



**GLENDALE TOWNHOMES:  
AN ASSESSMENT OF  
NATIONAL REGISTER ELIGIBILITY**

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## PROJECT AND METHODOLOGY

The Minneapolis Public Housing Authority (MPHA) owns and manages the Glendale Townhomes, a public housing project opened in 1952. The MPHA hired LHB to consider options for the project's future development. Because anticipated improvements would involve funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, LHB retained historical consultants Hess, Roise and Company to evaluate the property's National Register eligibility and assist with compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Points of contact for the project included MPHA Deputy Executive Director Emilio Bettaglio and Development Project Manager Dean Carlson, and LHB Housing Studio Leader Kim Brethem. Charlene Roise managed the project for Hess Roise and coauthored this report with staff historian Rachel Peterson, with research assistance from Penny Petersen.

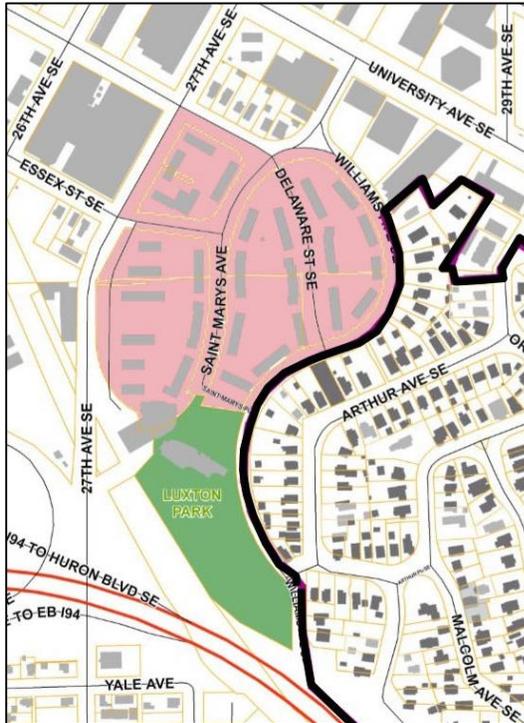
Research was conducted in Hess Roise in-house files and at the Minnesota Historical Society, Hennepin County Central Library, Northwest Architectural Archives at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, and City of Minneapolis. Mid-twentieth-century records of the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority archived at the city's Community Planning and Economic Development Department were particularly helpful.



*166-176 Twenty-Seventh Avenue Southeast, view east showing typical townhome.*

## PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

The Glendale Townhomes opened in 1952 and underwent substantial renovations in 1972 and 1989. It is in Prospect Park, a neighborhood on the east side of Minneapolis between the University of Minnesota and the Saint Paul border. The neighborhood is uncommonly hilly and Glendale's site was previously known as Sand Hill or Morse Hill. The site's use as a gravel pit and additional grading during the construction of Glendale has substantially altered the topography, but the change in elevation, which rises to the northeast, remains noteworthy in a city where most land is flat.



*The Glendale property is shaded pink.  
The thick black line to the east is the western  
boundary of the Prospect Park Residential  
Historic District.*

Most of the streets are lined with sidewalks and grass boulevards that hold mature trees and saplings. Curvilinear streets are a distinct feature of Prospect Park. In Glendale, Saint Mary's and Williams Avenues Southeast form a teardrop shape bisected by Delaware Street Southeast, which was extended east through this block as part of the development. Saint Mary's Place, which links Williams and Saint Mary's Avenues at the south end of the teardrop, was also added at that time. Two somewhat more rectilinear blocks are on the project's west side between Saint Mary's and Twenty-Seventh Avenues Southeast. These blocks are divided by Essex Street Southeast. South of Essex, Twenty-Seventh Avenue splits into two parallel sections, with the westernmost section carrying through-traffic. The easternmost section, shown as a "new service road" on a July 1951 plan, provides access to the buildings on that edge of the project. As built, it looped below the southernmost building in the project and connected with Saint Mary's. (The July 1951 plan and an aerial of the project around the time of its construction are on pages 19-20.) A community center was erected across the southern section of the road in 1995, so the

southern end of the project's Twenty-Seventh Avenue now terminates in a parking lot.<sup>1</sup>

The development has several playgrounds between the buildings as well as large lawns at the intersection of Saint Mary's Avenue and Delaware Street. These recreational areas were part of the original plan and are in their historic locations, although the playground equipment has been replaced. Additionally, Luxton Park (historically known as the Prospect Field and the Prospect Park Playfield) abuts Glendale's southern border. Parking lots that were originally incorporated on the interior of the blocks remain.

<sup>1</sup> Larson and McLaren, Hugh Vincent Feehan, G. M. Orr Engineering Company, and Richard W. Evans, plans for "Low-Rent Housing Project, Minnesota No. 2-4 of the Housing and Redevelopment Authority in and for the City of Minneapolis, Aided by the Public Housing Administration, an Agency of the Federal Government," July 1951.

Glendale's 184 units are divided among twenty-eight buildings that are mostly rectangular in plan, with one of the long walls serving as the primary facade. Most primary facades face the street and are separated from the sidewalks by lawns, with straight walkways, with steps if required by the topography, connecting individual unit entries and the sidewalks. Along Twenty-Seventh Avenue south of Essex, the buildings are oriented perpendicular to the street and sidewalks run between the buildings. Fenced patios, play areas, and parking lots are behind most of the buildings.

The twenty-eight buildings feature six different plans (described in more detail below), but all are similar, giving visual consistency to the complex. Most units are two-story townhouses, with some single-story units at ends of buildings. The first stories of the buildings are clad in original brick veneer, and the second stories, which project slightly, are clad in composite siding. The composite siding dates from a 1989 renovation. The vertical dimension of the replacement siding is less than that of the original siding, but it retains the horizontal orientation. The buildings originally had flat roofs, but hipped roofs with wide eaves were installed in 1972.

