

**CURA RESOURCE COLLECTION**

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**Hale-Page-Diamond Lake:  
A Neighborhood History for Today**

by Leah Chizek

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# **I AN INTRODUCTION & ORIENTATION TO THE HALE- PAGE-DIAMOND LAKE NEIGHBORHOOD**

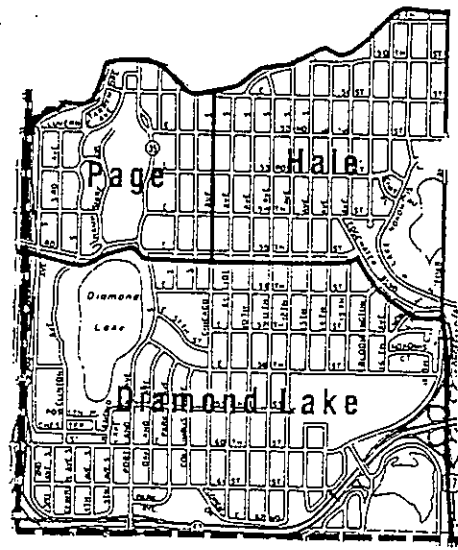
The Hale-Page-Diamond Lake (HPDL) neighborhood is a beautiful residential district of Minneapolis, just west of Lake Nokomis and Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport. HPDL is part of a larger municipal region known as the Nokomis Community, which is comprised of eleven neighborhoods in southeast Minneapolis. Much of the community used to be located in suburban Richfield, until Minneapolis annexed territory in Richfield south to 62nd Street. The annexation process took place in 1927, and the Nokomis Community was consequently one of the last Minneapolis districts to be developed.

Distinct neighborhoods emerged in each community, often the result of small changes in the landscape or variations in how quickly certain areas developed. The technical definition of neighborhoods, according to planning principles set by the city of Minneapolis, was originally based on school attendance boundaries. As elementary schools were established in the twenties and thirties, neighborhoods came to be identified by the name of the local school. Such was the case with the Hale and Page neighborhoods. (The Diamond Lake neighborhood, which never contained a neighborhood elementary school, was easily named after its most prominent natural feature.)

Although this system is no longer so clear cut, neighborhood boundaries continue to identify places with distinct topographies, concerns, and developmental histories. Hale, Page and Diamond Lake (HPDL) are separate

and unique neighborhoods, though they are bound by powerful defining features, which serve to draw the three together.. These boundaries are Interstate 35W to the west, Crosstown/Highway 62 to the south, Cedar Avenue to the east, and Minnehaha Creek to the north.

Mutual neighborhood concerns are which handled by the Hale-Page-Diamond Lake Community Association at 5255 Chicago Avenue. The Community Association actively promotes the well-being of HPDL, and has been instrumental in neighborhood's communication process with greater city officials since 1991.



In 1994, the HPDL Community Association published its Neighborhood Action Plan (NAP), a comprehensive report detailing HPDL objectives for the coming decade. Strategies proposed in the NAP are assisted by the Minneapolis

Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP), a municipal organization which secures funds for community improvement projects. Seven major areas of concern are expressed in the NAP and each possesses a set of guidelines for improvement. These include:

- 1) Creating Community/Crime and Safety
- 2) Education
- 3) Parks and Recreation
- 4) Housing
- 5) Commercial Development
- 6) Public Transportation
- 7) City and County Streets and Services

One special objective listed in the first section, Creating Community/Crime and Safety, is to increase the levels of information available to residents about the HPDL neighborhood. As written, it states, "to increase the social and economic stability of the neighborhood through education, social and public information projects highlighting community livability, convenience, and affordability to attract new residents and businesses to the neighborhood and increase the pride of existing residents and businesses."

One strategy for meeting this objective involves creation of a neighborhood history, available to both current and prospective residents as well as realtors. Although accounts of the neighborhood's past have been done before, few have provided a specific and comprehensive timeline of the neighborhood's development throughout the twentieth century. In addition, a written history would highlight various aspects of current and anticipated development in Hale-Page-Diamond Lake.

This neighborhood history thus looks at both the past and future to assess

what elements have fostered the local sense of identity. In any urban neighborhood, numerous features are crucial to instilling residents with a sense of pride and interest in their community. These can include everything from architecture and natural environs to ethnic identity and a shared set of cultural values. Ideally, this particular account of the past will reveal - as well as revel in - the elements that are the essence of Hale-Page-Diamond Lake.

Together, these three neighborhoods have endured various phases of development, evolving early into a stable and successful region. A closer look at the territorial days preceding mass residential construction is the best place to start gaining insight about the course of this unique past.



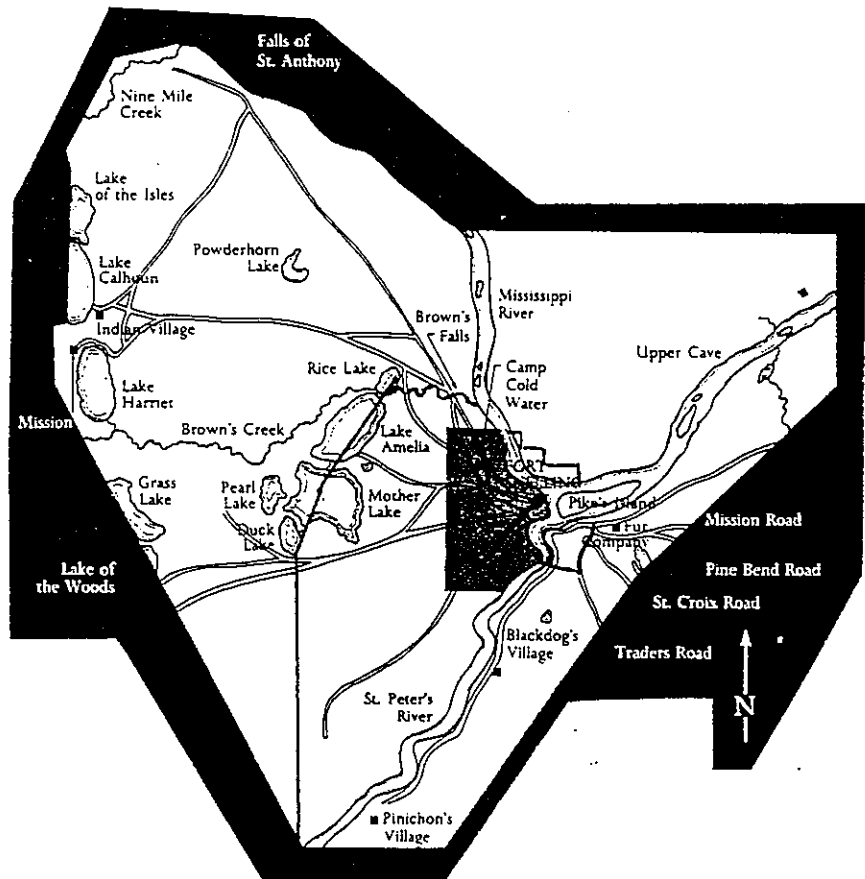
## **II FORT SNELLING & THE FIRST SETTLERS: TERRITORIAL DAYS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY**

Long before the first stirrings of development, Hale-Page-Diamond Lake was a region of dense bogs and marshy wilderness. This untamed territory was also home to the Minnesota Sioux Indians, and eventually, to one of the Twin Cities' most famous historical landmarks, Fort Snelling. Lieutenant Zebulon M. Pike entered the area in 1805 to devise a treaty with the local Sioux, and it was from this treaty that the land became a military outpost and Indian reservation. Fort Snelling Reservation was officially established.

Throughout the early years, much disagreement about the fort boundaries persisted. Lieutenant Joseph L. Thompson finally made the first formal survey of the disputed area in 1819. The results showed that most of the Nokomis Community, including all of HPDL, was part of the Sioux reservation, restricting settlers from the land. Pressure from settlers, who were often vehement in their demand for land, was a constant source of tension since the fort's establishment. Hence, in August 1852, Congress dramatically reduced Fort Snelling's area and created government lots, giving the settlers a chance to finally purchase land for the first time.

Fort Snelling's new northern boundary ran along Brown's Creek, whereas the new boundary to the south was St. Peter's River. The western boundary traversed Rice Lake (Hiawatha), Lake Amelia (Nokomis), and two smaller lakes known as Mother's and Duck Lakes. Most of this area is the current eastern border of the Hale and Diamond Lake neighborhoods. Before these boundaries were delineated, all of Hale-Page-Diamond Lake had been under

fort control.



One of the first and most influential settlers in the neighborhood's early days - if only by accident - was a man named John Winslow Brown, who bought a government lot January 15, 1856. Mr. Brown's land occupied a central portion of today's HPDL neighborhood and later became a key site in the area's residential development. Brown's territory lay from approximately 50th to 54th Street, and encompassed a swath of land between present-day Chicago and 4th Avenues.

In 1887, all areas north of 54th Street were officially annexed to the city of Minneapolis. This included all of Hale-Page, whereas the Diamond Lake neighborhood remained part of Richfield for another forty years.

The early territorial days also possessed a somewhat different topography than today's neighborhood. Although still a region of abundant natural beauty, some lakes from the older days have disappeared; most of the swampland associated with these small lakes has also vanished. Mother's Lake, once part of HPDL's eastern border, now has Cedar Avenue running across the old lake bed immediately south of 60th Street. Duck Lake, despite many historical references to its existence as well as disputes over its actual location, remains an enigma. Its true location was lost long ago, amid contradictory references on both official survey maps and in local history books.

Examples of this competing information are numerous. Most survey maps from the past show two sets of three lakes in a row. Rice (Hiawatha), Amelia (Nokomis), and Mother's Lake formed one set; Pearl, Diamond, and Mud Lakes completed the second set. Diamond Lake used to be larger, with an extended eastern arm that was transformed into present-day Todd Field. A creek ran from this arm toward Mother's Lake, although this creek has also disappeared.

N.H. Winchell, a prominent early naturalist who wrote *A Geological and Natural History Survey, 1882-1885*, mentioned these lakes in his chapter about Hennepin County and displayed them on an accompanying map. Curiously, Winchell's Mud Lake was Duck Lake according to Lieutenant Thompson's 1839 survey. Adding to this confusion, the lake Mr. Winchell considered Duck Lake was not even indicated on Thompson's earlier work.

Further examples of such confusion were furnished by early U.S. Geological Survey maps. Pearl Lake was often the source of cartographic confusion. The 1901 U.S. Geological Survey did not indicate Pearl Lake at all. Most of the area between Nicollet and Chicago from Diamond Lake to Minnehaha Creek was simply described as fresh marsh. A small pond was located in the middle of the marsh at the site of Todd Field. However, USGS maps from other years showed Pearl Lake as a true lake, surrounded by swampland.

By the turn of the century, little residential development had transformed this wild expanse of bog. Seventeen homes, mostly on farms, were plotted by the U.S. Geological Survey in 1901. The Charles Hoag farm was among these first homes. Charles Hoag was among a distinguished list of individuals who influenced the early development of Minneapolis. When the city was first incorporated, Hoag was one of the four aldermen. He was also a member of the first city council, the second treasurer of Hennepin County, and the superintendent of schools for four years.

