

Archaeology



St. Joseph Landmark Commission

St. Joseph's historic districts are more than a collection of historic buildings and their associated landscapes. Each historic resource is complex and multi-dimensional and very likely includes components that are below ground. These archaeological resources may provide important information about a historic property by indicating the location and configuration of now-vanished outbuildings, porches, additions, and landscape features such as walkways and plant materials. Archaeological resources may also yield information on the evolution of building development and human activity on a site through the discovery of long forgotten building foundations, walls, wells, post holes and trash pits. Knowledge of human activity and the existence of now vanished buildings help us to understand man's interaction with his environment throughout history. Archaeological resources may also provide important information on the area's pre-history, including Native American settlement. St. Joseph's strategic geographic location on the Missouri River also offers the potential for underwater archaeological resources, including artifacts such as shipwrecks, docks, and wharf structures.



An archaeological investigation was undertaken at Robidoux Row Museum as part of the restoration of the building. (Courtesy of Robidoux Row Museum/ St. Joseph Historical Society)

New construction frequently involves substantial site grading and trenching for the installation of utilities and foundations. It is therefore wise to investigate the likely presence of archaeological resources before beginning any significant ground-disturbing work. In certain areas, archaeological investigations and site mitigation may be required as part of the approval process for obtaining authorization to build on the site. Federally-funded, -permitted, or -licensed projects generally trigger an environmental Section 106 Review by Federal and state agencies, including the Missouri State Historic Preservation Office (MO-SHPO). As a condition of granting a permit, archaeological testing and subsequent evaluation and mitigation may need to be undertaken. A Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) granted by the St. Joseph Landmark Commission may impose such a condition on the COA with the concurrence of the MO-SHPO. Professional technical advice and consultation on archaeology is available from the staff of the State Historic Preservation Office. Contact the St. Joseph Preservation Planner to obtain information on the MO-SHPO's archaeology program.



Archaeology

Archaeology: Guidelines

1. Retain and preserve known archaeological resources that are important to the history of the site or historic district.
2. Notify the City's Preservation Planner and Missouri State Historic Preservation Office in the early planning stages of the project to assess potential for the presence of archaeological resources on site.
3. Minimize ground-disturbing activity to reduce the possibility of destroying unknown archaeological resources.
4. Avoid the use of heavy machinery or equipment on site which may damage archaeological resources.
5. Protect known archaeological resources in their natural and undisturbed setting, whenever possible. If disturbance is unavoidable, undertake investigations using professional archaeologists who follow accepted standards, methods, and practices for resource mitigation and/or recovery.
6. Stop work on a job site immediately if archaeological resources are unexpectedly uncovered during construction activity. Notify the City's Historic Preservation Planner and the MO-SHPO.