While the window units on all buildings have been replaced, the historic openings have been preserved. In addition, the original brushed-aluminum exterior framework for the first-floor windows, which incorporates combination storm windows and panels between windows, remains in place on the primary facades. This establishes a pattern of fenestration that is a distinguishing feature between building types. The brushed-aluminum trim for the single and paired windows on the second floor was removed during the 1989 renovation. The side walls have four one-over-one windows, two on each floor. On the rear facades, the first floor holds a door for each unit and one-over-one windows, and the second floor has one-over-one windows and small sliding windows. All of the windows on the first floor have historic, projecting stone sills. The sills on the second-floor windows do not project.



*Twenty-Seventh Avenue showing the curvilinear street plan, view south.*



*Playground behind 42-52 Williams Avenue and 2837-2851 Delaware Street, view southwest.*



*Shared portico on 42-52 Williams Avenue, view southeast.*

Front doors were originally sheltered by flat-roofed canopies, which were supported by simple posts or precast concrete panels. Pilasters that flank some doors today indicate where the concrete panels were once attached to the brick walls. In 1989, the canopies were enlarged and modified with gabled roofs supported by rectangular metal posts. Concrete thresholds are sometimes approached by concrete steps.

The interior of each unit is divided by a central staircase,

which runs parallel to the primary facade. Basements have an open plan. On the first floor, the front door opens into a living room, with kitchen and dining areas along the rear wall. The second floor holds bedrooms and bathrooms, which are laid in different configurations depending on the number of bedrooms in the unit.

The six building types are distinguished by the window pattern on the primary facade and the number of units (a table of building types and representative photographs of types follow):

- Type A (six units; two and three bedrooms): The townhomes on either end have individual porticos, while the entries of the central units are paired and share porticos. Two pairs of aluminum-framed windows (four total) are between the porticos and share a stone sill.
- Type B (eight units; two and three bedrooms): The units on either end of the building have individual entries and the six central units are paired and share a portico. Like Type A, two pairs of aluminum-framed windows are between the porticos.
- Type C (six units; one and four bedrooms): The end units have separate porticos, while the entries for the other units are paired with shared porticos. Groups of three one-over-one windows are between the outer porticos and two pairs of windows are in the center.
- Type D (four units; one and four bedrooms): While the smallest type, these buildings are similar to the others in having separate porticos for the units at the far ends, with the center two entries sharing a portico. Groups of three one-over-one windows are between the porticos.
- Type E (four units; one and four bedrooms): The single Type E building comprises a Type D building with a one-story office wing on the east side. The west half of the office wing was constructed in 1951. Its primary south facade has a central pair of one-over-one windows flanked by groups of three one-over-one aluminum windows. The center bay, which originally held the entrance to the office, has been filled with a darker shade of brick. The east half of the office wing was added in 2002. It has a large, tinted, storefront window and a doorway sheltered by orange awnings. The east wall has two one-over-one

windows. The north wall holds an overhead door, a pedestrian door, and windows. The office wing holds several offices, a lobby, conference room, lounge, and storage spaces.

- Type F (one, two, and three bedrooms): Each building holds eight units. It comprises a Type A building with a one-story unit on each end. The single-story units retains their historic flat roofs and do not have a projecting portico. Instead, the wide eave shelters the doorway.

A garage was constructed behind 2701-2709 Essex Street Southeast in 2008. The three-stall garage has two large overhead doors on its west wall. The east wall has two small windows and the north and south walls are windowless. The garage is nearly square in plan and has a gabled roof. Walls are clad in orange siding with a stone-veneer base.

The Glendale Early Childhood Family Development Center is at the southern edge of the development. It extends over what was once the southern end of Saint Mary's Avenue, which no longer extends to the segment of Twenty-Seventh Avenue that serves the development. The one-story building was constructed in 1995 and holds a cafeteria, kitchen, laundry room, classrooms, offices, support spaces, a community food shelf, and resident council offices. The building has an irregular roofline; some sections are flat and others are gabled. It is clad in rock-face concrete, brick, and metal paneling.



*Garage behind 2701-2709 Essex Street,  
view southeast.*



*The Glendale Early Childhood Family Development  
Center, view southeast.*

## Table of Building Types

<b>TYPE</b>	<b>ADDRESS</b>
<b>A</b>	2700-2710 Delaware Street Southeast
<b>B</b>	2805-2819 Delaware Street Southeast
<b>B</b>	2806-2829 Delaware Street Southeast
<b>F</b>	2821-2835 Delaware Street Southeast
<b>F</b>	2822-2836 Delaware Street Southeast
<b>B</b>	2837-2851 Delaware Street Southeast
<b>A</b>	2838-2848 Delaware Street Southeast
<b>D</b>	2700-2705 Essex Street Southeast
<b>E</b>	2701-2709 Essex Street Southeast
<b>B</b>	28-42 Saint Mary's Avenue Southeast
<b>C</b>	33-43 Saint Mary's Avenue Southeast
<b>B</b>	44-58 Saint Mary's Avenue Southeast
<b>F</b>	45-59 Saint Mary's Avenue Southeast
<b>F</b>	60-74 Saint Mary's Avenue Southeast
<b>B</b>	61-75 Saint Mary's Avenue Southeast
<b>B</b>	76-90 Saint Mary's Avenue Southeast
<b>C</b>	2801-2811 Saint Mary's Place
<b>D</b>	100-106 Twenty-Seventh Avenue Southeast
<b>D</b>	108-114 Twenty-Seventh Avenue Southeast
<b>C</b>	116-126 Twenty-Seventh Avenue Southeast
<b>B</b>	128-142 Twenty-Seventh Avenue Southeast
<b>A</b>	166-176 Twenty-Seventh Avenue Southeast
<b>A</b>	10-20 Williams Avenue Southeast
<b>A</b>	22-32 Williams Avenue Southeast
<b>D</b>	34-40 Williams Avenue Southeast
<b>A</b>	42-52 Williams Avenue Southeast
<b>B</b>	66-80 Williams Avenue Southeast

## Examples of Building Types



*2700-2710 Delaware Street Southeast, Type A,  
view southwest*



*28-42 Saint Mary's Avenue Southeast, Type B,  
view northwest*



*2801-2811 Saint Mary's Place, Type C,  
view northeast.*



*100-106 Twenty-Seventh Avenue Southeast, Type D,  
view northeast.*



*2701-2705 Essex Avenue Southeast, Type E,  
view north.*



*2821-2835 Delaware Avenue Southeast, Type F,  
view southeast.*

## Map of Glendale



*The Glendale Public Housing Project is shaded green.  
The Prospect Park Residential Historic District is to the east-southeast.*

## HISTORY AND CONTEXT

### *Introduction*

The Glendale Townhomes complex covers over twelve acres of land in the Prospect Park neighborhood of Minneapolis. The site comprises twenty-eight townhome buildings, a garage, a community center, and several playgrounds and recreational spaces.