Hoag's most memorable contribution, however, was naming the city of Minneapolis. A lengthy roster of names had been suggested for the young mill town, many which were in favor long before Hoag's idea. All Saints and Hennepin were two early favorites, although Adasville, Albion, Lowell, and Winona were all considered. In fact, Albion was first selected by Hennepin County commissioners following the 1852 reduction of Fort Snelling Reservation. The public's response was negative and in just weeks Hoag invented his name. Originally, the spelling was "Minnehapolis," combining Greek and Sioux words; the public took an instant liking to Hoag's creation and the name was adopted, without an "h," in December of 1852 at a town meeting. Nevertheless, two years elapsed before the government officially organized under the new name.

Under a majestic elm tree in the Hoags' backyard, the City Charter of Minneapolis was drafted. The elm tree later died of dutch elm disease and was sculpted into the six foot figure of a goose which is still located there today. Now owned by Dick and Marie Saunders, the Hoag house is located at 5610 Clinton Avenue.



In addition to the Hoag farm and sixteen other homes, only a few roads were developed. These included Chicago, Bloomington, and Cedar Avenues which would later become major neighborhood thoroughfares. Portland Avenue had been the earliest road, joining with a lone east-west route following parts of Diamond Lake Road, 54th, Edgewater Boulevard, and the Lake Amelia shoreline.

Nevertheless, the first major signs of impending growth soon emerged. On April 27th, 1913, the J.W. Brown farm set a pace for future development. The heirs of Mrs. John Winslow Brown, who died in 1902, platted the farm and christened it Edenhurst. This was the first platted development in the area, and by 1920, residential development was well underway.

### **III FROM BUNGALOWS TO BABY BOOMERS: TWO PHASES OF RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT**

#### ***THE PREWAR HOUSING BOOM, 1920 - 1940***

National prosperity in the 1920s led to the prewar housing boom, a period of extraordinary urban growth and architectural innovation. Additionally, the Twenties ushered in several other events pivotal to the development of specific neighborhoods like Hale-Page. These included new trends in residential construction, the introduction of building codes and zoning, and the emergence of a new professional/managerial class.

In Minneapolis, these elements intersected to create a demand for new residential neighborhoods further south of the city. The Hale-Page area, on the edge of city limits, was the perfect site for such development. Furthermore, the region was endowed with exceptional visual beauty, including lakes, rolling hills and the picturesque Minnehaha Creek. The neighborhood was consequently designed with an intentional emphasis on its natural setting. Developers coupled distinctive housing with preserved vegetation, hilly lots, and waterfront views.

Grid streets were most typical throughout HPDL, although their regularity was set off by natural vistas and the occasional boulevard. The houses built during this era were a combination of well-crafted bungalows and pricier midwestern versions of Period Revival architecture. Both reflect trends in architectural innovation during the Twenties. North of 54th Street, everything from rural English cottages to Georgian and Tudor throwbacks could be observed. Bungalows were built on tracts that were slightly

smaller and cheaper. In every case, however, these homes were designed with careful attention to modern amenities.

The most expensive and largest homes tended to be located along waterfront boulevards, and were often the first to be constructed. Hampshire Drive in Page used to border Pearl Lake when many of its old, stately homes were constructed. A similar waterfront trend was found near Lake Nokomis, where larger homes were erected along Nokomis Parkway and Edgewater Boulevard. These lots were an attractive amenity to the new influx of well-heeled professionals, and were typically larger than the standard lot size in Minneapolis of 40 square feet.

The bungalow was even more popular than Period Revival homes, attractive to a wider variety incoming residents. Driving through the neighborhood reveals block after block of well-maintained bungalows, especially in the Hale-Page vicinity, and it would easy to contend that they were the most popular new style of the prewar housing boom. Each of these homes is unique, but all can be identified as a variations on the bungalow, a style that first gained local popularity in the 1920s. These houses may seem small compared to the larger homes of today's suburb, but during their heyday, bungalows were a symbol of modern urban living. An excellent combination of solid construction, pleasing looks and easy maintenance, they are homes of special architectural significance.

The word "bungalow" was derived from its place of origin, Bengal, India, where it was the result of British efforts to design informal tropical houses during the colonial era. Their initial spread to the United States was limited; typically located in rather isolated and protected locations, the bungalow was especially adaptable to the surrounding outdoor environment. In fact, bungalows first appeared in the upper midwest as small "vacation houses,"

popular at lake resorts or just outside the city, where they provided an antidote to urban life. They were not actually considered proper urban housing.

The appeal to city residents finally began in response to the bungalow's easy embellishment, durability and modification. Since they had begun as vacation homes, the first residents of urban bungalows felt their houses had a special relationship to the natural environment. In HPDL, where developers wanted to emphasize pleasant landscapes and emerging recreational amenities, bungalows were the ideal home. Again, these were especially attractive to the upper middle-class residents purchasing homes in the neighborhood.

Perhaps the hallmark of housing development at the time was its attention to custom detail, important to all homes built in the neighborhood at this time. Architects usually designed most of the homes for sale in areas near Lake Calhoun and Harriet. Such homes were constructed quickly, and hence, prospective owners normally selected one prebuilt and fashioned for upper-class tastes. Unlike these homes, most developers in Hale-Page built to reflect the unique tastes of the builder or the person for whom the house was constructed. Consequently, the pace of development was more gradual, and the houses mingled in a display of individualism.

The 1920s saw additional developments that reinforced certain aspects of Hale-Page's physical design. Building codes and zoning were first introduced in the United States during this era, giving the city ways in which to protect itself from certain kinds of development. In 1926, the United States Supreme Court ruled that single-family residential areas like Hale-Page could be exclusively protected from the encroachment of other forms of land use. These events meant that the neighborhood had an early incentive to remain



blissfully residential. A large majority of the Hale, Page, Diamond Lake neighborhood was zoned strictly for residential purposes, and remains so today.

During this innovative period in America's modern development, the neighborhood was more than just a testing ground for new and improved housing styles. The Twenties was also a birth period for the emerging professional and managerial classes, whose specific set of abilities, high mobility, and disposable income made it easy to seek out and develop new neighborhoods based on their own expectations. Many of these professionals survived the Depression with their assets and careers intact. Although these residents had above-average incomes, Hale-Page was never a neighborhood for the elite. In fact, the elite were already abandoning the city for a more pastoral existence in suburbs like Minnetonka and White Bear Lake during the thirties. Furthermore, most people who bought houses in the HPDL neighborhood had the intention of staying as permanent residents. They were fond of the amenities available through urban life. This profile is in many ways true of current residents as well, people who desire to remain in the city and enjoy the pleasures of an urban neighborhood.

The neighborhood continued to gradually fill in throughout the twenties and thirties, although various factors occasionally hindered development. Not surprisingly, Minnehaha Creek was a barrier to the normal pattern of construction, even though it was also a popular natural attraction. The creek bed's ravine was just wide enough that it thwarted private developers from building their own bridges across the water. Although this posed a challenge, the dilemma was not serious enough for the city itself to take action. Fortunately, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) increased its activities near the creek, and by the late thirties, it had bridged Minnehaha

in several places as well as built up the parkway considerably.

Page residents also took pleasure in a large and verdant greenspace near the creek that was known as the Nicholson Park Addition. This land was inherited and named after Mr. John Clark Nicholson, a kind and generous man whose good heart was often taken advantage of by crafty individuals. Mr. Nicholson founded a popular lending library on Nicollet Avenue in a very small two-room house, and was also a collector of hobby supplies and a good friend to neighborhood children. Throughout his last years, Nicholson operated Richfield Cleaners near his home where he lived and died in his sleep on a cleaning table.

For many reasons, it is surprising that the prewar housing boom lasted through the Great Depression. By the late 1920s, rampant speculation and increasing foreclosures made house production a risky business, and by 1929, economic collapse had all but shut down development. Nationally, housing starts dropped over ninety percent, and families felt like there may never be a chance to acquire their own home. Boarding houses experienced an enormous swell of unenthusiastic popularity.

Nevertheless, certain factors allowed for the construction of some of HPDL's finest homes at this time. Construction picked up a bit by the late thirties, and a sort of "miniboom" was accountable for such luxurious estates. The miniboom seemed like it should be impossible.

Since few builders worked in the thirties, material prices had plummeted to all-time lows. Simultaneously, a great number of innovations were taking place in construction materials and design, even though such methods would sit dormant for some time. The few developers who still worked had access to cheap material prices as well as new technologies, making extra

embellishments a low-cost option. Additionally, decreased land values meant that larger undeveloped lots were accessible.

As for demand, if one was well-insulated from the Depression and could afford to buy a new house, some of the best built homes in over a decade were on the market. Affluent professionals were the prime source of new HPDL residents ever since the prewar building boom had started. These demographics remained similar through the Depression, and these were the residents most likely to afford a home at this time. The consequences for the Hale-Page neighborhood were thus especially fortunate. Unlike many of the other neighborhoods in Minneapolis during the thirties, HPDL experienced this miniboom and continued its gradual pace of development with little harm done.

By 1940, Hale-Page filled in considerably as bungalows filled in the street grid, interspersed among areas with larger Tudors and other Period Revival homes. Some land remained, however, most of which lay in low, swampy regions. Such areas were unattractive to both potential residents and developers; construction on marshy land prior to World War II was uneconomical, especially for the larger, custom-crafted homes which builders favored.

Conclusively, the kind of development that formed Hale-Page prior to World War II has created a specific type of residential district, found almost exclusively in South Minneapolis. Such zones are more extensive here due to the chain of lakes and Minnehaha Creek, which stretch in a roughly semicircular pattern across south-end neighborhoods. These districts are a unique combination of prewar housing in a landscape of exceptional physical beauty. Growth was based primarily upon attracting a cross-section of new auto-borne professionals, and succeeded in establishing Minneapolis'

southbound residential trends.

Local geographers David Lanegran of Macalester College and Judith Martin of the University of Minnesota refer to the Hale-Page neighborhood as a "prewar amenity district." These zones are characterized by the patterns just described. Other parts of the greater Nokomis Community, including Keewaydin and Lynnhurst, are also such prewar amenity districts. In total, roughly 15% of Minneapolis' residential area falls into this kind of zone, although Hale-Page is the largest intact example.

### ***THE POSTWAR HOUSING BOOM, 1945-1960***

World War II witnessed a dramatic lag in development. A lack of supplies and manpower, coupled with the slow pace of any construction that was attempted meant virtual standstill. Of special note were the large number of basements built without the next logical step: a house. This pattern could actually be seen from time to time preceding the war, when residents would purchase lots, build basements, and then need to save money for a few years in order to complete the home. A few locals even tell the story of a Clinton Avenue musician whose house took a long time to be completed; apparently, he just chose to settle in and live alone in the basement for a spell!

