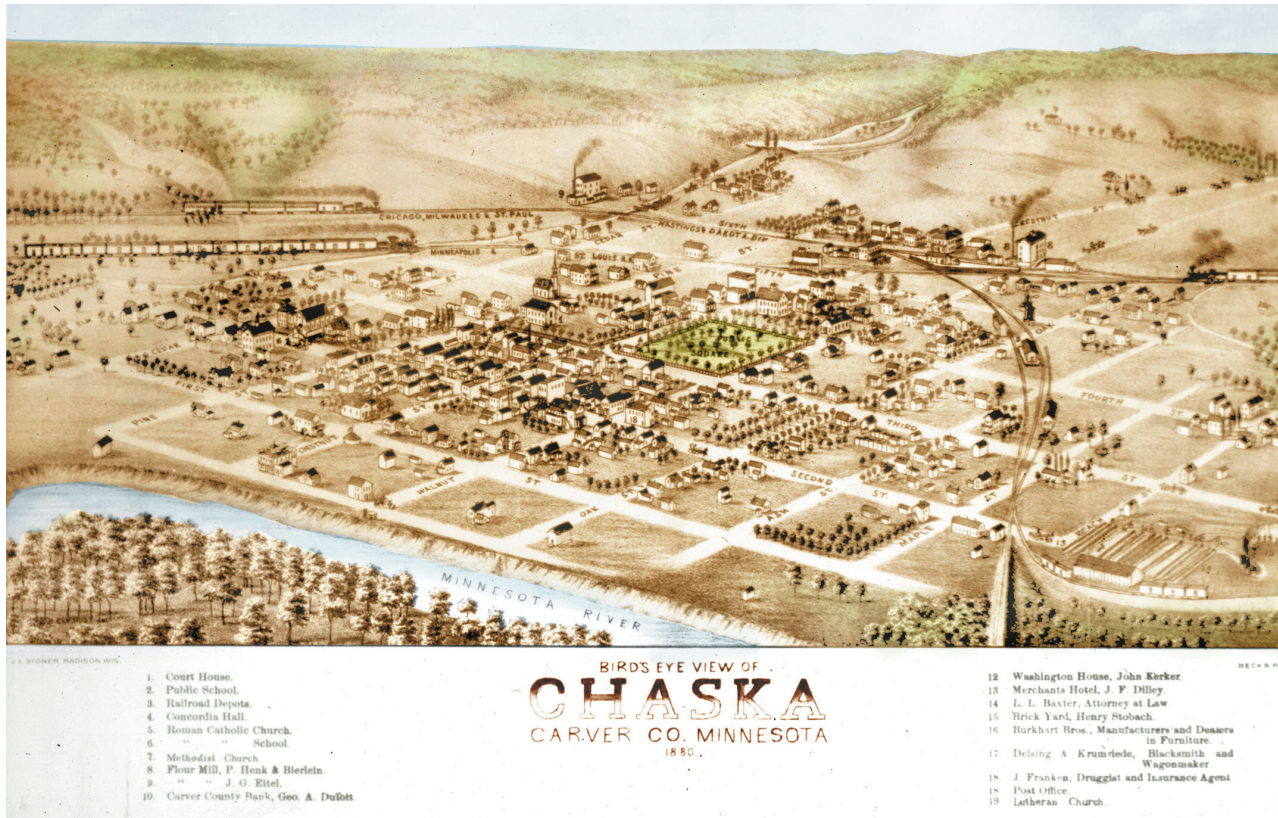


City of Chaska Historic Context Study



Prepared for the
Chaska Heritage Preservation Commission
Chaska, Minnesota

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Spring 2006

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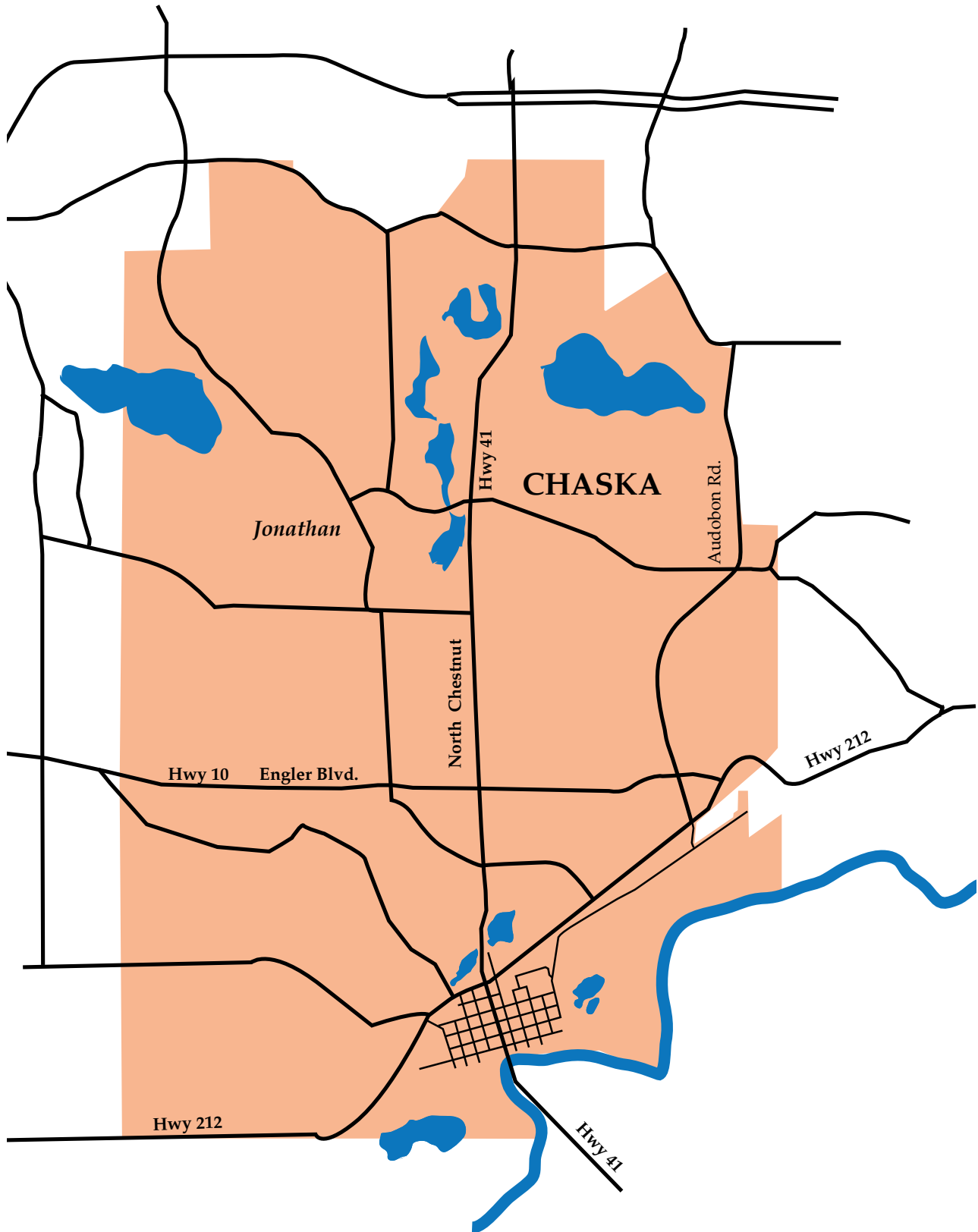
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City-Wide Chaska Map



Downtown Chaska Map



City of Chaska Historic Context Study

Introduction

The City of Chaska is proud of its past, and very cognizant of the role its history can play in future development. With the creation of a set of specific historic contexts, the city takes the next important step of tying preservation to planning, ensuring a vibrant future for the community by building on the resources of its past. Historic contexts will allow the city to evaluate its resources and incorporate them in the comprehensive planning process, while securing the character and spirit inherent in Chaska's history.



Gazebo in Chaska's City Square Park

The city has long shown a great pride in its past and an emphasis in chronicling its history. This civic spirit is demonstrated in its history books, *Chaska, A Minnesota River History (Volumes 1 and II)*, with *Volume III* underway. The city proceeded to designate its historic resources through several National Register nominations (see below), and through design guidelines for its historic downtown. The *Chaska Herald* has also been an important chronicle of the past. Recent development of this area has capitalized on this preservation planning.

These efforts have been facilitated through leadership and citizenry who are both aware of and involved in historic preservation as an integral part of their daily lives. The city's historical society was established in 1980, and is active in a number of projects ranging from preserving historic resources to collecting oral histories and hosting public presentations. Its museum and

offices are located in a recently-restored 1890 livery stable, located next to City Hall at 112 West 4th Street. The Heritage Preservation Commission is equally active and committed, having commissioned the above work and guided preservation-friendly development.

