

HISTORICAL SOCIETY MOVES AHEAD ON SLP HISTORY CENTER

For 45 years the St. Louis Park Historical Society has been quietly carrying out its mission to collect, preserve, and share artifacts and information about the City's unique history. But 2015 was a watershed year for the Society: Its move from a hallway in a community center to a full-fledged office has made it possible to make many more resources available to the public, such as newspapers, yearbooks, telephone directories, photos, plat maps, and much more. The Society has also sponsored events and reached out to the community to share information about the City's past and how it relates to the present and future.

Now the time has come for the Society to find a permanent home – one with enough space to display the artifacts that have been stored at the Historic Milwaukee Road Depot for years. And while the present office contains an impressive number of resources, a larger, permanent space would enable the Society to provide better service to the citizens of the Park, to the City, and to the greater community. One particularly resource consists of files from the tax assessor's office with information on individual houses, complete with old photos, which will help people trace the history of their homes.

The Minnesota Historical Society (MNHS), which advises all local historical societies, strongly recommends that a building for this purpose be of new construction rather than an older building that is retrofitted, due to special requirements such as humidity control, fire suppression, etc.

VOLUNTEERS SOUGHT

The Society seeks to strengthen its Board by electing people who have experience in planning, marketing, grant writing, law, fundraising, museum administration, and other critical skills. People with the time, skills, and energy to oversee the development of a destination, first-class History Center are encouraged to contact the Society and attend the Society's Annual Meeting, which will be held at 7:00 pm on September 13 in the Banquet Room of the St. Louis Park Rec Center, 3700 Monterey Drive.

The Society is also in the process of assembling a Building Committee that will formulate a plan for the new building. Participants on this committee will include an architect, engineer, representative from the City, and an expert in construction. This committee will develop a concept of what the building will look like. One important caveat is that members of the Building Committee and Board would not be eligible to do the actual work.

Volunteers will also be recruited to carry on the work of the Society, which includes conducting interviews, researching, writing, assisting customers in the office, and more. Other duties could include filing, preserving photographs, or just envelope stuffing or cleaning.

FUNDRAISING

A building of the size and amenities needed for the History Center will have a significant price tag. Once the Building Committee produces a conceptual design and provides the dollar amount needed, fundraising will begin in earnest. Assistance in learning how to raise funds will be provided in part by MNHS. The Society is confident that there are enough successful businesses, foundations, and citizens – past and present – who will support this effort and donate the amount needed to build the facility. The Flashbacks of St. Louis Park Facebook page (which is not affiliated with the Society) has over 7,000 people who are actively interested in Park history. There are many avenues to be explored.

SUPPORT

Park citizens are encouraged to get involved with this process, whether by participating on the Board or the Building Committee, becoming a volunteer, helping to raise funds, or contacting representatives on the City Council to voice support. Becoming a member of the Society, at just \$25 per year, is another way of showing support for the work of the Society. The Historical Society also needs to hear from people about the kinds of services they would like to see the Society provide. A City has a rich, varied history that the Society works hard to document and preserve, and a History Center would not only teach current Park citizens about the past, but engage people in conversations about how the past impacts the present and the future.

Contact information: slphistory.org history@slphis.org 952-583-9893