

E 38th Street Area Walking Tour



U-Meet-Us, Black Senior Citizens Lounge, and Minneapolis Urban League, East Thirty-Eighth Street and Fourth Avenue Minneapolis, 1975

The East 38 Street community is rich with history. African American entrepreneurs, civic, community, and faith leaders, home builders and architects, all contributed to the Minneapolis we know today. From the Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder, the oldest Black-owned business in the State of Minnesota, to the home of Lena Olive Smith, the first Black female lawyer in the State of Minnesota, to Sabathani Community Center, a Black-led non-profit celebrating its 50th Anniversary of service in 2016, there is much to explore.

Discriminatory housing practices, restrictive deed covenants and red-lining are part of the recent history of Minneapolis with present-day impacts. As recently as the 1950's, banks and the Federal Housing Administration refused to provide mortgages for homes outside of established Black neighborhoods such as those near the E 38th Street and 4th Avenue corridors. The Tilsenbilt homes, a group of over 50 homes just south of the E 38th Street Corridor, were constructed in the 1950's with the help of realtor and philanthropist Archie Givens Sr. The Tilsenbilt Homes are believed to be the first federally-supported residential housing development in the United States that was open to homebuyers of all races.

Our tour will end with a walk across the 40th Street Pedestrian bridge over I-35W to the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Park, which was renamed in honor of Dr. King in 1968, The construction of I-35W ripped apart neighborhoods, took park land, and set in place patterns of racial segregation that still define our neighborhoods today.

Black History and its Influence on the E 38th Street Community



Greater Sabathani Mission Baptist Church, 3805 3rd Ave S

Established in 1959, Sabathani, like most Black Baptist churches, was created to fulfill the spiritual needs of a particular community. Greater Sabathani Mission Baptist Church Mass Choir put Twin Cities gospel on the map. Gary Hines, founder of the Sounds of Blackness, was a music minister and the youth choir director for many years. The Church later became known as the Greater Friendship Missionary Baptist Church and moved from this location to 2600 E 38th Street in Minneapolis. The Seward Coop Friendship Store, named in honor of the Greater Friendship Missionary Baptist Church, today is located at 3805 3rd Avenue South.



Sabathani Community Center, 310 E 38th Street

Sabathani was founded in 1966 by concerned residents and members of Sabathani Baptist Church. Residents began requesting broader services, creating a place where residents could gather in a welcoming environment, fellowship, build community, conduct business and receive programs and services that would move people forward. Sabathani was founded by African American Minnesotan and has to this day a proud history of supporting Black leadership as well as staffing and services appropriate to people of color. Sabathani settled in the former Bryant Junior High School building in 1979 and celebrates its 50th Anniversary in 2016.



Central High School, 3416 Fourth Avenue South

Central School, organized in 1860, had the oldest lineage of any Minneapolis high school before its closing in 1982. Ten years after opening, Central hit the highest enrollment for high schools in the state. Central has an impressive list of alumni from musician Prince to Mayor Sharon Sayles Belton, actress Ann Sothorn, Yankee catcher John Blanchard, Gov. Orville Freeman, real estate developer Archie Givens, Judge Pamela Alexander, and many more. The only remnant of Central High School is the gym built in 1976. Richard R Green Central Park School and Central Gym Park now occupy this site.



Hosmer Library, 347 E 36th St

***National Register of Historic Places**

Hosmer Library was built in 1916 during a period of rapid immigration into Minneapolis. At the time it was built, the library was in a sparsely developed Scandinavian neighborhood and one block away from the since-demolished Central High School. The library was built under the leadership of librarian Gratia Countryman and financed with support from the Carnegie Corporation. The building is in the Collegiate Gothic style, with two granite lion-dogs outside the entrance. In 1969, reflecting the changing composition of the neighborhood, an African American reading room was dedicated in Hosmer to serve patrons.

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38th Street and 4th Avenue Business Corner

The corner of 38th Street and 4th Avenue has been, for decades, a center of business and community featuring Black ownership and executive leadership of organizations and businesses. The intersection has been home to eateries, retail stores, a grocery store, and the Minneapolis Urban League south location. Today, 38th Street and 4th Avenue and the surrounding area remain home to properties predominantly owned by entrepreneurs of color, including the Spokesman-Recorder, Kente Circle, and more.



Minnesota Spokesman Recorder, 3744 4th Avenue South

***Minneapolis Designated Historic Landmark**

Celebrating its 80th anniversary in 2015, the Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder is the oldest Black-owned business in the state of Minnesota. Established in August 1934 by Cecil E. Newman, the Spokesman-Recorder remains a family-run newspaper company that is African American and woman-owned, led by CEO/Publisher Tracey Williams-Dillard, granddaughter to Mr. Newman.



Tilsenbilt Homes, on 3rd, 4th, and 5th Ave in the 3800-4600 blocks

***Nomination pending, Minneapolis Historic Landmark**

The Tilsenbilt homes, a group of over 50 homes just south of the E 38th Street Corridor, were constructed in the 1950's by Edward Tilsen with the help of realtor and philanthropist Archie Givens Sr. The Tilsenbilt Homes are believed to be one of the first federally-supported residential housing developments in the United States that were open to homebuyers of all races.



Nacirema Club, 3949 4th Ave South

The Nacirema Club ("American" spelled backwards) was a "bring your own bottle" bar that catered to African American community members as a place to socialize and dance.

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The Lena O Smith House, 3905 5th Avenue South ***Minneapolis Designated Historic Landmark**

Born in 1885, Lena O Smith was the first African American woman licensed to practice law in the state of Minnesota. The Olive Smith House is the only extant building associated with the first woman president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the founder of the Minneapolis Urban League.



St. Peters AME Church, 401 E 41st Street

The African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church grew out of the Free African Society (FAS) in Philadelphia in 1787 in protest of segregation. In Minneapolis, following disaster at previous sites, the site at 41st and 4th avenue was built. The building was purchased in full in July, 1963, under Rev. Lovell Johnson. In 1967, under the pastorship of Rev. Johnson and succeeding him, Rev. Henderson Davis and Rev. Carl Fuqua, the design and development for the education unit came into being. The church's mission to impact the plight of those oppressed by racism, sexism, and economic disadvantage continues under the Leadership of Pastor Nazim B. Fakir.



Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Park, 4055 Nicollet Ave South

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Park, once called Nicollet Field, was renamed at the urging of civil rights activists in 1968 after the assassination of King. The renamed park underwent renovation and was dedicated on June 21, 1970. Freedom Form No 2, a gift from New York sculptor Daniel LaRue Johnson in the 1970's, is located in a beautifully landscaped area in the West side of the park. The park also boasts a civil-rights themed playground, installed in 2015.



The Arthur and Edith Lee House, 4600 Columbus Ave ***National Historic Landmark**

Arthur and Edith Lee bought their home in 1931, the first African American family in an all-white neighborhood. Mobs that sometimes swelled to thousands surrounded the home, in racially motivated protests to force the couple and their young daughter to leave. The Lee home was guarded by Arthurs' fellow WW1 veterans and US Postal Service co-workers. The family refused to be intimidated, making a powerful decision to take a stand for fair housing; they stayed for two years before moving a few blocks north to the Central neighborhood.