Chaska is proud of its past, and has done a good job of preserving and enlivening its historic resources. This spirit will carry on in its next efforts, as the city goes about "building the future from its past."

The Importance of Historic Contexts

The National Park Service, as it evaluates potential National Register properties, is very specific as to the importance of historic contexts. These standards are primarily defined in the publications *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form (Bulletin 16A)*, *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation (Bulletin 15)*, and *Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning (Bulletin 24)*. Bulletin 24 defines historic contexts as “broad patterns of historical development in a community or its region, that may be represented by historic resources.” Bulletin 15 expands on the importance of historic context by remarking that “its core premise is that resources, properties or happenings in history do not occur in a vacuum but rather are parts of larger trends or patterns.” Bulletin 16A organizes historic context by “theme, place and time” that “allows applicants to understand a historic property as a product of its time and as an illustration of aspects of heritage.”

In general, historic contexts are considered most valuable as a “framework” for evaluating the relative significance of cultural resources such as varied sites, structures, districts, and other elements. They serve as an organization tool for defining a community’s history, a past which is often otherwise extremely lengthy, complex, and unwieldy.

Rather than concentrating on each individual property, historic contexts focus on broad, overarching themes that would provide the city with the means to organize and evaluate its resources and lend perspective on the past. By developing these preservation themes, the city can most effectively evaluate current resources, designate new ones, and plan for preservation in future generations. The contexts will allow for a more fair designation of properties, as each site can then be viewed in terms of what is best for the city as a whole, rather than as a single instance in isolation. These contexts also assist commissioners in making difficult decisions about the preservation of buildings, sites, and structures that best represent the history of the City of Chaska, and to target future preservation efforts in the areas where they are most effective.

It is the consultants’ understanding that the Heritage Preservation Commission expressly wishes to identify more properties suitable for local and National Register nomination. Although these contexts do not specifically list properties for such designation (except for a few suggestions in the “Recommendations and Future Actions” section), they should help to guide these efforts.

The contexts identified herein can also be used as a rallying point for educational and community participation initiatives and are integral to future planning for land use, economic development, parks and recreation, transportation, public infrastructure, and housing. As more data is organized, the contexts will evolve and change, recommendations will be updated and the contexts will become more useful as long-range planning tools. The expanded contexts, in addition to being a framework for evaluation resources, will be useful in public education programs for neighborhood organizations, government bodies, and local schools. Rather than serving as a static end point that mothballs historic resources, this study designed to be an exciting jumping-off point for the future of preservation in Chaska.

Objectives and Methodology

As defined above, the main objectives of defining historic contexts for Chaska were to provide a framework for the community's history that can assist in making future planning decisions, including though not limited to National Register nominations.

The study process began by meeting with Chaska's planning staff and its Heritage Preservation Commission to identify prominent local resources, sites, and priorities. The consultants then met with the State Historic Preservation Office regarding federal guidelines and state contexts. They collected and reviewed information and history on the city, ranging from primary sources such as city records, Sanford Fire Insurance maps, and city directories, as well as secondary sources including previous studies and reports and the two immensely helpful Chaska histories. They also compiled a comprehensive map of the city and historic areas, based on several sources. Particularly informative to the process were the many unique resources contained in the History Center.

Working with the Heritage Preservation Commission, the consultants identified eight contexts that most clearly demonstrated Chaska's history as a Minnesota river town and industrial/agricultural center, as well as the particular features that distinguish the community and demonstrate its unique character. The period of influence was defined by the consultants and the Commission as the period between 1769 (when Chaska's written history began) and 1976 (which is when HUD foreclosed on the important planned community of Jonathan, Minnesota).

These contexts are arranged as follows:

Number 1 – "Early History" reflects the Chaska's location, the importance of Woodland and Dakota tribes in the area, and early settlement.

Number 2 – "Chaska Brick" addresses the importance of the town's major industry, including the resources that led to the success of the brickyards, a discussion of the brick industry, the economic and physical implications of Chaska brick, and the use of the material statewide.

Number 3 - "Commerce, Industry, and Civic Leadership" considers the wide range of businesses, industries, and governmental units prevalent in the town, from the importance of the city as the county seat, to the plethora of retail establishments, to services from attorneys to undertakers. The major brick and agricultural industries, however, have their own dedicated contexts.

Number 4 - "Agriculture and Farmsteads" is influenced by the important relationship between Chaska's rural farmsteads and the city. It also looks at Chaska's important agricultural industries, from sugar to pickling to mills and granaries.

Number 5 - "Transportation" focuses on the congruence of river, rail, and road in the city. As time passed the river became less important and the roads more so. Unfortunately, many cultural resources relating to the Transportation context have been lost.

Number 6 - "Religion" looks at the three major Chaska churches and congregations — Guardian Angels Catholic Church, St. John's Lutheran Church, and the Chaska Moravian Church.

Number 7 - "Residential" context spends some time in defining the city's variety of both architect-designed and vernacular housing stock. As many of the remaining resources are constructed of Chaska brick, this necessarily has some overlap with Context #2. This context also suggests some possible National Register nominations.

Number 8 - "Preservation of the Recent Past" is a somewhat unusual context that is based primarily on the importance of Jonathan as an important example of a planned community. It also looks at other recent but influential projects, such as Hazeltine Golf Course, the athletic park, and the levee.

Each context is arranged around a short narrative, which is not designed to be a full history of the city, but rather serves as a brief introduction to the theme. In many cases, some time is spent on descriptions of the past and on lost resources; these narratives are designed to fill in information that would be missing if only current resources were considered, and to demonstrate the importance of remaining properties. The next component is a fairly comprehensive list of typical property types associated with the context; this section also identifies some specific Chaska sites. Visual examples round out the individual sections.



Turn-of-the-century photograph of the Frederick E. DuToit House at 121 Hickory Street

Finally, all of the contexts are designed to be modified through time. As mentioned earlier, the City of Chaska has an active Heritage Preservation Commission, which is very interested in preservation and planning. It is the consultants' hope that they will use this context study to develop a number of programs, ranging from a comprehensive site survey to public education processes.

Current National Register Sites:

Chaska currently has the following listings on the National Register of Historic Places. All were added to the Register in 1980, with the majority of the applications completed by Charles Nelson of the State Historic Preservation Office, with additional research by Lynne Van Brocklin:

Frederick Greiner House	319 E. 3 rd Street
Frederick E. DuToit House	121 W. Hickory Street
Eder-Baer House	105 N. Elm Street
Brinkhaus Saloon (Livery)	112 W. 4 th Street
Herald Block	123 W. 2 nd Street
EH Lewis House (Lewis-Faber House)	321 W. 2 nd Street
Simons Building and Livery	123 W. 3 rd Street

Walnut Street Historic District — As originally designated

Nord Residence	423 N. Walnut Street
Rowhouses/Tenement Houses	414-422 N. Walnut Street
Casper Schmidt House	415 N. Walnut Street
Dienslake House	412 N. Walnut Street
Moravian Church	4th and Walnut Street
C.P. Klein Mansion	205 E. 4th Street
Steinberger Residence	320 N. Walnut Street
C.H. Klein Mansion	314 N. Walnut Street
Gibson Residence	308 N. Walnut Street
Stege-Klammer House	302 N. Walnut Street
Ess Foundry	218 N. Walnut Street
Joseph Ess House	217 N. Walnut Street
Ess House	212 N. Walnut Street
Ess House	211 N. Walnut Street
House	207 N. Walnut Street
Miessler/Schutz House	206 N. Walnut Street
Linenfelter & Faber Building (2)	200 N. Walnut Street
Linenfelter & Faber Building (1)	123 N. Walnut Street
National Hotel Building	123 E. 2nd Street
Phillip Henk Store	122 E. 2nd Street
Chaska Auto Body	115 E. 2nd Street
Young Family Home	109 E. 2nd Street
Hammer & Bierstettel House	107 E. 2nd Street
Diedrick Building	100 E. 2nd Street
Werner Store	E. 2nd Street
DuToit Bank	E. 2nd Street
Ann Marne Decorating	224 N. Chestnut Street

These sites have been deemed National Register-eligible or pending, but have not yet achieved full listings:

Conrad Fink House	322 W. 1 st Street
Phillip Henk Building	100 E. 2 nd Street
William Scott House	516 Pine Street

Finally, these two properties were Register-listed or eligible, but were demolished:

Iltis Brewery and Ice House	Stoughton Avenue and 5 th	demolished 1989
Miesler Farmstead	Chaska Township	demolished 2004
Ortlieb Farmstead	Chaska Township	demolished 2005

Related State Contexts

The Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office has identified several major state historic contexts. Three of these in particular apply to Chaska:

“Indian Communities and Reservations, 1837-1934”

“Early Agriculture and River Settlement, 1840-1870”

“Railroads and Agricultural Development, 1870-1940”

A Brief History of Chaska

The Native Americans of the Woodland Culture, commonly known as the Mound Builders, were some of the first people to settle the area that is now Chaska, starting around 1200 BC. The site was an advantageous location where the Big Woods, that covered much of central Minnesota, met up with the Minnesota River. Although most of the burial mounds of this tribe have been destroyed, three remnants still remain and are marked in City Square.