The Minneapolis Housing and Redevelopment Authority (MHRA), predecessor to the MPHA, constructed Glendale in response to a severe affordable housing shortage after World War II. When the MHRA was established in 1947, it was tasked with providing safe and affordable housing to veterans and low-income residents of Minneapolis. It successfully completed Glendale, its first undertaking, in 1952. To do so, it had to deal with limited options for sites, weather public controversy, and make decisions about the design of units, buildings, and the project as a whole. With the experience gained from this pioneering effort, the MHRA and MPHA went on to build and manage thousands of units throughout the city.

### *Public Housing and the Post-World War II Housing Crisis*

The concept of public housing in America emerged with the New Deal and the U.S. Housing Act of 1937. Previously, the federal government had little experience constructing or administering such developments. Most of America's urban poor were housed in deteriorated and crowded tenements built before the turn of the century. During the Great Depression, the idea of affordable housing gained wider political appeal, leading to several New Deal programs for government-subsidized housing. These programs enabled Minnesota's first public housing development, Sumner Field. The 464-unit complex opened in 1938. Erected by the federal Public Works Administration, ownership of the complex passed to the city two decades later.<sup>2</sup>

Housing construction slowed when the onset of World War II limited available materials and manpower. In April 1942, the War Production Board issued an order prohibiting unauthorized residential building. As a result, the construction of new housing dropped by 50 percent between 1941 and 1942 and continued falling until 1944, when it was only 20 percent of its pre-war level. Construction rates continued to fall as the number of households increased, exacerbating the crisis: between 1942 and 1945, the number of new families outpaced available housing by 25 percent.<sup>3</sup>

After federal restrictions on building materials ended in October 1945, contractors were eager to turn a profit and, therefore, were not interested in building low-rent housing. This magnified the affordable housing deficit. By the end of 1945, Minneapolis needed 80,000 low-rent units, but lacked the means to address the shortage. Hope for funding was placed in the federal Taft-

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<sup>2</sup> Jeffery Hess and Christine Curran, "Sumner Field Homes," HABS No. MN-160, 1997, Historic American Building Survey prepared by Hess, Roise and Company for the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority (hereafter referred to as MPHA); "MPHA History," accessed April 28, 2015, [www.mphaonline.org/about/history](http://www.mphaonline.org/about/history).

<sup>3</sup> Mason C. Doan, *American Housing Production, 1880-2000: A Concise History* (Lanham, Md.: University of America Press, 1997), 48-49.

Ellender-Wagner Bill, but the bill failed to pass Congress in both 1945 and 1946 leaving the city to initiate its own programs.<sup>4</sup>

Minneapolis Mayor Hubert Humphrey became an advocate for public housing and developed a three-pronged approach to dealing with the housing crisis: 1) a door-to-door campaign to ensure that every leasable room was listed, 2) requiring governmental and private agencies to obtain pre-fabricated emergency housing, and 3) increasing the number of private housing units on the market. Humphrey also traveled to New York, Chicago, Milwaukee, Louisville, and Cleveland to study housing programs and visited Washington D.C. to lobby for federal construction funds.<sup>5</sup>

Humphrey hoped that a permanent solution to the housing shortage would come through an amendment to the city charter, allowing Minneapolis to establish its own housing authority. While waiting for a vote on the amendment, the mayor sought short-term solutions to the housing crisis. He established Minneapolis Veterans Trailer Housing, which installed several temporary homes in north Minneapolis. This provided some relief, but the city still needed permanent, low-rent accommodations for returning servicemen. In early 1946, Humphrey initiated the “Shelter-a-Vet” campaign, which urged Minneapolitans to open their homes to veterans and their families. The drive procured housing for nearly 3,000 families, but this was only a small portion of what was needed. The following August, Humphrey established the Mayor’s Emergency Housing Commission. It was charged with determining local emergency housing needs; facilitating relationships among government agencies, veterans’ groups, and builders; coordinating local housing referral centers; and investigating changes in building codes and zoning ordinances.<sup>6</sup>

In 1947, the Minnesota State Legislature adopted the Municipal Housing and Redevelopment Act, which allowed local jurisdictions to establish their own public housing agencies. This came after two failed attempts to pass a charter amendment to the same effect by popular vote. Once Humphrey had the authorization, he created MHRA and appointed its first director and board of commissioners.<sup>7</sup>

When the MHRA opened in 1947, Minneapolis was a city of 500,000 people. The agency estimated that 23,000 families lived in substandard housing and 6,500 households were overcrowded, meaning more than 1.5 people per room. The MHRA spent its first year assessing the city’s need. In 1949, it received federal financing through the Housing Act of 1949. This legislation authorized federal loans and grants to build over 800,000 low-rent housing units nationwide and redevelop slums. Once the MHRA had the authority and funding to begin constructing permanent public housing, its next task was to find a suitable site.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Gary W. Reichart, “Mayor: Hubert H. Humphrey,” *Minnesota History* 56 (Summer 1998): 56.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 56-57.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 57-59.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 59; MPHA, “MPHA History,” accessed April 29, 2015, [www.mphaonline.org/about/history](http://www.mphaonline.org/about/history).

<sup>8</sup> Minneapolis Housing and Redevelopment Authority (hereafter referred to as MHRA), *Three Decades, 1947-1977: Renewal in Minneapolis* (Minneapolis: MHRA, 1977), n.p.; Alexander von Hoffman, “A Study in Contradictions: The Origins and Legacy of the Housing Act of 1949,” *Housing Policy Debate* 11 (2000): 309-310.

