



The Pilot House, formerly at 2104 North Dayton, demolished in 2004. A sign on the front porch conspicuously displays the replacement of this historic Second Empire home.

Sheffield Historic District

Address: Centered at Armitage and Sheffield Streets, in the Lincoln Park Neighborhood. The District, commonly known as DePaul, encompasses areas roughly between Racine (west), Halsted (east), Belden (north), and Willow (south).

Dates: Primarily between 1870 and 1895

Architects: Numerous

Style: Various. Primarily Queen Anne, Italianate, and Romanesque

CHRS Rating: Various, many Orange and Green

National Register: The area was designated a Federal National Register Historic District in the mid 1970s, with two extensions in the 1980s.

Threat and Synopsis :

A civil war has broken out in Lincoln Park over the preservation of its historic architecture. In the spring of 2004, a group of concerned DePaul University-area residents, alarmed by over-development and the loss of historic buildings, initiated the discussion of creating a city landmark district to slow this development trend. However, since that time, the debate has become anything but civil.

As more and more charming and irreplaceable Victorian homes fall to the wrecker ball in one of Chicago's most intact areas, neighbors have pitted themselves against neighbors in a fight over the historic soul of the neighborhood. This architecturally and historically

important area has already received federal recognition, and is officially known as the Sheffield National Register Historic District. However, this designation does not protect against demolition of buildings.

Recent town hall meetings have disintegrated into shouting matches. Some pro-development advocates, who wish to block any restrictions on their ability to undertake teardowns, have even resorted to disseminating misinformation, further fanning neighborhood confusion and fear. As a result, some residents who once considered supporting a landmark district have now adopted an anti-landmarking stance.

However, the Sheffield area is no stranger to landmarking efforts. Community activists, working with 43rd Ward Alderman Vi Daley and other city officials, successfully preserved the commercial portion of the neighborhood in 2003 with the creation of the Armitage/Halsted Landmark District. This designation is now working well to regulate demolitions and new development along the chief commercial corridors of the neighborhood.

Complicating matters, the two community groups that represent the concerns of the neighborhood, The Sheffield Neighborhood Association and RANCH Triangle association, refuse to take positions regarding the creation of a landmark district. Ironically, both organizations were initially founded as historic preservation organizations in the 1970's, and facilitated the first wave of rehabbing that helped to revitalize the neighborhood. Thus, with no established community organization standing behind them, individual community preservation activists are undertaking the current pro-landmarking effort alone and unassisted.

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Furthermore, Alderman Daley has taken a position of neutrality in the debate. In an effort to be fair to everyone, Alderman Daley has remained thus far on the political fence. Absent a firm political position, and without leadership from community groups, the divided neighborhood continues to battle, with each faction trying to find the elusive 51% majority that favors their position. Meanwhile, as the debate continues, the wrecking balls remain swinging with virtually nothing to stop them.

The Sheffield National Register District was, until only a few years ago, one of the finest, largest, and most intact collections of urban Victorian architecture in the Midwest. Unfortunately, some damage has already been done. However, that vast majority of the district is still intact enough for a landmark designation and can be preserved, but only if action is taken quickly.

Recommendations:

- **Designation of a Preliminary Landmark District** as soon as possible for the entire area. By law, this action will trigger a Demolition Moratorium, during which time a new round of public hearings would be held. These hearings would be facilitated by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks, would include expert testimony, and would provide a more civilized forum in which to discuss the creation of a Chicago Landmark District.
- **Rezoning** to R-3 and R-3 ½ *only* those areas that do not qualify for landmarking, and where residents also have concerns about over-development. (Rezoning is not an appropriate substitute for Landmark Districts.)
- **Introduction of City Incentives** for the preservation and rehabilitation of historic properties that are beyond the boundaries of current or future landmark districts.
- **Introduction of Penalties** for the demolition of historic properties that are beyond the boundaries of current or future landmark districts.



A shadow on the side of this home in the 2000 block of North Dayton Street shows where a historic three-flat building once stood. The building could have readily been converted for single-family use.



A sign advertises this unique, well-preserved house in the 2100 block of North Sheffield as a teardown. The house was demolished in 2004.

Landmarking would allow growth, but would insist on more creative solutions.



This Orange-rated three-flat at 2043 North Clifton, in the Sheffield Historic District, will be demolished in 2005. The building was eminently suitable for any sort of residential conversion.