The end of World War II was the beginning of a new era for development in South Minneapolis. A large surplus of undeveloped land existed within city boundaries, and the Diamond Lake area up to 62nd Street was fertile grounds for postwar construction. Indeed, a new boom in development evolved in response to a huge demand for housing, characteristic of America during this period.

Demand climbed to high levels for two major reasons. First, the interwar years had seen a lack of both building supplies and intact families for housing starts. When soldiers, as well as supplies, returned from the war, the demand for new housing rose tremendously. Secondly, housing starts faltered some during the Depression and finally had an opportunity to begin again.

Geographical circumstance was largely responsible for why city land was still preferred for development. Large tracts of land did exist outside the Minneapolis city limits. However, employment was still traditionally located in the central city, and since freeways were not yet developed, developers would be making an illogical decision to choose outer tracts when inner-city land was so generously available.

Once postwar construction began, two distinct types of development occurred, one earlier than the other. At first, smaller and inexpensive homes were built on low, flat land, much of which used to be marshes. These homes were on the same low-lying fields that were too swampy for their economical development in earlier days. Furthermore, builders were not as concerned with gradual, custom development as they were through the thirties.

These homes were constructed to meet a pressing demand, and most were positioned on standard size city lots. Very basic housing styles like modified Cape Cods and tidy bungalows dominated this wave of construction. Small, one-car garages were by now a mainstream feature of development as well, as cars became readily accessible.

The trend toward suburbanization finally began in earnest during the late forties and into the fifties. Additionally, the first wave of postwar

construction reduced the amount of land available for development within city limits. As suburban communities opened up, tracts of suitable, low-cost land became more readily available, meaning builders could reasonably relocate their efforts. Thus, "economical" development moved out of the city, and new urban construction underwent a transformation.

Developers who wanted to remain in the city began building larger, more expensive ramblers and two-story split-levels on the remaining vacant lots. Oftentimes, this remaining land was a more challenging landscape of steeper hills and forested terrain, land once ignored in favor of more level lots. The result was dwindling yet lucrative tracts on which urban builders again created larger homes with an emphasis on natural beauty.

Many portions of Diamond Lake reflect this second trend in postwar construction, particularly west of Chicago Avenue. Diamond Lake Lane, Roslyn Place and portions of Portland Avenue have large numbers of sprawling ramblers and split-levels, much more typical of later suburban development. Backyards in these areas do not always abut alleyways, but instead open to woodsy views and hidden glimpses of Diamond Lake. Neighborhoods like nearby Kenny, Armatage, and Fulton were also affected by this last refuge of inner-city housing construction.

Residents moving into Diamond Lake during both periods of this postwar housing boom were again white-collar, middle-class residents. The levels of affluence associated with the first influx of professionals was absent, however. Car ownership was mainstream, houses were not custom-designed as often, and suburban communities provided new havens for younger generations of the upper-middle class. Today, many of the original owners are still present in houses they bought more than thirty years ago. Consequently, Diamond Lake enjoys high levels of stable ownership, little

need for extra housing repair, and the attractive surroundings which have matured even more since the area's development.

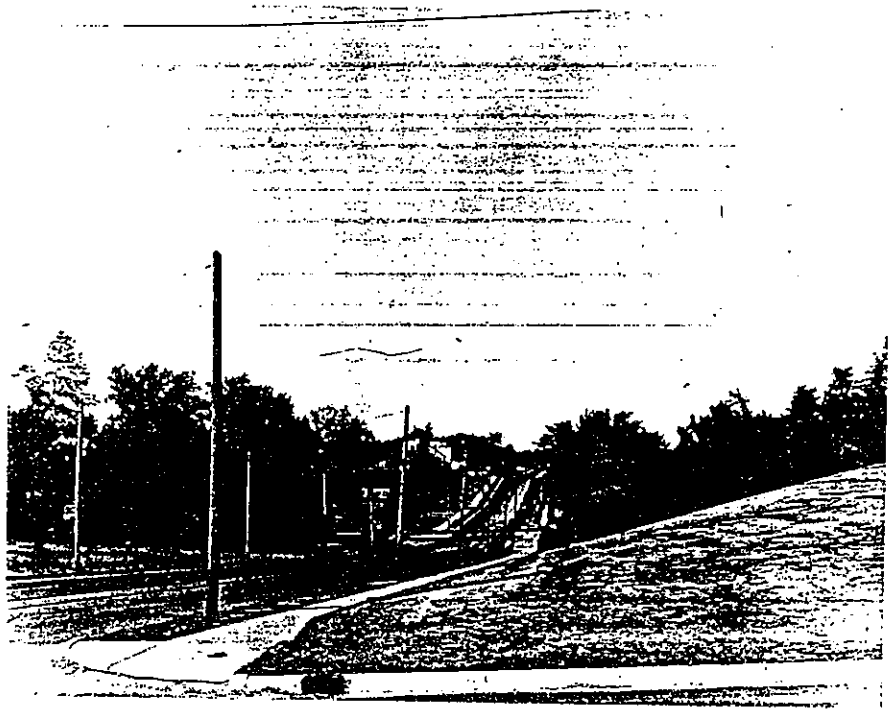
The similarity of these homes does not mean that the area lacks a sense of nostalgia or, for that matter, variety. In many cases, old farmhouses have remained in their original position or have been relocated in order to make way for new construction. The ramblers and newer tract housing in Diamond Lake is dotted in between with these older structures, remnants of the area's heyday as a trucking and gardening outpost. One example is an early home located at 5712 Clinton Avenue, not far from the site of Charles Hoag's original residence. This particular home, a fairly large structure graced with colonial overtones, is on the list of recognized historic resources, put out by the Minneapolis Historic Preservation Commission. A drive down Portland Avenue also reveals some earlier homes, reminders of days past. Such features help to give Diamond Lake a historical context which is largely absent from the true suburbs located south of city limits. In these areas, older homes and farmhouses were destroyed by the demand for new housing instead of preserved.

Both waves of postwar construction led to fairly complete development of the Hale-Page-Diamond Lake neighborhood by the mid-fifties. Very little land was available by the time freeway construction began its transformation of the urban residential landscape. In some parts of Minneapolis, the sixties saw an "apartment boom." However, this never really took hold in HPDL since most of the land was already invested in single-family homes, park land, and the occasional commercial strip. A smattering of apartments does exist near the confluence of I-35W and the Crosstown and out near the airport.

By the mid-fifties, the suburbs had come to dominate trends in both residential construction and population migration, and HPDL emerged as an impressively stable Minneapolis neighborhood. However, one more significant development was to affect HPDL's residential landscape. Before the neighborhood could assume its current physical boundaries and high level of stability, it had to contend with the construction of Interstate 35W.







## **IV PLANES, TRAINS & AUTOMOBILES: THE EXPANSION OF MODERN TRANSIT**

Like any neighborhood, Hale-Page-Diamond Lake was shaped extensively by the development of transportation systems. What made the early neighborhood's situation unique was the staggering effect of simultaneous developments in auto transit, the streetcar system, *and* the young aviation industry. In 1930, just ten years after initial residential growth, HPDL was hosting the city's first auto owners, saw the expansion of the streetcar system, and watched the dramatic expansion Wold-Chamberlain airport.

### ***AUTO-BORNE AT LAST***

As construction continued in HPDL, neighborhoods like Field, Regina and Northrup remained stable, built-up sections of the city. North of Minnehaha Creek, these neighborhoods relied on a well-developed streetcar system, lending credibility to the Twenties' image as a true "streetcar era." Radial lines connected such older, more established districts to downtown Minneapolis. In 1920, Hale-Page was just on the fringe of regulated streetcar service, where it would remain for another twenty years. Conversely, the neighborhood was one of the first to be on the forefront of emerging auto technology.

Hence, for workers who needed quick and easy transport to downtown jobs, living as far south as Hale-Page was not a logical option. Owning an automobile was the only sensible way to live south of Minnehaha Creek, and when the auto was introduced to the general public in 1920, its availability

was limited. Car owners were generally upper-class professionals, with the extra income necessary for acquisition and maintenance. Ironically, car owners were also the only residents who could afford the extra leisure time necessary to travel downtown without an auto. The consequences for local development meant Hale-Page was also a neighborhood intended for auto-borne residents. Some of the city's first private commuters thus lived in the region.

The automobile naturally also had effects on the physical design of the neighborhood. In particular, this included the development of alleyways in Hale-Page. A whole series of alleys was created behind the bungalows that began to line north-south avenues. Serving as throughways for automobiles, pedestrians and service vehicles, alleys were akin to a whole second street system and retain a history of their own.

Unlike other areas of the inner city, where alleyways originally accommodated horse-drawn vehicles, these alleys sprung up as "service areas." Since Hale-Page residents were some of the first auto-borne residents, they were also some of the first residents to need garages. Compact garages were first built separate from the house in the alley, utilizing a rule of thumb important to early auto owners: "build the garage as far away from the house as possible!" Cars, as well as their respective repair materials like oil, gas and tools were correctly regarded as strong fire hazards. By storing such equipment in an alley garage, a home could be as far removed as possible from any conceivable fire threat. Since service stations were not yet a necessary feature of the urban landscape, car owners generally stored much larger surpluses of gas and oil than people today. Additionally, the alley was an appropriate service area where trash could be left for pick-up.

It was not until after World War II that alleyways lost necessity. As cars became increasingly common, as well as larger and safer, more space was devoted to automobile care. Garages were routinely integrated into house design, giving a definite visual difference between prewar bungalow-and-alley grids and postwar housing design. The alley's function ceased to be important to these newer homes with driveways opening directly to the street and less need for safe storage of combustibles. Since most of Diamond Lake was developed after World War II, there is today a noticeable lack of alleyways dividing the lots. They have persisted to exist in Hale-Page, however, preserving yet another reminder of earlier days.

### ***RIDING THE TAIL OF STREETCAR EXPANSION***

The prewar housing boom, thanks to such development, was not dependent on the expansion of public transit as were many older housing tracts. Even so, the streetcar companies foresaw expansion to the south, and continued to develop through the prewar period. By 1940, Hale-Page was as well-served by trolley to downtown as any other neighborhood in Minneapolis. Major streetcar lines now ran down 4th and Chicago Avenues, as well as Nicollet Avenue immediately to the neighborhood's west.

For many years, 54th Street and Nicollet served as an entry point to Minneapolis. The train from Northfield to Minneapolis was owned by M.W. Savage who also owned the famous harness racing horse, Dan Patch. This pacer set the mile record of 1.55 1/4 in 1905, and the train was named the Dan Patch Line in his honor. (The record held until 1938, when Greyhound, a trotter, also did 1.55 1/4 and Billy Direct finally paced 1.55.) Passengers disembarked on 54th Street and then took the streetcar into downtown Minneapolis from 48th Street and Nicollet.

For Hale, Page and Diamond Lake, the era of the trolley may very well have been the early forties. At that time, the streetcar was equipped with a number of assets residents say made it a desirable form of transport. When the bus started running during the fifties, many people still preferred the trolley; streetcars were roomier, riders could stand up and smoke a cigarette outside in the back, and the heating system was one of the best in the nation. Helen Merrill, a retired health care professional who has lived in the Page neighborhood for 38 years, mentioned the advantages of twenty-four hour operation. Public health care workers often kept late-night hours, and the trolley's constant service was of enormous benefit.

