



Historic Resources

Introduction

Stillwater is well known as one of the oldest cities in Minnesota, and its historic downtown and neighborhoods are inseparable from its picturesque St. Croix River setting. Beginning in the mid-1840s, the levee was lined with lumber and grain mills, factories, and rail yards. In the early 1900s, at the end of the St. Croix lumber era, citizens planned and raised funds to reclaim this riverfront land. Lowell Park, named for hotel owner and city leader Elmore Lowell, was the result.

Lowell Park represented a growing understanding that the city's historic buildings and landscapes were important resources worthy of protection. This effort has grown steadily and has gathered great community support. As detailed in this chapter, preservation goals, objectives, and policies are linked to many others, including those for downtown land use, transportation, natural resources, housing, and economic development.

This Comprehensive Plan chapter update is intended to strengthen Stillwater's preservation planning framework by examining existing needs and identifying new opportunities. Following a review of Stillwater's development, the components of current planning programs and tools are analyzed, along with the result of meetings with the Historic Resources Advisory Committee, Heritage Preservation Commission members, and City staff. This information was used to develop goals, objectives, and policies as well as implementation timelines.

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Historic photo credits:

Minnesota Historical Society (MNHS)
Washington County Historical Society (WCHS)

Abbreviations:

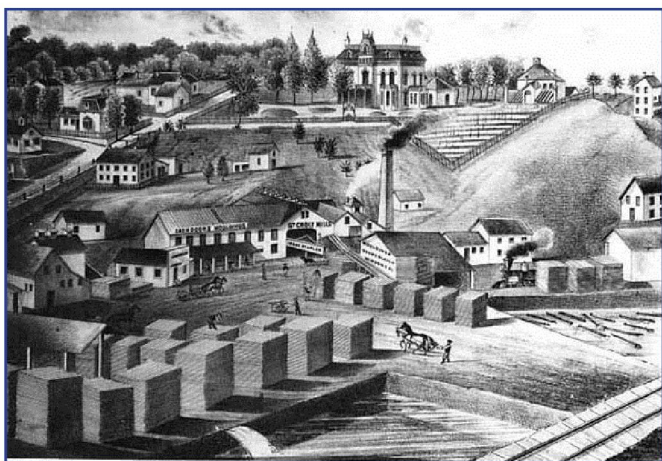
National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)
National Historic Landmark (NHL)



Lowell Park in 1918. MNHS



Looking downriver from the Stillwater Public Library in 2016.



As the stage for one of Minnesota's leading lumber centers and a supply depot for the St. Croix Valley, the city's early riverfront was continually remodeled to serve industry and commerce. The area below present-day Pioneer Park is shown in 1874 in the Illustrated Historical Atlas of Minnesota (A. T. Andreas).

Context for 2040: An Overview of Stillwater History and Development

Lumber prospectors founded Stillwater on land inhabited by the Ojibwe for hundreds of years. Indian treaties signed in 1837 ceded millions of acres of land across Minnesota and Wisconsin, and investors from New England were drawn to potential sawmill sites on the St. Croix River. In 1844, John McKusick (1815-1900), a native of Maine, was among the founders of the Stillwater Lumber Company. Other companies added about a dozen more mills within the next decade.

Stillwater was the site of the 1848 Territorial Convention that initiated the path to Minnesota statehood. It was selected as the seat of Washington County in 1849, and as the Territorial Prison site in 1851. Three years later, Stillwater organized a city government and elected John McKusick as mayor. When the second Washington County Courthouse (NRHP), was placed atop Zion Hill in 1869, it announced the city's continuing significance as an important axis of the "St. Croix Triangle" lumber economy. This triangle was bounded by the St. Croix and Mississippi Rivers and extended as far north as Mille Lacs Lake.

Despite its location on Lake St. Croix—a setting highly praised by some steamboat visitors seeking scenery—early investors focused on Stillwater's full industrial potential. For more than sixty years, Stillwater would prove an ideal setting for sawing and shipping the white pine harvested in Minnesota and Wisconsin forests. In addition to mill, factory, and steamboat sites, the riverfront offered a platform for rail construction connected to a national network. Sheltering bluffs offered some degree of separation from the smoke and noise of industry, but much of the activity was visible across a wide viewshed of city neighborhoods.

Overview adapted from the Stillwater Cultural Landscape Report (2011) prepared by Landscape Research for the Minnesota Department of Transportation's Cultural Resources Unit (MnDOT CRU).

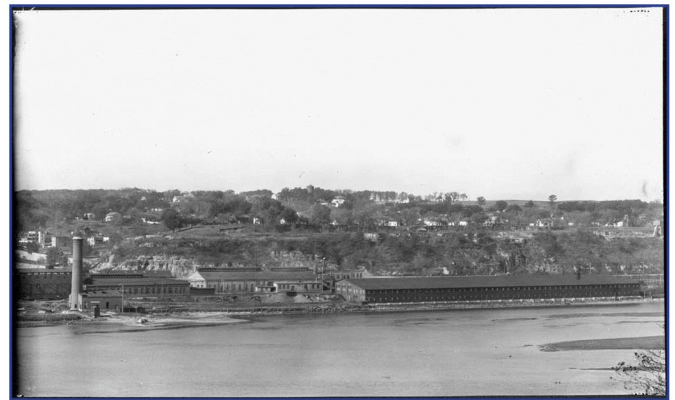
The city's leading position in the St. Croix lumber industry soared with the creation of the St. Croix Boom Corporation. Isaac Staples and other investors incorporated the company in 1856 to collect, measure, and raft logs downriver, creating a distribution point for the entire St. Croix. Located about two miles north of Stillwater, rafts containing millions of board feet of lumber were directed to the city's mills and were also bound for Winona, St. Louis, and other mill sites.

Inexpensive frame buildings made up much of the early commercial district. By the end of the Civil War in 1865, however, the owners of the six sawmills then in operation began to build enduring integrated business networks that included real estate, flour milling, transportation, banking and insurance, and manufacturing. Lumbering financed new enterprises, and new masonry buildings reflected increased investment. Many early sawmill firms would remain in business until 1914 and the end of the lumber era.

After the Civil War, builders of Greek Revival and Italianate style houses selected prominent sites with panoramic views of the river as well as its numerous new industries. Isaac Staples' Second Empire Style residence (ca. 1873), atop North Hill, featured an eye-catching mansard roof clad in polychrome slate tiles.

In 1867, area business leaders organized the Stillwater & St. Paul Railroad. This line and the two that followed immediately brought economic and population growth and secured the city's position as a lumber center. In 1871 the Stillwater, White Bear and St. Paul Railroad connected Stillwater with Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Duluth. In 1872, the St. Paul, Stillwater, and Taylor's Falls Railroad reached the city.

By 1878 the Stillwater and St. Paul became part of the Northern Pacific transcontinental system. Rails and spurs were laid across the riverfront to sawmills and factories and connected to depots that supplied freight and passenger service and connected to river steamers. In 1876 a pontoon-supported, wood drawbridge spanned the river to



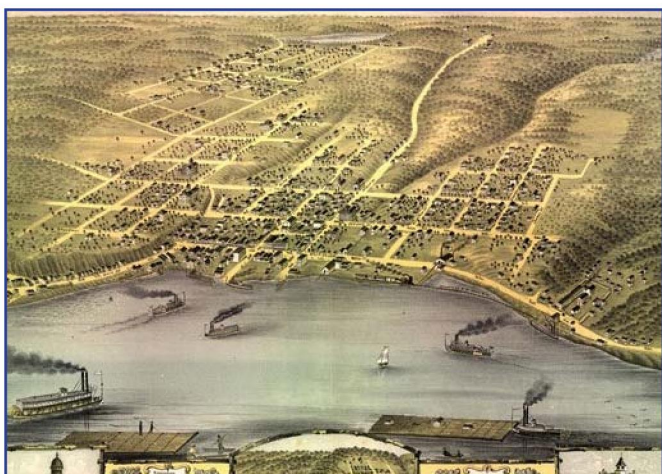
The same area in 1910. MNHS



St. Croix Boom Site in ca. 1886. MNHS



Main Street looking north in 1870. MNHS



In 1870, with about 4,000 inhabitants, Stillwater was the largest settlement in Washington County. Small creeks creased the lightly wooded ravines, and the beginning of dense residential development is evident along the grid-plan streets: between 1870 and 1871, more than 200 houses were finished. MNHS



A simple vernacular house at 408 Maple Street W. (ca. 1875). WCHS



The Italianate Style: 214 Elm Street N. (1877). WCHS

Houlton, Wisconsin. This structure was rebuilt in 1911 and occupied the site of the present Stillwater Lift Bridge (1931; NRHP).

By 1900, eleven sawmills located on the levee. Sawn lumber had been rafted downriver to other markets for processing, but rail connections allowed local manufacturers to produce lumber, lath, shingles, doors, sashes and furniture. The peak year for lumber traffic on the St. Croix was 1890, when one-half-billion board feet passed through the St. Croix Boom. The boom closed in 1914, marking the end of Stillwater's lumber era.

Grain dealers built mills and warehouses served by rail spurs laid along the levee. Boat builders, icehouses, and foundries of various types also located here. Foundry products were needed for mill and railroad development, and there was demand for many types of agricultural implements. In 1882, Seymour, Sabin & Co., a manufacturer of furniture and wood products, launched the Northwestern Manufacturing and Car Company, which had several successor firms including Northwest Thresher, until the building was razed in 1946.

Stillwater's late nineteenth-century prosperity mirrored that of many other Minnesota manufacturing cities. The townsite platted by John McKusick in 1848 was a standard grid plan, but many of the lots surveyed across the city's hills and ravines provided picturesque building sites. Simple, gable-roofed vernacular dwellings built for laborers, shopkeepers, and artisans filled many of the lots, and some enjoyed great river views.

