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Historic Designation and city renovation programs save historic home in the Merrill Park Neighborhood that is now being listed for sale at \$439,900

Statement of Alderman Robert J. Bauman March 28, 2024

The single family home at 3402 W. St. Paul Ave. is an architect designed cream city brick structure built in 1889. The current owner of this property has listed the home for sale at \$439,900.

The evolution of this property over the last 15 years is an excellent case study in the successful operation of the city's Historic Preservation Ordinance and the city's housing renovation programs.

In 2008 this property was owned by an absentee investor owner and divided into several units. It had been neglected for many years. Neighbors were complaining to my office about the condition of the property and nuisance activity. The ornate front porch was falling apart and there were several roof leaks causing interior damage. DNS issued a raze order in July 2008.

Demolition was the next step but that would just create a vacant lot producing no property taxes. Instead, the property was nominated for historic designation under the Historic Preservation Ordinance. The Common Council approved historic designation on July 28, 2009.

Subsequently, the absentee investor owner defaulted on their property taxes and the city acquired the property through tax foreclosure in November 2010.

Instead of demolition, the city allocated funds for a complete exterior renovation including a new roof, and extensive masonry repairs to the front porch under the city's Housing Infrastructure Preservation Fund. The Housing Infrastructure Preservation Fund was a program I created to provide funding to perform big ticket exterior repairs on significant 1 & 2 family homes that had fallen into disrepair due to neglect. The idea was for the city to complete these exterior repairs to render the property more attractive to owner-occupant buyers who would then undertake the interior renovations. The city invested \$117,200 in these exterior repairs.

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Once the work was complete, the city marketed the property for owner-occupancy. The current owner purchased the property in July 2013 for \$50,000. The city's net investment in preserving this property was about \$67,000 and the property was returned to the tax rolls.

The new owner undertook a complete interior renovation of the home and in the winter of 2024 decided to list the property for sale at \$439,900.

In 2008, 3402 W. St. Paul was a neglected and deteriorating home that was a blight in the neighborhood and on a path toward demolition. In 2024, it is a beautifully restored historic home that will be on the tax rolls with an assessed value in excess of \$400,000 thanks to the intervention of the Historic Preservation process and the City's Housing Infrastructure Preservation Fund coupled with the work of a dedicated and skilled homeowner. A true success story: housing stock preserved, tax base expanded.

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