The Mdewakanton Dakota followed soon after, and by 1769, the time that Chaska's recorded history began, they were the primary nation in the area. Native American tribes remained active in the area well into the twentieth century. Though the area was first called "Little Rapids," the eventual name of the city, Chaska (sometimes recorded in early history as "Shaska"), is actually traced to a Dakota word meaning the first-born son.

European-American occupation began in 1700 with the French explorer Pierre-Charles Le Sueur, charting what was then called St. Peter's River (the name was not changed to the Minnesota River until 1852). In 1766, early British explorer Jonathan Carver began to map out the area, while searching for a western water route to the Pacific Ocean. Fur traders are recorded as early as 1804, and Jean Baptiste Faribault ran the Little Rapids trading post in the area from 1826-1842. To further European culture, a Catholic missionary chapel-school was established to teach the Dakota in 1843.

The Treaty of Traverse des Sioux, signed between the Dakota and the US Government, opened the area to settlement in 1851. Thomas Andrew Holmes canoed up the river to become the first settler, though he soon sold the land to David L. Fuller in 1852. The site became the County Seat in 1856 and was platted by the Shaska Company in 1857, one year before Minnesota became a state. The township was platted and bonded, but went through lengthy litigation and financial issues, resulting in many of the surrounding farmsteads being well settled before a town was established. This set up the expectation for a vital relationship between the city and the rural settlements, one that has served Chaska well throughout its history.

Most early settlers relocated from the East Coast, drawn by the area's fertile farmlands and river location. Many were of German ethnicity, with some Scandinavians as well. Early names of note include Byhoffer, Young, Eitel, Linenfesler, Noble, Schoenborn, Glatzel, Schindler, Iltis, Henk, Ochs, Ess, and DuToit — names which represent the diversity of the town and are still associated with extant historic buildings.

Due to its position as the County Seat and the market and transportation needs of the farmers, the town grew quickly. It also became an industrial center, primarily in relationship to its rich natural resources — bricks from the clay deposits, timber industry from the remaining Big Woods, and mills, sugar factories, dairies, canning and pickling plants (including Gedney) taking advantage of local agricultural bounty. The riverfront location allowed for easy transportation — as well as floods — with a thriving steamboat route by 1857

including daily trips by the *Antelope* to Saint Paul. Later railroad expansion connected the small community's resources to markets statewide.

Chaska was incorporated as a village in 1871. The end of the nineteenth century was relatively prosperous. Brickyards and agricultural industries were the major employers, though a thriving downtown developed. Saloons, boarding houses, and hotels were particularly prevalent, as well as services catering to those doing business in the county seat, such as attorneys and surveyors. In 1891, Chaska was determined a city by special legislative action.

For much of the twentieth century, Chaska remained a small town just outside of the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Though certainly affected by world events, especially by its residents' service in WWI and WWII, in general the city kept to itself. The brickyards and mills stayed active, and the sugar industry rose to prominence, giving the town the nickname "Sugar City."

By the 1960s, however, suburban expansion had reached Chaska. It drew national attention for the groundbreaking New Town project of Jonathan in 1970, and concurrently became home to the exclusive Hazeltine Golf Course. Jonathan began with great promise but soon ran out of money, and was foreclosed upon in 1976, with only a few of the planned 10 neighborhoods completed. Today, however, these neighborhoods still thrive as part of the Jonathan Association, and many new developments have been built nearby. This relatively recent expansion gives Chaska a distinctive place in modern history.

From its early importance to Native American communities to its success as a thriving river town to its more recent urban planning developments, Chaska has remained a town with a unique sense of place. Its relationship to the river, its industrial history, its distinctive Chaska brick architecture, and its many family-owned businesses demonstrate this special kinds of success. Social influences, such as the three major churches, and community functions, have also been crucial in the city's development.

Context 1 – Native American, Early Archeological, Early Settlement Time Span –1700 to 1858

Although early settlement of the Minnesota River Valley likely began about 1200 BC, Chaska begins its recorded history in 1769.

Geography and Location

Due to its advantageous geography, the Chaska location has long been a prime settlement area. Here, the natural resources of the Big Woods met the transportation possibilities of the Minnesota River (originally called “St. Peter’s River” by Anglo-American settlers). The river itself also provided abundant bounty, including the deep clay deposits that were later to lead to the city’s brickmaking success.

The “Big Woods” were an enormous area of mainly deciduous forest that covered much of southeastern Minnesota, with Chaska located right at the core. These dense woods were composed of a wide variety of trees, including mostly basswood and sugar maple, but also ash, box elder, butternut, cottonwood, dogwood, elm, hackberry, and willow. Diverse in both flora and fauna, the forest areas provided an abundance of small game animals, allowing for excellent hunting and trapping.

Though the Big Woods was known as one of Minnesota’s most prominent features, earlier topography may have been more diverse. Studies of the early geologic resources refer to the importance of early prairie lands. Rolling uplands of low hills were dotted with smaller lakes and peat bogs. These lakes and pockets of prairie and oak savannah continued to some extent within the forest, adding to its vitality.

The Minnesota River was an important tributary to the Mississippi that formed the backbone of the valley’s transportation network. The river was considered especially important to the Dakota tribes, who believed the mouth of the river was located between the center of the earth and the center of the heavens.

The river itself forms an L-shape that flows southeast from Big Stone Lake on the South Dakota border. It then turns upward to join the Mississippi just north of Chaska, near Fort Snelling. Its name (and eventually that of the state) comes from the Dakota words *mini* meaning “water” and *sota*, “like the cloudy sky.” It was formed from glacial melt. The rolling hillsides provide some bluffs, though these are not as dramatic as those off of the Mississippi. The relative lowness of the terrain often led to flooding of the basin area, especially during spring snow melt.

Very little of these original geologic features (along the river), natural landmarks (such as the Big Woods), or viewsheds exist today.

Native American Settlement and Sites

Archeological studies have demonstrated evidence that the area was settled as early as ca. 10,000 to 3,000 BC, and that the site has been continually occupied since the early Archaic period. However, the preponderance of archeological evidence is associated with the middle to late Woodland period and the later M'dewakanton Dakota, who are the primary band associated with the area.

Archeological investigations in the area, particularly on farmsteads and as part of the environmental impact studies of new housing developments, demonstrate a fair amount of archeological remnants of these tribes, and perhaps of some even earlier settlements. Much of the evidence discovered are lithic scatters throughout previous cultivated farmland, and range from flakes and flake fragments to bone fragments and sherds. In general, however, artifacts in the area are not well inventoried, and suffer from both natural disruption from flooding, sedimentation, etc. and man-made development. For example, most of the early mounds the area was noted for have been destroyed by construction.

Although there are "lithic scatters" and evidence of settlement in the area as early as 3000 BC, the first consistently chronicled Native American settlement of the area appears to have been the Mound Builders of the Woodland period, beginning around 1200 BC. "Mound Builders" is a term applied to a diverse group of people who lived over a great portion of North America. Current archeological studies indicate that this culture may actually have been several different bands, some of whom were hunter-gatherers and the majority of others that farmed a specific area.

Mounds are evident from Minnesota all the way down to the Gulf of Mexico, and as far east as the Appalachian Mountains. The purpose of the mounds can be mysterious — although some were apparently used for burial purposes, others appear to have no artifacts and perhaps served simply as raised areas for religious ceremonies ("temple mounds") or as fortifications. Still others may be collapsed lodges. Many of these mounds were located along river valleys. In any case, they were fairly prevalent throughout Minnesota, though fairly rare today. The three remaining mounds in City Square park are thus all the more valuable.

However, the primary band of Native Americans associated with the area are the M'dewakanton band of the Dakota (Sioux) tribe. These "People of the Lakes" had settled the area having been driven south due



Illustration of a Dakota Indian from Jonathan Carver's 1778 publication

to conflict with the Chippewa (Ojibway) associated with the area just north of the Minnesota River Valley. Several of these battles actually occurred in the Chaska area.