North and South Hill were the focus of much early development. Builders erected excellent examples of Greek Revival, Second Empire, and Italianate style houses. A growing economy and wealth of local wood and stone products also underwrote large Queen Anne style houses constructed by the city's "lumber barons." Many of these houses feature complex rooflines and elaborate porches and millwork trim.

Stillwater's large community of laborers included Germans, Scandinavians, Italians and other European immigrants, including Jewish families from Eastern Europe. African-American families were also members of the early community. Prominent hilltop sites were sought for steepled churches representing a variety of denominations and ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The Washington County Courthouse (1869, NRHP) was placed on the most prominent parcels on South Hill.

A new crop of commercial-district business blocks reflected the economic success of the city as well as its cultural life. The Union Depot (1888, razed), an exceptional example of the Shingle Style, presided over its riverfront location near the bridge. The Hersey and Staples Block (1890; Main and Myrtle streets; razed), was built of locally quarried stone, with Lake Superior brownstone trim. The Lumber (Lumbermen's) Exchange Building (1890; NRHP) was the first modern business block in the city and featured heating, plumbing, and electrical service, as well as an elevator. The craftsmanship and size of these buildings reflected a high level of investment for a city of 11,268 residents in 1890.

Closing of the St. Croix Boom Company in 1914 was a critical event in the city's economic history. Riverfront mill and factory buildings were put to other uses, but the new businesses were often short-lived. Investment in diversified manufacturing such as agricultural implements, allowed the city to retain its workforce and position as a trade center. The city's population stood at 12,318 in 1900, but declined to 10,198 in 1910, 7,735 in 1920 and 7,013 in 1940.

The Northwest Thresher, Twin City Forge and Foundry, Foote-Schultze, Smithson Paper Box, Stillwater Market Creamery, Minnesota Mercantile, and Stillwater Garment companies were among the city's important early twentieth-century employers on or near the riverfront. The Stillwater Prison,



The Queen Anne Style: L. E. Toronius House, 812 Harriet Street (1901). MNHS



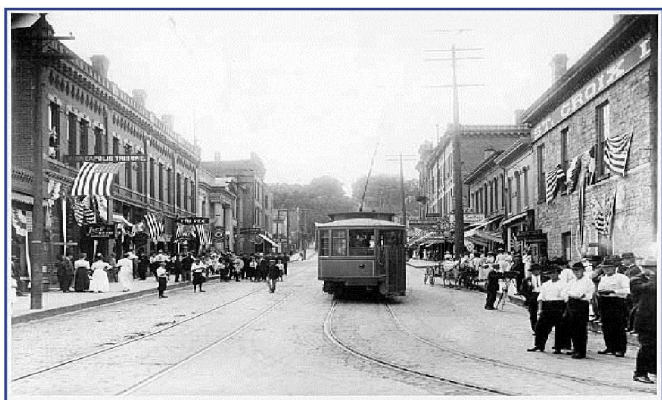
St. Michael's Catholic Church (1873), 611 3rd Street S. (MNHS)



Union Depot (1888, razed). MNHS



Lumbermen's Exchange, 101 S. Water Street (1890). MNHS



Looking up Chestnut Street in 1912. MNHS



Main Street looking north, in ca. 1925. MNHS

located on N. Main Street in Battle Hollow since 1853, closed in 1914. During the next decades the riverfront area was slowly transformed by removal of industrial buildings, railroad tracks, and boathouses.

The popular City Beautiful Movement, which emphasized urban planning built on a foundation of improved streets and neighborhood parks, was underway just as many people in Stillwater were beginning to understand the potential need for new uses for the riverfront. Evidence of the city's progressive planning included streetcar service inaugurated in 1889, opening of the Minneapolis and St. Paul Suburban Railway (which after 1899 offered half-hour service to St. Paul), and completion of the Carnegie Library in 1903.

Although the riverfront would continue to be dominated by industry for several more decades, the initial construction of Lowell Park (1911) represented the first step in reworking the city's gateway, creating a public use along the former levee, and accommodating new automobile traffic.

William A. Finklenburg of Winona designed the first phase of Lowell Park. The park extended two blocks south of Chestnut Street and featured a river wall with a lawn, plantings, and concrete benches. A north extension was completed in 1917 with plans by Minneapolis landscape architects Morell & Nichols. A riverfront pavilion was completed in 1923. The firm also prepared the Plan of Stillwater (1918). It was a blueprint for the modern city, proposing new ideas for parks, boulevards, housing, and riverfront land use. It called for a system of scenic drives linking views of the river valley, and the reclamation of ravines for park purposes. In 1917, the East Side Lumber Company on the Wisconsin side of Lake St. Croix donated their property to the City of Stillwater for park use. In 1931 American Legion Post 48 constructed Legion Beach. The site was later named Kolliner Park. It has been closed since 1979.

When the new Stillwater Lift Bridge opened in 1931, the two-lane, 1,050-foot structure was the centerpiece of a redesigned riverfront. This was

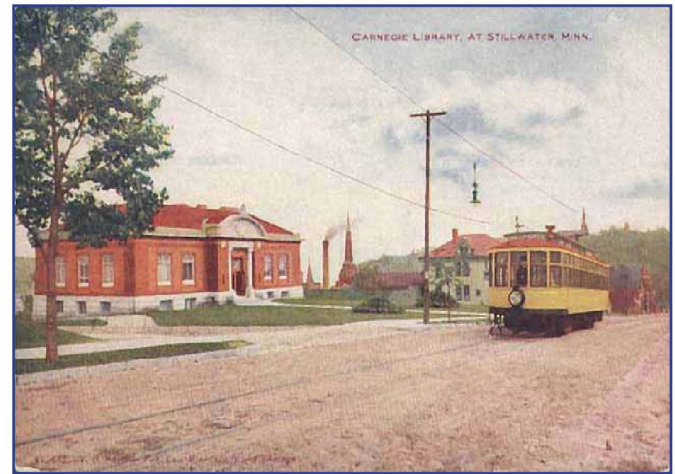
also a period, however, when city leaders planned to build future tourism and recreation markets. The Lowell Inn (1927), built on the site of the popular Sawyer House hotel, was an early symbol of the city's potential as an automobile traveler's destination.

During the Depression years of the 1930s, Works Progress Administration (WPA) and other public funds assisted with some area improvements geared at tourism, including the placement of commemorative markers at Battle Hollow and near the Tamarack House, the site of the first county courthouse. Design and construction of the Lake St. Croix Overlook (NRHP), south of Stillwater, and the St. Croix Boom Site (NHL), north of the city, was completed by the Minnesota Department of Highways and utilized federal relief funds.

Increasingly, visitors saw less and less of the city's industrial past, although railyards still defined much of the riverfront. Notably, in 1918, lumberman Isaac Staples' North Hill residence, built in ca. 1873 and overlooking his St. Croix Lumber Mill, was razed. During the 1930s, Pioneer Park was built on the site and offered a dramatic view of the Stillwater Lift Bridge and broad river and valley vistas.

Following World War II, some merchants remodeled downtown façades with large signs and materials such as aluminum panels. In 1960, a new one-story Hooley's Supermarket (razed) replaced the Shingle style Union Depot (1888). Attractions such as the Stillwater Caves drew tourists, while replacement of key downtown buildings—such as the Hersey Staples Block at Main and Myrtle Streets with the Cosmopolitan State Bank in 1968—altered the traditional streetscape.

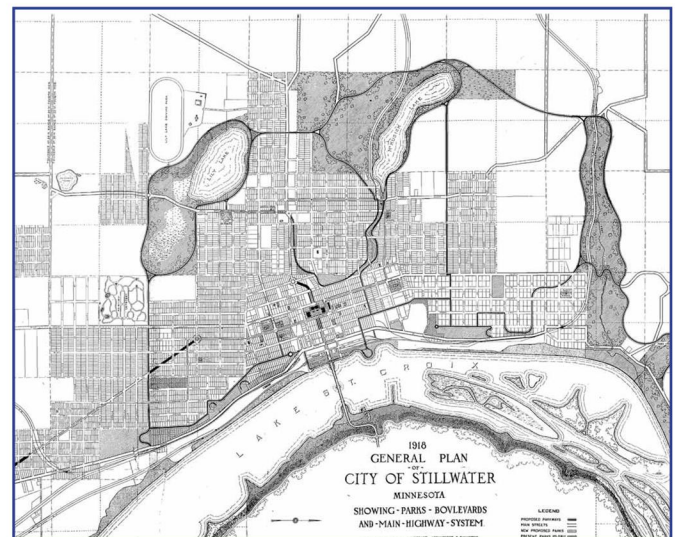
Residents' pride in the city's historic houses was always evident, but interest in downtown historic preservation grew during the early 1970s. The Brick Alley (432 S. Main Street) was among the first of several downtown buildings adaptively reused as restaurants and specialty stores. The Connolly Shoe Factory at 123 N. Main Street, which now houses the city's largest event center, is exemplary of continuing success with adaptive reuse.