By this time - the 1940s - streetcar routes existed down all of HPDL's major arterials. In the west, the Nicollet Avenue streetcar made the trip downtown from 48th Street an easy jaunt for local residents. Portland and Chicago Avenues were also thoroughfares, and Bloomington Avenue further east provided the neighborhood with a fourth route. Each of these streets saw further commercial development as a result of the streetcar's growth.

Nevertheless, car and trolley were not the only forms of transportation that transformed HPDL neighborhood, however. The twenties also witnessed the first version of today's Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport (albeit, quite a bit smaller in the beginning!)

### ***NEW WINGS***

Many residents are not aware that airport actually began on the site of an old racetrack. On September 4th, 1915, Snelling Motor Speedway held its first 500-mile race. Endorsed by the Minneapolis Civic and Commerce Association, the racetrack was meant to make Minneapolis an "Indianapolis of the West," complete with its own major 500-mile annual competition.

The bleachers could seat up to 100,000 people around a two-mile concrete track.

Such aspiration, however, did not succeed for long. By 1917, poor management and shoddy construction brought the speedway to quick bankruptcy. Margaret Foster, a longtime resident, used to wander down to the field during its vacant years and run around the track. The field then remained empty for three years until the Aero Club and the Minnesota National Guard set their sights on opening the first flying field on the old spot. Removed from the general direction of Minneapolis' development and graced with low, flat fields stretching for miles, the track was well-situated for airplanes. Rechristened Speedway Field, the airmail service between Chicago and the Twin Cities started August 10th, 1920. Almost exactly three years later, all traces of the speedway's existence were erased when the airfield was renamed yet again, this time as Wold-Chamberlain Field. The carrier now known as Northwest Airlines was established a short time later on July 10, 1926. Throughout the thirties, major additions vastly expanded the airport's size as air traffic increased.

Today, the airport's presence is confirmed daily by the noise of early morning jets in residents' ears. The airport's younger years, however, preserved the neighborhood's appeal for a number of reasons. Early planes, of course, did not fly nearly as high or as fast as modern jetliners. Since this was the case, construction in the vicinity was largely dictated by limitations on height, and merely reinforced the trend toward low density residential development, already encouraged by the 1926 Zoning Ordinance. Many industrial and commercial structures were unfeasible to build due to both height and zoning restrictions. Thus, the airport "accidentally" influenced and sealed HPDL's evolution as a residential neighborhood to a certain extent.

Building restrictions were not the only influence the airport had on local development. Expanded commercial and military facilities throughout the forties and fifties meant a greater demand for housing by servicemen and airport employees. Finally, today's noise pollution was virtually nonexistent, and planes were not the nuisance they are now to the neighborhood's peace and quiet.

### ***FREEWAY CONSTRUCTION: A NEW AUTOMOBILE ERA***

By the mid-sixties, a new generation of automobile drivers saw the development of massive freeways, built to accommodate the trends of increased traffic and suburbanization. The construction of Interstate 35 began in the 1960s and was well underway, and had enormous consequences for hundreds of HPDL residents. This was perhaps the greatest effect ever yielded on the neighborhood by the demands of transportation.

According to longtime residents of 2nd Avenue, five years elapsed that are best lost from memory. Helen Merrill, a 2nd Avenue resident for thirty-eight years, says that she has let herself block out the noise and dirt and tension of those years when 35W was being built. As the interstate was constructed along the western border of Page and Diamond Lake, necessary evils were incurred by residents whose homes were forcibly displaced, and others who saw a completely new landscape being shaped in their own front yards.

Interstate 35W displaced hundreds of homes. Fortunately, many of these houses were relocated instead of being destroyed. A large number were moved to new lots immediately to the side of the new freeway. Second Avenue, on the Page side, harbors at least three such homes. Second Avenue residents tell of one exceptionally large house which was too big to be moved in one piece. It was bisected and moved to a location near Lake



Calhoun where it was successfully put back together. Page resident Phyllis Wendling says it "looks absolutely beautiful! You cannot tell the difference at all."

These residents were fortunate to have their homes merely displaced. Greater numbers saw their houses demolished to make room for the construction. Between 1960 and 1963, 577 housing units were removed from the freeway clearance area, which included land set aside for the construction of both I-35W and Crosstown 62. These were almost all houses in the original confines of the HPDL neighborhood. The impact seems even more powerful when one stops to consider that only 466 homes were added to the entire Nokomis Community during the same period.

Todd Field, a park where residents now play baseball in the summer, was transformed into a peculiar graveyard of sorts, when the decision was made to fill it in with house debris. The park had already experienced dredging and filling once before in the forties, when an extended arm of Diamond Lake was filled to create the field. Now, the park would be refilled, this time with debris that would be over 25 feet deep. Walking through the park today, it is possible to see various pieces jutting out from the ground. A large fee was later incurred by the Park Board while Todd Field was being rebuilt by construction workers who kept running into chunks of the old concrete.

In addition to the problems created by displacement, remaining residents were plagued by the endless results of the construction. The grade needed to be raised tremendously to create a bridge over Minnehaha Parkway. This altered the drainage system at the corner of 53rd Street and 2nd Avenue and it now floods during heavy rains. The elevation of the freeway and the increase in traffic created tremendous noise pollution - all vehicles needed

to increase power from going under the Diamond Lake Road bridge to go over the parkway. Motorists in trouble for any reason would scale the chainlink fence and ring doorbells along 2nd Avenue at all hours of the day, even late at night and the wee hours of the morning.

The construction process itself experienced curious setbacks from time to time. One favorite neighborhood anecdote recalls the day when a potential oil source threatened to hold up construction for an indefinite period. As it turns out, some lucky engineer had conducted a soil test on the site of an old oil pit, probably used by a resident for auto maintenance. Construction resumed quickly, but tense moments elapsed as the construction team went about finding an explanation.

The first soundwall in the city was installed between Minnehaha Parkway and Diamond Lake Road to reduce the new dilemma of traffic noise. Double-wall construction was used and terraced landscaping was employed to soften the visual assault. Noise pollution was reduced somewhat but the double wall served as a great incubator for the rodent population. In late fall, mice would seek refuge in homes across the street. Thirteen mice at one time is remembered - not so fondly! -by one 2nd Avenue homeowner.

Highway 62, known to most locals as the Crosstown, was under construction in the early sixties as well. Although its effects were not as widespread as I-35W's impact on the neighborhood, residents remembered the early Crosstown by a rather morose nickname - "Blood Alley." Residents like Margaret Foster remembered the constant whine of sirens let off by ambulances on their way to an accident scene. The early junction of Highway 62 and Interstate 35W was one of the most dangerous intersections in the city, and Mrs. Foster relates how the ambulances would sit atop the freeway entrance ramp, poised for quick response. Most accidents were

attributed to the frighteningly short length of entrance and exit ramps, especially those to and from Portland Avenue. The confluence of 35W with Highway 62 was another overburdened zone. 35W may have been remembered for its massive assault on the landscape, but Crosstown was an early lesson about the need for appropriate highway engineering.

## V

### **"SONG OF HIAWATHA": THE PRESERVATION OF NATURAL BEAUTY & CREATION OF NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS**

Modern transportation and residential development have certainly played an invaluable role in defining Hale-Page-Diamond Lake's landscape. However, an early awareness of the area's natural beauty has given HPDL its most prized asset: parks and lakes which are a refuge for residents who navigate a sprawling urban landscape everyday. They have also helped give the neighborhood a sense of identity, defined not just by physical landscape, but also by a strong concern for ecological preservation and community focal points.

Minnehaha Creek and Lake Nokomis give the city green spaces in which to play, ride a bike or just lie along the Nokomis lagoon. Diamond Lake is not only a beautiful haven for a nature walk, but a valuable niche for the plant life and waterfowl that reside there. Pearl Park and George Todd Field provide small community focal points, places where neighbors can meet for a game of softball or just take a brief respite.

The neighborhood's beautiful natural setting has brought tourists to the area since the mid-nineteenth century. By the 1850's, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem, "Song of Hiawatha," had already created a stir, drawing tourists, artists and the occasional romantic to the area's serene natural setting. In addition, a pioneer wagon trail along the Minnehaha Creek Valley was already being used by the public to reach Lake Harriet for recreation. Such facts established an early connection between the local setting and the desire for future enhancement of its natural beauty.

1889 was an exceptionally important year in the Minneapolis Park Board's history. Minnehaha State Park was established, and grand plans were harbored by city officials intent on developing an extensive recreational landscape. The aim was to create a beautiful parkway connecting Minnehaha State Park, Minnehaha Falls and the Mississippi River with the chain of lakes in southwest Minneapolis. At that time, Lake Calhoun and Lake Harriet were already somewhat developed, but Lake Nokomis was still a large bog to the east and Lake Hiawatha a major source of grain supply for the Indians. HPDL fell directly in between Nokomis and these lakes to the west, and consisted mostly of undeveloped marsh to the south of Minnehaha Creek.

Nevertheless, the Park Board was optimistic about future development, and in 1907 - just eighteen years later - acquired Lake Nokomis, perhaps the most massive undertaking in Park Board history. (The lake was acquired under its former nomenclature, Lake Amelia, named so after the wife of a local military official.) The idea was to completely redevelop what was still bog into a sparkling body of water. Theodore Wirth, a prominent park official at the time, comments that Lake Nokomis was then "a wild tangle of willow and popular saplings and the lake required much dredging before it could be utilized." He reaffirmed later that it truly was the largest job ever undertaken by the Minneapolis Park Board. The vast task of dredging and filling Lake Nokomis was a six year process, accomplished from 1918 to 1924. Later, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) completed further rehabilitation of Nokomis following World War II.

At this point, little residential development had been undertaken in the HPDL area. The first platted zone, Edenhurst, was not finished until 1917. The Minneapolis Park Board demonstrated incredible insight by developing Lake Nokomis so early, seeing as to how the local development boom was

in full swing by the 1920s. Had Lake Nokomis not been dredged and created when it was, lake side property might not have developed until a significant time later. Lakefront property was often the first in a neighborhood to be developed, attractive to the affluent residents who initially chose to live there.

In the twenties and thirties, as the neighborhood slowly started to fill in and streetcar lines extended further south, new areas took on the status of unofficial parks, developing as locals picked out favorite recreational spots. Diamond Lake Woods became popular as a favorite picnic area around this time. It stretched from approximately 57th to 60th streets, between Portland and Chicago, and was reportedly being held for park purposes. When summers were dry, a person could easily reach it via the Nicollet Avenue streetcar line, take the trolley to 60th, and then hop from muskrat house to muskrat house across Diamond Lake.

This favorite watering hole did emerge as official park land by 1936, when the Minneapolis Park Board finally acquired Diamond Lake, a small lagoon with a significant (if not turbulent!) local history. At the time it was acquired, Diamond Lake was more of a swamp than a lake, with a large arm extending east across the area that is now George Todd Field. Pearl Lake existed just to the immediate north in the area that is now Pearl Park.