## Selecting a Site

Minneapolis's new ring of suburbs prevented the city from physical expansion. Therefore, the MHRA targeted underdeveloped lots in the city for potential redevelopment sites. Many of these sites were previously used for heavy industry, so the MHRA needed to evaluate whether the parcels were fit for new construction. The agency surveyed lots, tested soils, researched existing buildings that would need to be removed, and hired architects and planners to develop preliminary site plans.<sup>9</sup>

By March 1950, MHRA had narrowed the list to four potential sites, called A, B, F, and K. The Minneapolis City Council voted for a moratorium on building permits on these lots while the housing authority continued its analysis. Later that month, Site A was eliminated from consideration because of the extensive amount of unstable infill. After three more months of investigation, Site F was determined to be the best for a new public housing community.<sup>10</sup>

Site F was located in Prospect Park, a Minneapolis neighborhood near the University of Minnesota. The area was first developed by real estate speculator Louis Menage in the late 1870s. The surveyors incorporated the topography into their plan following the approach of prominent landscape designer Andrew Jackson Downing, a proponent of curvilinear streets,



*Detail from aerial view of Site F  
in August 1950.  
(James K. Hosmer Special Collection,  
Hennepin County Central Library)*

rolling lawns, and natural gardens. Prospect Park developed slowly because it was relatively isolated from the rest of Minneapolis, but its growth was simulated when the city's first inter-urban railway line opened on University Avenue in 1890.<sup>11</sup>

Site F, however, was on the edge of Prospect Park in an area known as Morse Hill or Sand Hill because it had previously been used as a gravel pit. This industrial use helped level this uncommonly hilly area of Minneapolis and facilitated building on the site. Several homes had been constructed on the hill during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, but the development was sparse compared to other parts of Prospect Park.<sup>12</sup>

The neighborhood's community group, the Prospect Park and East River Road Improvement Association (PPERRIA), had a history of strong opinions on new projects. For example, when the

<sup>9</sup> Charlene Roise, Stephanie Atwood, and Marjorie Pearson, "Prospect Park Residential Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Nomination, August 2014, prepared by Hess, Roise and Company; MHRA, memorandum, November 30, 1950, City of Minneapolis.

<sup>10</sup> Director Hoben Daily Log, March 6, 1950, City of Minneapolis; Director Hoben Daily Log, March 23, 1950, City of Minneapolis; Director Hoben Daily Log, June 1, 1950, City of Minneapolis.

<sup>11</sup> Pearson, "Prospect Park, Minneapolis: An Historical Survey," 7, 9, 25-26; Penny Jacobson, "Platting Prospect Park Was a Torturous Affair," *Southeast*, October 1986.

<sup>12</sup> Pearson, "Prospect Park, Minneapolis: An Historical Survey," 7; Claire Aronson, "A Few Good Fights," *Hennepin History* 54 (Winter 1995): 11.

city began planning a new streetcar line through the area in the early 1900s, PPERRIA galvanized residents against it and forced the city council to reconsider the route. The discussion around public housing in the neighborhood was equally intense, but resident opinion was divided over the project. Those who supported the development reasoned that it would extend the neighborhood's residential zoning and protect it from industrial encroachment. Others were concerned that the area's schools and recreational facilities could not accommodate such a large population influx. Opponents argued that the project would lower property values and bring an "undesirable element" to the neighborhood. After much discussion, PPERRIA consented to the project and the city passed the proposal. Another group, the Sidney Pratt-Motley Citizens Committee, indicated that "there would be no opposition to the site if recreational and school facilities were sufficiently developed to handle additional population." The MHRA board confirmed its intention to meet that condition.<sup>13</sup>

### *Developing Glendale*

Before construction could begin, Site F needed to be cleared of existing buildings. The MHRA was initially committed to obtaining the cooperation of existing residents and this substantially delayed the process. All of the existing homes were appraised and the MHRA's buy-out offers were accepted for a handful of properties. Many of the homeowners, however, were unhappy with the MHRA's valuation of their homes and refused to settle. Stagnant negotiations forced the housing authority to begin condemning the remaining structures. After the housing authority acquired all of the properties, it moved the structurally stable homes to new sites and demolished the others. The twenty-two families displaced by the construction were given priority in the new development.<sup>14</sup>

The MHRA hired local the architectural firm Larson and McLaren to design the project. Albert Larson was a Saint Paul native and graduate of the University of Pennsylvania. He worked with notable local architect Clarence Johnston before starting a new firm with Donald McLaren in 1922. McLaren was born in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin, and graduated from Cornell University in 1916. He worked in New York City before joining the Navy during World War I. McLaren moved to Minneapolis in 1920 and worked for Magney and Tusler before joining Larson. The firm was commissioned to design a number of prominent buildings in the Twin Cities including the Groveland Apartment Hotel (510 Groveland), the headquarters and printing plant of the *Minneapolis Star*, and two hangars at Wold-Chamberlain Field.<sup>15</sup>

The city awarded the contract to build the townhomes to the Fleischer Engineering and Construction Company. Richard Evans and G. M. Orr served as mechanical engineers. Landscape architect Hugh Vincent Feehan, who had designed the University of Saint Thomas

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<sup>13</sup> Aronson, "A Few Good Fights," 6-12; A. C. Godward to the Housing Committee of the City Council, Minneapolis, May 31, 1951, City of Minneapolis; MHRA, "Minutes of the August 4 Adjourned Session of Meeting of July 25, 1950."

<sup>14</sup> Peer Engineering, "Phase I Environmental Site Assessment: Glendale Housing Redevelopment," 2014, prepared for Hennepin County and the MPHA, 8-12; MHRA, "Minutes of the Regular Meeting of October 20, 1950"; A. C. Godward to the Chicago Field Office of the Public Housing Administration, January 17, 1951, City of Minneapolis.

