

CARONDELET (1)

LOCATION

The area is defined by Eichelberger on the Northeast, River Des Peres on the Southwest, the Mississippi River on the Southeast and by Grand and I-55 on the Northwest. The Patch neighborhood, which was historically part of Carondelet City, lies to the southwest of Robert and southeast of Alabama.

HISTORY

Carondelet was originally founded in 1767 under the name Louisbourg (commonly called “Vide Poche”) by Delore, who settled on a site that is now Elwood Street. Delore was given 6,000 acres by Spain. This land extended 10 miles along the Mississippi River. Delore changed the name to Carondelet in 1794 in honor of the Spanish Governor General. In 1803, when Louisiana was purchased from France by the U.S., it was a hamlet of 50 homes and 250 people. In 1826, Carondelet sold 1,700 acres to the U.S. for Jefferson Barracks at a cost of \$5.00. In 1832, Carondelet became an official town and, in 1851, a city. In 1870, the City of St. Louis annexed what had become the booming industrial city of Carondelet.



The Carondelet neighborhood, to this day, maintains a strong sense of community pride due to its rich history, architecture and ethnic diversity that included French, German, Irish, African, Spanish, British, Italian, and Polish settlers. Residents wishing to preserve the heritage of Carondelet founded the Carondelet Historical Society in 1967. Plaques have been placed at over 45 sites of historic significance throughout the neighborhood. A collection of historical documents, books, furniture, and other items are maintained at the Carondelet Historic Center, operating out of what was once the Des Peres School, where the first public school kindergarten appeared in the U.S.

CHARACTERISTICS

Carondelet is a well-established, economically diverse neighborhood with an increasingly mixed racial composition. The neighborhood is a fusion of middle class homeowners, rental properties, small businesses, and community organizations. Its housing stock ranges from beautiful old mansions to smaller owner-occupied buildings and multi-unit apartment buildings that accommodate the working- and middle-class populations of the neighborhood. While some properties need improvements, Carondelet is a basically stable area with a low level of vacancy and abandonment.



INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

The Carondelet Community Betterment Federation (CCBF), founded in 1971, is a well-organized, devoted group that works with the schools, the police, and the City to improve the neighborhood by providing social services, including food, clothing, utilities, winterization materials, home-visits to the elderly, and Parish Nurse services for the homebound. CCBF, along with the Carondelet

Blow Community Education Center, serve the population well. Increased attention to employment assistance would benefit the area, as would another police substation to the South, possibly in the Patch neighborhood. Family Care Health Center is located in Carondelet, with two other satellites. They provide primary healthcare to all ages. The Carondelet YMCA is very active providing recreational activities for all ages.



PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Carondelet is a neighborhood whose historic architecture is not as well-known and appreciated as that of other St. Louis neighborhoods, such as Soulard and Lafayette Square. One of the first steps being undertaken to better take advantage of Carondelet's historic character is a study to inventory the historic buildings in the area around St. Boniface Church (technically, located in the Parch neighborhood). The study is currently being prepared by the Landmarks Association of St. Louis, under contract with the Regional Housing and Community Development Alliance (RHCA). The study may lead to the designation of the area as a historic district. If enacted, the historic district designation could make rehabilitation projects more feasible through the use of historic tax credits and other available incentives.

Another asset that Carondelet hasn't fully capitalized on is its access to and views of the Mississippi River. It's unclear what immediate steps can be taken to leverage its riverfront location, but improving recreation facilities (perhaps a bike trail linking Bellerive Park/Sr. Marie Charles Park and Carondelet Park with the Mississippi River, the River Des Peres, and the

Carondelet Greenway) would seem to be a natural idea worth pursuing.

Another possible opportunity lies in the potential development of a MetroLink line that would link Downtown with South County. The East-West Gateway Coordinating Council (EWGCC) is currently engaged in a Major Transportation Investment Analysis (MTIA) for the South City/South County transportation corridor. Preliminary findings indicate that a light-rail line would most likely follow an existing Union Pacific rail line or Interstate 55, both of which cut through Carondelet. Although construction wouldn't begin for another decade or so, EWGCC will select the preferred route in 2000. The opportunity for transit-oriented development in conjunction with a new light-rail line's station(s) merits that neighborhood groups actively monitor the study's progress and promote a route and stations that would most positively benefit the neighborhood.

Although Carondelet remains a stable and vital neighborhood, it is being threatened with a decrease in owner-occupied properties and an increase in "problem properties." Greater attention will need to be given to promoting and capitalizing on Carondelet's historic character and riverfront location. This emphasis would help in attracting more market-rate housing development and owner-occupants. Reducing the number of "problem properties" will take a concerted effort—including increased enforcement of building codes and nuisance laws, as well as stronger neighborhood organizations.