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## **THE VILLE LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT**

### **Ordinance 60236 (as Amended, Board Bill No. 444)**

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An Ordinance concerning the Ville Historic District; designating a described area in the City of St. Louis as an historic district, to be known as the Ville Historic District: containing, identifying and providing for maintenance of a general location map of such district, which also evaluates the architectural significance of the improvements within such district; stating the historic, architectural, cultural and aesthetic significance and the current economic condition of such district; describing the advantages to residents of such district and to the City which may be anticipated as a consequence of historic district designation; containing, identifying and providing for maintenance of a plat at a scale of not more than 300 feet to the inch indicating the existing uses of all properties within the district; stating a general plan for the district indicating planned or proposed (public or private) restoration, development and demolition within the district; prescribing historic standards to be applied within the district; stating amendments to the existing zoning classification and boundaries necessary to conform to the proposed plan; with a severability clause and an emergency clause.

**WHEREAS**, ordinance 57986 (Sections 24.04.010 to 24.20.020, inclusive, Revised Code St. Louis, 1980, Anno.), provides a procedure for designation of historic districts; and Whereas, pursuant to such ordinance the Aldermen of the wards in which the Ville area as hereinafter defined is located have petitioned that such area be designated an historic district; and

**WHEREAS**, the Heritage and Urban Design Commission has duly approved such petition as provided in Ordinance 57986 \_\_\_\_\_. 1986;

**WHEREAS**, designation of the Ville area as hereinafter described as an Historic District is in the best interests of the City of St. Louis;

***Be it ordained by the City of St. Louis as follows:***

**SECTION ONE.**

Notwithstanding its present zoning designation, the following area of the City of St. Louis, together with the improvements therein, is designated an historic district:

Beginning at the intersection of the center-line of Sarah Avenue and the center-line of the east-west alley in the City Block 3669 extended eastward; thence westward along the center-line of the alleys in City Blocks 3669, 3672, 4468S and extended to the intersection with the northern extension of the center of the north-south alley in City Block 3714; thence southward along aforesaid extension of the center-line of the north-south alley through City Blocks 3714, 3715, 3716, 3717 and 3718 and extended southward to the intersection of the center-line of North Market Avenue; thence westward along the center-line of North Market Avenue to the intersection of the center-line of the north-south alley in City Block 3719 extended northward; thence southward along the

immediate aforesaid alley extension through City Blocks 3719 and extended to the intersection of the center-line of Garfield Avenue; thence eastward along the center-line of Garfield Avenue to the intersection with the extension northward of the centerline of the eastern north-south alley in City Block 3720; thence southward along immediately aforesaid alley extension center-line southward along the center-line of alley through City Block 3720 to the intersection with the center-line of Cote Brilliante Avenue; thence westward along the center-line of Cote Brilliante Avenue to the intersection with the northward extension of the center-line of eastern north-south alley in City Block 3721; thence southward along immediate aforesaid alley center-line through City Block 3721, 3722 and part of City Block 3776 and extended southward to the intersection of the westward extension of the east-west alley immediately south of Dr. Martin Luther King Drive (alley in City Block 3724); thence eastward along the immediate aforesaid alley extension eastward along said alley center-line through City Block 3724, 3727, 3728, 3731 and alley extended eastward to the intersection with the center-line of Sarah Avenue to the intersection with the center-line of Dr. Martin Luther King Drive; thence eastward along centerline of Dr. Martin Luther King Drive to the intersection with the southward extension of the center-line of north-south alley in City Block 3657; thence northward along the immediate aforesaid extension of alley center-line through City Blocks 3658, 3657, 3656 and extension northward to the intersection of the center-line of Garfield Avenue; thence eastward along center-line of Garfield Avenue to the intersection with the southward extension of the north-south alley in City Block 3654; thence northward along the immediate aforesaid alley centerline extension through City Blocks 3655, 3654, 3653, 3652, 3651B, 3651A, 3650 and part of 3649 to the intersection with the centerline of the east-west alley in City Block 3649; thence westward along immediate aforesaid alley center-line to the intersection with the center-line of Sarah Avenue or the point of beginning.

