

Philadelphia's Historic Street Paving Thematic District

- **Streets – maintenance**
- **Streets - funding**

Background

Locally designated to the Philadelphia Register of Historic places in 1998, the Historic Street Paving thematic district recognizes rare paving throughout the city. Designation includes all streets containing at least 30% of original, exposed, historic street paving materials (cobble, granite pavers, bricks, or blue stone). The designation encompasses about 56 streets and includes the cartway only (curbs or sidewalks are not included). Originally a non-profit inventoried the streets, surveying 328 blocks.

“The examples of street paving included in this multiple resource nomination possess significance as rare surviving fragments of the history of street paving in the City of Philadelphia, and as landmarks forming a visual record of the way Philadelphia looked in the past.”¹

Care of the District

Any work that is physically done to the designated streets needs approval of the Philadelphia Historical Commission. Historical Commission staff has the ability to approve basic

work such as street maintenance or utility work; larger projects must be heard before and approved by the Historical Commission.

Meanwhile, Philadelphia Streets Department keeps records of all work performed on designated streets. Every few years the Streets Department hires a contractor to repair/fix damage incurred on designated streets (e.g. replace pavers that were removed to install a utility line).

Financing

Each year, money is set aside from capital budget for historic street repair and maintenance. In the current capital program, "Historic Streets" is funded at \$400,000 every two years, or \$1.2 million over six years.

The City programs \$98.7 million over six years for "Grading and Paving" of city streets. So, the fund for historic streets is barely more than 1 percent of the total budget.

¹ Historic Street Paving Thematic District - Philadelphia Register of Historic Places Nomination Form. Rep. Philadelphia: City of Philadelphia Historical Commission, 1998. Print.

Lessons for Minneapolis

- The City of Philadelphia sets aside money to repair and retain their historical streets. Minneapolis should consider designating a portion of their yearly street maintenance budget for historic street repair if they wish to retain a visual paving record in the City.
- Philadelphia's Streets Department keeps manual logs of all work done to designated streets; Minneapolis Streets Department should consider keeping a log of work occurring on all streets, especially historic, for future reference, repair, and historical documentation.

