hold a second community meeting in May or early June to discuss the results. This may be virtual but we welcome feedback about this.
  - Staff will review, State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) will review, and then HPC will review.
- There is a sign-in sheet if you want to be notified when the next meeting will be.

Questions/comments and staff answers are below. Text may be paraphrased.

- How does the City tell residents they'll be part of a historic district?
  - Practice was different in 1970s. Process may have been similar, but the ordinance language might have been different. We believe there was a public hearing process then.
  - Current practice is that one of five entities can nominate a property/area for historic designation (Mayor, Council Member, Heritage Preservation Commission member, Planning Director, or the property owner). The designation study process takes about a year and includes public hearings.
- An attendee expressed concern about it being authoritarian to designate a historic district. They gave an example of Portland, Oregon having financial incentives for historic districts.
  - City of Minneapolis doesn't currently have financial incentives. Short-term rental waiver is available for historic properties. Historic variances are also an option to request exceptions to the Zoning Code.
  - There was an effort in the 1990s to try to create financial incentives and they fell through. It's something that we'd like to do but we're not there yet. Portland is doing a really great job at this.
- If this were a National Register of Historic Places-listed district, would there be grants available?
  - SHPO would be the best resource for this. In short, there may be grants but they can depend on the type of property owner and also whether or not a property is income-producing.
- Could this information from this project be used in a NRHP nomination if someone wanted to nominate it?
  - Yes, this information could form a foundation. Keep in mind that local designation is different from the NRHP. They use different forms, although they ask for similar information.
- What's the thinking behind allowing new construction in historic districts?
  - There may be a misconception that historic districts don't allow new construction. Preservation is guided by the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. These 10 standards do not ban new construction. They give instructions for it to be contemporary and compatible. Design guidelines are used to evaluate projects, including new construction. This district has design guidelines that are from the 1970s. Projects have to comply with the design guidelines and the Standards. It is possible that we may want to update these guidelines in the future to make them more useful.
- An attendee expressed a preference for the second meeting to be in person instead of virtual. Some may have concerns about projects getting approved that don't seem to meet the guidelines. Others don't get approved that seem to meet the guidelines. It seems subjective. They might like to discuss the following: what's the purpose of the Fifth Street Southeast Historic District? What's in it for us as homeowners in the district?
  - Staff encouraged attendees to provide specific examples of projects and to reach out to discuss further.
- Any guess on the dates of the period of significance during this resurvey?
  - In the past, we've used 1850s-1940s as our best guess. We imagine the final period of significance will be close to this. We'll have to wait and see what the consultant recommendation is. Start date is usually when the oldest building was built and the end

date is the construction date of the latest building that still contributes to the historic district's historical significance.

- Does this project have a name?
  - It's called the Fifth Street Southeast Historic District Resurvey. You can search for this on the City's website and find the project website for more info about the project.
- If there were historic events that weren't related to the development of the neighborhood, could that extend the period of significance? Can there be different aspects of significance that inform the period? For example, Hubert Humphrey lived in one of the houses.
  - Sometimes yes. The period should tie to the history for which it was originally designated.
- An attendee expressed concerns about some properties that are not being maintained but the City seems to not be able to enforce ordinance to make the properties stop deteriorating. And then the property might deteriorate to the point that they may need to be demolished. The City is very concerned about window sizes but what about ensuring these other properties are preserved? Some people are unaware that the ordinance states they need to maintain historically designated properties.
  - This is handled on a case-by-case basis. We work with our enforcement staff to respond to these concerns. We have zoning inspectors who would inspect this.
- Do you have any questions for us?
  - Not at this time.
- An outcome of this is that every property will be determined to be contributing or non-contributing. What does this mean?
  - Non-contributing properties have greater flexibility when it comes to design changes.
  - For contributing properties, staff will have focus more on maintaining historic materials when projects are proposed.
  - Contributing/non-contributing status also goes into developing design guidelines and understanding the overall character of the historic district. If historic materials don't remain, can you tell that it was built in the 1890s and does it still show what the district is significant for?
  - Even if a building is non-contributing, we'll still review it. It's captured in the ordinance one way or another. It's not a free pass for non-contributing properties. We're working to translate this better to property owners for when they want to make changes to the properties.
- It feels like there are extra constraints and not a whole lot of benefits. Hard to see a neighboring house falling down and no one is doing anything about it.
- What are the pros and cons? Feeling limited to not be able change windows, but then who is going to pay for the heating bills?
  - One option is to install storm windows on top of their historic, double-hung windows. This can be as effective as replacing the window.
  - Our first recommendation will be to repair. If it can't be repaired, then you can request changes through an application.
- Lots of notifications about robberies, dangerous dogs – feels like these issues may need to be addressed.

- Are there plaques that you can put on our house? Could show pride for your house.
  - We have a historic plaque program. Bronze-looking plaques about 7 inches wide. It's up to the property owner. Rob is the contact for it.
- I agree with the choice to repair. But it's hard to find a craftsman to do it and at an affordable price. It would be great if the City could point homeowners to resources and offer grants. Not everyone can afford to do major rehab to houses. Doesn't seem right to enforce someone to make repairs to a property whose owner can't afford it.
  - We've heard this from other folks and wish that we could create an incentive program.
  - Our directions from CPED leadership are to not enforce this, unless something is truly falling down.
- We would like to see a concrete plan for how to offer financial incentives next time.
- Are there any historic advocacy groups working on developing financial incentives? Preserve Minneapolis or National Trust for Historic Preservation?
  - Staff are not aware of any specific local initiatives, but it is always something on our minds.
  - The state historic rehabilitation tax credit is back, which is good. But there are strings attached. Properties have to be income-producing and listed in the NRHP. So this doesn't apply to everyone.
  - Other cities do have revolving loan fund (i.e. Savannah, Portland).