



HISTORIC SCHOOLS

S u c c e s s S t o r i e s

Sidney Pratt School and Community Education Center *Minneapolis, Minnesota*

For more information about the National Trust's historic neighborhood schools initiative, contact:

Western Office (AK, AZ, CA, HI, ID, NV, OR, WA): Mike Buhler, 415-956-0610

Mountains/Plains Office (CO, KS, MT, NE, ND, SD, UT, WY): John Mitterholzer, 303-623-1504

Midwest Office (IL, IN, IA, MI, MN, MO, OH, WI): Royce Yeater, 312-939-5547

Southwest Office (AR, NM, OK, TX): Megan Brown, 817-332-4398

Southern Office (AL, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, PR, SC, TN, VI): Mary Ruffin Hanbury, 843-722-8552

Southern Field Office (DC, MD, VA, WV): Rob Nieweg, 202-588-6107

Northeast Field Office (DE, NJ, PA): Adrian Fine, 215-848-8033

Northeast Office (CT, MA, ME, NH, NY, RI, VT): Marilyn Fenollosa, 617-523-0885

The Sidney Pratt School and Community Education Center is a prominent building in the Prospect Park community of Minneapolis, Minnesota. The school however stood vacant since the early 1980's, and was slated for demolition. A group of local activists recognized the school's importance and persuaded the School Board to undertake reinvestment initiatives. As a result, the Sidney Pratt School and Community Education Center once again plays an integral part in the community.

The Sidney Pratt School was built in 1898, with additions made in 1906 and again in 1926. The school was closed in 1982 as part of a system-wide restructuring of Minneapolis' schools. At this closing, Pratt was the oldest building in the system and was a candidate for demolition and site divestiture. A group of local activists formed the nonprofit Pratt Council, which ultimately partnered with the City of Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Program to



pursue rehab of the school. Eighteen years after the school closed, and following the addition of an elevator, roof and window replacement, a cleaned building envelope and newly paved parking lot, the surrounding neighborhood of Prospect Park regained its public school.

Today, Sidney Pratt School and Community Education Center serves a socio-economically diverse neighborhood, which includes public housing as well as faculty and staff members of the University of Minnesota. The City of Minneapolis has undertaken a mission to retain city residency and promote urban living via the preservation and modernization of historic neighborhood schools. The renovation of the Sidney Pratt School and Community Education Center has prompted a significant increase in Prospect Park real estate and provides the neighborhood with a state-of-the-art educational facility.

School Administrators

Ms. Ellen Murphey
Pratt Council
Principal
66 Malcolm Avenue, S.E.
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55414
612.668.1210
612.668.1110 (fax)
ellen.murphey@mpls.k12.mn.us

Mr. Bruce Graff
Pratt Council
Building Director
66 Malcolm Avenue, S.E.
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55414
612.668.1122
612.668.1110 (fax)
bgraff@mpls.k12.mn.us
No website available

Ms. Mary Alice Kopf
Pratt Council
President
66 Malcolm Avenue, S.E.
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55414
612.379.7436
612.668.1110 (fax)
mollisk@earthlink.com
No website available

Description of Project

Project

Address: 66 Malcolm Avenue, S.E.,
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55414

Status:

Local, state, national designation: While the school does not have historic designation status, an adjacent water tower was deemed a historic landmark.

Architect: The school's architect, Mr. Lambureau, was the French son-in-law of the Town's Mayor/Superintendent at the time of the building's construction.

Date of construction: The school's construction in 1898 was prompted by neighborhood residents, who were concerned for the safety of children travelling nearly a mile to the closest school (Motley School).

Date of renovation: The school reopened in the Fall of 2000.

Date of previous renovation: Six additional classrooms were added in 1906. In 1926, a three-story structure was added to the north side of Sidney Pratt School and Community Education Center

Use

(The school is exclusively for kindergarten, first and second grade students. A third grade level will be added soon.)



Size: Approximately 40,000-50,000 square feet (57 students)

Student/teacher ratio: 10:1

Alternative uses: The school provides Adult Basic Education classes, including English as a Second Language. The school also serves as a venue for community activities, including a youth center, senior programs, block nurse programs, early childhood family education, Americorps and community council meetings.