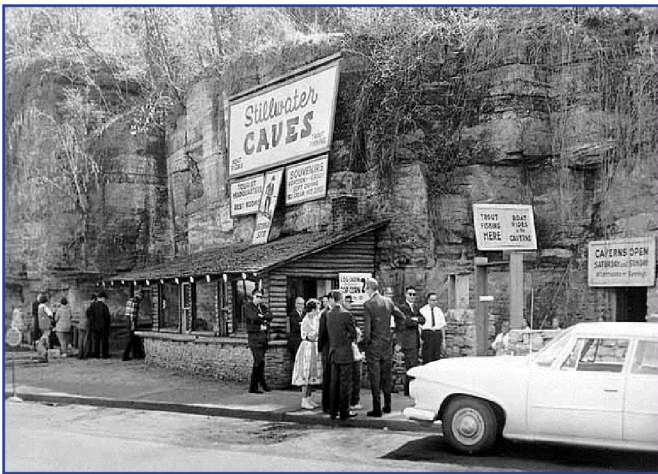
Carnegie Library (1903). MNHS



Lowell Park sunken gardens in 1934. MNHS



General Plan of City of Stillwater, Minnesota, Showing Parks, Boulevard, and Main Highway System. Morell and Nichols, Landscape Architects and Planners, 1918.



The Stillwater Caves in 1962. MNHS



N. Main Street in 1974, looking south. (MNHS)



S. Main Street in 2018, looking north.

In 1973, the Stillwater City Council approved creation of the Stillwater Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC), reflecting increased community interest in preserving and revitalizing the city's historic and cultural resources. In 1988, the National Park Service designated Stillwater as a Certified Local Government (CLG), providing access to historic preservation guidance and grants. In 1992, the Commission began to provide design review for properties within the Commercial Historic District.

In the 1990s, the vacant Stillwater State Prison was proposed for adaptive reuse as housing. In 2002, before development began, the N. Main Street buildings were destroyed by fire. More than 300 rental and condominium units in three new riverfront housing projects have since been constructed on the prison and adjacent sites. Adaptive reuse projects continue within the Commercial Historic District and surrounding Downtown Design Review District, including a boutique hotel development (2018) in the former Joseph Wolf Brewery (1886) at 402 N. Main Street. Since completion of the St. Croix Crossing Bridge (2017), closure of the Stillwater Lift Bridge to vehicular traffic offers new recreational potential for the community and visitors.

Analysis: Preservation Planning and Stillwater

Stillwater's efforts to identify, evaluate, and preserve its historic and cultural resources while encouraging adaptive reuse and reinvestment follow national standards for preservation planning. Preservation planning is "the process by which a community develops a vision, goals, and priorities for the preservation of its historic and cultural resources." The National Park Service within the U. S. Department of the Interior provides Standards and Guidelines for all aspects of planning. The principles include:

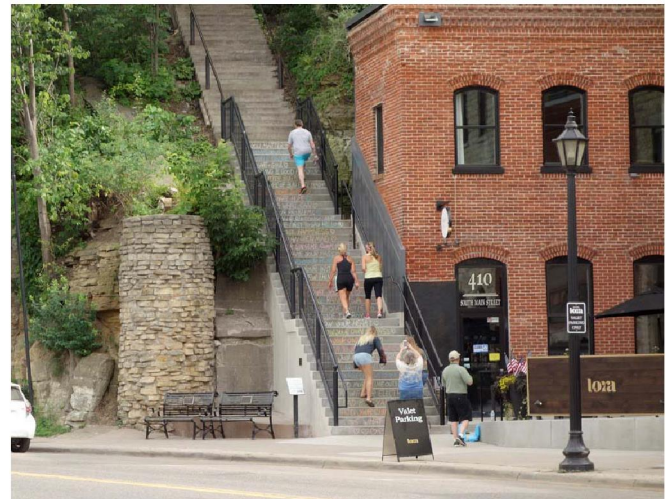
- Important historic properties cannot be replaced if they are destroyed.
- To make responsible decisions about historic properties, existing information must be used to the maximum extent and new information must be acquired as needed.
- Preservation planning includes public participation.

As a Certified Local Government (CLG), one of forty-four in Minnesota as of 2018, Stillwater is eligible for federal grants that support historic preservation studies and public education programs. The Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and National Park Service (NPS) are partners in the effort.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Preservation Planning recommends:

1. Preservation Planning Establishes Historic Contexts

Historic contexts organize information based on a cultural theme and its geographical and chronological limits. Contexts describe the significant broad patterns of development in an area that may be represented by historic properties. The development of historic contexts is the foundation for decisions about treatment of historic properties.



Public stairway reconstruction accompanied the adaptive reuse of the Joseph Wolf Brewery, 2018.



First National Bank (1888) in the Stillwater Commercial Historic District.

2. Preservation Planning Uses Historic Contexts to Develop Goals and Priorities for the Identification, Evaluation, Registration and Treatment of Historic Properties

Preservation goals are developed for each historic context to ensure that the range of properties representing the important aspects of each historic context is identified, evaluated and treated. Then priorities are set for all goals identified for each historic context. The goals for each historic context may change as new information becomes available.

3. The Results of Preservation Planning Are Made Available for Integration Into Broader Planning Processes

Preservation of historic properties is one element of larger planning processes. Preservation goals and priorities, and results of studies and projects, need to be integrated with all aspects of community planning.

Stillwater Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC)

The creation of the Heritage Preservation Commission in 1973 occurred during a period of increased interest in historic resources at the national as well as local level. In the late 1970s, the successful rehabilitation of Stillwater's Main Street buildings—such as those housing Brine's Meat Market (219 S. Main Street) and Kolliner's Clothing Store (113 S. Main), and development of the Brick Alley (423 S. Main) and the Grand Garage (324 S. Main)—demonstrated adaptive reuse and renewed interest in the city's downtown core.

As adopted by the Stillwater City Council, the Heritage Preservation Ordinance (Section 22-7) states that the "preservation, protection, perpetuation and use of areas, places, buildings, structures and other objects having a special historical, community or aesthetic interest or value is a public necessity and is required in the interest of the health, prosperity, safety and welfare of the community." The seven-member HPC meets monthly and is supported by Community

Development Department staff. Commissioners are appointed to staggered three-year terms.

The ordinance charges the HPC with designating heritage preservation sites and conducting design review for individual properties and those within specified districts; conducting ongoing study and survey of areas, places, buildings, structures and objects in the city; providing information and assistance to property owners, and with obtaining grants and other funds for ongoing work.

By 1994, the Stillwater HPC was recognized in a Minneapolis Star Tribune article for demonstrating that "historic preservation is an economic development tool for drawing great numbers of visitors to town." By this time, the HPC had sponsored several important studies, including the Historical Reconstruction of the Riverfront (1985), the Intensive National Register Survey of Downtown Stillwater (1989) and Stillwater Historic Contexts: A Comprehensive Planning Approach (1993).

In addition to overseeing local designation and related studies, the HPC conducts design review for individually designated properties and those in the Downtown Design Review District and the Stillwater Commercial Historic District (Figure 5.1). The HPC reviews new construction in the Neighborhood Conservation District (Figure 5.1).

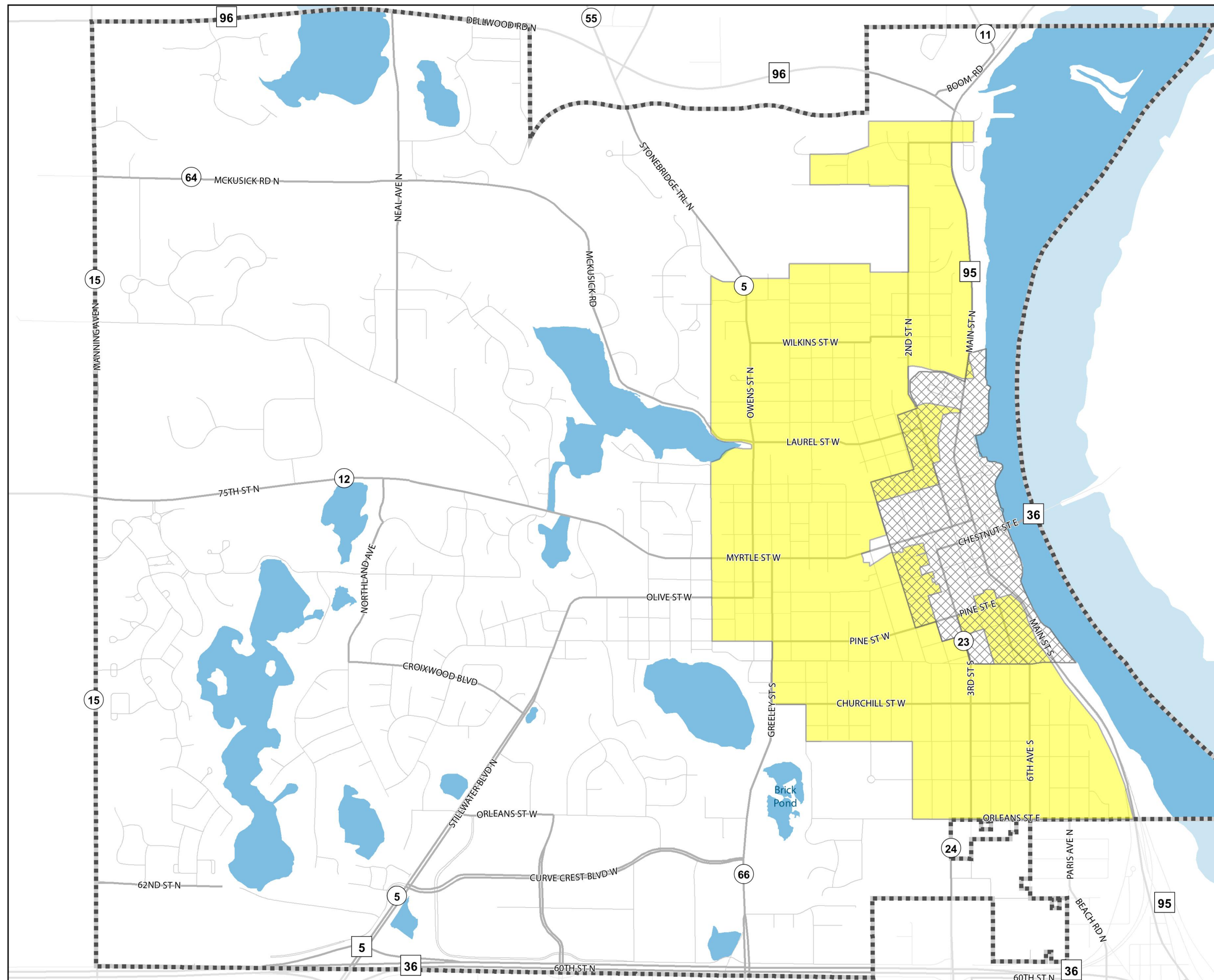
The HPC also conducts design review for properties in the West Stillwater Business Park. Each district has specific design review guidelines.