The boundaries of such district, addresses of properties therein, and the architectural significance of improvements therein are set forth in a map captioned Architectural Survey Map, a copy of which is attached hereto and incorporated herein by this reference. Copies of such map shall be maintained with the Clerks copy of this office and in the offices of the Register and of the Heritage and Urban Design Commission.

## **SECTION TWO.**

- a. The historic, architectural, cultural and aesthetic significance of the Ville Historic District is as follows:

### **The Ville Historical Statement--Introduction**

The Ville neighborhood is of great historic significance as the cradle of culture for Black St. Louis. The Ville was a beacon, attracting major Black literary, musical and theatrical figures of international stature; and an incubator for local talent whose brilliant contributions exceeded local and national boundaries. Leaders of the Famed "Harlem

Renaissance" of the 1920's and 1930's felt at home in the Ville, because the neighborhood was part of the movement. A large disproportionate number of individuals from this St. Louis neighborhood went on to achieve world-wide fame.

In the midst of this cultural cornucopia, the Ville was a thriving business district which both served and sustained the area and adjacent neighborhoods. The famed Poro College was located here. Founded by Mrs. Annie Turbo Malone, the school served as a training ground for sales persons and distributors for her hair care products, which was her major business. Other businesses rounded out the manufacturing, retail and service business community.

The Ville was a major medical center, not just for Black St. Louisians but for Black physicians and allied health professionals from across the United States and several foreign countries. As with most St. Louis institutions, hospitals and related organizations were rigidly segregated by race. Homer G. Phillips Hospital therefore stood as a magnificent medical oasis in the desert of racially segregated medical care delivery for Black people. Fittingly, the Homer G. Phillips Hospital Complex is today a National Historic Place. The Complex is of major architectural and aesthetic significance because it brought a new and positive physical dimension to the area.

In addition to culture, business and medicine, the Ville was also the education center for Black St. Louis. Among the education facilities, some of which are still active, are Simmons School (formerly Elleardsville Colored School No. 8), Sumner High School (the first Black high school west of the Mississippi River), Lincoln University Law School, Turner Middle school, Poro College and of course Homer G. Phillips Hospital.

### **History**

The Ville neighborhood was settled in the mid-1800s as a semi-rural area of the northwest suburbs of the City of St. Louis. The area was formerly called Elleardsville, named for Charles Elleards, a German horticulturist who chose the location so that his estate and nursery would be next to Old St. Charles Rock Road, which was the main route to St. Charles, Missouri, the State capital.

Mr. Elleards built a two-story brick home on Goode Avenue, which was later expanded to Newstead Avenue, and from Old St. Charles Rock Road to Cote Brilliance Avenue. St. Charles Rock Road is now Dr. Martin Luther King Drive, Taylor Avenue, St. Louis Avenue and Sarah Street.

Within the Ville boundaries are major currently - functioning Black Institutions; important structures and sites no longer in their original use; and a growing number of property rehabilitation projects. Most important is an exceedingly rich and diverse history of triumph of the human spirit by residents of the Ville and those who are influenced by its presence.

The Ville produced a disproportionately high number of Blacks who made major contributions to St. Louis, the nation and the world. A large number of these persons were graduates of Sumner High School, still located in the Ville. This historic high school stands today as a major educational institution. Its historic value is demonstrated by a

sterling symbol of lasting contributions. A partial listing of Sumner graduates will serve to indicate its place in history.

In the Arts, **Spencer T. Banks**, a commercial artists who developed a successful career despite the field being generally closed to members of his race. **Thurman Dillard** became a noted sculptor. **Voris Dickerson** was a portrait painter who specialized in athletic personalities; and **Edna Nofles** became a designer and commercial artist. **William E. Feaman** continues today as a commercial artist and editorial cartoonist for the St. Louis American Newspaper.

Sumner High School's list of graduates who became successful in business is impressive. A representative roster will give a picture of the diversity of talented persons from this historic high school.

