

**HISTORIC DESIGNATION STUDY REPORT**  
**NORTH GRANT BOULEVARD HISTORIC DISTRICT**

**I. NAME**

Historic: None

Common: North Grant Boulevard Historic District

**II. LOCATION**

The district is located on the West Side and includes both sides of North Grant Boulevard from West Meinecke Avenue to West Locust Street.

**III. CLASSIFICATION**

District

**IV. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

Multiple

**V. DESCRIPTION**

A. Boundaries

The North Grant Boulevard Historic District includes both sides of Grant Boulevard from West Meinecke Avenue to West Locust Street. It includes all of Grant Boulevard except for the 2300 block, which is predominantly built-up with modern condominiums built in 1984. At its northern end, Grant Boulevard terminates at Sherman Park, a four block square city park. Grant Boulevard differs markedly in its physical characteristics from the surrounding neighborhood. It was constructed as a discrete residential subdivision with deed restrictions requiring the construction of houses of a generally higher quality than those found in the area. Its lot sizes and set back requirements further differentiate it from the small lots and modest frame bungalow and duplex tract houses found to the east of it and the late Victorian houses to the south. As a result, Grant Boulevard has always stood out on the West Side as a distinct residential enclave.

The legal property description is:

The Grant Boulevard Historic District is bounded by the east right-of-way line of the alley between North Grant Boulevard and North Sherman Boulevard, the south curb line of West Locust Street, the west right-of-way line of the alley between North Grant Boulevard and North 41<sup>st</sup> Street and the north curb line of West Meinecke Avenue.

## B. General Character

Grant Boulevard is a suburban residential street of middle-class, early twentieth century, detached, single-family houses. The houses are uniformly situated back from the street behind ample front lawns landscaped with mature shrubs. Although it is classified as a boulevard, Grant Boulevard has extra wide parkways on either side of the roadway, rather than a planted median strip. The original street trees have been replaced with young trees.

The majority of the 119 houses in the district were built between 1912 and 1930. They are mostly 1-1/2 or 2-story, masonry, medium-mansion scale dwellings, but rather carefully designed, well crafted, family houses that, taken together as a continuous streetscape, present an image of comfortable, bourgeois prosperity.

The most prevalent design influence is the bungalow style. The basic, 1-1/2 story, ground hugging house type with a prominent dormered roof and wide overhanging eaves is architecturally articulated in a wide variety of motifs ranging from Craftsmen bungalow to Arts and Crafts, Colonial, Norman, Mediterranean, Prairie and Tudor. There are also a number of two-story dwellings illustrating a range of styles of which Mediterranean, Prairie, Arts and Crafts, Norman and Colonial are the most common. Although a few of the houses are eye-catching architectural compositions designed to impress the passerby, such as 2717 North Grant Boulevard, most are similarly designed brick and stucco bungalows with bracketed eaves that blend together to create a continuous streetscape of informal and unimposing dwellings.

There are good examples of several domestic styles popular in the early twentieth century. Many houses including 2457, 2471, and 2762 illustrate the better type of middle-class Craftsmen bungalow. In addition there are good examples of Arts and Crafts bungalows such as 2524 and 2645, Tudor bungalows such as 2756, Mediterranean bungalows such as 2456, Prairie bungalows such as 2847 and numerous examples of what is generally known as the Milwaukee bungalow including 2504-2516- 2549, 2658, 2722 and 2831.

In addition to the street's predominant stock, there are examples of houses in the Arts and Crafts Style such as 2416, 2530 and 2856, the Mediterranean Style such as 2424, the Colonial Style such as 2557, 2804 and 2851, the Norman Style such as 2774 and 2810, the Prairie Style such as 2436, 2517 and 2770, and the Craftsman Style such as 2565.

## VI. SIGNIFICANCE

Date Built: 1912-1930

The Grant Boulevard Historic District is significant as an intact, early-twentieth century, residential area laid out on a boulevard plan displaying high quality domestic architecture including one of the city's finest and most varied collections of bungalows.

## **VII. HISTORY**

Grant Boulevard was laid out in 1909 as part of a residential subdivision of expensive middle-class house lots. The generous lots in the Boulevard Park and residence Park subdivisions were oriented to a wide street with extra-wide parkways to differentiate the subdivision from the less costly plats that surround it. Deed restriction attempted to ensure that only single-family, high quality residences would be built. The subdivision attracted prosperous, predominantly German-surnamed professionals and merchants many of whom were of the Jewish faith. The neighborhood is characterized by the homey, informal, middle-class cottage and suburban architecture of the 1910-1930 era rather than the large, formal, showy residences found in the more upper-income residential plats of the period. Few of the houses on Grant Boulevard, for example, were built with accommodations for live-in servants and most are modest in size with only two or three bedrooms and an informal bungalow floor plan of average sized rooms opening off one another. Nevertheless, most of these comfortable houses were excellently crafted of quality materials and finely finished on the interior. The houses on Grant Boulevard were constructed with the automobile in mind and most included a garage as part of the original construction.

