

Introduction

Incorporated in 1845 as a town, St. Joseph has a rich history, having grown from a tiny trading post established by founder Joseph Robidoux on the Missouri River, to an outfitting town for the westward migration movement, to a bustling city serving the entire Midwest and developing western region as a wholesale distribution center. Such prosperity manifested itself in the construction of monumental civic, institutional, commercial, and residential architecture. Many of St. Joseph's buildings were built of quality materials and fashionable, often avant garde designs, that established an air of permanence reflective of the City's optimism for its economic and cultural future. Despite the prosperity experienced during its "Golden Age", the community also witnessed difficult times, such as the decline in economic prosperity after World War I, the transition from a manufacturing to a service-oriented economy, and a gradual loss and shift of population in the 20th century due to the forces of urban sprawl.

Unfortunately, the fate of some of St. Joseph's historic structures followed the decline in the economy and the population loss and shift to the eastern edges of the City. Neglect and a lack of appreciation and awareness for the City's fragile, historic, built environment contributed to the loss and pilfering of many fine buildings. These losses were exacerbated by widespread local demolition, particularly in the downtown core, that was part of misguided "urban renewal" policies in the 1970's. Fortunately, St. Joseph has such a vast wealth of historic structures that today, even with the loss of many buildings, an incredible number of historic homes, commercial structures, churches, parks, and entire neighborhoods remain.

As St. Joseph enters the 21st century, there is a growing realization that historic structures play an increasingly important role in defining the community's unique identity. Through the efforts of the St. Joseph Landmark Commission and non-profit groups such as St. Joseph Preservation, Inc. and the St. Joseph Downtown Partnership, historic resources are being identified and evaluated and efforts are being made to encourage reinvestment in previously declining neighborhoods and commercial districts. The City now is a participant in a national historic preservation movement. A "tear it down and build it new" mentality is gradually being replaced with an attitude that sustainable, long term revitalization of the central city is contingent upon a thoughtful evaluation of existing resources. Rehabilitation and preservation have been integrated into the City's community planning process.

One important planning tool for historic preservation is the **design review** function performed by the City's Landmark Commission. In an effort to ensure that the architectural and historical integrity of historic resources is maintained as they evolve through time, it is critical that exterior alterations to buildings and sites be monitored and evaluated. The *Design Guidelines for St. Joseph, Missouri Historic Districts* provides a comprehensive set of standards by which the Landmark Commission and the owner of a historic property can evaluate proposed changes. All components of a building – from the roof to the foundation – are addressed in a logically organized format that combines background text with succinct guidelines. Site features ranging from landscaping to driveways to fences and walls are also explored. In addition, procedures pertaining to the Landmark Commission's review process are also detailed.

While the focus of this manual is primarily oriented to the City's locally designated historic districts and other designated areas in which design review is mandatory, it also is targeted to any owner of an historic property or older home who may be contemplating exterior work and seeks guidance on historically appropriate treatments, regardless of whether or not such treatments are legislated. Photographic representations of historic treatments found in the manual have been taken from buildings found throughout the City. Some of these properties may be found within local or National Register-listed historic districts. Others are located in areas that are National Register-eligible. In some cases, the properties have yet to be the focus of historic resource surveys and their significance is yet to be evaluated. Regardless, the photographs represent examples of building and site features that contribute to the unique historical character of St. Joseph.



St. Joseph Landmark Commission



The rehabilitation of the Krug-Hill Mansion, 1105 Krug Park Place, has been one of St. Joseph's most celebrated residential historic preservation projects.