

MOUNT PLEASANT (17)

LOCATION

The neighborhood's boundaries are defined by Virginia Avenue on the West, the Mississippi River on the East, Meramec Street on the North, and Delor Street on the South.

HISTORY

The Mount Pleasant neighborhood has been an important constituent of St. Louis for many years. A portion of the area used to be a part of the old St. Louis Commons before it was annexed by the city in 1836. By 1860, a great deal of the Commons had been sold. The city had retained a portion of the reservations that eventually became Gravois, Laclede, and Mount Pleasant Parks. Development took place from east to west. By 1910, a great deal of the area had been developed. The Minnie Wood Memorial Playground, located at the intersection of Broadway and Meramec Street, was acquired in 1925 as a gift. On the eastern side of Broadway between Mt. Pleasant Street to Bates Street were large homes overlooking the Mississippi River. Many of these homes have been demolished, while a few remain, having been converted into homes for the elderly.



The land on which Mount Pleasant was constructed is the old St. Louis Commons, purchased in 1836 by the City, which was also responsible for the creation of the neighborhood's Mt. Pleasant Park. The area was, for the most part, developed on a gridiron pattern, with the streets running east and west named after various Indian tribes, and the streets running north and south named after the states of the Union. Development occurred generally from east to north. Many oil tank farms and industrial yards developed along the banks of the Mississippi. Also along the river, many large, stately homes had been built; few remain today, however, and those that do have been converted into homes for the elderly (such as Edgewater).

Many single-family structures were built between 1900 and 1930 along South Compton, north of Delor Street. Mount Pleasant for the most part, however, had assumed its present aspect by 1910. The area had been settled originally by immigrants, particularly those of Germanic descent. The area provided a comfortable place in which to live, as well as close proximity to the thriving industries along the river.

North of Delor Street is the south end of the old St. Louis Commons, which was sold to the City in 1836. Neighborhood construction began in the mid to late 1800s and continued through the early portion of the twentieth century. Most of the wooden buildings along the riverfront were destroyed by the fire of 1849.

CHARACTERISTICS

Adjacent to the Carondelet, Dutchtown, and Marine Villa neighborhoods, Mount Pleasant offers a good example of St. Louis' eastern southside architecture. Most of the

buildings date back to the late 1800s. Some date from the 1870s, while most were built between 1890 and 1910. A majority of the older buildings could be characterized as federal style, which is typical of early German craftsmanship. One may also find examples of late Baroque style scattered throughout the neighborhood. Many of the homes are recognized as having shallow window and door arches. Furthermore, there are numerous two- and four-family units and bungalows, with relatively few multifamily units.



Mount Pleasant has generally followed the same trends as the Dutchtown neighborhood. Compared to Dutchtown, however, Mount Pleasant offers a greater concentration of single-family units, mixed with larger apartment complexes. Recent years have shown many young couples and families moving into the area. While many are renters, there are also a great many interested in purchasing many of the old historic buildings the area has to offer. The area is attractive to young couples and professionals as a result of the charm of the architecture, Germanic in style, as well as the relative low cost. This provides a grand opportunity for individuals interested in the rehabbing and beautification efforts that have been taking ground in recent years. Mount Pleasant, as well as many of the older sections of St. Louis, does have several derelict buildings that are unoccupied and in need of serious investment, lest they face inevitable demolition.

Broadway, Meramec, Virginia, and Grand Avenues all offer convenience and a wide array of specialty shops and business opportunity. These areas are well-established, popular shopping districts and have been for many decades. Most renowned for the concentration of antique, collectibles, and other specialty shops, Mount Pleasant attracts prospective shoppers who come from all over the Metro area to browse and purchase the eclectic selection of goods and products.

INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Mount Pleasant is located in the vicinity of several of the City's most renowned shopping districts. Most popular are those located along Cherokee, Virginia, Grand, and Broadway. These areas, as stated previously, offer shoppers and collectors a great variety of antiques, collectibles, and specialty shops. Parks located within the community include Mount Pleasant Park and Minnie Wood Park. The neighborhood offers active community involvement within the Mount Pleasant Neighborhood Association (501C3). Furthermore, the neighborhood offers a variety of housing for the elderly and physically challenged (handicapped) residence. The facilities that cater to such individuals are the Charless Home, a nonprofit home for assisted-living care that aids lower-income individuals, as well as the new Edgewater Health Care facility, which will be added in the near future.

Mount Pleasant offers a variety of churches committed to the spiritual strength of the community. The major churches in the neighborhood include St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church, St. Hedwig Catholic Church, South Side Free Will Baptist Church, Gateway Tabernacle Church, and Seed Faith Fellowship Church. Schools in the neighborhood include Meramec Elementary Public School and St. Anthony's Catholic School (K-8). Nearby schools include St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran School (K-8)

and Cleveland Jr. Naval Academy (9–12). There are two police substations and Engine Company #4 Firehouse within the neighborhood boundaries. Other major establishments and organizations that give character and strength to the neighborhood include the Dutchtown South Community and Housing Corporation, Lady's Inn, Youth In Need, the St. Louis Veterans Consortium, Viet Nam Vets, and the Knights of Columbus.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The trend of urban flight within the City has left a number of the buildings unoccupied, thus rendering many in need of structural improvements. Within recent years, there have been efforts to restore many of the buildings to their previous charm by new residents, both young and old, with more emphasis on young families. Young families are encouraged to invest in the area, as they tend to provide strength and care to their community. The affordable cost of the buildings, convenient location, and diversity of its residents are all further incentives to invest in the area. There are a number of scattered residential sites under various stages of development (both new construction and rehab projects) in the neighborhood. Also, the Home Repair Program is available through the Neighborhood Housing Services. These initiatives are important to the stabilization of the neighborhood.



Currently, there have been efforts underway with business and property owners to improve their buildings' façades and increase property maintenance. Such activity promotes and in some cases even creates competition among residents and business owners to maintain a clean atmosphere.

Within the past few years, Mount Pleasant, as well as adjacent Dutchtown, has been experiencing a new influx of residents. There are many forces that are driving such movements; some of which include affordable housing, historic buildings, revitalization incentives, and an increased interest in new urbanism.