The M'dewakanton were established in at least seven villages along the Mississippi, and their territory ranged as far south as the Illinois River. When the first Anglo-American settlement began in the 1700s, this would have been the tribe that they encountered, and even the name "Chaska" stems from a Dakota word meaning "first-born son."

The Treaty of Traverse de Sioux was signed between the Dakota and the US Government on July 23, 1851. That treaty officially opened the area for Anglo-American settlement, ceding almost twenty-four million acres of land for about three million dollars, paid over time. Though it established reservation areas for the Dakota, many members of the tribe remained living in the Chaska area through the end of the 19th century, and enjoyed good relationships with the town's residents, which may have protected Chaska settlers during the later "Indian Uprising" of 1862.

Archeologically, there are likely few remaining Native American resources in the area. Erosion and other natural causes, farming, and development have compromised the integrity and placement of artifacts. The most likely remaining resources occur in mounds and in existing remnants of the Big Woods.

Early Anglo-European Settlement

"There is no doubt that at some future period, mighty kingdoms will emerge from these wildernesses, and stately and solemn temples, with gilded spires reaching the skies, supplant the Indian huts..."

- Jonathan Carver

The same geographic features that made the Chaska area so attractive to Native American settlement made it an ideal Anglo-European destination as well. The area was originally explored by Pierre-Charles le Sueur under the auspices of the French government in 1700. He came up the Minnesota River from Louisiana with three boats and twenty-two men, passing through Chaska en route to the Blue Earth River, where he established Fort L'Huillier at what is now Mankato. The fort was abandoned in 1702.

Many years later, in 1766, British explorer Jonathan Carver began to map out the area, while searching for a way to the Pacific Ocean. His book, *Travels Through the Interior Parts of North America in the Years 1766, '67, and '68* became the first English account of the region, though historians cast doubt as to whether or not he actually explored all of the areas chronicled, or relied upon information passed on from Native Americans for many of the descriptions.

The river basin area around Chaska was dubbed Little Prairie, and included a trading post at Little Rapids. It became an accessory area for fur trading, though most of that business was centered at Mendota. As part of that trade, the area was occupied mainly by French and French-Canadian voyageurs. Jean-Baptiste Faribault ran a trading post in the area from 1826-1842 (just north of the present-day City of Chaska), and others trading in the area included Louis Provencalle, James "Bully" Welles, and Joseph Renville Jr. Exploration continued, particularly by the Feathersonaugh and Nicollet parties. Missionaries were also active, including Father Augustin Ravoux's log chapel which opened in 1842 — holding services for three years until the still un-converted Dakota threatened to burn it down (it was sold to the Catholics of Wabasha and floated down the river to its new location).

Though nearby areas, such as Carver, were settled early by "sooners" who moved in before ("sooner than") the area was officially open for homesteading, Chaska was generally not settled until after the Treaty of Traverse de Sioux in 1851.

The earliest name associated with the town is that of the land speculator Thomas Andrew Holmes, arriving in the Minnesota River valley about one month after the treaty was signed. Holmes had been licensed for two sites by the Indian agent, one at Shakopee and a secondary one at Chaska. However, he focused his efforts on the first site, selling the "Shaska" townsite to David L. Fuller in 1852. Fuller's main agent, Samuel Allen, was one of the first Anglo-American settlers in the area, which soon proved to be popular with Western-moving settlers due to its accessibility and plentiful natural resources.

The City of Chaska

The city itself was rather slow to develop. It was first platted by John T. Halsted in June of 1854. The Shaska Company was incorporated in 1857 by Frederic de Freudenreich, Amasa Mason, Freeman James, T.D. Smith, and George Fuller. The city, which had been chosen in 1856 as the county seat for the newly-established Carver County, was re-surveyed and platted to facilitate roadways and government buildings. It is at that time that the City Square was recorded "for the purpose of a common park." Bonds were issued and plats sold, but due to financial issues and litigation, the development of the city proper was slow.

Meanwhile, just outside of the town, efforts were made to establish the community of "Yorkville" at the river dock. These were soon abandoned, and that area is part of present-day Chaska in the area around Stoughton Avenue.

At the same time, the area farmsteads were being rapidly settled. Most of the early homesteaders relocated from the east coast, drawn by the fertile farmlands, river access, and woodlands. The Chaska area was also one of the first areas west of Minneapolis and St. Paul to be opened for homesteading, and so was very

accessible. The farmsteads soon had a predominance of German — and some Scandinavian — immigrants and recent immigrants, coloring the cultural heritage of the area.

One of the first buildings in the city was the Chaska House Hotel, built by Jacob Byhoffer for Paul Faber. The hotel burned down, sadly, in 1876. Other early buildings included Wagner’s saloon, the Linenfelser and Faber stores (still standing at Walnut and East Second), the Warner General Store, the Nobel-Sell House (301 East 3rd Street), and Lucius Howe’s brickyard, established in 1857. Due to fire, flooding, and development, few early buildings remain in Chaska, with the majority of the historic resources in the city dating from the 1880s-1920s.

Related State Contexts

Chaska’s historic contexts are incorporated within three of the larger, statewide contexts as determined by the State Historic Preservation office:

- “Indian Communities and Reservations, 1837-1934”
- “Early Agriculture and River Settlement, 1840-1870”
- “Railroads and Agricultural Development, 1870-1940”

Property Types

Note: In general, these property types listed in these contexts will identify specific Chaska examples as available. Unfortunately, relatively few of these examples are available for the Early History context. The following list represents cultural resources that are likely present in the area.

Pre-European sites

Mounds — particularly the three remaining in City Square

Gravesites

Caves

Habitation Sites

Ceremonial Sites

Other Archeological Sites

Prominent Natural Features

Low Bluffs

Viewsheds

Remnants of the Big Woods

Pre settlement

Fort Sites

Trading Sites

Chapel Sites

Boat Landings and River Access

Camp Sites

Early Settlement

House Sites
Civic Sites
Commercial Sites
 Howe Brickyard
 Linenhauser and Faber Store
Farm Sites

Recommendations and Future Actions

1. Chaska should pay special attention to archeological investigations of pre-European sites. In particular, this investigation should be required of any new development, in an effort to discover and inventory an early archeological resources.
2. Chaska should pay particular attention to remaining mounds, particularly those in City Square park. Although these mounds were far from rare (historians estimate there may have been tens of thousands in Minnesota at the time of Anglo-American settlement), very few remain intact. Most have been destroyed by natural forces and/or development. Preservation and interpretation of the mounds and remaining resources should be given the highest priority.
3. Chaska should pay special attention to any early settlement resources, such as forts, chapels, trading posts, and housing and commercial sites. Ideally, a full archeological survey should be completed.
4. Because of the importance to the area of these early sites, and their relative rarity, the HPC should pay special attention to making Chaska's residents aware of this early history. Through this outreach, other sites and resources may come to the HPC's attention. The preservation of any sites and related resources should be given the highest priority.
5. Due to necessary flood prevention efforts, such as the levee, most of the original vistas and viewsheds have been compromised. A sense of these views and the location, as portrayed in early maps, plans, paintings, drawings, and even photographs, would give modern-day visitors a much better sense of early resources and why Chaska was such an attractive settlement site. Such an interpretive display could be featured at the History Center, or perhaps on a walking trail along the levee. Similar efforts should be made with remaining old-growth forestry from the Big Woods.
6. The Chaska HPC should consider ways to interpret lost resources, including early homes, businesses, and Lucius Howe's first brickyard, that may have been destroyed by fire, flood, or development. Ideas for this include a walking tour of "sites that were," or a physical/website exhibit.
7. Efforts should be concentrated on remaining early settlement resources, such as the Linenfelser and Faber stores and the Nobel-Sell House.

Context 2 – Chaska Brick

Time Span –1857-1950

“A Love Affair with Brick”

It is impossible to consider the city’s history without a discussion of Chaska brick. Though certainly other Minnesota cities held some brickyards (including Moorhead, St. Cloud, Minneapolis, and nearby Carver), none were as closely identified with the industry. Brickmaking defines Chaska in the same way that granite does St. Cloud, tourism does Brainerd, or beer does Milwaukee. It is indeed the central identifying historic context for the community.

For such a crucial industry, some aspects remain remarkably vague. For example, we don’t even know exactly when the term “Chaska brick” was coined. An 1894 edition of the *Chaska Herald* refers to a farmer “hauling Chaska brick for his new home,” but it is likely the term became popular far earlier than that.