**Lucien P. Garrett, Jr.** continued his education and became a manufacturing chemist. **Darrell Clay** became an auditor for Johnson and Johnson, the medical supplies manufacturing giant. **Elrod Hubbard** formed a successful construction company. Insurance, the **Ford Brothers** started a company that later merged with a larger firm, Lawton Bryne and Bruner. **Charles J. Gales, Sr., Annette Harris Officer, Vora Thompson Wilson** and **Virginia Bullock Koonce** started funeral homes that continue today.

Two giants among Black real estate entrepreneurs came out of Sumner High School. **Patrobas C. Robinson** was the first Black admitted to the hitherto segregated Metropolitan Real Estate Board. Before Blacks were admitted, they could not use the Realtor designation, giving the impression that Black real estate professionals were less competent than whites.

Before P.C. Robinson was admitted, Black real estate professionals who affiliated did so with a local branch of the national black real estate organizational, Realtists.

**Clifton W. Gates** became a successful realtor who later expanded the horizons of his business interests. Other interests included mortgage banking. He helped establish the first full-service Black owned bank in St. Louis, Gateway National Bank. More recently, Mr. Gates is known as the prominent owner of a beer distributorship from the Miller Brewing Company. **Harry E. Douglas** established the Belva hair care manufacturing company. This was a significant contribution in that major white manufacturers did not develop hair care products for Blacks. **Annie Turbo Malone** had pioneered in that area of business in St. Louis. Mrs. Malone was not born in St. Louis but located her business, Poro College in the Ville.

The Ville was also known for the quality and breath of its civic and political leadership. Many Ville leaders rose to national prominence. A giant among political leaders was the legendary **Jordan W. Chambers**, who was one of the most powerful Black politicians of his time. He was known as a power broker who made decisions on the choices of candidates for elective office. Chambers served as Committee-man and Deputy Constable. Like most Blacks of the early twentieth century began his political career as a Republican, the party of Abraham Lincoln.

By the mid-1930's, Jordan led many Black political leaders and many voters from the Republican to the Democratic ranks. As a Democrat, Jordan is said to have exercised through his sharp political instinct and acumen, an amount of power that belied his modest political office.

While Jordan was a genuinely canny politician, **David M. Grant**, another Ville resident was suave, analytical and incisive. After Grant graduated from Sumner High School, he continued his education at Howard University in Washington., DC. He earned a law degree at the same institution. Grant returned to St. Louis and had a distinguished career in law. He entered private practice and also held posts in City government.

**Wayman F. Smith, Jr.** became the first Black Certified Public Accountant in Missouri. As his professional career grew, he added to it a political career. Smith became one of few Black members of the Board of Aldermen. Today, his son Wayman Smith III is a St. Louis Alderman.

**Joseph W. B. Clark** built a successful plumbing business and became an Alderman and later held City government posts as Director of Public Safety and of Welfare. Clark was a pioneering leader of the St. Louis Civil Rights Movement.

**Margaret Bush Wilson** attorney and civic leader today has risen to a position of international prominence. Mrs. Wilson was elected as the first Black female Chairperson of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Mrs. Wilson is the daughter of James Bush Sr., a successful real estate broker. Mr. Bush helped prepare the evidence that led to the historic landmark Supreme Court ruling in Shelley v. Kramer in 1948. That ruling outlawed restrictive covenants used to prevent Blacks from moving into White neighborhoods.

**Hugh J. White** was a lawyer and politician. He was elected as a State Representative. While his career in public service was noteworthy, his military career was just as distinguished. White entered military service in World War II and was accepted in the Army Air Corps. He wanted to become a fighter pilot but was discouraged because the Air Corps did not train Blacks as pilots. A pilot training program was later established for Blacks at Tuskegee Institute, Alabama, where White was accepted. He became a crack fighter pilot and rose to the rank of Major. As a result of his military exploits and subsequent public leadership, after his death, the St. Louis Chapter of Tuskegee Airmen Incorporated was named in White's honor.

**Reverend Archie Blaine** was the first Black Clerk of the Board of Election Commissioners, a former Alderman, and the first Black administrative assistant to a Mayor of St. Louis.