<sup>15</sup> Alan K. Lathrop, *Minnesota Architects: A Biographical Dictionary* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 137, 156.

football stadium and the Virginia Golf Course in Virginia, Minnesota, was responsible for the landscape plans. The Park Construction Company carried out the site work.<sup>16</sup>

The largest challenge in designing Site F was sheltering the residences from the industrial development on the west side of Twenty-Seventh Avenue. To help separate the uses and reduce traffic on the south side of the development, Larson and McLaren eliminated the intersection of Saint Mary's Avenue and Twenty-Seventh Avenue. Also, the elevation of the land on the site's west side was raised five to fifteen feet "for the purposes of safety and health and freedom from noise, gases, and other disturbances." Finally, a spur of Twenty-Seventh Avenue was constructed to give residents a street exclusively for their use. To improve the layout within the complex, Delaware Street was added to through the largest lot, giving every unit street access. Originally, the architects proposed building units on the interior of the site with no street frontage. This was against city building codes and the plan was revised.<sup>17</sup>

Once the new street plan was finalized, the townhomes were incorporated at different levels to fit the unique topography. The architects were adamant that the quality of materials and construction be comparable to private housing. Each building held four, six, or eight units, and each unit had its own entry, basement, furnace, and yard. This was in stark contrast to the conditions in previous affordable housing, which often had shared baths, drain-less washtubs, and alleys that doubled as playgrounds. As the *Minneapolis Star* noted, "the change . . . to neat, bright one-family units with wide, rolling lawns is dramatic." In this way, the MHRA fulfilled its mission to provide the city with decent, safe, and sanitary low-rent housing.<sup>18</sup>

In 1951, Site F was officially named Glen-Dale after Glenn Wallace and Dale Staunchfield, two alderman of Ward Two, which includes Prospect Park. Staunchfield was flattered but perplexed by the recognition. In a letter to the MHRA director A. C. Godward, he wrote: "I believe that the board has acted contrary to the policy of the National Housing Authority, as well as the precedent established by most local authorities, in naming sites after people were are still living. . . . These two aldermen at the very best are here today and gone tomorrow." To his chagrin, the name stuck, though it was compressed to become "Glendale" in the following years.<sup>19</sup>

Construction of the \$2.1-million project took a year, finishing three months ahead of schedule. Glendale opened with a ceremony on October 12, 1952, attended by Senator Humphrey, Minneapolis mayor Eric Hoyer, and other dignitaries. Also on the podium was a representative

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<sup>16</sup> George Rice, "Dad, Mom, Children—All Like Glen-dale," *Minneapolis Star*, October 10, 1952; "Buildings of the University of Saint Thomas," accessed May 6, 2015, <http://www.stthomas.edu/libraries/special/archives/buildings>; "Virginia Golf Course—Virginia," accessed May 6, 2015, <http://courses.golfdigest.com/1/23698/Virginia-Golf-Course-Virginia>.

<sup>17</sup> A. C. Godward, "Report to the Committee for Planning Review," January 4, 1951, City of Minneapolis; A. C. Godward to the Chicago Field Office of the Public Housing Administration, January 18, 1951, City of Minneapolis; Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, *Fire Insurance Map of Minneapolis, Minnesota* (New York: Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, 1912, updated to 1930), sheet 978; A. C. Godward to the Chicago Field Office of the Public Housing Administration, January 18, 1951.

<sup>18</sup> MHRA, *Twenty Years of Firsts, 1991-2011: Expanding Horizons, Exceeding Expectations, Achieving Excellence* (Minneapolis: MHRA, 2011), 14; MHRA, *Three Decades*, np; MHRA, *Major Milestones: History and Highlights, Where We Are Today, Project Costs Tabulation, Governmentally Assisted Housing, Photographs, and Explanatory Remarks* (Minneapolis: MHRA, 1972), n.p.; MHRA, "Minutes of the Regular Meeting of October 20, 1950."

<sup>19</sup> Aronson, "A Few Good Fights," 11; Dale Staunchfield to A. C. Godward, July 25, 1951, City of Minneapolis.



*View of Glendale northwest down Delaware Street, 1952.  
(James K. Hosmer Special Collections, Hennepin County Central Library)*

of the new residents, Robert McNally, a 33-year-old disabled veteran. He, his wife, and two children had “formerly lived in a third-floor flat . . . where they shared a second-floor bathroom with 10 other persons,” a newspaper reported. The new two-bedroom unit at Glendale was a welcome change for that family and others who moved into the project: “The men like it, the women love it, and the children are crazy about it.” The units filled quickly with veterans who were returning to school after the war and other low-income families. Residents never paid

more than 20 percent of their income in rent, which amounted to twenty-five to fifty dollars per month.<sup>20</sup>

Only five years after Glendale opened, the Minnesota Highway Department announced proposed routes through the state for a new interstate highway. One of the routes called for significant demolition in Glendale and Prospect Park, which PPERRIA opposed and suggested several alternatives. To strengthen its argument, PPERRIA formed a coalition with groups in other neighborhoods including Merriam Park, Desnoyer, the university area, and Como and Beltrami Parks. Eventually, the highway department agreed to modify its plan and spare Glendale, area homes, and the majority of the Prospect Field playground.<sup>21</sup>

### *Renovation and Reinvention*

Glendale proved that the MHRA was able to successfully initiate and administer a public housing development. With this confidence, the MHRA began three more family-orientated projects during the 1950s. Unlike Glendale, the new units were not specifically intended for veterans.<sup>22</sup>

By the 1960s, however, it was apparent that low-density, family-orientated developments did not meet the demand for affordable housing in Minneapolis, so the MHRA switched to high-density

<sup>20</sup> Rice, “Dad, Mom, Children—All Like Glen-Dale”; “Public Housing Project Is Filled,” *East Minneapolis Argus*, October 13, 1955; A. C. Godward to William T. Middlebrook, March 8, 1951, City of Minneapolis; Aronson, “A Few Good Fights,” 13.

<sup>21</sup> Aronson, “A Few Good Fights,” 14-15.