HPC responsibilities are also specified in other city ordinances. For example, the Demolition Ordinance (Chapter 34) provides procedures for HPC review of demolition permits for properties not currently listed but potentially eligible for local designation. The ordinance notes that such properties must be built on or before January 1, 1946, the date coinciding with the historic context period recommended in 1993. Site Alteration Permits (Sec. 31-215) further specify the requirements of design review for historic properties.

Design Review Districts

-  Downtown Design Review District
-  Neighborhood Conservation District
-  City Limit
-  Surface Water

Figure 5.1: Design Review Districts



PLAN OF STILLWATER 

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Washington County Courthouse (1869), in ca. 1900. Listed in the NRHP in 1971. (MNHS)



Austin Jenks House (1871, NRHP).

Commissioner Training and Education

In 2015 the City of Stillwater, in conjunction with the cities of Eden Prairie and Mankato, received a Heritage Partnership Program grant from the Minnesota Historical Society to retain professional services and develop a training curriculum for statewide distribution. The focus of the grant was to develop materials satisfying the educational needs of Heritage Preservation Commissions across Minnesota. The Heritage Preservation Commission Training Manual (2016) and other materials are posted on the Stillwater Heritage Preservation Commission website.

The National Register of Historic Places and Stillwater

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the Nation's historic places worthy of preservation.

The passage of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) in 1966 created the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The NRHP is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America's historic and archaeological resources.

NRHP-eligible properties may be evaluated for the effects resulting from federally funded projects, such as road and bridge construction, as provided by the Section 106 process. Owners of income-producing properties eligible for the NRHP may be able to use federal historic tax credits for certified rehabilitation projects.

Stillwater's first NRHP property listing was in 1971 with the Washington County Courthouse (1869). The building was nominated as Minnesota's oldest functioning courthouse and one of its few surviving examples of monumental public architecture from the mid-19th century. The second property was the Minnesota Territorial Warden's House (1853), listed in 1974. It was recognized as the only surviving structure of the prison's Minnesota Territory period and chief remnant of its statehood years.

The Stillwater Commercial Historic District (1992) and twelve individual properties have since been listed in the NRHP. They include a broad range

of dwellings, public buildings, and industrial and commercial properties recognized for architectural style as well as their historical value to the development of the city. Some properties, including the Washington County Courthouse (1869), also have state significance.

Why are NRHP Properties Significant?

Properties are evaluated for significance with the following NRHP criteria:

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects:

- A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. That are associated with the lives of significant persons in our past; or
- C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. That have yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.

Properties must also retain integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. There are also seven criteria considerations, including those applicable to religious properties, cemeteries, reconstructed buildings, and properties achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Stillwater NRHP Districts

- Stillwater Commercial Historic District

Stillwater NRHP Districts Determined Eligible but not yet listed:

- Stillwater South Main Street Archaeological District
- Stillwater Cultural Landscape District

Individually-listed NRHP Properties

In Stillwater Commercial Historic District:

- Chicago Milwaukee & St. Paul Depot and Freight House (1883)
233 and 235 Water Street

In Downtown Design Review District:

- Roscoe Hersey House (1880)
416 Fourth Street S.
- Ivory McKusick House (1868)
504 Second Street N.
- St. Croix Lumber Mills/Stillwater Manufacturing (1850, 1900)
402 Main Street N.
- Washington County Historic Courthouse (1869)
101 Pine Street W.
- Mortimer Webster House (1865)
435 Broadway Street S.

Other:

- Point Douglas-St. Louis River Road Bridge (1865)
- Stillwater Lift Bridge (1931)
- Bergstein Shoddy Mill and Warehouse (1890)
805 Main Street S.
- Austin Jenks House (1871)
504 Fifth Street S.
- Albert Lammers House (1893)
1306 Third Street S.
- Nelson School (1897)
1018 First Street S.
- William Sauntry House and Recreation Hall (1891) 626 Fourth Street N.

Stillwater Local Heritage Preservation Designation

The Heritage Preservation Commission can recommend designation of individual properties and districts through the local nomination process authorized by Minnesota Statutes (471.193). Properties must meet one or more of seven local significance criteria:

- A. The character, interest or value as part of the development heritage or cultural characteristics of the city, state or county.
- B. The location as a site of a significant historic event.
- C. The identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the city's culture and development.
- D. The embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, period, form or treatment.
- E. The identification as work of an architect or master builder whose individual work has influenced the city's development.
- F. The embodiment of elements of architectural design, detail, materials or craftsmanship that represent a significant architectural innovation.
- G. The unique location or singular physical characteristic representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community or the city.

Properties must also retain integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Historic Contexts

As recommended by the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Preservation Planning, evaluation of any individual property or district's historic significance and integrity is based on one or more historic contexts. Contexts are typically based on one or more themes, a geographical area, and periods of significance. They describe the broad patterns of historical development of a community or region

that are represented by the physical development and character of the built environment. Historic contexts can be developed for many kinds of properties, including designed historic landscapes and archaeological sites.

Neighborhood Studies

In 1993, following the completion of the city-wide historic context study, Stillwater Historic Contexts: A Comprehensive Planning Approach, the HPC began in-depth study of the city's historic neighborhoods. Sixteen neighborhoods were initially identified. Context development, property inventory, and recommendations for future actions, including local designation and/or NRHP listing, have been completed for ten neighborhoods. Figure 5.2 shows the areas completed 1995-2005:

- North Hill Original Town (1995)
- South Hill Original Town (1996)
- Greeley Addition (1997)
- Dutchtown District (1998)
- Holcombe District (1999)
- Hersey Staples & Co. Addition (2000)
- Carli & Schulenburg's Addition (2001)
- Churchill, Nelson & Slaughter West Half (2002)
- Churchill, Nelson & Slaughter East Half (2003)
- Staples and May's Addition (2005)

To date, no action has been taken on recommendations to designate all or part of these areas as local or NRHP districts. In 2013 the HPC and its consultant produced a draft of Stillwater, Minnesota: Preserving Historic Neighborhoods. The document includes general historical information, building rehabilitation information, and design guidelines. This information and detailed guidelines are adaptable to design review for any future historic districts, and are also an excellent source of general information.