The relationship between Diamond Lake and Pearl Lake was a main cause for the aforementioned "turbulent" history. Dry years in the late thirties meant that Diamond Lake remained a mosquito-infested swamp, despite its status as the place to picnic. After its acquisition, the park board slowly began the process of dredging the swamp. Dredging, coupled with significant heavy rains in the early forties, transformed the marsh and turned it into a glimmering body of water. Although the lake rose enough to kill most of

the choking swamp grasses, it was still only three to five feet deep. .

Various sources suggest that there was a spring under 52nd Street during the late thirties as well. Cars were left mired between Columbus and Chicago Avenues on 52nd Street for a number of years; Mr. George Beacom, deceased principal of Sanford Junior High, had a garden that ended up eight feet below street level; finally, a Mr. William Hughes once referred to the best fishing hole in Pearl Lake, which he walked to as a boy, from the Chicago Avenue Streetcar line near St. Mary's Cemetery. These facts all appeared to confirm the existence of a spring in the general vicinity. More recently, houses on Eliot Avenue's east side experienced settling in the early seventies, and the drying of the old lake and river bottom was attributed to the cause.

While Diamond Lake was still swampland, Pearl Lake had become dry land as well, disappearing by the early thirties. The Park Board sodded the property, planting trees and creating a tidy local playground. When wet years arrived and Diamond Lake was indeed a lake once again, Pearl Lake also surged, leaving the playground underwater. An article in the 1944 Minneapolis Star Journal referred to it as the place where children now "catch frogs where they used to play leapfrog." The grass had grown rank and the trees planted by the park board were killed. Now, the Park Board had to contend with an underground park and shallow but rather vast Diamond Lake. The most desirable situation would be to save the playground somehow and create a permanent Diamond Lake that would be smaller but deeper. If done properly, future precipitation would have little effect on the region. Furthermore, the prewar building boom and acquisition of park land meant that increasing development required more land on which to build. A clever decision had to be made.

World War II brought plans to a halt until after the war. It was during the war, however, that an efficient scheme was devised. Following the war, the Minneapolis Park Board would dredge Diamond Lake, making it much deeper, and using over 750,000 cubic yards of dredged material to accomplish three tasks: 1) fill in the Pearl Lake site and bring it up to street level to create a permanent playground; 2) fill out Diamond Lake's own shoreline, significantly reducing its area; 3) Create George Todd Field by filling in Diamond Lake's eastern arm as well as surrounding swampland. Such massive dredging and filling endowed Diamond Lake with a healthy permanent depth of about twenty feet. The smaller lake, paired with new park spaces, assisted in attracting residential development after the war. This was advantageous for both developers who needed drier land and residents who found the new landscape desirable.

Although Pearl Park has existed in various forms since its days as a lake, it was not officially dedicated by the park board until 1968. In 1970 when the board declared a portion of the park north of 52nd Street as surplus land for sale, the neighborhood stopped the sale of the land for further development, demonstrating an exceptional display of grassroots power and community togetherness. Pearl Park to this day is a key part of the neighborhood's urban landscape as well as its social focal point.

Throughout the sixties, community involvement with the parks increased by leaps and bounds. September 18, 1964 saw the birth of the all-volunteer, nonprofit Park Improvement & Recreation Council (PIRC). Not only did PIRC give the community a stronger voice over how HPDL's parks were handled by the Minneapolis Park Board, it gave residents an opportunity to create programming they felt was key to the park system's success. PIRC staffed Pearl, Todd Field and Diamond Lake with volunteers and arranged a variety of youth programs. Currently, it is still the largest voluntary provider of



youth programming in the city.

The 1970s were active years for community members, whose efforts to increase awareness of park resources were especially laudable. The construction of a nature trail during the summer of 1977 virtually reintroduced Diamond Lake to the HPDL neighborhood as a vital source of local pride. Installation of the floating dock was also put in at the request of residents and supervised by the neighborhood. Guided nature walks were offered and wood duck boxes and baskets helped to encourage nesting by the local waterfowl. Diamond Lake Neighborhood Association and local park employees even helped to arrange British double-decker bus tours, which would emphasize HPDL's park resources, viewing Minnehaha Creek, Pearl Park and Diamond Lake and Lake Nokomis Parkway.

Diamond Lake Neighborhood Association was eventually transformed into today's HPDL Community Association. Originally, the DLNA was a special-interest group, formed by residents concerned with the well-being of Todd Field and Diamond Lake. When the NRP program began distributing funds for neighborhood use in the early eighties, DLNA was unable to cooperate due to its status as a special-interest group. To work with the NRP, a more broad-based group had to be developed. Karen Pritz, who was working at Hale School during this time, helped to establish such a group from the DLNA and other interested community members. The initial result was the formation of an NRP Steering Committee, formed in fall, 1991, with Karen Pritz as supervisor. This group has since developed into the HPDL Community Association, still working closely with NRP to establish and fund neighborhood projects.

During the summer of 1990, the Department of Natural Resources evaluated Diamond Lake's quality as a safe ecohabitat, concluding that it has remained

in especially good condition. A whole variety of waterfowl make Diamond Lake home for much of the year, including duck, pheasant, plover, and shrikes to name a few. Fish are able to swim back and forth from Diamond Lake to Minnehaha Creek via an equalizer tube which connects the lake to Minnehaha Watershed. Aquatic vegetation in the area also thrives and ensures abundant feeding sites for the wild fowl. One potential problem involves the noticeable impingement of loosestrife, a pesky aquatic "weed" that can kill other forms of plant life. Park upkeep, however, has provided the lake with exceptional maintenance, and continues to ensure that loosestrife does not become a serious threat. Nonetheless, local residents still express much concern that Diamond Lake is overlooked too often by Minneapolis city officials, and that efforts to reaffirm its role as a city lake must persist.

In 1994, the Diamond Lake nature path was enhanced with the creation of a paved path at street level along the lake's eastern end, between 58th Street and Diamond Lake Road. This path has greatly aided in improving the safety of cyclists and pedestrians, especially children who are walking to Pearl Park and George Todd Field. These efforts were originally initiated by the HPDL Community Association, a group whose involvement was crucial for the project's completion.

## **VI FEELS LIKE HOME: BIRTH OF A NEIGHBORHOOD CULTURE**

Three traditional aspects of neighborhood life have asserted their presence in Hale-Page-Diamond Lake since early days, giving the neighborhood a solid foundation on which to create its local culture. Not surprisingly, these influences have stemmed from the priority placed on family, education, and worship. The result is a neighborhood blessed with statistics many other neighborhoods strive to achieve: a very low divorce rate, a large number of children, and one of the best-educated populations in the Twin Cities area.

### ***FAMILY***

The original residents of HPDL were fortunate to be rather prosperous members of the emerging professional class in the 1920s. As the neighborhood developed and the postwar stability of the fifties settled American homeowners somewhat, this cross-section of the population maintained its affluence. The result was a classic arena for the 1950's nuclear family: most couples had children, and the male head of household was generally a "breadwinner." As was typical of the era, many women chose to stay home during this period, but career trends in the sixties and seventies led to a significant change.

Dual-income households became a way of life for many "enlightened" professionals. Both husband and wife tended to find work outside of the home, and professionals like those who had first settled in HPDL led this national trend. Although the result was oftentimes a profusion of DINK

(Dual-Income, No Kids) couples and spawned an era of cynically-labelled Yuppiedom by the seventies and eighties, plenty of professionals were still choosing to have children. The attractive homes and relatively quiet atmosphere of HPDL, a community still close to the city, was an enticing district to such families.

### *EDUCATION*

Today, it is obvious that these families are still a major part of the HPDL community. Nearly one in every three households had a child under age 18 in 1990, a statistic which has always slightly higher than the average for the city of Minneapolis. Of course, education has consequently been an important priority to residents. This was also true of HPDL's earlier history.

For a long time, neighborhood boundaries were synonymous with school boundaries, and the schools often gave a neighborhood its name. This was true for both Hale and Page, named after their local elementary schools. The concept of the "neighborhood school" was not only practical, but was a useful way to cultivate an intimate sense of community purpose. Kids who attended schools in the immediate vicinity of home were kids with a solid sense of just where home was.

Before HPDL maintained any schools in its own boundaries, students were served by two elementary schools in nearby neighborhoods, both built in 1920. In the Field neighborhood just north of Minnehaha Creek, children living close by could attend the Field School at 4645 4th Avenue South. This early elementary schoolhouse served slightly older neighborhoods to the north as well, including Regina and Northrup. Children who lived much further south might have attended the Windom School in Windom neighborhood, open for kindergarten through sixth grade. Located at 5821

Wentworth Avenue, Windom has undergone much renovation since its early days, including additions in 1923 and 1925.

In 1930, Hale Elementary School was established at 1220 East 54th Street, and HPDL acquired its first neighborhood school. The school gave Hale neighborhood its name in honor of Nathan Hale, a hero of the Revolutionary War. As the years passed, Hale School has also installed new additions, once in 1938 and later in 1954, although attendance levels were still lower than expected in 1965. Nokomis Community Analysis Report said of Hale School that it was a "good building, with some underutilized space."

The second public elementary school was not opened until 1958, when the Page School began serving students from kindergarten through the 6th grade. Page School was named after Walter Hines Page, a famous American editor and diplomat, and was a well-loved example of traditional neighborhood schooling. Laani Fong remembers going to the "old Page School" which was located on a triangular plot of land bound by Minnehaha Parkway on the north, Tarrymore Drive on the east and Luverne on the south. It was an all wooden structure with each room having its own outside entrance and exit. There were no lunch facilities as all children went home to eat, and bus service was unthinkable - one walked to and from school. The Page School was home to kindergarten through 6th grade, and kids subsequently attended nearby Ramsey Junior High School and Washburn Senior High just west of Portland.

The "new Page School" was of brick construction, K-6, and among the smallest elementary schools in Minneapolis. In 1965, Page School was referred to by the Nokomis Community Analysis Report as a "very good building on an unusual site." During the late sixties, a temporary building was added to serve as a school hub for children. Enrollment at Page School

ceased before the 1982-1983 school year, and the school sat dormant for three years. Demolition crews tore down the building in April of 1985, and the site has since been converted to townhomes.

In addition to early public schools, one private school served the neighborhood's fairly large Catholic population. Resurrection private Catholic school opened in 1941, with five sisters and roughly fifty students. The school is still associated with Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church at 5425 11th Avenue South. Additions were made in 1961, and capacity has since been increased again to accommodate the merger of Resurrection with St. Kevin's private school in 1991. With the merger complete, Resurrection's name was changed to Our Lady of Peace, and the school's attendance doubled from 110 to 250. Currently, over 400 students attend the school, 85% of whom are neighborhood residents. The school also attracts many kids from the south suburbs of Eagan and Mendota. Father Richard Pates says this is due to an increasing interest in both private and Catholic educations. These numbers appear on the school's growing waiting list as well, with 25 kids alone on the kindergarten waiting list.