<sup>22</sup> MHRA, *Three Decades*, n.p.; MPHA, *Twenty Years of Firsts, 1991-2011*, 14.

projects. Two dozen high-rise public housing projects with some 4,200 units were constructed during this period.<sup>23</sup>

High-density housing, though, did not prove to be a panacea. The quality of construction was sometimes compromised to cut costs. This resulted in small units, limited amenities, and an inadequate number of elevators, making buildings unsuitable for family living. The large-scale projects had little connection to the surrounding neighborhoods, creating a separation that was detrimental to both the projects and the local community.<sup>24</sup>

In contrast, Glendale exemplified family-friendly public housing. The majority of the community's residents were children, who enjoyed easy access to Glendale's playgrounds and the neighboring park. Services grew as the project evolved. In March 1969, the project began offering the city's first privately funded Head Start classes, which attracted twenty children. All were eligible to start kindergarten the following fall, attesting to the number of families living there. A few years later, the Glendale Child Development Center opened and provided daycare for children living throughout the Prospect Park neighborhood.<sup>25</sup>



*Children playing in front of Glendale, c. 1955.  
(Minnesota Historical Society)*

Another sign of the Glendale's community spirit was a co-op store, which was established in the basement of the unit at 57 Saint Mary's in 1967. Claiming forty-five stockholders, mostly residents of Glendale, the store was "selling groceries at lower prices than other nearby stores," according to a newspaper account. "It is the first such store in the Minneapolis area started with the aid of the federal antipoverty program." The duration of this venture is not known.<sup>26</sup>

Due to the issues with high-density public housing, MHRA's focus returned to low-density projects in the 1970s, including upgrading earlier properties. In 1970, the agency won a federal grant to improve five existing public housing developments. The money was used to modernize the Sumner Field, Lyndale, Olson, Glenwood, and Glendale developments. At Glendale, the

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<sup>23</sup> MPHA, "MPHA History," accessed April 28, 2015, [www.mphaonline.org/about/history](http://www.mphaonline.org/about/history); MPHA, *Twenty Years of Firsts, 1991-2011*, 15.

<sup>24</sup> J. A. Stoloff, "A Brief History of Public Housing," accessed June 1, 2015, [http://reengageinc.org/research/brief\\_history\\_public\\_housing.pdf](http://reengageinc.org/research/brief_history_public_housing.pdf).

<sup>25</sup> A. C. Godward, "Report to Commissioners," December 5, 1952, City of Minneapolis; "First Private Head Start Program Begins," unidentified clipping from the James K. Hosmer Special Collections, Hennepin County Central Library.

<sup>26</sup> Maurcie Hobbs, "Little Co-op Store Planning to Expand," *Minneapolis Star*, November 6, 1967.

kitchens were updated and new hipped roofs replaced the original flat roofs. Only the office wing of 2701-2709 Essex Street and the one-story units in the Type F buildings retained flat roofs.<sup>27</sup>

Soon after this work was completed, Congress passed the Section 8 Program, revolutionizing the federal government's approach to subsidizing housing costs for low-income families and individuals. An MPHA history reported that "in 1974, MHRA jumped to the forefront among the housing authorities in the nation to introduce a Section 8 rental assistance program. For the first time, families could now secure rental assistance to seek and find decent, affordable housing in the private market, with a greater range of location choices." During the same period, according to a historical review in the *Journal of Affordable Housing*, "relatively easy home-ownership terms sucked middle-class families out of the projects, to be replaced by single-parent households, many on welfare."<sup>28</sup>

The City of Minneapolis decided that the changing times required a new organizational structure, establishing the Minneapolis Community Development Agency (MCDA) in 1981. The MHRA was incorporated into this organization. In 1986, the MHRA was reorganized as the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority. A year earlier, a report from the Mayor's Task Force on Public Housing concluded that the city's public housing stock was beset with "neglected maintenance, unchecked crime, [and] delinquent residents." The failings of the developments were underlined by high vacancy rates despite long waiting lists, indicating that no one wanted to move into public housing. To address some of these issues at Glendale, the MHRA renovated the interior and exterior of the townhomes. Interior updates included replacing the majority of the fixtures and finishes in the kitchens and bathrooms, installing new interior doors, and laying new flooring. On the exterior, the renovations were more extensive. The existing flat-roofed porticos were modified into gabled canopies supported by pipe columns. The cement-asbestos siding on the second floor was replaced with composite siding. All of the windows and exterior doors were also replaced at this time, although the brushed-aluminum framing at the first-floor windows was retained.<sup>29</sup>

In the following decade, the Glendale Child Development Center was replaced. The center had relied on the support of people who could afford to pay to offset the costs for those who could not. As demographics in the area shifted, the center could no longer operate and was forced to close. The new Glendale Early Childhood Family Development Center filled the void, opening in 1995 and offering a variety of community services.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> MHRA, "MPHA History," accessed April 28, 2015, [www.mphaonline.org/about/history](http://www.mphaonline.org/about/history); Fred Johnson, "U.S. Grants \$819,000 for Housing Repair," *Minneapolis Tribune*, October 16, 1970; Minneapolis Building Permit Nos. B416646 (July 24, 1969) and B433148 (January 10, 1972), City of Minneapolis.

<sup>28</sup> MPHA, *Twenty Years of Firsts, 1991-2011*, 16; Charles L. Edson, "Affordable Housing—An Intimate History," *Journal of Affordable Housing* 20 (Winter 2011): 196.

<sup>29</sup> Meyer Scherer and Rockcastle, "Glendale Modernization Project," 1988, MPHA; Soon-Har Tan, "Task Force Fault MCDA for Deterioration of Public Housing," *Southeast*, February 1985.

<sup>30</sup> Prospect Park History Committee, *Under the Witch's Hat* (Minneapolis: Prospect Park East River Road Improvement Association, 2003), 33.

## ASSESSMENT OF NATIONAL REGISTER ELIGIBILITY

The National Register of Historic Places provides a standard measure to evaluate the significance of the Glendale Townhomes.

### *Criteria*

To qualify for the National Register, properties must meet at least one of the following four criteria:

- **Association value/Event—Criterion A:** Properties that are associated with events that have contributed to broad patterns of history.
- **Association value/Person—Criterion B:** Properties that are associated with significant persons and illustrate their achievements.
- **Design or Construction value—Criterion C:** Properties with physical characteristics which are distinctive of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.
- **Information value—Criterion D:** Properties that have yielded or are likely to yield important information about prehistory or history.

In addition, a property must be at least fifty years old unless it is of exceptional importance (Criteria Consideration G). Properties must also retain sufficient physical integrity to convey their significance. The seven aspects of integrity are location, setting, materials, design, workmanship, feeling, and association. Properties can be significant individually or as contributing elements of a historic district. Significance can be local, regional, or national.