Grant Boulevard remained a fashionable and prestigious residential street into the 1950s and 1960s when a few modern houses were constructed on the last available lots. In the 1970s, the surrounding neighborhood experienced a period of decline when property values fell and maintenance was curtailed on many houses. This trend was encouraged by the clearance of most of the 2300 block for freeway construction. The freeway was never built and the long vacant land was finally redeveloped with modern condominiums in 1984. In recent years the neighborhood has reversed its decline and Grant Boulevard is now a viable and desirable residential area.

## **VIII. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that Grant Boulevard be designated a historic district in accordance with the provisions of Section 2-335 of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances.

## IX. PRESERVATION GUIDELINES

The following preservation guidelines represent the principle concerns of the Historic Preservation Commission regarding his historic designation. However, the Commission reserves the right to make final decisions based upon particular design submissions. These guidelines shall be applicable only to the North Grant Boulevard Historic District. Nothing in these guidelines shall be construed to prevent ordinary maintenance or restoration and/or replacement of documented original elements.

### A. Guidelines for Rehabilitation

The North Grant Boulevard Historic District is important as one of Milwaukee's best concentrations of well-designed bungalows and early 20<sup>th</sup> century suburban houses exhibiting fine craftsmanship and materials. Throughout the district's history owners have maintained their properties in nearly original condition. This has resulted in a neighborhood of well-preserved period residences and intact sites. These guidelines are based upon those contained in Section 2-335(10) of the historic preservation ordinance. These guidelines are not intended to restrict an owner's use of his/her property, but to serve as a guide for making changes that will be sensitive to the architectural integrity of the structure and appropriate to the overall character of the district.

#### 1. Roofs

- a. Retain the original roof shape. Dormers, skylights and solar collector panels may be added to roof surfaces if they do not visually intrude upon those elevations visible from the public right-of-way. Avoid making changes to the roof shape that would alter the building height, roofline, pitch or gable orientation.
- b. Retain the original roofing materials, wherever possible. Avoid using new roofing materials that are inappropriate to the style and period of the building and neighborhood.
- c. Replace deteriorated roof coverings with new materials that match the old in size, shape, color and texture. Avoid replacing deteriorated roof covering with new materials that differ to such an extent from the old in size, shape, color and texture that the appearance of the building is altered.

#### 2. Exterior Finishes

- a. Masonry
  - (i) Unpainted brick or stone should not be painted or covered. Avoid painting or covering natural stone and unpainted brick. This is likely to be historically incorrect and could cause irreversible damage if it was decided to remove the paint at a later date.
  - (ii) Repoint defective mortar by duplicating the original in color, style, texture and strength. Avoid using mortar

colors and pointing styles that were unavailable or not used when the building was constructed.

- (iii) Clean masonry only when necessary to halt deterioration and with the gentlest method possible. Sandblasting brick or stone surfaces is prohibited. This method of cleaning erodes the surface of the material and accelerates deterioration. Avoid the indiscriminate use of chemical products that could have an adverse reaction with the masonry materials, such as the use of acid on limestone or marble.
- (iv) Repair or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the old as closely as possible. Avoid using new material that is inappropriate or was unavailable when the building was constructed, such as artificial cast stone or fake brick veneer.

b. Stucco

Repair stucco with a stucco mixture duplicating the original as closely as possible in appearance and texture.

c. Wood

- (i) Retain original material, whenever possible. Avoid removing architectural features such as half-timbering, window architraves and doorway pediments. There are, in most cases, an essential part of a building's character and appearance that should be retained.
- (ii) Repair or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the appearance of the old as closely as possible. Avoid covering architectural features with new materials that are inappropriate or were unavailable when the building was constructed such as artificial stone, brick, veneer, asbestos or asphalt shingles, vinyl or aluminum siding.

d. Terra Cotta

- (i) Unpainted terra cotta should not be painted or covered. Avoid painting or covering naturally glazed or finished terra cotta. This is historically incorrect and could cause irreversible damage if it was decided to remove the paint at a later date.
- (ii) Clean terra cotta only when necessary to halt deterioration and with the gentlest method available. Sandblasting terra cotta is prohibited. This method of cleaning destroys the material.
- (iii) Repair or replace deteriorated terra cotta with new material that duplicates the old as closely as possible. Precast tinted concrete or cast fiber glass are recommended replacement materials as long as it is finished with a

masonry coating to resemble the original appearance. Avoid using new material that is inappropriate or does not resemble the original.