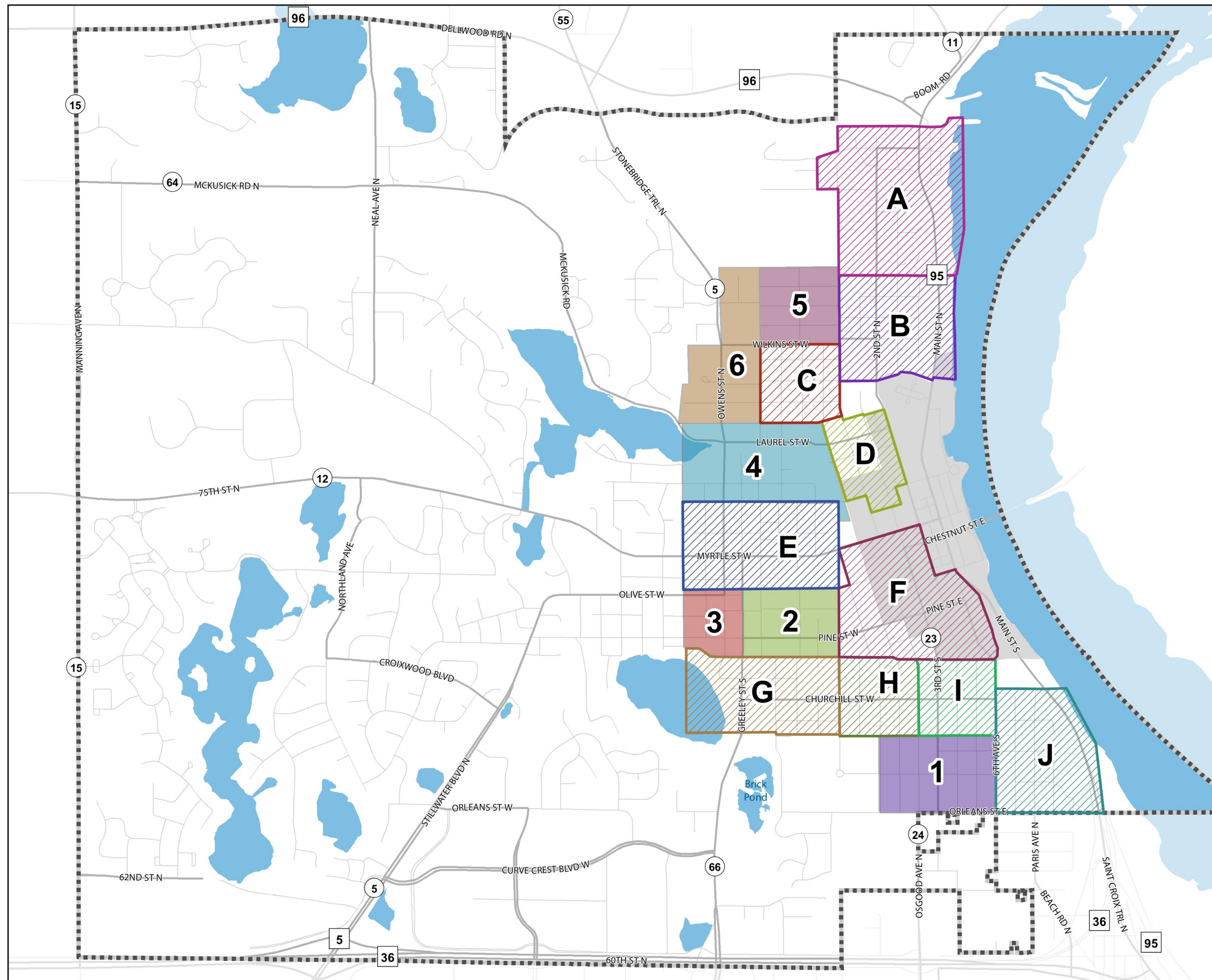
Neighborhood Architectural Survey Areas

- Downtown Survey
- Completed Survey**
 - A. Dutchtown Addition
 - B. Carli and Schulenburg Addition
 - C. Staples and Mays Addition
 - D. North Hill (Original Town)
 - E. Greeley Addition
 - F. South Hill
 - G. Holcombe's Additions
 - H. Churchill, Nelson, Slaughter Addition (East Half)
 - I. Churchill, Nelson, Slaughter Addition (West Half)
 - J. Hersey, Staples Addition
- Future Survey**
 - 1. Third Street South Neighborhood
 - 2. Pine Street West Neighborhood
 - 3. Olive and Pine Neighborhood
 - 4. Sabin's Addition
 - 5. Wilkin's Addition
 - 6. Owens Street North Neighborhood
- City Limit
- Surface Water

Figure 5.2: Neighborhood Architectural Survey Areas



PLAN OF STILLWATER





National Register of Historic Places

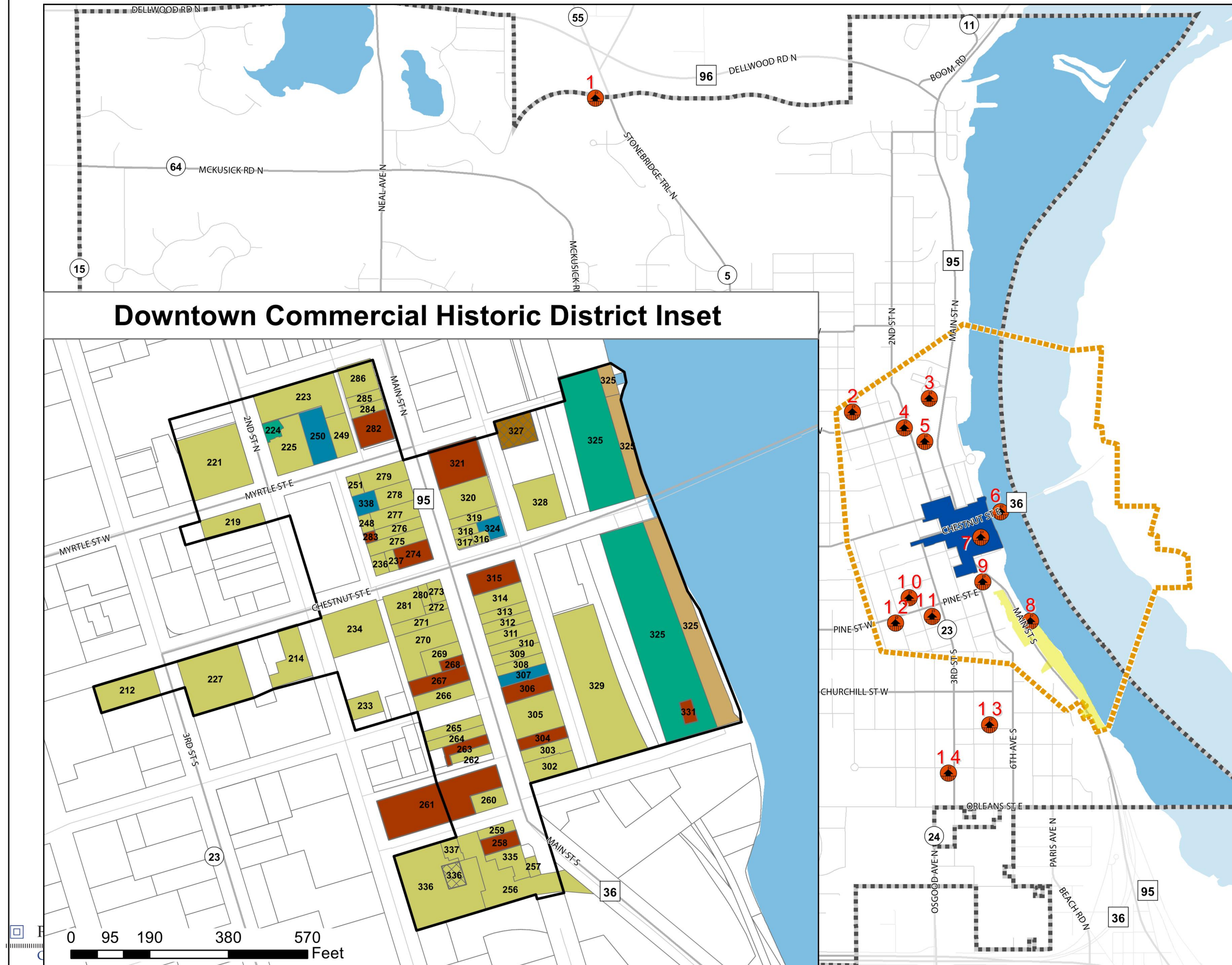
- Downtown Commercial Historic District
- Historic District Boundary
- Property Designation*
- Contributing Building
- Contributing Site
- Contributing Structure
- Noncontributing Building
- Noncontributing Site
- Removed-Contributing Building
- Removed-Noncontributing Building
- National Register Listed Places
- 1. Old Stone Bridge
- 2. William Sauntry Mansion and B&B
- 3. Territorial Prison Site & Warden's House
- 4. Ivory McKusick House
- 5. Staples Mill
- 6. Lift Bridge
- 7. Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Depot/Freight House
- 8. Mortiz Bergstein Shoddy Mill & Warehouse
- 9. Mortimer Webster House
- 10. Roscos Hersey House
- 11. Washington County Historic Courthouse
- 12. Austin Jenks House
- 13. Nelson School
- 14. Albert Lammers House
- Draft South Main Archaeological District
- Draft Cultural Landscape District
- City Limit
- Surface Water

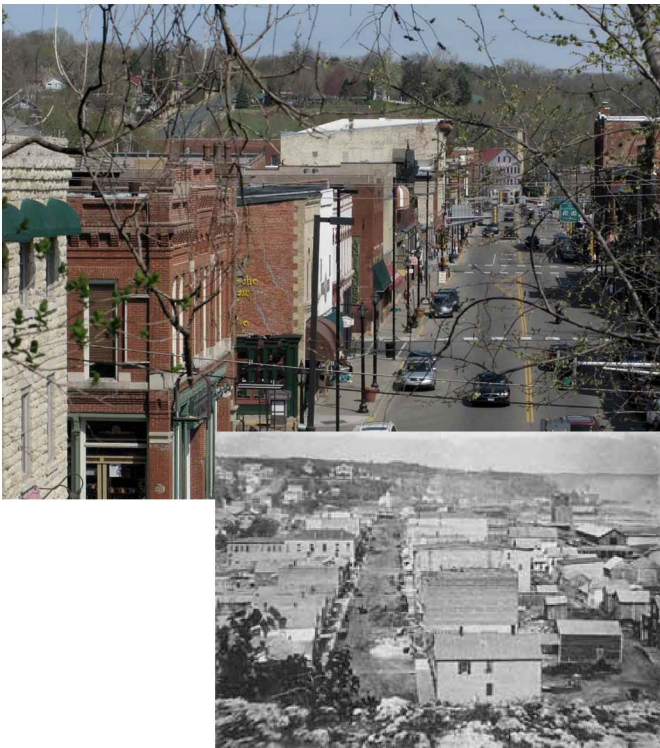
Figure 5.3: National Register of Historic Places



PLAN OF STILLWATER

Downtown Commercial Historic District Inset





Main Street from the Main Street stairs, in 2018 and in ca. 1880.



Bryan Mosier Cigar Store, Main and Chestnut Street, in 1915, and in 2010. (MNHS)

Stillwater Commercial Historic District

The Stillwater Commercial Historic District was listed in the NRHP in 1992 and is also locally designated, with a slightly different boundary. Both districts encompass the area that parallels the river along Water and S. and N. Main streets, and the cross-streets of Mulberry, Commercial, Myrtle, Chestnut, Olive, and Nelson (Figure 5.3). The NRHP district includes 56 contributing buildings, two contributing sites, three contributing structures, and one contributing object.

Contributing properties include primarily brick commercial buildings representing a variety of architectural styles from the 1860s through the 1930s. There are also examples of 1860s and 1870s Greek Revival and Italianate style dwellings at the edges of the district. The oldest remaining downtown core along N. and S. Main Street is composed of structures built between 1864 and 1875; some feature stone, party walls with brick-faced façades. In addition to historic commercial enterprises of many types, buildings related to lumber, rail, and manufacturing are well represented.