Location

Historic district: The Sidney Pratt School and Community Education Center is located in Prospect Park, one of the oldest residential communities in Minneapolis. This middle class neighborhood is located at the geographic center of the Twin Cities metropolitan area. The Prospect Park East River Road Improvement Association is in the process of seeking historic neighborhood designation status.

Walking distance:

Bussing vs. walking: While most students walk to school, inclement weather is an impediment. The number of students that walk rather than rely on bus transportation is growing significantly.

Cost

Total renovation cost: Approximately \$1.2 million.

Per square feet: Approximately \$26.66

Per student: Approximately \$21,052.00
Source of funding

Local: The City of Minneapolis funded a Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP), which paid for a portion of the rehabilitation work. This unique funding program provides greater financial assistance to less stable neighborhoods. In this case, the Sidney Pratt



School and Community Education Center will receive \$3.5 million over a five-year period.

State: A portion of state taxes help fund the NRP.

Federal: No

Private: Private fundraising from businesses and private citizens also helped pay for the rehabilitation effort.

Tax credits: No

Cost estimates for new school construction: Information not available.

Problems and/or Threats

Close the school building: Following a broad restructuring of the City's school buildings, The Sidney Pratt School was closed in 1982. At this time, the community center remained open to the public, however since it was the oldest building in the school system, it became a candidate for demolition.

Raze existing building in order to build a new facility: See above.

Policies promoting the construction of school sprawl in outlying areas: The School District utilizes population growth patterns in determining the location of new public school buildings. Budget and enrollment issues are instrumental in closing historic neighborhood schools.

Acreage standards: No

State funding biases: No

Inadequate government funding: No

Acceptance of donated sites for new school construction: No

Inflated school renovation cost estimates: No

Poor or bad renovation job: No

Resolution

Strategies or state/local policies utilized to achieve success story:

Pratt Council, a nonprofit corporation comprised of local activists, were instrumental in generating community support, which ultimately persuaded the School District to preserve the old school building, a process that took five years.

Renovation Success

Undertakings The rehabilitation initiative included refurbishing the building's exterior, replacing the roof and windows and building a new performance amphitheater. Historic features, such as an Art Deco style tiled drinking fountain, were preserved.

Classroom size and circulation: In order to accommodate a new elevator, several classrooms were reconfigured.

State-of-the-art facility: The school has wiring for state-of-the-art computer systems.

Computer technology: Each classroom has a computer with Internet and e-mail access. The computer lab has between 25 and 30 computers.

Meets education programmatic needs: Yes

Building codes: Up-to-code

Life safety codes

Asbestos: In 1995, all existing asbestos was removed from the building.

Fire safety: A new sprinkler system was added in the building's attic.

Air quality: Up-to-code

Handicapped accessibility: A new elevator was installed to the building.

Parking: The school has a newly paved parking lot. Portions of existing asphalt were removed in order to build a garden.

Playing fields: An existing parking lot was transformed into a park and playground. The "Village Green Park" is located adjacent to the school.

Awards Granted

Achievements/Recognition: The school received a Neighborhood Revitalization Program Award from the Heritage Preservation Commission and the Minneapolis Chapter of American Institute of Architects.

Future Endeavors

Maintenance plans: The school will eventually add a fourth and fifth grade level.

Maintenance funding: Information not available

Description of Outcome

Community Response

Neighborhood stability: The diverse community surrounding the school described the project as a "labor of love."

Safety: Not an issue.

Community reinvestment: The City has undertaken a mission to retain city residency and promote urban living via the preservation and modernization of historic neighborhood schools. The renovation of the Sidney Pratt School and Community Education Center has prompted a significant increase in Prospect Park real estate.

Economic growth: No

Community Benefits

Students: Following the renovation initiative, the school's atmosphere has enhanced.

Increased academic achievement: No information available.

Independence: No

Teachers: The faculty members have responded in a very positive way.

Parents: Parents of Sidney Pratt School students are very supportive of the school and volunteer with lunch and recess activities.

Quotes

"Residents of the neighborhood . . . worked hard and turned it into a community education and activity center that served as a focal point for this increasingly diverse and isolated neighborhood."

—Robert D. Miller, Director of the Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization program



Before and after: reconfigured entrance for ADA accessibility