The main considerations of a Chaska brick context are clear:

The factors that led to Chaska’ brickmaking dominance:

- essential natural resources, including a vein of high quality clay as well as timber to fire kilns
- viable transportation sources, including the river and later the railroad
- available labor, particularly German and Scandinavian immigrants familiar with brickmaking and construction

The effects of the industry:

- economic impact – in the development of the town
- social impact – in who settled the area and who worked with the brick, as well as Chaska’s identification with the material
- physical environment, both in the use of Chaska brick as the dominant construction material and in the clayholes (which have now filled in and serve as small lakes) that dot the town

Brickyard Beginnings

The location of the Chaska settlement led directly to its success in the brickmaking industry. The townsite was established on top of a very rich and deep alluvial clay deposit, formed as part of massive glacial melting around 10,000 B.C. The deposits in Chaska consisted of a layer of yellow clay over a layer of blue clay, both rich in sandy deposits and in finely ground silica, which gives the slight sparkle to the brick. The vein was

very accessible, and it was deeper than most — considered inexhaustible during the late 1800s — though in actuality it ran 20-45 feet deep.

The second major natural influence to affect the brickmaking industry was the “Big Woods,” described as:

“A dense hardwood forest, a real wilderness, containing many trees two and three feet in diameter — red and white oak, maple, basswood, elm and ash, together with the smaller varieties such as ironwood, poplar, white birch, butternut, hickory and hackberry.” (*The History of Victoria Parish*)

With that copious supply of deciduous hardwood, brickyards were guaranteed fuel for the kilns. In many cases farmers, who were felling the trees to clear their land, would trade the wood for brick, since brick farmhouses, barns, and even outbuildings were considered of higher status than frame structures. Wood was also purchased from middlemen, and some brickyards would even employ their workers during the off-season to cut wood.



Early photograph of laborers at a Chaska brickyard

By most accounts, it was Lucius Howe who pioneered Chaska’s brickmaking industry in 1857. A transplant from Vermont, he provided the bricks for mason Lyman W. Noble to build John Humple’s Chaska home. Howe represented the third major factor in Chaska’s brickmaking success — its human resources. Most of the area was settled by German or Scandinavian immigrants (over three-quarters of the county’s foreign-born population), often relocating from the east coast, many of whom had experience with brick.

Howe soon had competition, both from commercial brickyards and from the fabrication of cruder, homemade bricks made on-site, particularly at rural farmsteads. His main competitor was J.W. Gregg, though by the mid-1860s, there were four major Chaska brickyards, running continuously from April to November. The yards employed up to 100 men in a town of 1,255. River barges allowed the bricks to be easily transported throughout the state, especially to the population centers of Minneapolis and Saint Paul. Production averaged 3,500,000 bricks annually, with a rate of up to \$12 per 1,000.

By the 1870s, the industry had expanded rapidly. In 1872, two railroads — the Hastings & Dakota line and the Minneapolis & St. Louis railroads — added lines to the area. Soon, most brickyards had a spur of the line,

and most of the bricks were carried by train, which was cheaper and faster than boat. However, in 1889, rail rates had increased enough that a consortium of brickyard owners contracted with J.P. Donaldson to resume barge hauling. Rail tariffs were soon reduced in response to the boat competition, but the barges remained a viable, if sporadic, option for the rest of the century.

Whether carried by boat or train, a big advantage of Chaska brick was that it was lighter than traditional red brick, and thus cost less to transport. As production techniques were refined the industry grew still further, until it reached its peak near the turn of the century with eleven yards.

By the time Charles and Christian Klein achieved dominance of the brickmaking industry just after 1900, daily production had risen to 3.5 million bricks (averaging 40-60 million per year), both solid and hollow core. Chaska was producing 30% of all the brick made in Minnesota. The brickyards employed up to 600 men annually (roughly 20% of the town's population), at an average wage of \$1.25-1.75 a day. With no child labor laws in place, a number of children were also employed, performing jobs such as hand turning the bricks at the rate of 4-7¢ an hour. The brickyards had been firmly established as Chaska's dominant economic force.

As the 20th century progressed, the brickyards began to decline. Many consolidated, until by 1930 Charles Klein was the remaining owner. Financial crises such as the 1930s recession affected construction, as did the development of new materials, such as clay tile and concrete block. For a short time, the buff color of the brick even fell out of fashion. Though Klein did not close the brickyard until 1971, the period of dominance had really ended by World War II. According to the Minnesota Manufacturer's Directory, today there are only four brickyards total remaining in Minnesota.

Brickmaking Techniques

The first, and crudest method, of brickmaking in Chaska was clamp brick, a homemade process. In this process, the raw clay was shoveled directly out of the ground, then weathered for 6 months and kneaded by foot or by hoof. It was then mixed with water and sand, tamped into rough forms, and left to dry in the sun. Once formed, they were stacked to produce the "clamp kiln" and fired from the middle with a basic wood fire. This method was both inefficient and inexact, but did produce a distinctive brick that was generally smaller than commercial efforts. Due to its lack of durability, few examples of this hand-crafted brick remain today.

An improvement on the process was slop brick. For this type, water and clay were mixed into a thin, almost slurry-like consistency that was poured into a mold, whose rounded edges and corners were to become a characteristic feature of all Chaska brick. These bricks were dried on open-air racks before firing and had to be laboriously hand-turned. It was also risky — in a period of particularly bad weather all of the semi-dry bricks could easily be disintegrated by heavy rains. In two particularly bad years, over 100,000 bricks annually were ruined.

By the mid-1860s, with the advent of professional yards, brickmaking became more efficient. The clay was excavated from the vein by a pick-and-shovel team and then hauled to the factory, first with wheelbarrows but soon by horse and wagon. By 1870, brickmolding machines were prevalent, making both wire-cut and pressed brick. In particular, the pressed brick became synonymous with Chaska, as the machinery allowed the bricks to have the characteristic indentations (called “frogs”) that reduced the weight of the brick and provided a better key for the mortar, and also later allowed the word “Chaska” to be pressed directly into the frog.

Brickyard owners were constantly looking for new ways to make the process better. One solution was Mike Bierlien’s clay crusher and temperer — otherwise known as the “nameless” machine — which pulverized the clay, added sand and water for the optimum mixture, and mechanically filled the molds, in one continuous step without human intervention. The result was a “handsome, even, solid brick, of a delicate cream color... undoubtedly the most desirable bricks in the market.” (*Herald*, May 26, 1887).

These bricks, with their thicker consistency, dried to form more quickly before kiln-firing. Hot-air dryers were also introduced, cutting initial drying time from several weeks to under 72 hours.

Bricks were then fired in beehive kilns, which with the number of active brickyards, soon became a prevalent physical feature of Chaska. Kilns were either intermittent, meaning that bricks had to be cooled and unloaded between firings, then re-loaded and baked again, or continuous, which had a number of connecting chambers that the heated air coursed through. Despite the slightly longer firing time, continuous kilns soon became the standard due to their labor efficiency, lower heating costs, and ability to create a more consistent product. With internal temperatures running from 400-2000 degrees Fahrenheit, fires at the kilns were a weekly occurrence.

Bricks were then hand sorted, according to grade and color. Charles Klein’s papers report that one way to test the quality was to knock the bricks together; if they made a high-pitched sound they were good, but a low thud meant they were of a poorer quality.

As the 20th century progressed, particularly as the Kleins consolidated the yards, technology introduced a number of changes. Steam shovels and bulldozers took over from the pick crews and horse carts. Industrial, tunnel kilns replaced the distinctive beehives. Firing times dropped dramatically — while wood fires took ten days to bake the bricks, coal took eight, fuel oil just three, and finally gas power just over two days.

The Aesthetic Character of Chaska Brick

Though so many factors were in place for the creation of Chaska brick, it would not have become a major industry without a substantial demand for the product. Chaska brick became incredibly popular not just

because of its quality and ease of use, but in particular because of its distinctive appearance and coloration. This brick has been likened to Milwaukee brick, but often described as “creamier,” more natural in tone, and with more variation in color. Though buff-colored brick was indeed made in other locations and even nationally, none has achieved the strong place-association or relative fame as Chaska brick.

The color of Chaska brick ranges from a sandy buff to a gray-blue, with extensive variation in between. The color is mostly due to the high concentration of lime in the clay, as well as the firing process, including amount of oxygen introduced, length of firing, and temperature. For these reasons, earlier brick fired before techniques were standardized tends to have more variability in it than later brick. There is also a slight glister to the clay, due to the silica content.

The brick’s texture is also appealing. The size, particularly in the early iterations, was often slightly smaller than red brick. With the rounded corners, distinctive “frogs,” and grainy faces, even new brick seemed slightly weathered.

In general, the brick was of a consistent high quality, especially as manufacturing practices improved. Because it was lightweight and thus easy to transport and use, as well as resistant to compressions, it was of high demand for construction projects. Masons particularly liked it, because the porous clay, high in lime, wicked moisture from the mortar and set more quickly.