Stillwater Commercial Historic District Design Guidelines

The HPC reviews all building permits for exterior alterations and additions to properties within the Stillwater Commercial Historic District, including landscape alterations. If determined to be maintenance-related, roof repair and similar projects may receive review and approval from City staff.

The Commercial Historic District is located within the larger Downtown Design Review District (Figure 5.1). Buildings in the larger district may have different levels of significance and integrity than those in the Commercial Historic District. The Design Manual for the Commercial Historic District (2006) contains design guidelines applicable to both districts. The adopted guidelines are intended to “direct and lead Stillwater in its endeavor to conserve and enhance its appearance, preserve its historical and/or architectural assets, protect and encourage areas of existing or potential scenic

Stillwater Conservation District Design Guidelines



February 20, 2006

Stillwater Conservation District Design Guidelines



300 block of Hickory Street W., as shown in the Architectural Survey of the Staples and May's Addition to Stillwater (2005).

value, and assist its property owners.”

Both NRHP listing and local designation are usually limited to buildings at least 50 years old, which now includes buildings dating from 1968 or before. District boundaries could accordingly be revised to include mid-twentieth century buildings.

Stillwater Neighborhood Conservation District

In 2006 the Stillwater City Council established the residential Neighborhood Conservation District (NCD; Figure 5.1). According to the NCD ordinance, the objective of the NCD is to “conserve traditional neighborhood fabric, to guide future infill development within the district, and to discourage unnecessary demolition of structures that contribute to the district’s historic character.”

The NCD includes most of Stillwater’s late nineteenth- and early-twentieth century residential building stock.

Neighborhood Conservation District Design Guidelines

The Neighborhood Conservation District Design Guidelines (2006) include standards for new construction, including garages. Standards emphasize setback, height, size and scale, massing, and overall relationship to the streetscape and neighborhood. The HPC reviews design proposals prior to issuance of a building permit for new construction, but additions and alterations to existing buildings are not currently subject to design review.

National Register-Listed and Eligible Districts

Stillwater South Main Street Archaeological District (NRHP)

Beginning in the 1840s, decades of milling and other industrial use resulted in great alteration to the Stillwater riverfront. Although many structures have been razed, in certain areas there remains an important historic archaeological record.

The Stillwater South Main Street Archaeological

District has been determined eligible for listing in the NRHP (Figure 5.3). It includes the Hersey & Bean Sawmill and Planing Mill sites, which were part of one of Stillwater's major nineteenth-century lumber milling complexes.

At the northern end of the district, Slab Alley was a commercial and residential working class neighborhood dating from the height of the lumber boom prior to 1870; the dwellings were removed when TH 95 was constructed in 1934.

Stillwater Cultural Landscape District

As defined by the Department of the Interior, a cultural landscape is "a geographic area, including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals therein, associated with a historic event, activity, or person or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values." The Stillwater Cultural Landscape District has been determined eligible for listing in the NRHP (Figure 5.3).

The district encompasses the city's setting of shoreline, hills and ravines, and the Stillwater Commercial Historic District. It also includes the bluff-top historic neighborhoods that are part of the North and South Hill landscapes. The boundary generally follows the alignment and area of the Original Plat of the Town of Stillwater (1848), including viewsheds up, down, and across the St. Croix River.

The Stillwater Cultural Landscape District includes 248 contributing properties on both the Minnesota and Wisconsin sides of the St. Croix River, including the Stillwater Lift Bridge, Lowell Park, and archaeological sites. On the Wisconsin side of the river, the district includes Kolliner Park, owned by the City of Stillwater.

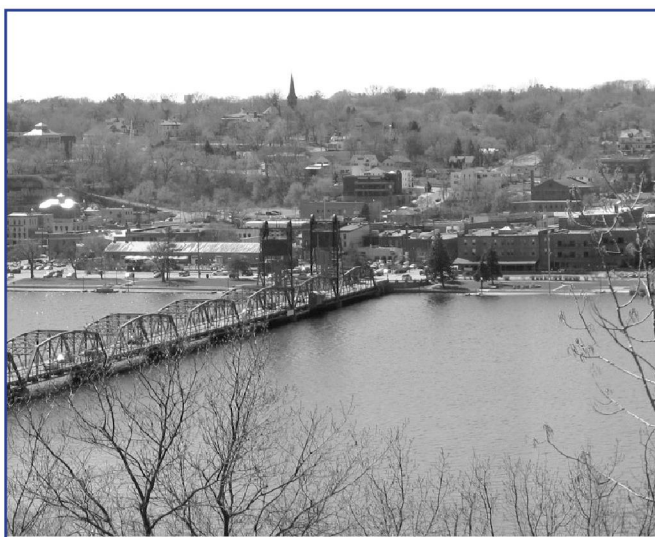
Determination of district boundaries and significance was useful to planners during studies for the St. Croix Crossing Bridge (2017), to assess potential effects to the landscape setting. The district boundaries and historic contexts highlight the significance of Stillwater's unique setting and natural resources, and the preservation of its hilltop and river views.



Slab Alley on South Main Street in 1932 (razed). MNHS



South Hill, 2018.



Looking at Stillwater, across the St. Croix River, from Houlton, Wisconsin, in 2011. Chris Faust, photographer.



Looking south from Pioneer Park in ca. 1935. (MNHS)



Looking south from Pioneer Park in 2011, prior to St. Croix Crossing Bridge construction.



Thomas and Elmira Sinclair House (1857), NRHP, 402 Fourth Street N. (Suki Thomsen photograph)

The South Main Street Archaeological District and the Stillwater Cultural Landscape District are not locally designated.

Public Outreach and Educational Resources

Heirloom Homes and Landmark Sites Program (HHLS)

In 2007 the City of Stillwater and the Heritage Preservation Commission established the Heirloom Homes and Landmark Sites Program to recognize property owners who maintain the historic character of their properties (Figure 5.4).

In 2014 the program received an award from the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions (NAPC) for Best Practices in Public Outreach and Education.

Heirloom Homes are defined by the HPC as houses located in the older part of Stillwater that have “good historical integrity and represent the various architectural styles of the nineteenth century or the first half of the twentieth century;” these landmarks are “among the most historically and architecturally significant properties in Stillwater.”¹ Landmarks retain their architectural integrity and have been recognized by the City of Stillwater, although they are not locally designated. Some are listed in the NRHP.

To date, more than one hundred dwellings of many styles and types have been recognized. In addition to showcasing these properties and providing information to owners about best practices in building conservation, the program illustrates the potential of historic preservation in the city’s neighborhoods.

Program resources are linked to the Heritage Preservation Commission website. The website includes rehabilitation information, searchable databases, intensive research reports on the properties, and photographs.

¹ http://www.stillwater-mn.org/hpc/Sample_interface/Categories/about.asp



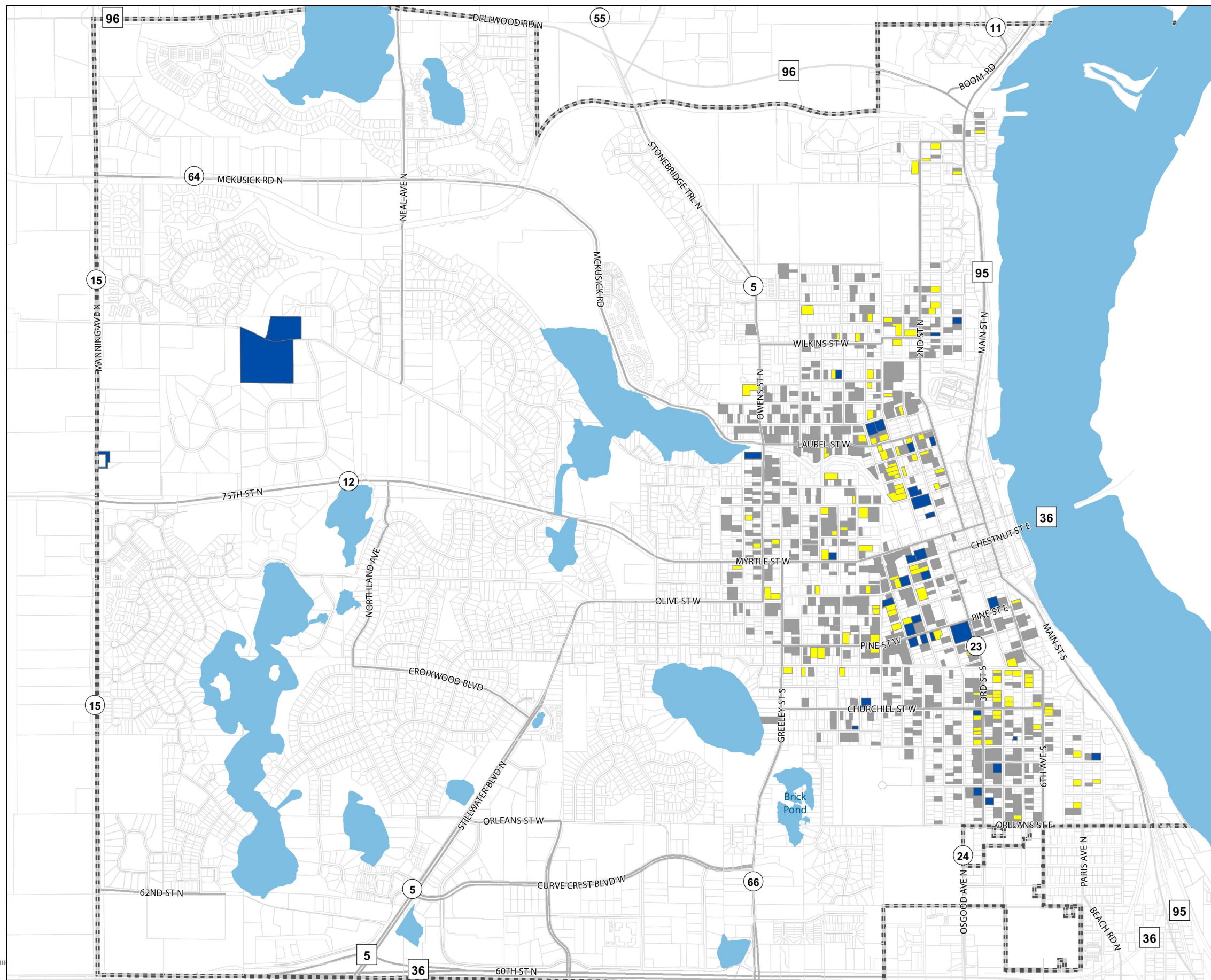
Heirloom Homes and Landmark Sites Program