### ***WORSHIP***

Finally, the neighborhood church has also been a strong focal point in HPDL, though not with the same distinctive tie to ethnic community as in some parts of Minneapolis. Neighborhood churches are indicative of the city's prevailing Scandinavian and German roots; half of HPDL churches are Lutheran parishes. The Catholic Church has also been a strong draw, in part fulfilling the increased demand for quality parochial schools.

In total, HPDL is home to nine churches representing a variety of Christian denominations, and all with their own special connections to the

neighborhood's well-being. These include Bible Presbyterian Church, Diamond Lake Lutheran, Edgewater Baptist, Edgewater Emmanuel United Methodist, Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church, First Evangelical Free, Hope English Evangelical Lutheran, Mt. Zion Lutheran, and Nokomis Heights Lutheran. The Church of St. Kevin Catholic parish was also located in HPDL until 1991.

Established October 1, 1941, St. Kevin thrived until expansion of the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport forced it to close. A runway had been erected only 3,000 feet from St. Kevin's school, posing a significant safety hazard as well as serious noise pollution. When the church closed in 1991, the land was bought and developed by the airport. With the parish bereft, HPDL's Catholic community was disrupted. The only other Catholic parish at the time was Church of the Resurrection, but St. Kevin's parish was more concerned with finding a way to keep its own parish together.

The Church of the Resurrection was begun on January 22, 1933 by Archbishop John Gregory Murray. Father Thomas Sheehy became its first pastor, and the church flourished as an independent Catholic community in South Minneapolis for sixty years. The Resurrection parish was composed largely of HPDL residents, although Resurrection attracted members from all over Minneapolis.

In 1991, a merger was formed between St. Kevin's parish and Resurrection, and the Our Lady of Peace Parish officially emerged July 1st. The new parish was founded by Archbishop John R. Roach and located at Resurrection's original site at 5425 11th Avenue South.

Overall, the merging of the two parishes has been highly successful. Residents who have joined Our Lady of Peace since 1991 may not be aware

of how painful the merger was for some older members of St. Kevin's. In fact, 15% of St. Kevin's Parish left once the merger was completed. The new parish took off, however, as did the parochial school which benefitted from the addition of energetic new faculty.

Today, Our Lady of Peace has a parish of 3000, including 1200 families, most of whom are HPDL or Nokomis Community residents. Father Pates noted with pleasure the extraordinary growth of the parish's largest contingent: kids age twelve and under. OLP has extended itself well to both the young and elderly populations, and is also seeing greater diversification. Membership on behalf of Catholic African- and Asian-Americans has increased every year since the original two churches merged. OLP certainly has bounced back, and as Pates put it, "the church has a new synergy."

Not all churches are experiencing the growth of their own congregations, however. "The churches are having a tough time maintaining viable congregations," mentioned Tom Dial, a resident of HPDL for six years. Social awareness and communication between local pastors will be key to maintaining the church as an important neighborhood focal point. These processes have begun, as social programs that extend beyond the parish become stronger priorities.

Church programs are reaching beyond race, age and gender lines, and are leading to an enhanced quality of neighborhood life. Habitat for Humanity teams from Hope English Evangelical Lutheran Church participate in statewide projects, building homes for the poor. Nokomis Heights Lutheran Church maintains parenting classes, marriage enrichment seminars and a Parents Morning Out that have been popular neighborhood programs.



## **VII FROM FLOWER FARMS THROUGH THE FRANCHISE AGE: NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

Although Hale-Page-Diamond Lake has long enjoyed relative serenity, away from the hustle and bustle of business and commerce, it is not entirely without local commercial development. Neighborhood business is always beneficial to an area's well-being, bringing with it a sense of pride, economic advantages, and convenience for local residents. Not surprisingly, the commercial activity that did emerge in HPDL came about as a direct response to local and immediate needs. Before the onset of storefront development, trucking and gardening were important activities. As the neighborhood grew, grocers and drugstores flourished, providing the new community with necessary goods during the twenties and thirties. By the fifties, the national trend in commercial development was based on the auto strip, drawing customers from many parts of town.

Despite these different stages of commercial development, two major issues have determined the conditions for most businesses ever established in the HPDL neighborhood. First, both residents and developers have long been concerned with the effects of heavy traffic. Second, particularly related to the wave of commercial development in the fifties, businesses desiring a larger clientele base needed more space than the HPDL neighborhood even had available. These factors helped to preserve HPDL's residential appeal, if not by default to some extent. Hence, commercial activity in the neighborhood has remained on a smaller level, emphasizing both convenience and local needs.

Long before residential development encroached on farms in the area, trucking and gardening were important commercial activities. This was particularly true in the Diamond Lake neighborhood, where large farms kept acreage just outside city limits in the 1920s. (Diamond Lake was a part of the village of Richfield at this time, a town whose name was no mistake, but an actual reflection on the local farming activity.) Located just outside city limits, these vast tracks of rich marshland were beneficial to commercial growers, whose products could be delivered quick and fresh by truck to Minneapolis in a matter of minutes. The vast tracks of rich marshland were beneficial to such growers. Present-day Bachman's Flower Market in Richfield was originally part of an early farm, as was Klier's on 54th and Nicollet.

Long time residents might also recall Mr. A.B. Franklin's peony farm, located along what is now Loren Drive. Mr. Franklin was both a hybridizer and commercial grower of peonies, which would erupt into a flame of color each spring that was seen all the way down to Portland Avenue. The property was gradually sold off as developers encroached to the south, but was still operating in the late 1940's. Throughout these years, the Men's Garden Club of Minneapolis made annual visits, and Mr. Franklin was very well-known in the gardening community.

Paul and Virginia Hunter, longtime residents of the Page neighborhood, also recall a large truck farm across from Windom School between Nicollet Avenue and Blaisdell from 58th to 62nd Street. When 54th and Nicollet later became a local commercial hub, this truck farm supplied the grocery stores with fresh produce such as corn, tomatoes, beans and potatoes.

Slowly, small businesses began to appear, catering to the new neighborhood's most basic needs. The first shopkeepers were often grocers

and pharmacists, who kept stores which residents could walk to and exchange greetings or share a bit of conversation with the owner. Beauty salons and soda shops also became increasingly popular. William J. Russell ran a popular beverage bar as far south as 5800 Cedar Avenue in the thirties. Customers would come by after passing a lazy day by the newly popular Lake Nokomis. Russell's shop has continued to enjoy success as a neighborhood hangout; the 58 Club now serves its infamous "Juicy Lucy" burgers at the old location.

By the thirties, definite "strips" of commercial activity could be identified. Most of these shops were located along streets which would later become major intersections. As streetcar routes developed along Bloomington, Chicago, Nicollet and Portland, commercial activity along these routes simply expanded. No pressing need existed to move beyond these initial intersections, as they were adequate for the local commercial activity.

The junction of Bloomington Avenue with 52nd Street was probably the first well-developed intersection. Situated to the north amid the first flurry of bungalow construction, early buildings housed active businesses by 1925. Such buildings arrived before the streetcar, providing new residents with immediate access to convenience goods. In the thirties, the intersection hosted a drugstore, a dry goods shop, two grocers, and two doctor's offices. Physician Harold W. Ford and dentist Sarlock M. Riess practiced out of the building at 5161 Bloomington Avenue, still home to a doctor's office today, as well as Boeder's Beauty Salon and Great Northern Antiques. Also at this corner, Fossum and Gillquist Grocers & Meats vied with the Oys Brothers for business. Both were popular grocers in the neighborhood; the Oys Brothers was a local chain with numerous locations in south Minneapolis. At 5163 Bloomington was Donald Christianson's Drugstore, now State Farm Insurance.

5161 Bloomington Avenue, erected in 1925, is still the biggest structure on the block, and has been placed on the Minneapolis Historic Preservation Commission's list of Recognized Historic Resources. This roster lists city buildings with either architectural or historic significance. Today, window shoppers can browse at Great Northern Antiques, now located in the 5161 building. Its large selection of vintage radios - one of the largest in the neighborhood - lends a touch of nostalgia to the old building.

Despite Bloomington Avenue's early development, Chicago Avenue ultimately ended up with more opportunities for expansion. Zoning along Chicago allotted more space to commercial activity, and business clusters began to appear every few blocks, first at 52nd Street and later at 54th and 56th Streets. Chicago Avenue was also able to handle a greater volume of traffic and the streetcar expanded here first as well.

From 52nd to 53rd Street, the businesses along Chicago were a similar blend of services and convenience stores. Again, locals could pay a quick trip to the corner grocer; Sydney Swanson's, which opened in 1932 at 5249-51, was one of Chicago Avenue's earliest grocers. Zemlin Drug Company (5301) and Ring's Radio & Electric Service (5257) also provided valuable local services in this block. By 1940, there was even a dance academy - Gilbert School of Dance - at 5245 Chicago.

Today, these businesses are no longer here, although the original structures remain filled by new tenants. The dance academy has been transformed into Jim's Home Improvement, and the old electric service has become a consignment shop called My Sister & Me. The spacious interior of the old Sydney Swanson's grocery is now Minnesota Institute of Acupuncture and Herbal Studies, the midwest's only institution of higher learning in the field of acupuncture. Only the building that housed Zemlin DRug has been torn

down, in order to make way for apartments at 5301 Chicago.

Clustered about 54th Street was another node of activity, similar in pattern. Oys Brothers had another grocery branch in the thirties at the current site of Sir Jack's Cafe, and Edgewater Drugs was housed where Huie's Chow Mein now stands. Aqualand Aquarium moved to its present location here following over thirty years at the 54th and Nicollet commercial hub. This pattern continued to expand south with the population, and Chicago's intersection at 56th Street started to build up in the forties and fifties. An early fill station was open by 1940 at 5545 Chicago, as well as Minneapolis Pharmacy. Minneapolis Pharmacy has since become Diamond Lake Pharmacy, a business long owned by the Findell family. This junction is now a central hub of activity with a major bus stop.

When most locals reminisce about earlier days, they recall the busy commercial district at Nicollet Avenue and 54th Street. This intersection was a major hub of local activity from the thirties and well into the fifties. Instrumental to the junction's rapid development was the Dan Patch train line which brought passengers from Northfield into the city via this intersection; passengers would then depart and walk to 48th and Nicollet to catch the local trolley into downtown. Hence, the length of Nicollet from 54th to 48th was rapidly commercialized and on most days was a bustling mix of residents and travelers en route to Minneapolis.

The post office, corner drug store, grocer and several bakeries shared the intersection with a number of other small shops. By 1940, the intersection positively brimmed over with activity and was not just limited to convenience stops. National Tea, a popular grocery chain in earlier years, opened at this intersection, giving "mom and pop" stores their first flavor of "big name" competition. Another outlet was immediately north at

Nicollet and 48th Street, where the streetcar led directly to downtown.