The Glendale Townhomes development appears to qualify for the National Register under Criterion A in the areas of Social History and Community Planning and Development. In the years after World War II, Minneapolis, like the rest of the country, faced a severe housing shortage. In 1947, two years after the Armistice, the MHRA was established with the purpose of clearing slums and underdeveloped areas in the city and constructing public housing to serve returning veterans and low-income residents. The agency selected the local architectural firm Larson and McLaren to design Glendale. The architects took advantage of the site's topography, creating irregularly shaped blocks that departed from the city's typical grid and accommodated communal and private spaces that were noteworthy amenities for affordable housing. After years of planning, Glendale opened in 1952, the first project to be completed by the MHRA since its establishment in 1947.

Glendale exemplified the MHRA's next decade. According to an MHRA publication, the authority "asserted itself during the 1950s by using millions of dollars in federal funding to build hundreds of new public housing units—the first such units driven entirely by city planning and development efforts." Experience gained from the pioneering Glendale project and subsequent development in the 1950s prepared the MHRA to embark on a campaign of high-rise construction in the 1960s. This was targeted primarily at housing the city's senior citizens thanks to the new "202 Program" that allowed HUD to make loans to nonprofit developers for that purpose. Towards the end of that decade, the MHRA sought a new approach to family housing, becoming among the first in the nation to try scattered-site development. It also began addressing

issues with its earlier projects, including Glendale, as they aged and experienced competition from newer subsidized housing.<sup>31</sup>

### *Period of Significance*

A property's period of significance is the time when the property was associated with important events, activities, or persons, or attained the characteristics that qualify it for listing in the National Register. According to guidelines included in the National Preservation Act of 1966, which created the National Register, properties must be at least fifty years old to qualify for the National Register unless they are considered "exceptionally important." Direction for evaluating more recent properties is provided in National Register Bulletin 22, *Guidelines for Evaluating and Nominating Properties that Have Achieved Significance within the Past Fifty Years*. This bulletin notes that the fifty-year benchmark "safeguards against listing properties which are of only contemporary, faddish value and ensures that the National Register is a register of **historic** places." The bulletin further explains, though, "The Criteria for Evaluation provide general guidance on National Register eligibility. However, the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act did not assume that significance could be a matter of rigid, objective measurement. It specifically encourages the recognition of locally significant historic resources that, by appearance or association with persons or events, provide communities with a sense of past and place. The historical value of these resources will always be a combined matter of public sentiment and rigorous, yet necessarily subjective, professional assessment."

For the Glendale project, the period of significance begins with its construction in 1952. Using the standard fifty-year cutoff, Glendale's period of significance would end in 1965. Based on the preceding analysis, however, it appears that the period of significance more appropriately ends in the 1970s, after the MHRA renewed its focus on low-density projects after an aggressive period of high-rise construction in the 1960s. Also, the introduction of the Section 8 Program in 1974 was a watershed for public housing. Continuing the period of significance to 1974 would include the change of the building roofs from flat to gable, reflecting a desire to update the appearance of the complex and also acknowledge the difficulties of maintaining flat roofs in Minnesota's challenging climate. The assessment of integrity that follows considers the implications of both a 1965 and 1974 end to the period of significance. Scholarly research on public housing in the United States in the decades after World War II provides substantial context for evaluating this property type into the 1970s, allowing the period of significance to end in that decade under the provisions of Criteria Consideration G ("properties that have achieved significance within the past fifty years").<sup>32</sup>

### *Integrity*

An evaluation of integrity considers the property's current condition in light of its historic evolution. The following discussion analyzes the Glendale Townhomes project using the seven aspects of integrity as established by the National Register guidelines.

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<sup>31</sup> MPHA, *Twenty Years of Firsts, 1991-2011*, 14-16.

<sup>32</sup> Marcella Sherfy and W. Ray Luce, *National Register Bulletin 22: Guidelines for Evaluating and Nominating Properties that Have Achieved Significance within the Past Fifty Years* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1979; revised 1990, 1996, and 1998), available at [http://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb22/nrb22\\_I.htm](http://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb22/nrb22_I.htm).

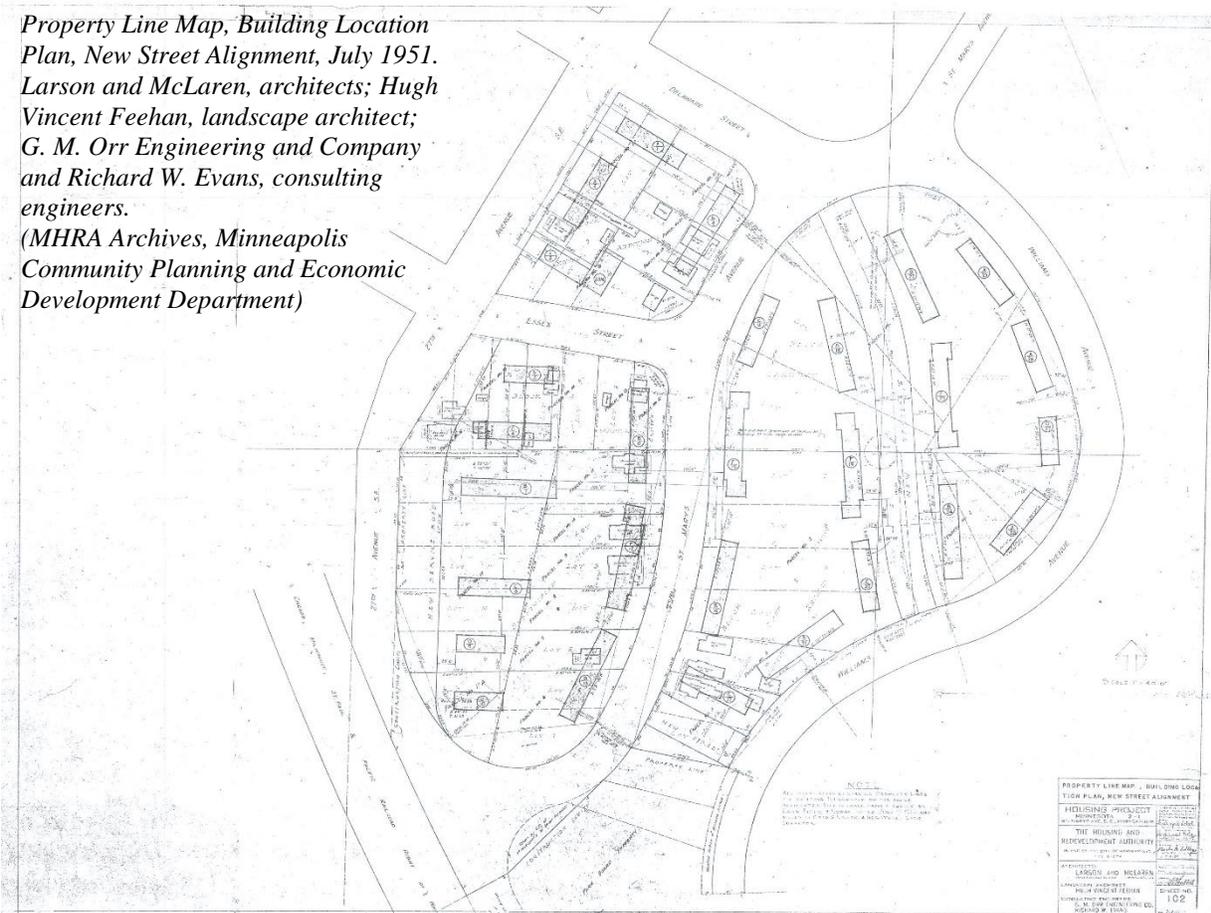
The Glendale Townhomes development has good integrity of **location**. None of the buildings have been moved from their original locations.