- Potential Heirloom Homes
- Designated Heirloom Homes
- Designated Landmark Sites
- City Limit
- Surface Water

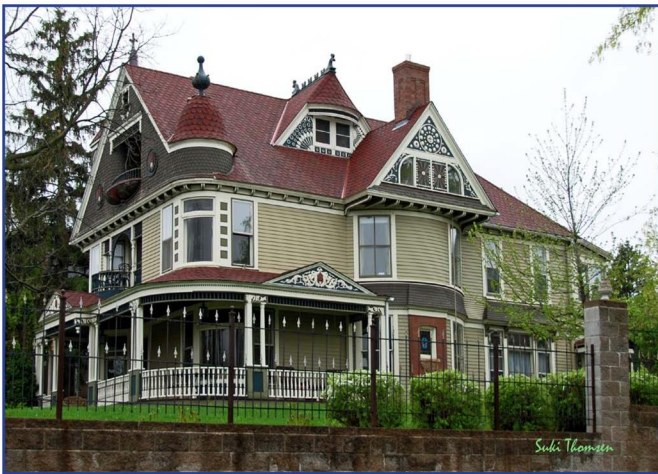
Figure 5.4: Heirloom Homes and Landmark Sites Program



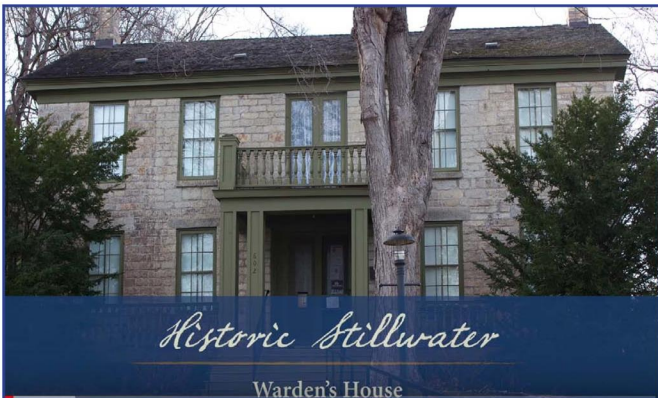
PLAN OF STILLWATER



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Albert and Helen Lammers House (1893, NRHP), 1306 Third Avenue S. (Suki Thomsen photograph)



From Pastcasts

South Hill Walking Tour

Walking Tours and Videos

The Stillwater HPC has an extensive and innovative program of videos and printed tour brochures that focus on the Commercial Historic District and the South Hill area. The material enhances public understanding of the city's resources, and contributes to the offerings of the Stillwater Convention and Visitor's Bureau.

The tour stops on the "Pastcasts" by Daniel Hoisington, which are designed for viewing on hand-held devices, cover general Stillwater history as well as fourteen properties throughout the downtown area. Loops on Pine Street and Chestnut Street areas include eighteen properties. This work has been supported by the City of Stillwater and by Minnesota Cultural and Heritage grants, and with funds from the Department of the Interior through the CLG grant program. The Minnesota Department of Transportation also funded a walking tour brochure for the Cultural Landscape District (2013).

In 2018, the City is developing additional web mapping applications including Arc GIS Story Maps, and walking tours.

Research Resources

The Washington County Historical Society, founded in 1934, is headquartered in Stillwater and operates the Warden's House Museum at 602 N. Main Street (1853, NRHP). The organization also provides information about Stillwater's historic resources and maintains a significant research collection. Planning for a new heritage center is underway. The Society is represented on the seven-member Heritage Preservation Commission.

The Stillwater Public Library, housed in the Carnegie Library at 224 Third Street N., maintains the unique St. Croix Collection. The Collection holds important books, photographs, and other materials on the history of Stillwater, the St. Croix Valley, and Washington County.

Goals, Policies, and Objectives

Heritage Preservation Program for 2040

Previous sections outlined the background and components of Stillwater’s Heritage Preservation Program. As discussed, the Heritage Preservation Commission has both regulatory and public education responsibilities, and interacts with many other city departments and commissions. The City and HPC also interact with federal and state agencies on management of resources eligible for or listed in the NRHP.

Stillwater has been successful in documenting many aspects of its built environment, including the Commercial Historic District and historic neighborhoods. Maintaining existing historic resources while encouraging rehabilitation, reinvestment, and new development is an important challenge for the City and the HPC. Stillwater’s prominence as a scenic visitor destination with a recreational waterfront adds another dynamic, as does the potential to develop new mixed-use development within and at the edges of the Commercial Historic District.

With the opening of the St. Croix Crossing Bridge in August 2017, the historic Stillwater Lift Bridge was closed to vehicular traffic. Currently being repurposed as a pedestrian and bicycle path and under restoration to its 1931 appearance, the structure remains the city’s central landmark. The new pedestrian and bike trail will be known as the St. Croix Loop Trail.

Formerly, about 17,000 vehicles per day were traveling through downtown Stillwater and across the bridge, causing traffic congestion that discouraged pedestrians and cyclists. With the loss of this traffic, many residents report the city center feels more “knit together”. This is attractive to local residents, who are more likely to shop and dine downtown, as well as to visitors.

The Stillwater Market Analysis (2016), prepared by Maxfield Research and Consulting LLC, noted that anticipated population growth in key cohorts may create additional opportunities for retail goods and service businesses in Stillwater’s Commercial Historic District and adjacent areas. A significant number of new retail businesses and restaurants could be anticipated, as could proposals for residential and office development in mixed-use buildings. Demand for increased parking may accompany this growth. Maxfield also noted that Downtown Stillwater has “a number of physical characteristics that make it a strong shopping location and a highly desirable urban district.”¹ This analysis suggests that the City and HPC may review new development proposals geared for an increased number of visitors and residents. Good communication about the need for conservation of historic resources and application of appropriate guidelines for building rehabilitation and new infill construction will be required.

Challenges and Opportunities

It is easy to take Stillwater’s natural setting and unique historic resources for granted. However, future planning will need to adapt to many kinds of changing conditions. These changes may be due to increased visitor demand and increased number of residents, as well as environmental needs. For example, peak-season parking capacity and additional garage development requires careful consideration of impacts on existing resources. For historic resources as well as the community in general, many types of resiliency plans need to be considered, including those for significant rainfall events and seasonal high water and flooding. Historic and cultural resources also need to be addressed when considering the demand for solar arrays, electric vehicle charging stations, and increased wireless capacity.

¹ Maxfield Research & Consulting, *Market Potential Analysis for Downtown Stillwater, Stillwater, Minnesota*. Prepared for SRF Consulting, 2016, 53.

2040 Historic Resources Chapter Development Process

The City of Stillwater organized an Advisory Committee to participate in the preparation of the 2040 Historic Resources Chapter of the Stillwater Comprehensive Plan update, along with the Heritage Preservation Commission. The consultant from Landscape Research attended several meetings to review Stillwater's preservation planning process and the 2030 comprehensive plan and recommend updates and revisions for 2040. The five preservation planning goals identified in the Heritage Preservation Ordinance and adopted by the Stillwater City Council in 1980 have been retained.

Heritage Preservation Ordinance Goals

Goal 1. Safeguard the heritage of the city by preserving historic properties that reflect Stillwater's cultural, social, economic, political, visual, aesthetic, or architectural heritage.

Goal 2. Protect and enhance the city's appeal and attraction to residents and visitors, using the presentation of historic properties to support and stimulate business and industrial investment.

Goal 3. Enhance the city's visual interest and aesthetic character and diversity.

Goal 4. Foster civic pride in the beauty and notable accomplishments of the city's past.

Goal 5. Promote the preservation and continued use of historic sites and structures for the education and general welfare of the city's residents.

The consultants also reviewed the Heritage Preservation Ordinance and related documents, the many studies and inventories completed since 1984, and public education materials. The recommendations of each study were noted, and the previous components of Stillwater's preservation planning program presented in the 2030 Plan were analyzed. The Advisory Committee, Heritage Preservation Commission members, and Community Development staff provided information and feedback.

Comments and observations from the Advisory Committee, HPC, staff, and the public were organized into categories including Ordinance and Guidelines, Staffing and HPC Resources, Local Designation and Program Development, Public Education, and Implementation.

Objectives and Policies

Each chapter in the Comprehensive Plan provides a list of goals and objectives. However, the Historic Resources Chapter provides another level (i.e., policies) of specificity in how the goals and objective may be obtained. The policies were developed through the Historic Resources' planning process, which included involvement from the Heritage Preservation Commission.

Objective 1.

Promote educational outreach and engagement opportunities related to historic preservation, including the cultural values and economic benefits of historic preservation.

Areas: Public Education and Awareness

Policies:

Policy 1. Create new ways to participate in heritage preservation that encourage more residents to engage in and influence decisions about the places that matter to them.