Even with this softness, it was said to weather elements as well as harder brick, and indeed, many Chaska brick buildings of over one hundred years old still stand today. While used in Chaska primarily as an exterior brick, elsewhere in the state the brick was in particular demand for structural walls of buildings, where it would be covered by a veneer of another product, or for infrastructure such as sewers.

The Brick as an Economic Engine

“Pay day at the brickyards is equal to one of our holidays for our merchants and saloon keepers. It makes things lively in town.” (*Chaska: Volume I*)

The importance of the brickyards to the economic development of Chaska cannot be underestimated. With the yards employing up to 20% of the population, associated businesses such as foundries and machine shops thriving, and local farmers selling wood for the kilns, it seemed like almost everyone in town had some kind of association with Chaska brick. In addition, the City of Chaska had become the County Seat in 1856, providing governmental services and related businesses.

The brick business was eagerly reported upon by the local newspapers, which in the spring would preview each yard and forecast its production. As the *Weekly Valley Herald* commented in 1910:

“Chaska owes a good deal to the brick industry in fact more so than to anything else. For years the industry has been a source of revenue to hundreds of our people and has contributed manifestly toward the upbuilding of many of our leading business enterprises. It has put hundreds of dollars into the pockets of our people in the years gone by and will continue to do so.”

The newspapers also often reported on Chaska brick houses constructed, especially in the rural areas. An example:

“Tobias Ottinger, of Laketown, has the brick on the ground for a dwelling and from what we understand, it will be a comfort to the occupants when finished.” (*Weekly Valley Herald*, April 25, 1878)

Perhaps no outside business was more related to the brickyards than the Ess Foundry. Joseph Ess, a wagon maker, started the foundry in 1886 along with his sons Frank and Fred, at the urging of local brick manufacturers. He began by repairing machines, but eventually also created new ones, including the slop molds and Bierlien’s “nameless” machine.

Other businesses whose fortunes depended directly on the prosperity of the brickyards included machinery shops, liveries and other stables working with the horses and mules that carried the clay, and hardware stores.

As noted above, even the businesses that would not seem to have a direct relationship to the brickyards were profoundly affected by the industry. Saloons, hotels, restaurants, stores, and services all depended on its prosperity. This effect was especially acute since pay was delayed for several months — workers who began when the yard opened each year in April might not be paid until August or later.

The area’s practical farmers considered Chaska brick a prime material for farm buildings — including houses, barns, and even outbuildings — due to its strength, durability, and ease of use. They also saw brick homes as a status symbol, and would replace previously-built frame houses with brick structures as soon as their finances would allow. To this end, farmers would often trade wood to fuel the kilns for brick to build their houses. Many of these farmers were German and Scandinavian immigrants, seeking to recreate the materials and styles of dwellings in their homelands.

Another group of people affected by the brick were service workers, such as the laborers, masons, and builders who used it, many of whom developed specialized skills with the medium. Builders recorded included Olaf Hanson, John S. Letford, Henry Kenning and sons, Henry Saurbrei, John Seims, Christian Bloecher, Lyman Noble, F. Klatte, and Charles Klatte.

Finally, the brickyard owners themselves were their own economic force, both bearing the risk of the yards and often profiting greatly from them. In 1878 yard owners formed the Brick Manufacturer's Union of Chaska. The Union met at least monthly to discuss pricing, bidding, wages, contracts, transportation, and other matters. One member was elected to serve as the sole agent for all of the firms. These "Brick Barons" formed a strong lobby that served to standardize wages, bidding and practices, until the Kleins' consolidation of the yards.

Social Implications of Chaska Brick

As discussed elsewhere in this context, although other Minnesota cities had brick industries, none became so closely identified with a specific place as Chaska brick. The city became known as the home of this highly desirable, attractive product, and a thriving business grew from and around the manufacturing. The Chaska brick industry gave a specific and positive presence for the city, one that nearby and similar communities, such as Carver, did not attain.

For those who settled the area, mainly German and Scandinavian immigrants and transplants from the east coast as part of the Homestead Act, brick was extremely popular. Charles van Ravenswaay comments:

"Buildings made entirely of of brick were of higher status, and, hence, prosperous settlers frequently opted for all-brick construction. Such was the prestige of brick that it became the predominant material of later German houses..."

Chaska brick was not only prestigious, but also stood for permanence, stability, and durability. The local Chaska brick had the advantage of being relatively cheap and available, and was easy to work with, especially as many of the builders had masonry experience. It is no wonder that Chaska brick became the material of choice in the area.

For some, however, this is not the case. The Klein brothers' homes (at 314 N. Walnut Street and 205 E. 4th Street in downtown Chaska), are notoriously rumored to be not of Chaska brick, but instead brick from Iowa & Illinois. Whether this is because of inside knowledge about its durability, a shortage of the brick, or, as rumored, a reticence to use their own brick because brickyard workers could then easily calculate the value of the home, we do not know.

The use of Chaska brick in structures all over Minnesota, particularly in the Twin Cities, also increased its prestige. Some of these buildings are discussed below.

The result is that Chaska brick structures have achieved a kind of prestige and quality standard. Whether they are urban or rural, whether they maintain integrity or have been painted, stuccoed, or otherwise altered, they provide an icon and an identification point for the city.

“The Brick City of the West” — Physical Implications of Chaska Brick

As discussed above, Chaska brick was an extremely popular building material in Minnesota during the last half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. Nowhere was it a more popular material than in the City of Chaska and in the larger environs of Carver County. Though readily available, the brick was seen both as a practical, durable choice and as a status symbol. Thus, a high percentage of buildings in Chaska are constructed of Chaska brick, many of which remain intact today.

Some of the first buildings constructed were commercial buildings and houses in the City of Chaska, including the Humple house that Lucius Howe provided brick for in 1857. As spring river flooding was a major issue in much of the city, brick gained even more popularity for its durability and water resistance. The city has many Chaska brick buildings, though they are of varying integrity; a formal inventory has yet to be completed, but there are over fifty separate buildings of note between the local and nationally designated sites.

Rural buildings followed soon after — the earliest of which appears to be the Vogel farmstead, constructed in 1864, likely from bricks produced on-site. At least 66 Chaska brick farmhouses still exist in Carver County, and are currently under nomination to the National Register in a Multiple Property Submission.

The prevalence of Chaska brick commercial buildings downtown also predicates a certain design sensibility. In general, Chaska’s historic commercial frontages are similar to those in most other small Minnesota cities — two story, with storefront below and offices or living quarters above. The storefronts display large glass windows distinguished by a bottom bulkhead and/or top transom. The decoration on these buildings is generally limited to a brick corbel or parapet and arched window caps. Some also includes ironwork, most often from the Ess Foundry.

Residences constructed of Chaska brick, though they vary in period and predominant style, are also relatively congruent. Ornamentation is generally restrained, with arched window heads, ranging from one simple row to rather complex multi-row designs, being the primary decorative enhancement. Some, particularly Queen Anne or other Victorian styles, also incorporate wood trim, such as brackets and turned porch columns and spindles.

Few remnants of brickyard kilns, drying racks, or other buildings remain, so these important institutions bear relatively little influence on Chaska’s physical landscape today. However, a major and sometimes overlooked remnant of the brick industry is the city’s three large clayholes, which are now filled with water and serve as small lakes. One in particular, the Brickyard Clayhole behind Cooper’s Supermarket, is said to still contain brickmaking machinery at the bottom of the pit, along with more recent artifacts. The other two are Fireman’s Clayhole and the clayhole behind the courthouse.

Chaska Brick Throughout the State

A great number of historic buildings in Minnesota contain Chaska brick.

Buildings with structural walls created of Chaska brick include:

- the Lumber Exchange Building
- Butler Square
- Renaissance Square
- the Orpheum Theater
- the Grain Belt Brewery
- the Masonic Temple/Hennepin Center for the Arts
- the State Capitol in Saint Paul — the basement walls are made of over two million Chaska bricks

The sewers of both Minneapolis and St. Paul are lined with Chaska brick.

Some architects particularly favored the aesthetics of Chaska brick and would use them as the primary material for their building. Examples of these include:

- Market Square
- Crown Roller Mill Building
- Wesbrook Hall at the University of Minnesota

Many homeowners also preferred Chaska brick for its color and ease of use, and so it is seen in many residential properties, especially in Minneapolis and St. Paul. However, there is no reliable inventory of these properties (see Recommendations).