The integrity of **design** of the buildings has been somewhat compromised by renovations in the late 1980s. The porticos were enlarged, the flat roofs gabled, and the concrete sidewalls removed during the 1989 renovation. Additionally, when the townhomes were re-sided in 1989, the brushed-aluminum framework was removed from the second-story windows. This change, along with the removal of the portico sidewalls, has eliminated some of the buildings' distinctive architectural details.

If the period of significance ends in 1974, the change of the roofline from flat to gabled is within that time period. If the period of significance ends in 1965, then this change is also detrimental to the integrity of the buildings by changing their massing.

The overall design of the project, however, retains very good integrity. The curvilinear street pattern, arrangement of buildings, and location of greenspaces have all been maintained. Very little new construction has altered the original site plan. Photographs comparing historic and current conditions are included on the following pages.

*Property Line Map, Building Location Plan, New Street Alignment, July 1951. Larson and McLaren, architects; Hugh Vincent Feehan, landscape architect; G. M. Orr Engineering and Company and Richard W. Evans, consulting engineers. (MHRA Archives, Minneapolis Community Planning and Economic Development Department)*





*Glendale shortly after its construction (above; MHRA Archives, Minneapolis CPED) and today (below; Google Earth map). The integrity of the project's overall design is very good.*





*View northwest from Williams Avenue down Saint Mary's Place, 1952.  
The horizontality of the townhome design is pronounced.  
(James K. Hosmer Special Collections, Hennepin County Central Library)*



*View northwest from Williams Avenue down Saint Mary's Place. The altered porticos and roofline can be compared with the original configuration in the photograph above.*



*Unidentified street at Glendale, undated, note curving street and greenery.  
(James K. Hosmer Special Collections, Hennepin County Central Library)*



*View northeast from the intersection of Essex Street and Saint Mary's Avenue showing the  
historic street alignment and landscaping.*



*Unidentified townhomes at Glendale Public Housing, undated.  
(James K. Hosmer Special Collections, Hennepin County Central Library)*



*View northwest of 76-90 Saint Mary's Avenue Southeast. Note the redesigned porticos, altered roof, and loss of the aluminum framing at the second-story windows.*

As with the design, the integrity of **materials** and **workmanship** were compromised by the 1989 renovation. The buildings retain their original brick veneer cladding on the lower story, but the siding on the second story, the roof, the windows, the doors, and the porticos have all been replaced. On the interior, the buildings retain their historic spatial configuration, but all of the flooring, fixtures, and doors are non-historic. Given the building type, this is to be expected.

Glendale continues to relate to its surroundings much in the way it did when first constructed. Through this, it achieves good integrity of **setting**. Glendale provides a transition between the eclectic, small-scale residences and Prospect Park to the east and industrial development to the west. The project's function as a buffer between these uses was a major reason that the neighborhood association approved the plan. Within Glendale, the buildings continue to relate to one another and to open spaces as they originally did.

Integrity of **feeling** is defined as “a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time. It results from the presence of physical features that, taken together, convey the property's historic character.” While exterior materials and porticos changed in 1989 and the rooflines in the early 1970s, the project maintains a strong sense of the community that was created to address the critical housing needs following World War II. There is still a strong feeling of the complex that greeted returning veterans, eager to start families and gain an education at the nearby University of Minnesota.

Like integrity of feeling, the integrity of **association**, or “the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property,” is retained if the property is “sufficiently intact to convey that relationship.” The overall form of the project remains intact, communicating that association.

## CONCLUSION

Glendale Townhomes was the first public housing development constructed by the Minneapolis Housing and Redevelopment Authority. The 184-unit community was built to provide affordable housing for veterans and other Minneapolis families in the years after World War II when the country experienced a severe housing shortage. As a planned development intended to serve disadvantaged people during this period, the site appears to meet Criterion A.

If the period of significance ends in 1965, the integrity of the buildings in the complex was compromised by renovations in the 1970s and 1980s. If the period ends in 1974, then the work done prior to that time, specifically the change in the roof profile, is part of its significance. In either case, while the integrity of individual buildings is somewhat compromised, the overall integrity of the complex is good. The configuration of the streets—which were realigned to meet the needs of the Glendale development—remain intact. The overall plan shows how the designers took advantage of the site's sloped topography, an unusual feature in the mostly flat city but also a highlight of the adjacent Prospect Park Residential Historic District. The relationship of the buildings and open space, a key feature of the family-friendly design, has been maintained. All in all, the Glendale Townhomes district retains sufficient integrity to merit listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

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