**Dr. Julia Davis**, a renowned Africa-American historian, is a current resident living in the inner core of the Ville. She is the founder of the Negro History Exhibits at the St. Louis Public Library. In honor of her efforts in revealing the Black contributions to world history and culture, the "Julia Davis Week" was established in St. Louis and is commemorated annually February 10-16.

- b. The current economic conditions of the Ville Historic District, and the advantages to residents thereof and to the City which are anticipated as a result of historic district designation are as follows:

**Current Economic Condition**

The Ville is an older residential neighborhood which offers a unique opportunity and potential for augmenting the City's desirable living areas for low and moderate income households. Though currently suffering from many years of disinvestment, the Ville in recent years has shown evidence of renewed interest for revitalization. The Ville has more than one hundred vacant residential structures, most of which are feasible for rehabilitation. In addition, there are close to three hundred vacant parcels of land that offer opportunity for new development.

The area was adversely affected by out-migration and housing code policies during the 1960's and most of the 1970's. Housing opportunities outside of the area developed for long-time Ville residents. Also, local and federal urban housing policies before 1975 favored demolition of vacant buildings.

The Ville has a variety of housing types and a concentration of one-family and two-family structures. The composition of the housing stock is very similar to that of the housing stock in the City overall. Fifty-eight percent of the housing units in the Ville are single family and two-family, eighteen percent are three and four unit structures and twenty-one percent are five or more unit structures. Slightly more than twenty-five percent of the units in the Ville are owner-occupied units.

**Section Three.**

A set of plats and legend therefore at a scale of not more than 300 feet to the inch, indicating the existing uses of all properties within the Ville Historic District, captioned, "Plat - Ville Historic District," is attached to the Clerk's copy of this ordinance. A copy of such set of plats is attached hereto and incorporated herein by this reference. Copies of such set of plats shall at all times be maintained in the offices of the Register and the Heritage and Urban Design Commission.

**Section Four.**

The following general plan for the Ville Historic District is thereby adopted, to be implemented consistent with the standards in Section Five, and in accordance with and subject to the provisions of Ordinance 57986 (Sections 24.12.010 to 24.20.020, Rev. Code St. Louis, 1980. Anno.).

**Development Plan and Strategies for Ville Neighborhood**

1. Development Goals and Objectives
  - A. Create a well designed, moderate income residential area which is a competitive residential location for working households.
  - B. Preserve and restore the culturally and historically significant buildings in the neighborhood.

- C. Create a new housing market in the area, without excluding the existing residents,
- D. Develop new housing units on vacant land.
- E. Expand and improve neighborhood facilities for recreation and shopping.

## 2. Development Strategies

The restoration, preservation or rehabilitation of all structures in the area, with immediate emphasis on structures in and adjacent to the institutional core, along Dr. Martin Luther King Drive, St. Louis Avenue., Taylor Avenue, and Sarah Street, and at intersections within the area are most important. New residential construction should be on a scale and at locations that create significant positive visual and physical image to the area. Property owners should be encouraged to purchase adjacent vacant lots for side yard space. All construction, demolition, or alteration of exterior architectural features with respect to any improvement within the Ville Historic District is subject to "the review of the Heritage and Urban Design Commission and staff and other appropriate City agencies"

The majority of the structures in the area are masonry structures which are at least eighty years old and have lacked adequate maintenance over recent years. They need more than normal maintenance if they are to be retained without further deterioration. Based on exterior conditions, they have a variety of deficiencies when evaluated against current code standards. While requiring repairs, however, the majority of the residential structures in the area are structurally sound and feasible for rehabilitation. The median value of owner-occupied units is less than half of the City median value of owner-occupied units. This is related to the fact that the overwhelming majority of Ville households have low and moderate incomes.

Some housing rehabilitation has occurred in the neighborhood, however, the federal development incentives that were used are being reduced or eliminated. As a result, development of affordable housing units have become difficult. The historic district designation can provide incentives through federal investment tax credits and stimulate increased development activity in the Ville. Designation will assist marketing new development in the Ville neighborhood.