Other familiar names included Clark's Service and Fill Station, still located on the corner at 5401 Nicollet, Backstrom's Meats, and Richfield Beauty Parlor & Barber Salon. This area was actually a part of Richfield until 1927, and many of the businesses had kept Richfield in their name. Phyllis Wendling, a 48 year resident of the Page neighborhood, recalls Morsel Bakery at 5413 Nicollet, owned for many years by Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Lighter of Hiawatha Avenue. Morsel Bakery was an exceptionally popular stop for fresh pastries and morning coffee, and as Wendling remembered, sold the best pumpernickel in town. Directly next door at 5413 1/2 was a small rental library (the one started by well-loved businessman John Clark Nicholson), and next to this, a large building (5415) that housed American Electric Company, Caserta Dancing Academy and Town's Edge Ballroom. People came from well beyond the neighborhood confines for forties-style swing jazz dance at Town's Edge. The dancehall was a colorful sight, bedecked with European-style trimmings and reminiscent of a Bavarian Inn. Today it houses American Lighting, Style Beauty Salon, Frame Factory, and a cobbler.

Throughout the fifties, 54th and Nicollet was probably the most active site of commercial activity HPDL has ever known. Page residents were especially close by, separated by just a few blocks from the junction. The intersection's popularity persisted until freeway development in the sixties separated Nicollet Avenue from HPDL, and I-35W became the neighborhood's new western border.

Following World War II, commercial activity evolved somewhat differently as increasing car traffic made new forms of development popular. In many parts of the city, major streets were commercialized along virtually their entire length, and new stores were likely to be bigger and were housed in

small multitenant shopping centers. Parking lots also became a more common feature.

Almost by default, Hale-Page-Diamond Lake remained protected from encroaching commercial development. Most land was already being used for new housing development and by the fifties, attractive parks were filling large expanses of HPDL, even along major streets. Commercial developers were concerned with finding their own vast tracts of land, on which they could build strip malls or large multitenant structures. This surplus of land simply was not available in Hale-Page-Diamond Lake. Only the neighborhood perimeters possessed ample space for these developers.

As it were, Portland and 60th was an appropriate space, and commercial activity developed at the intersection in the fifties. Located on the very edge of the newer Diamond Lake neighborhood, land was generously available and removed from the more attractive residential area immediately north. As it was developed, clear differences distinguished the junction from more traditional commercial corners along Chicago and Bloomington.

Portland and 60th was designed with cars foremost in mind, as so many things were when the auto achieved major popularity in the Fifties. Wide entryways were created in front of stores, and stores themselves were being set back further and further back from the street. Small parking lots developed and gas stations began to dominate street corners. (The auto's extreme popularity was bolstered by the seemingly endless supply of cheap gasoline, which service stations sought to dispense.) Even today, gas stations and auto repair shops are the dominant feature on three corners. The northeast corner has been home to numerous service stations and is now home to a car repair lot owned by Jim's Service Station at 54th and

Chicago.

Another fifties trend was for businesses to be located in multitenant buildings; these were the very earliest form of strip malls. Examples around Portland and 60th include buildings currently leased by a printer and Know-Name Records on the southeast corner, as well as the neighboring movie rental and one hour photo shop. These structures first appeared in the fifties and sixties.

This kind of commercial strip was not without its more novel aspects, however. Another impact of the automobile age was the exploding fast-food industry, begun in 1955 when Kentucky Fried Chicken and McDonald's opened their first outlets. In 1961, 60th and Portland saw the opening of Dairy Queen, by far the most popular stop along this intersection! This Dairy Queen's offbeat, boxy design was part of a sixties design craze, known as Streamline Moderne architecture, and was popular among early franchises. Streamline Moderne still exemplifies a particular time and place: young and booming, auto-oriented America. The style meant to communicate exuberance and modernity while maintaining an efficiently-sized space.

As franchises have aged, their architecture has ceased to remain indicative of anything (at least on the outside!). Pedestrians who still stop by when a Mr. Misty urge strikes are likely unaware that this Dairy Queen is consequently on a list of Recognized Historic Resources. Formulated by the Minneapolis Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), this list notes buildings in every neighborhood with special architectural or historic significance.

Dairy Queen is not the only modern commercial building in the neighborhood placed on the MHPC list. Returning to Bloomington Avenue, another building from the 1960s reveals its own architectural sensibility,



giving it the status of a Recognized Historic Resource as well. 5201 Bloomington, home to Kasten Dental Services and Dr. Roger K. Schroeder's dental studio, was constructed in 1968, and is a distinct example of the more practical Modern design that took hold in the late sixties. This colorful yet fairly plain structure bespeaks the Modern tenet, "form follows function."

Although HPDL has experienced various levels of commercial development through the years, its function as a residential neighborhood will always be foremost in the minds of residents. Commercial activity is largely influenced by the local preference to remain predominantly residential. However, the development of local commercial intersections and the resulting landscape of small businesses and historical buildings have given HPDL a valuable commercial backdrop.

## VIII

### **HALE-PAGE-DIAMOND LAKE: A COMMUNITY WORKING TOWARD THE FUTURE**

Residential development, transportation, the natural landscape, and commercial ventures have all interfaced to create the community we know today as Hale-Page-Diamond Lake. As HPDL continues to flourish, new challenges are presented to residents who wish to see the area remain a desirable place to live. Issues regarding the features recalled above will be key to the neighborhood's future well-being. Combined with the changing demographics of a dynamic city like Minneapolis, "community" has become a much more fluid construction. HPDL Community Association, local residents, and plans set forth by the Neighborhood Action Plan of 1994 will be crucial to the maintenance of a solid and successful community.

#### ***PRESERVING THE HOUSING STOCK***

Residential development is just one arena which HPDL must continue to regard as a valuable neighborhood resource. Today, much of the prevailing housing stock is left over from these successive building booms between 1920 and 1940. In fact, these two decades led to an increase in total housing units from 1,625 to 9,356 units within the entire Nokomis Community. Driving down virtually any thoroughfare from north to south puts HPDL's developmental history on display, as early homes along Minnehaha Creek give way to attractive south end ramblers. Diversity is the key word in describing HPDL's well-kept housing stock, each home possessing numerous individual touches. What ties together this diverse set of homes is an exceptionally high owner-occupancy rate, which in turn helps to ensure

topnotch maintenance and high housing values.

Nevertheless, HPDL is an aging city neighborhood, and greater levels of upkeep must be maintained to ensure such satisfying statistics. As houses age, they require significantly greater levels of structural improvement; since HPDL is also a neighborhood with an increasing number of seniors, assistance in the maintenance of homes will become more urgent as well. Furthermore, the existing housing stock, over 80% of which are single-family homes, might be complemented by a wider variety of housing options for seniors who wish to remain in the neighborhood without the demands of maintenance.

The 1994 HPDL Neighborhood Action Plan lists four major strategies for ensuring the present and future needs of the neighborhood as it relates to the existing housing stock.

To ensure maintenance of the existing housing stock, HPDL intends to develop a major housing assessment study, one which could identify homes in need of better maintenance. Once such homes are identified, a possible strategy would involve establishing a loan fund accessible to property owners and enabling them to perform necessary improvements. Furthermore, incentives could be created for purchasing and renovating old alley homes in some cases.

The creation of new housing options for seniors is also included in the action plan. Already, HPDL is seeing the development of new housing stock, such as the townhouses along Luverne and Tarrymore Roads in the Page neighborhood. This kind of housing has been virtually nonexistent in the neighborhood until recently, although more projects must be specifically geared toward seniors.

One potential strategy for success might be the conversion of aging or underused commercial properties to senior housing. Of course, such projects require the willingness of property owners and financial interest for the developers. The incentive for such projects is high, however, and even smaller units like four-plex condominiums would be suitable for all parties. Other housing options remain to be considered as well. One disadvantage is that since most of HPDL's housing land filled up by the sixties, very little new space exists for development. Hence, the neighborhood must turn to creative options, identifying underused property or perhaps substandard housing which could be replaced. Even substandard housing, however, is virtually nonexistent in the neighborhood, leaving few opportunities for development available.

Other issues distinctly affect homes in addition to the general effects of both an aging housing stock and aged population. Namely, these involve external threats that have the potential to decrease housing values or even eliminate homes altogether. Elements of transportation like the airport and potentially expanded highways must be carefully considered in the light of this threat.

Airport noise is certainly no stranger to residents, who are well-aware that their neighborhood sits directly underneath two major flight paths. Driving north on Chicago, residents receive detailed views of jet logos and underbellies, reserved in most cases only for traffic along Highway 5 by the airport itself. The noise pollution is not only a source of irritation, but a factor in decreased housing values and increased turnover rates. To minimize the effects of airport noise on housing, the Neighborhood Action Plan suggests the creation of another loan fund. Using Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP) dollars and a private funding source, the loans would specifically enable homeowners to execute soundproofing

improvements. Not only would noise levels be reduced from within homes, property values and existing ownership levels could be better stabilized. Cooperation with the FAA has also been suggested in order to secure more funds for soundproofing carried out by residents.

Similar effects on the housing stock can also result from highway expansion, a major issue for a neighborhood bordered by two major freeways. The final objective listed in HPDL's most recent action plan involves minimizing the impact on homes from construction along 35W and the Crosstown. Although plans to build Light Rail Transit (LTR) along 35W are currently awash in red tape, construction would inevitably mean some displacement as well as decreased housing values.

Thus, the Action Plan recommends staying completely informed about homes that would be affected by highway construction. If reconstruction of either highway forced residents to move, HPDL could supplement Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDot) and the Federal Relocation program to better assist residents who would desire staying in the neighborhood. Cooperation with MnDot could also help to better protect the value of remaining homes. If property values significantly decreased for homeowners, relocation options should be made available. This last strategy is expressed directly in the NAP, although whether or not MNDot will acquiesce to such a request remains to be seen.

### ***PARKS AND RECREATION***

Aside from these present-day issues, HPDL has continued to enjoy the vitality of its parks and lakes, the presence of which asserts the neighborhood's identity as an active and united community. Future steps should also be taken to insure that this continues, and many strategies are

currently in the planning stage, laid out once again by the Neighborhood Action Plan. The key to maintaining park vitality is to strengthen the quality of HPDL's recreational resources. Such plans rely on efforts from a whole host of organizations, including HPDL Community Association, Minneapolis Park Board, and the Neighborhood Revitalization Program. Increased interaction between the neighborhood and the greater Minneapolis community will also be crucial.

Pearl Park has undergone perhaps the most extensive redesign efforts since the park's community center was officially established in 1968. Currently, the facilities are undergoing major expansion of its facilities in order to provide more space for community functions. Associations using the community center range from boy and girl scout troops to nature center groups. The HPDL Neighborhood Action Plan Report of May, 12, 1994 states its objective quite concisely, "Ensure that Pearl Park has the physical capacity to function more as a community gathering point, serving the needs of youth, seniors and community groups."

The HPDL Neighborhood Action Plan also includes significantly more ambitious strategies to strengthen the existing parkways and recreational facilities. 1996-1997 should be a busy time if the anticipated "Grand Round" park plan is undertaken. This scheme involves physically linking all of HPDL's current park spaces using green space pathways and bike paths if such green spaces are not feasible. Initially, the Grand Round plan would link the Lake Nokomis and Minnehaha Creek area with airport-owned green space at 58th Street and 14th Avenue. This connection would be established using a delineated street path. The Nokomis area could then potentially be linked to Father's Lake and the adjacent Richfield Parks. The second leg of this Grand Round would involve connecting Pearl Park-Todd Field-Diamond Lake area to Richfield's Legion Park. Once these areas are all interconnected, a

series of maps would be designed to depict the new parkway system for bikers and pedestrians.