There are a number of lost resources statewide which also made significant use of Chaska brick. These include:

- the Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce Building
- the Minneapolis Auditorium
- the Northwestern National Bank Building in Minneapolis, which used over seven million Chaska bricks in its construction
- the prison at Fort Snelling
- the Chamber of Commerce Building, Minneapolis – over 2 million bricks
- the Humboldt mill in Minneapolis (following the 1878 fire)
- the Washburn mill in Minneapolis (also following the fire)

Chaska brick is also said to have been used for diverse buildings ranging from the courthouses in McLeod county and the town of Stillwater courthouse to Shakopee churches, but this is unsubstantiated.

Lost Resources

As discussed above, the high concentration of Chaska brick buildings in both the City of Chaska and Chaska Township give a high level of cohesion to its aesthetic standards. Members of the community and visitors can easily identify Chaska brick structures, are attracted to the distinctive colors and properties of the brick, and have a broad understanding of the importance of the material. It gives the community a distinctive quality and sense of place.

The town has lost many resources as vacant lots and infill construction prove. All of the original major civic buildings have been torn down, as well as some schools and larger commercial properties. Virtually all resources relating to the brickyards (save the clayholes), and most relating to the railroads, are gone.

At least one property previously listed on the National Register, the Iltis Brewery and Icehouse, was removed from the Register when razed in 1989.

Though not “lost” *per se*, many Chaska brick structures have lost some or a great deal of their original integrity, usually due to being painted, covered with siding or stucco, or added on to. In some cases, such as the painted structures or ones with small (often wooden) additions, these alterations are relatively reversible. In others, such as in buildings that have been stuccoed, it would be relatively difficult, if not impossible, to restore them to their original state.

Rural farmsteads in Chaska face similar issues, particularly in alterations. In addition, as urban development extends, many of them may cease to be farms and will thus lose at least part of their context. Though farms need not continue in their original function to maintain relevance, they should retain some visual associations with a nineteenth or early-twentieth century farmstead, such as open, field-like spaces, a retention of mature plantings, and/or the preservation of outbuildings. They should not be too narrowly encroached upon by new construction or subdivisions. In addition, all efforts should be made to avoid the unfortunate demolition of one-of-a-kind resources, such as the unfortunate 2004 demolition of the Miesler farmstead, which had been one of only two known remaining examples of early “fachwerk” construction in the state.

Sites Currently Designated

The following sites are currently designated to the National Register of Historic Places, or have been determined eligible for designation:

- Frederick Greiner House
319 E. 3rd Street
associated with Chaska merchant’s history

- Frederick E. DuToit House
121 Hickory Street
founder of the Chaska Herald
- Eder-Baer House
105 Elm Street
distinctive Queen Anne styling
- Conrad Fink House – National Register eligible but not listed
322 W. 1st Street
- Herald Block
Pine and 2nd Streets
Chaska Herald
- E.H. Lewis House
321 W. 2nd Street
associated with Lucius Faber and Dr. E.H. Lewis families
- Diedrick Building – tax credit received as part of a historic district
100 E. 2nd Street
- William Scott House – National Register eligible and in process, but not yet listed
516 Pine Street
Criterion B – association with mill owner, next to mill
- Simons Building and Livery
123 W. 3rd Street
commercial / residential
- Walnut Street Historic District
a number of structures, not all of which are Chaska brick or contributory

Property Types

Because Chaska brick is so prevalent, the potential property types are almost unlimited. The following represents the most common resources:

City of Chaska Residences

Downtown Houses

Row Houses

Houses in the city but not in the central core (e.g. Stoughton Avenue)

Outlying scattered houses that are no longer farmsteads (e.g. Karen house, Eitel house)

Rural Farmsteads

Farmhouses

Barns

Other Outbuildings

City of Chaska Commercial Properties

Storefronts

- Offices
- Newspaper Offices
- Industrial Buildings and Offices
- Mill and Associated Buildings
- Inns and Hotels
- Livery Stables
- Bars, Saloons and Restaurants
- Banks and Financial Institutions
- Icehouses
- Breweries
- Warehouses
- Automobile Dealerships and Garages
- Factories – cigar and other
- Surveyors, Law Offices, and Other Buildings related to Chaska as a County Seat
- Outlying Offices and Commercial Properties
- Brickyards
 - Remaining Resources or Ruins
 - Clayholes
- Public Buildings
 - Remaining Schools
 - Any other remaining public buildings — police and fires stations, city and county offices, other units of government
- Infrastructure
 - Any use of Chaska brick in remaining infrastructures (sewers, levee, etc.)

Recommendations and Future Actions

1. The City of Chaska should identify and inventory all Chaska brick buildings within its boundaries.
2. The City of Chaska should consider local designation of all remaining Chaska brick structures within its boundaries. As part of this, the city may or may not want to consider placing some levels of consideration, such as:
 - Unaltered Chaska brick structure of high integrity
 - Chaska brick construction, but with alterations (additions made of some other material, extensive non-brick trim, etc.)
 - Chaska brick construction but with extensive alteration that is likely irreversible (such as covered with stucco, etc.)
 - Contains elements of Chaska brick (portions are of Chaska brick, etc.)
3. Chaska should pursue National Register nominations for the 11 buildings determined National Register eligible as part of a recent Section 106 survey by the Minnesota Department of Transportation. The majority of these buildings are constructed of Chaska brick, and they represent the most obvious candidates of major historical significance.
4. Chaska should consider making a Multiple Property Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places for significant properties within the city and township created of Chaska brick. Such a nomination

would incorporate properties that might not stand on their own as National Register-significant, but would demonstrate part of a trend or context. Of particular interest for this nomination would be:

- Properties that demonstrate early patterns of settlement (see Point #6, below)
- Properties that show a wide range of use (residential, commercial, etc.)
- Properties that were of strong local importance that may not rise to a national standard.
- Properties that demonstrate a range of style (Queen Anne, Craftsman, etc.)

5. The Minnesota Department of Transportation is currently in the process of submitting to the National Register a Multiple Property Nomination for Chaska brick farmhouses in Carver County. The City of Chaska should support these efforts.
6. In particular, the City of Chaska should focus on Chaska brick buildings that are scattered around the outskirts of town, since these represent early settlement patterns and are particularly striking by virtue of being the only example of Chaska brick construction in the immediate area. A partial list of these may include:
 - Karen House (Jonathan)
 - Eitel House (Jonathan)
 - small cottage on Willow off of Stoughton Avenue
 - Riedele House (122 US Highway 212)
 - Ottinger House (821 Howard Lane)
 - house at State Street
 - sugar factory offices on Stoughton Avenue
7. Chaska should recognize and interpret any remaining resources related to the brickyards (kiln ruins, etc.)
8. Chaska should recognize and interpret the three remaining clay holes as demonstrative of the brickmaking industry and its physical effects on the city.
9. The Chaska Historical Society should continue its excellent interpretation of the brickmaking industry as part of its core activities. It may want to consider other methods of outreach, such as history curriculum development on the topic for local schools or a traveling exhibit.
10. The Chaska HPC should consider establishing a "Chaska Brick Owners" society for those who own buildings constructed of Chaska brick. Such a society could provide technical support for issues associated with the properties' unique repair and maintenance needs, standardize restoration and rehabilitation techniques, provide educational and networking opportunities, and perhaps even administer a small grants program.
11. The City of Chaska already does an excellent job of stockpiling Chaska brick and using it in public projects. The City should draw more attention to this process and to the importance of its careful resource management.

12. The Chaska Historical Society should begin a database of use of Chaska brick in buildings statewide. Such a database would demonstrate the wide range of use of the brick, and its importance in the physical development of the Twin Cities and the State of Minnesota.

13. The city and county government should work together to try to preserve the feeling of agricultural life on the rural farmsteads. While many of these may not continue to be viable farms, visual elements representative of an agricultural setting, such as open, field-like space, the preservation of mature plantings (the "Big Woods"), and the retention of outbuildings should be retained. A rural farmhouse will not feel like a farm site if narrowly encroached upon by new construction.

Context 3 – Commerce, Industry and Civic Services Time Span – 1850s to 1950s

A Center for Commerce, Industry, and Civic Pride

Chaska has a modest yet historically significant downtown, filled with historic commercial buildings that are representative of its rich commercial and industrial past. Much of its industry is related to its famous brickyards, as discussed in Context 2, and its important agricultural role, as discussed more thoroughly in Context 4; although these topics are touched upon here, the larger discussion is left for the more detailed contexts. And, even though Chaska had early importance as the county seat, few civic buildings remain today. The bulk of this context, then, will focus on the city's historic downtown core and its early business structures.