The level of rehabilitation required to retain the remaining housing stock will be infeasible without the federal investment tax credits. Tax credits will keep housing costs at affordable levels. A revitalized and redeveloped Ville Neighborhood will improve the quality of life for present and future Ville residents and provide economic benefits to the City of St. Louis.

- A. Parking: Off-street parking must be behind the building line. Rear alley access to parking area should be encouraged, especially for multi-family dwelling units.
- B. Landscaping: Trees and lawns must be maintained and street plantings are encouraged at approximately 35 foot intervals on all streets.

- C. Zoning: No zoning changes are presently proposed, and any future proposed changes should be made with prior notification of the Aldermen, who is encouraged to inform the Heritage and Urban Design Commission and the relevant active neighborhood organizations.
- D. New Housing Construction: New housing development should be carried out as residential, townhouse style and multi-family development, with design and siting characteristics that are harmonious with existing structures.
- E. Traffic Circulation: Dr. Martin Luther King, Sarah, Taylor, St. Louis Avenue, Newstead, Maffitt, Kennerly, and Whittier will remain major thoroughfares, with special care devoted to the maintenance of streets, sidewalks, and building facades.

#### **Priority Development Areas and Sites**

- A. Northeast Sector: The area bounded by Lamdin Avenue, Kennerly Avenue, St. Louis Avenue, and Sarah Street should be maintained as a strong residential area of homeowners. Vacant buildings and vacant land should be redeveloped immediately to preserve the relatively good housing quality. Housing code enforcement should be encouraged through minor rehabilitation and maintenance.
- B. Homer G. Phillips Complex: The facility should be redeveloped for multipurpose use as a magnet for the neighborhood, with emphasis on housing or the elderly convalescent.
- C. Kennerly/Maffitt: The large tracts of land in the 4300 blocks of Kennerly and Maffitt are suitable for multi-family development to compliment the recent new housing construction at Kennerly and Newstead.
- D. Taylor Avenue: The section of Taylor Avenue between Cote Brilliante and St. Louis has a number of vacant buildings, which if rehabilitated would enhance the visual image of this major thoroughfare and preserve the existing housing stock.
- E. Pendleton: Aldine to Garfield: The intersections offer approximately four acres of vacant land suitable for residential development which would dramatically enhance the area.
- F. Whittier Courts: This vacant structure and the adjacent structure at the southeast corner of Whittier and St. Ferdinand are the largest vacant residential structures remaining in the Ville neighborhood. These historic structures were originally built to provide housing for the resident staff at Homer G. Phillips hospital.
- G. Belle Glade/Sarah: This two acre tract of land could be redeveloped for multi-family or single family development.
- H. Whittier/Cote Brilliante: This one acre tract of vacant land could be redeveloped for multi-family or single family development.
- I. Scattered Site Rehabilitation: The neighborhood has many vacant buildings that should be purchased and rehabilitated through homestead and investor activity.

#### **Section Five.**

The following historic district standards for the Ville Historic District are hereby adopted:

[see The Ville Standards] The Heritage and Urban Design Commission and the Heritage and Urban Design staff shall be responsible for enforcing compliance with the adopted standards and for the determination of a project's compatibility with the existing neighborhood fabric.

**Section Six.**

No amendments to the existing zoning classification and boundaries are necessary to conform to the historic district plan.

**Section Seven.**

The Heritage and Urban Design Commission and the Division of Heritage and Urban Design shall be responsible for administration of this ordinance, as provided by, and subject to, the provisions of Ordinance 57986 (Sections 24.12.010 to 24.20.020, Rev. Code, St. Louis 1980 Anno.), with appropriate assistance of other City departments or offices as provided by City Charter or Ordinance.

**Section Eight.**

If any section or portion of a section of this ordinance or application hereof is declared invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, the remaining sections and portions of sections, and applications hereof shall remain in force and effect.

**Section Nine.**

This being an ordinance necessary for the immediate protection of the public health, safety and welfare, it is hereby declared to be an emergency ordinance pursuant to Article IV S 20 of the St. Louis City Charter.

***Approved: February 5, 1987.***