Policy 2. Expand outreach around heritage preservation activities and resources, and encourage opportunities for learning and enjoyment through creative ways of presenting cultural and historic resources to the public.

Policy 3. Expand outreach to owners of designated historic properties and other properties important to the city's heritage. Focus on the historic value of the properties, and offer maintenance and adaptive reuse information, including preservation workshops, expanded annual reports, and email updates.

Policy 4. Engage with and educate the next

generation of stewards of the city's built and natural environment. Include engagement with local schools, and existing and new owners of historic properties. Internships with the HPC may also create new audiences and participants.

Policy 5. Partner with community organizations to connect property owners with preservation education and technical support services.

Policy 6. Continue to support the efforts of the Stillwater Public Library (St. Croix Collection) and the Washington County Historical Society to collect and conserve materials related to all aspects of Stillwater's history.

Policy 7. Provide ongoing training for Heritage Preservation Commissioners, including annual retreats and access to state and national preservation conferences.

Policy 8. Continue to expand current public education measures including videos and podcasts, brochures, walking tours, and interpretive exhibits.

Policy 9. Continue to add information from studies and public education programs to the HPC website, including the Heirloom Homes and Landmarks Sites program. Consider adopting a graphic system to unify the presentation.

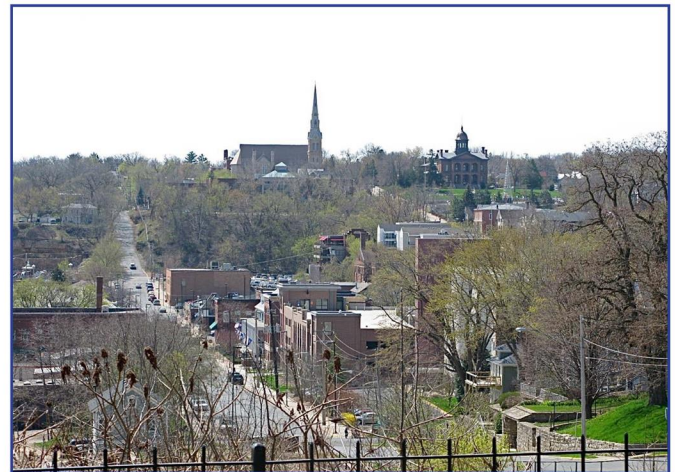
Policy 10. Digitize existing historic resource inventory data (approximately 2,000 properties) and integrate all records with the HPC website.

Policy 11. Expand the Commission's use of online web mapping applications such as Arc GIS Story Maps.

Policy 12. Continue to produce an HPC annual report designed for wide circulation. Such annual reports ensure that all city departments, community organizations, and residents have an understanding of the City's ongoing historic preservation efforts.



Stillwater Lift Bridge, 2018, during renovation as a pedestrian and bicycle path, and a foreground interpretive panel on bridge history and operation.



Looking from North Hill to South Hill over Second Street N., 2018.



S. 5th Street, 2018.

Objective 2

Continue to identify, examine, and evaluate historic resources with historic contexts and historic designation.

Areas: Identification, Evaluation and Designation

Policies:

Policy 1. Prioritize identification of publicly owned historic resources, including city parks, for evaluation, designation and preservation. Ensure that Stillwater's capital improvement budget includes historic preservation activities.

Policy 2. Engage communities that have been traditionally underrepresented in Stillwater's heritage preservation efforts to identify valuable historic resources and conduct further research on these resources.

Policy 3. Evaluate the ten previously completed neighborhood historic context studies and surveys for local and/or national designation. Recommend individual or district resources for local designation, and work with property owners, elected officials, and the State Historic Preservation Office to implement. These efforts should be incorporated into a long-range work plan.

Policy 4. Continue to complete additional context studies and survey for areas associated with the city's history and overall development:

- Sabin's Addition and H.R. Murdock's Addition
- South Hill
- North Hill
- Wilkin's Addition
- Churchill Nelson 2nd Addition and Marsh's Addition

Policy 5. Work with qualified archaeologists to organize existing data on significant and potentially significant archaeological sites and, where appropriate, develop tools to identify and protect these resources.

Policy 6. Use the Cultural Landscape District documentation as a guide to inventory the city's

public stairs, stone retaining walls, and linear circulation features such as stone paths. Work with Public Works staff on documentation, and evaluate the features for potential local heritage designation.

Policy 7. Evaluate the historic landscape of Lowell Park to ensure that future improvement conserves the scale, grades, circulation, and other features of the early-twentieth-century plans.

Policy 8. Identify and preserve unique Stillwater viewsheds.

Objective 3

Continue to preserve and maintain historic resources, and encourage adaptive reuse.

Areas: Preservation and Regulation

Policies:

Policy 1. Consider revisions to current preservation regulations to clarify approval practices and processes. Eliminate City Code inconsistencies, strengthen the connection between the Code and the design guidelines, and better clarify HPC roles and responsibilities.

Policy 2. Continue to refine and administer design guidelines so that the integrity of setting and context is maintained around historic resources, and that new development is compatible. Ensure that design guidelines reflect—and are tailored to protect—the significance criteria for which a property is designated.

Policy 3. Analyze design review practices to ensure that they are generally compatible with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, especially with regard to maintaining historic integrity.

Policy 4. Analyze the Downtown Design District and the Commercial Historic District. Review the existing Commercial Historic District design guidelines manual to determine if it meets the needs of the larger design review area. At minimum, revise the introductory material to better fit its current use.

Policy 5. Evaluate the potential expansion of the Commercial Historic District to include properties designated in 1992 that may now be potentially eligible within the 50-year local designation cut-off.

Policy 6. Explore interim protection as a tool for evaluation of threatened properties eligible for local designation.

Policy 7. Create and adopt design guidelines for evaluation of critical historic landscapes and viewsheds.

Policy 8. Encourage new development that retains and conserves many types of resources, including historic landscapes and archaeological sites.

Policy 9. Promote preservation as a means of achieving sustainability by reducing demolition waste and reducing the need for additional raw building materials. Support adoption of new technologies that make Stillwater more sustainable, including solar devices and electric charging stations.

Policy 10. Develop a financially feasible mothballing program for key resources requiring protection, including acquisition by the City or others, until suitable uses or owners are found.

Policy 11. Develop appropriate mitigation activities in cases where an important historic resource is lost or compromised.

Objective 4

Incorporate Stillwater's cultural and heritage preservation goals in all city department initiatives, policies and practices.

Area: Preservation Integration

Policies:

Policy 1. Strengthen heritage preservation and land use regulations to align with City goals, current preservation practices, and emerging historical contexts.

Policy 2. Work with city officials and planners to revise and clarify heritage preservation and zoning ordinances as they relate to the duties of the Heritage Preservation Commission. Eliminate City



James and Rose Spencer House, 205 Walnut Street E. (ca. 1870), in 2016.

Code inconsistencies, strengthen the connection between the Code and the design guidelines, and better clarify HPC activities.

Policy 3. Encourage preliminary review and early consultation with City staff to explore appropriate reuse for historic properties.

Policy 4. Address the need to provide operating budget for professional services for long-term projects, such as local designation studies.

Policy 5. Increase staff capacity and resources related to implementation of historic preservation plans and objectives.

Policy 6. Establish a yearly internship program to assist HPC staff with special projects.

Policy 7. Improve current archiving of historic property records in City Hall, including reconnaissance-level surveys currently only on paper. Conserve records of Rivertown Restoration Inc. and other early preservation organizations and efforts.

Objective 5

Promote historic preservation as an economic development tool.

Area: Preservation Partnerships

Policies:

Policy 1. Promote investment in cultural and historic resources that reflect broader City priorities.

Policy 2. Continue to incorporate historic and cultural resources into Stillwater's tourism efforts. Work with the Chamber of Commerce and Visitor's Bureau to support the many types of businesses that operate in historic buildings.

Policy 3. Develop, strengthen and promote partnerships to accomplish local preservation goals. These partners may include the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota, Washington County Historical Society, Stillwater/OPH Convention and Visitors Bureau, Stillwater Chamber of Commerce, Stillwater Public Library, St. Croix River Association, and the National Park Service-St. Croix National Scenic Riverway Association, and organizations that seek to convert properties into affordable housing.

Objective 6

Develop and promote financial incentives for preserving historically designated and other properties important to Stillwater's heritage.

Area: Financial Incentives

Policies:

Policy 1. Identify financial assistance for preservation planning and the rehabilitation of historic properties. Preservation programs may receive support from Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grants (Legacy, Partnership and Capital Projects Grants-in-Aid), MnDOT Transportation Alternatives, and the Jeffris Foundation. Sources of private sector support should also be identified.

Building rehabilitation resources may include loan and grant programs, Tax Increment Funds (TIF),

façade easements, façade improvement programs, and historic rehabilitation tax credits. Promote these programs and host educational sessions for owners of historic properties.

Policy 2. Consider financial preservation incentives for owners and developers of properties that are not locally designated but that may be highly important to the city's heritage.

Policy 3. Consider subsidizing architectural assistance for property owners who face challenging maintenance and remodeling issues.

Objective 7

Develop and expand recognition programs related to heritage preservation activities.

Area: Recognition

Policies:

Policy 1. Continue to recognize outstanding projects, programs, organizations, and individuals that have significantly contributed to Stillwater's heritage, broadened the appreciation of its history, and enhanced the urban environment. Include preservation partners and elected officials in the annual preservation awards programs.

Policy 2. Recognize the rehabilitation and maintenance efforts made by the owners of historic residences, and determine what kinds of "awards" are most effective and appreciated. Providing technical information and assistance, for example, may be more useful than a plaque or similar recognition.