A comprehensive design scheme like the Grand Round is an enormous benefit to a neighborhood's interaction with the city. By creating a large recreational network that connects HPDL's major point of interest, the neighborhood internalizes its sense of identity. Establishing physical connections to places of interest outside the neighborhood boundaries works to center the community in a larger network. Urban designers refer to this as "opening up to larger spaces for increased interaction." A very successful example of this principle is the East Calhoun neighborhood, whose boundaries include the popular shopping district known as "Uptown." The neighborhood exhibits a strong sense of internal cohesion, as well as strong boundaries identifiable by most outsiders who pass through. Lake Calhoun plays a large role in this process; it gives the neighborhood a distinct and easy-to-identify physical boundary, but physically connects well to larger spaces such as St. Louis Park and Linden Hills.

A series of articles by urban design student Katie Terwelp and Christian D. Dean, an architecture professor at the University of Minnesota, gave even more recent suggestions regarding methods for increased interaction. Terwelp and Dean have suggested stronger emphasis on the role played by Minnehaha Creek as the neighborhood's northern boundary. Dean commented in his draft about the HPDL neighborhood, "Minnehaha Creek has the greatest potential to become the element that links HPDL with the surrounding metro area." He suggested creating a series of "green boulevards" from the avenues that cross the creek into the neighborhood. Portland, Chicago, and Bloomington Avenues could be landscaped to link them more directly to the natural beauty of the creek. These boulevards could then, in Dean's words, "carry part of the natural system of the Creek

further into the neighborhood, further linking HPDL with the creek."

Another recent issue involved how to use land donated by the Metropolitan Airports Commission to the city. This land is still referred to as MACland, and is bound in the extreme southeast corner of HPDL. Primarily a swampy patch of green, the MAClands could potentially be incorporated into the park system, a strategy proposed by HPDL resident Jeff Hamill. The idea was to create nature paths connecting the MACland to both Lake Nokomis and nearby Legion Park in Richfield. Grant proposals were even drawn up, but the plans were brought to a halt by a technicality. Metropolitan Airports Commission was prohibited by law to work with the neighborhood to develop the land, and it has since remained undeveloped on the neighborhood's edge.

Hopefully, such improvements will sit well with long term residents who have seen the park and recreation situation change dramatically over the past decades. Some residents say that in recent years direct levels of involvement between the community and the park board have declined. Helen Merrill, an active member of the HPDL Neighborhood Association says that George Todd Field and Pearl Park used to be much more spontaneous in their relationships with the public. She mentions a big truck the park board would roll in on hot afternoons. This was at a time when much of Todd Field was still a broad expanse of swampy wilderness. Park employees would bring bats and balls to pass out for a game of baseball, or sometimes stage impromptu plays with kids who were just hanging out. "Now everything gets scheduled," she lamented, referring to calendar-slotted activities advertised by the parks.

Perhaps a return to spontaneity is just what the neighborhood park system needs. Nevertheless, families experience greater demands on their



schedules than they have in the past. HPDL is a neighborhood dominated by two-income households, with one in every three households having school-age children. Both kids and parents have experienced increasing pressure to schedule leisure time alongside their other activities. It may be unfortunate, but reality for the contemporary family has largely dictated by "calendar-slotting."

Tom Dial, a six year HPDL resident who has been closely involved with park concerns, mentions the need to create more space for "informal congregation." With a winter that can last six months, parks need more indoor space devoted to spontaneous leisure. Winter activity in particular needs to be addressed. Dial remembers the immense success of Winter Carnival and Family Skate Nights, which were held in Pearl Park just a few years ago. The success of the event was based on efforts to create an informal congregation on regularly-scheduled evenings. Unfortunately, these events were cancelled by PIRC and cited as too labor intensive. Dial feels differently, stressing the amazing number of people that would turn out to skate or participate in hockey games; crowds often reached 200 to 250 people on mild winter Saturdays! "I fully intend to bring that back," Dial commented.

### ***EDUCATION***

Traditionally, HPDL has long been a neighborhood dominated by families, and this has remained true. (Again, one in every three households in 1990 had at least one child under age 18!) Nevertheless, the choices available to parents and students has meant that the education system has undergone a variety of changes.

Many HPDL residents now choose to send their kids to specialized

elementary schools as well. Most are located at schools in South Minneapolis, although recent years have seen HPDL youth attending programs in all parts of the city. The 1992 Neighborhood Planning Information Base breaks down the numbers; Ramsey School has been a popular choice, with its emphasis on internationalism and the fine arts. Other students are dispersed among a variety of programs, concentrating on language immersion, math and science, or even an urban environment focus. This is not a surprising trend for a neighborhood like HPDL. Since 1965, community analyses have shown that HPDL residents have some of the city's highest education attainment levels; attendance in specialized programs is a newer extension of this trend.

Nevertheless, dispersion has had consequences, whether voluntary or involuntary. When the Page School was shut down, it heralded the end of the "neighborhood school" in Minneapolis. Throughout the seventies, Minneapolis Public Schools gradually mixed student populations and neighborhood boundaries ceased to be as important. Helen Merrill, a Page resident who recalls the old Page School well, discussed the effects with enormous insight. She said various problems can be attributed directly to the changes in the school system.

"Kids don't know other kids in their own neighborhood. They have more spare time to be competitive rather than cooperative," she explained. By taking kids out of their own community to attend either elementary or secondary school, they are left with fewer contacts within their neighborhood.

Problems like this lack of community-based education are among those issues common to most Minneapolis Residents. HPDL's Neighborhood Action Plan states among its goals that greater communication between both the

community and schools as well as the community and school board is imperative. Many strategies are highlighted, including the creation of various neighborhood contacts to serve as liaisons between these groups. Hale School, HPDL's only public school, would benefit from volunteer coordinators and from Hale representative to the Minneapolis School Board, said the plan.

### ***COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY***

HPDL continues to support its local businesses, most which depend on a neighborhood customer base and are resident-owned. A close look at the first HPDL business directory, published in 1994, reveals the kind of business which thrives. Out of seventy commercial establishments, over 70 % are service-oriented businesses like dentists, daycare, and local salons. These kinds of business cater to locals, and provide services many people like to find close to home.

Ten businesses in the directory are commercial businesses, selling everything from antiques to used records to pet fish supplies. These businesses are also geared toward local business, as are the eight restaurants listed in the directory. Each restaurant has its own share of devoted regulars who come by for their favorite food in a neighborly atmosphere. The new Perfect Cup Cafe on 56th & Chicago aspires to give residents their first sip of java each morning. It is one example of commercial businesses which have transformed Minneapolis' landscape the past few years, as coffeehouses have become a national pastime.

Nonetheless, most of HPDL's commercial property is aging. An important goal is to maintain and attract dynamic neighborhood businesses, emphasizing the local area's needs. Once again, this involves satisfying the

aims set up by the Neighborhood Action Plan, whose four objectives include rehabilitating commercial zones, improving business itself, developing vacant properties, and establishing a business association.

Rehabilitating commercial zones is not always easy, since it depends on attaining proper financial resources, design schemes, and sometimes, even new businesses. HPDL's major areas of commercial activity are small, however, making this somewhat easier. The Action Plan intends to offer 2% MCDA loan packages to businesses which would like to renovate or expand facilities. Developing actual strategies for rehab would work best if HPDL utilized its community association as well as an anticipated business association; this would ensure that the needs of both parties are met on best terms.

Improving business itself involves more than just a facelift, however. Residents must be aware of local business presence, and once they are, such businesses must be made as accessible as possible. This is why the Action Plan endorses two strategies for the improvement of actual business. The first involves greater encouragement of residents to support local commercial activity. For example, advertising in the HPDL newsletter can help to increase businesses' profiles, as well as reach a local audience. In addition, a critical look at HPDL's parking situation near and behind area businesses can also be helpful. Improved parking accounts for a greater sense of accessibility to business by residents.

The development of vacant commercial property is also high on the list of neighborhood objectives. Currently, the northeast corner of 60th and Portland presents developers with an area for new construction. Vacant land is very rare in the HPDL neighborhood, since most land is filled by residences. MCDA would help developers improve this corner, retaining the

residential flavor of the community. If a multitenant commercial building were developed here, it must serve the local market, add convenience and value to the community, and be compatible with the neighborhood's residential character. Furthermore, underutilized commercial property might actually do better if converted to housing. By converting sites to senior housing, including townhomes or condominiums, HPDL can fulfill two separate goals for the future: improved housing options as well as strengthened commercial vitality. Underutilized commercial property typically serves only to blemish a neighborhood, attracting little if any business and remaining an eyesore in a pleasant residential landscape.

Finally, all such goals will be better executed through the formation of an HPDL business association. Local business associations strengthen communication between business owners and provide a sounding board for both community and business interests. Such associations have been extraordinarily effective in other neighborhoods, like St. Paul's Grand Avenue, in accomplishing major tasks.

### ***THE ROLE OF DEMOGRAPHICS***

Between 1980 and 1990, Minneapolis experienced a gradual population loss as residents moved out of the city and into the suburbs. This "outmigration" has largely been white, and as it continues, Minneapolis appears to be diversifying. This is true in terms of the numbers; however, minority populations are still polarized around specific axes of growth. African-Americans in particular are concentrated more than ever into distinct regions of the city. In 1980, African-Americans accounted for 7.7% of the total population; by the date of the last census in 1990, that number had nearly doubled, reaching 13.0%.

Like the rest of Minneapolis, HPDL has experienced a gradual population loss over the past few decades. Diversification is being experienced as well, although at much smaller levels. The three neighborhoods average a population that is 94% white, with Diamond Lake being the largest and most diverse of the three. In fact, Diamond Lake's African-American population nearly doubled, from 2.2 to 4.0% over the last decade. Its Asian-American population has tripled. These numbers demonstrate the neighborhood's increasing diversification, although this process is not likely to be dramatic given the patterns of minority migration in Minneapolis.

## *CONCLUSION*

A fulfilling urban life has become increasingly hard to find in recent years, as social concerns create greater stresses on nearly all city dwellers. Finding a place in which to feel connected and foster pride seems akin to a dwindling resource that becomes more and more valuable, and must be handled with care. Indeed, this is a meaningful analogy for what more and more people regard as the urban "environment."

Hale-Page-Diamond Lake residents are fortunate to reap the rewards of their environment. Nevertheless, as the neighborhood matures, it also experiences the greater stresses of age and urban living. The result must be a community actively engaged in preserving its resources. In order to do so, these resources first must be identified and understood. HPDL is a neighborhood that has chosen to take these steps, of which this history is just the first. Newcomers and long time residents alike will cherish it as a neighborhood that can set an example to the city of Minneapolis for years to come.