### 3. Windows and Doors

- a. Retain existing window and door openings that are visible from the public right-of-way. Retain the original configuration of panes, sash, lintels, keystones, sills, architraves, pediments, hoods, doors, shutters and hardware. Avoid making additional openings or changes in the principal elevations by enlarging or reducing window or door openings to fit new stock window sash or new stock door sizes. Avoid changing the size or configuration of windowpanes or sash. Avoid discarding original doors and door hardware when they can be repaired or reused.
- b. Respect the stylistic period or periods a building represents. If replacement of window sash or doors is necessary, the replacement should duplicate the appearance and design of the original window sash or door. Avoid using inappropriate sash and door replacements such as unpainted galvanized aluminum storm and screen window combinations. Avoid the filling in or covering of openings with materials like glass-block or the installation of plastic metal strip awnings or fake shutters that are not in proportion to the openings or that are historically out of the character with the building. Avoid using modern style window units such as horizontal sliding sash in place of double-hung or the substitution of units with glazing configurations not appropriate to the style of the building.

### 4. Porches, Trim and Ornamentation

- a. Retain porches and steps visible from the public right-of-way that are historically and architecturally appropriate to the buildings. Avoid altering porches and steps by enclosing open porches or replacing wooden steps with cast concrete steps or by removing original architectural features, such as handrails, balusters, columns or brackets.
- b. Retain trim and decorative ornamentation including copper downspouts and guttering, copings, cornices, cresting, finials, railings, balconies, oriels, pilasters, columns, chimneys, bargeboards or decorative panels. Avoid the removal of trim and decorative ornamentation that is essential to the maintenance of the building historic character and appearance.
- c. Repair or replace, where necessary, deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the old as closely as possible. Avoid using replacement materials that do not accurately reproduce the appearance of the original material.

5. Additions

- a. Make additions that harmonize with the existing building architecturally and are located so as not visible from the public right-of-way, if at all possible. Avoid making additions that are unsympathetic to the original structure and visually intrude upon the principal elevations.

B. Guidelines for Streetscapes

The streetscape on North Grant Boulevard is visually cohesive because of the intact building stock and the retention of period street and landscaping features. There are no noncontributing buildings or visually prominent inappropriate additions to historic structures. The traditional landscape treatment of the building lots and the harp lights contribute to the maintenance of the district's traditional residential character.

1. Maintain the height, scale, mass and materials established by the buildings in the district and the traditional setback and density of the block faces. Avoid introducing elements that are incompatible in terms of siting, materials, height or scale.
2. Use traditional landscaping, fencing, signage and lighting fixtures that are compatible with the character and period of the district. Avoid introducing landscape features, fencing, lighting or signage that are inappropriate to the character of the district.
3. Retain the existing harp light style streetlights.

C. Guidelines for New Construction

It is important that additional new construction be designed so as to harmonize with the character of the district.

1. Siting

New construction must reflect the traditional siting of buildings in the district. This includes setback, spacing between buildings, the orientation of openings to the street and neighboring structures, and the relationship between the main building and accessory buildings. New buildings should not obstruct the vistas from the street to the house.

2. Scale

Overall building height and bulk; the expression of major building divisions including foundation, body and roof; and individual building components such as porches, overhangs and fenestration must be compatible with the surrounding structures.

3. Form

The massing of new construction must be compatible with the surrounding building. The profiles of roofs and building elements that project and recede from the main block must express the same continuity established by the historic structures.

4. Materials

The building materials that are visible from the public right-of-way should be consistent with the colors, textures, proportions, and combinations of cladding materials traditionally used in the district. The physical composition of the materials may be different from that of the historic materials, but the same appearance should be maintained.

D. Guidelines for Demolition

Although demolition is not encouraged and is generally not permissible, there may be instances when demolition may be acceptable if approved by the Historic Preservation Commission. The Commission shall take the following guidelines, with that found in subsection 9(h) of the ordinance, into consideration when reviewing demolition requests.

1. Condition

Demolition requests may be granted when it can be clearly demonstrated that the condition of a building or portion thereof is such that it constitutes an immediate threat to health and safety.

2. Importance

Consideration will be given to whether or not the building is of historical or architectural significance or displays a quality of material and craftsmanship that does not exist in other structures in the area.

3. Location

Consideration will be given to whether or not the building contributes to the neighborhood and the general street appearance and has a positive effect on other buildings in the area.

4. Potential for Restoration

Consideration will be given to whether or not the building is beyond economically feasible repair.

5. Additions

Consideration will be given to whether or not the proposed demolition is a later addition that is not in keeping with the original design of the structure or does not contribute to its character.

6. Replacement

Consideration will be given to whether or not the building is to be replaced by a compatible building of similar age, architectural style and scale or by a new building that would fulfill the same aesthetic function in the area as did the old structure (see New Construction Guidelines).