The townsite was first platted in 1854. Though some settlers occupied the area in the early 1850s, more significant development, by the Shaska Company, did not occur until the town was designated the Carver County Seat in 1856. At that point, the town was replatted to allow for the construction of roadways, public buildings, and other civic services, and City Square Park was dedicated as a common park in perpetuity. Due to a delay in issuing bonds and litigation thereafter, the establishment of Chaska proper was rather slow, and nearby farmsteads and smaller settlements, such as the short-lived Yorkville, developed congruently. The area became settled by those relocating northeasterners looking for homestead opportunities, and by new immigrants, the vast majority of which were Germanic. Some of the first businessmen recorded in the new town were the blacksmith Frank Mieseler, John Walter the baker, Nick Schoenborn and Julius Wagner who operated saloons, and George Faber and Florian Linenfelsler, who opened the first store. Their building on 2nd and Walnut Streets is one of the oldest remaining commercial-industrial structure in the city. Retailers Henry Young and Lucian and Charles Warner followed soon after, and Lucius Howe had the distinction of opening Chaska's first brickyard in 1857.



City Square Park in the fall

By the end of the 1850s, however, “downtown” Chaska still consisted of only a few scattered buildings. The layout was much as it is today, though lowland streets at the river bend, originally named after early settlers Smith, Lee, and Ellsworth (as well as Dakota and Sioux) were eventually abandoned due to flooding. The land was essentially bare, with few trees, fences, or infrastructure.

Though the south part of town (around Levee and 1st) was the first area to become built up, development soon spread along Walnut Street, then 2nd Street, Chestnut, and “up the hill” to Pine. Breweries were generally located at the “back of town.” By the time Chaska was incorporated as a village in 1871, the pattern of development was set.

Chaska’s boom years coincided with its industrial boom, with the peak period from the 1880s to the 1920s. The middle of the twentieth century was a rather sleepy time for development, and unfortunately many resources were lost during that period. The town’s next period of major development did not occur until the 1970s, when due to the expansion of the west metropolitan Twin Cities and the new construction of Jonathan, Chaska became part of the southwest growth pattern of the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

The Downtown Core

In general, downtown Chaska is remarkably similar to other river towns of the era. Buildings are simple, usually two stories high, with storefronts on the first level and offices, meeting halls, or living space above. The first floor held wide display windows, usually accented above by transoms and below by bulkheads.

Many buildings were constructed of local Chaska brick, though wood frame structures were not unusual. Usually plain and simple in nature, they were selectively accented by brick corbelling or window hoods, cast iron (almost exclusively from the Ess Foundry), or occasionally limestone sills and ornamentation — again, likely from local quarries. In general, the streetscape as a whole is more impressive than any single building.

Chaska commercial buildings do incorporate some unusual features. One of these is the use of space between and behind the buildings for exterior porches and balconies. Perhaps related to this is the rail ornamentation often seen on the second story of historic Chaska structures.

Commerce

The first commercial establishments in Chaska reflected immediate needs — retailers, bakers, blacksmiths and hotels. An early addition to the scene was a thriving saloon business, often relating to the hotels and breweries. Many people came through Chaska, whether for county services, on their way to somewhere else, or as new settlers, and these early gathering places became a leisure-time focus.

Early licensing attempts by the city created much dissension among saloon keepers, with a twenty-five dollar annual licensing fee established in 1867. Although some saloons closed due to the fee, Chaska still had fifteen saloons (though several were part of hotels or boarding houses). Soon after, licenses became required for everything from general stores to traveling players, becoming a major source of revenue for the town, along with levies.

Some early establishments still thrive today. The *Chaska Herald's* longevity is discussed below, and the Chaska Bakery was first opened in 1871 by Gottlieb Eder. Through the years, the bakery also sold everything from coffee to oysters to Christmas trees. It still exists today, though it has returned to its original sweet emphasis. The Ess Foundry is discussed below.

Retail provided a strong presence. One of the most famous was J.A. Schmidt's Glass Block building, built at the corner of Chestnut and 2nd Streets, in 1903 for \$13,000. Chaskans also have fond memories of Baxter's Store, Gehl's Meat Market, and Cooper's Store (a precursor to the current iteration).

Chaska businessmen were very entrepreneurial. Area merchants demonstrated great flexibility, and many stores changed with times and circumstances. As a result, most buildings became home to any number of stores and businesses during their lifetime. As a result, save for a few examples such as the *Herald* and the bakery, few businesses became integrally associated with their buildings. The diversity of goods, services, and industries offered at any given time was bountiful, though often short-lived. As a result, though Chaska has many historic storefronts, few of them bear particular business associations.

Services

The city was also well-known for its service industry, which ran the gamut from deed recorders to undertakers. In particular, it was known for its hotels (related to its saloons, discussed above). By the late 1870s there were at least 11 hotels and boarding houses in town, and they still could not meet the demand for rooms during court sessions. One of the most prominent was the National Hotel, built in 1886 by Peter Iltis, though it later burned.

There were a large number of doctors serving the area, including prominent early settler E.H. Lewis. Midwives also prevailed. There was, however, no dentist in the city.

Popular local entertainment included music (bands and choral), lectures, balls, lotteries, and croquet, though none of these had enduring related resources. There was a permanent racetrack during the 1880s-90s, but the site later became a hatchery. Fraternal organizations, from the Kiwanis to the Elks to the Oddfellows and the Knights of Columbus were also extremely popular. Since they met in multi-purpose rooms above stores, however, no associated meeting halls remain.

The Opera House was a landmark for many years, but was razed in 1924. Its *de facto* replacement was the Valley Ballroom, the entertainment hub of Chaska from 1933 to 1959.

The Chaska Herald

The *Valley Herald* first published on September 1, 1862 and was actually the fourth newspaper in the area, following the *Minnesota Thalbote* (established 1857), the *Valley Transcript*, and the *Carver County Democrat*. It was the 149th newspaper in the State of Minnesota. However, it soon became one of the longest to endure and continuously publish, a distinction it holds to this day.

First editions were four pages, with two of those pre-printed with national news and inserted into the locally printed edition. For a short period in the 1870s, a section was even printed in German. In 1889, these efforts were replaced by an all-German newspaper, the German (or Chaska) *Thalbote*, which published through 1897.

By 1892, the *Herald* had expanded to eight pages, with about half news content and half advertisements. After 1863, the paper also often held the contract for legal notices, particularly important due to county land transactions, etc. It boasted over a thousand subscribers at \$1.50/year (or an equivalent trade for wood).

Though it had several different offices early on, the *Herald* has been based in the same 2nd Street building since 1871. Its archives, located in the Chaska History Center, are impressive, and the paper remains a major source of historic and current information on the City of Chaska.

Industry

Though commerce and services were important to the quality of life of area residents, it was really Chaska's industrial base — namely the brickyards and agricultural services that made the town such a vital economic center. A network of support services and other industries grew up among these two main pillars.

Chaska's main industrial focus was its famous brickyards, with four yards distributing 3,500,000 bricks annually by the 1860s. The brickyards were the largest employers in town, and were even more influential if one includes directly related services such as masons or transport. As for the economic effect, *Chaska Volume I* quotes the *Chaska Herald* in saying:

“Pay day at the brickyards is equal to one of our holidays for our merchants and saloon keepers. It makes things lively in town.”

Agricultural industries, including mills, breweries, creameries, and the later sugar and pickling plants were equally influential to the local economy. Though wheat was the main crop, smaller alternatives ranged from

cranberries to gingers to a few small orchards. Wood, cut from the forested Big Woods, was also an important export.

Soon, livestock became a major business, and Chaska hosted a monthly livestock and farmer's market through the 1950s, which became an important event for the town. The market days became as much-anticipated by the saloons and stores of the town as brickyard paydays.

Chaska also housed many innovative industries, such as a butter repackaging company and one that prepared feathers for re-use in pillows and other down materials.

Ess Foundry

A particular Chaska success story is that of the Ess Foundry. Their metalworks can be seen throughout the city, including the manholes cast for the centennial celebrations. Up until the time the foundry moved out of Chaska, it was the oldest Chaska business to remain in one family, though the Esses were prominent in other local matters, such as the fire department. They also built several houses near the Foundry.

Joseph Ess began as a blacksmith and wagon maker. However, with the advent of the brickyards, he saw a need for a reliable foundry and began the business with his sons Frank, who became a molder, and Fred, who took over the wagon industry.

Early products included everything from kettles to sleigh runners and wagon parts. As brick production became more sophisticated, the Ess' began to construct machinery for them, including the "slop machine" and the "nameless machine." They also produced fencing, iron building trim, and crosses for the cemeteries. The Ess Foundry still produces ironwork, though it is no longer located in Chaska.

Civic Structures

Chaska's position as County Seat required a particular emphasis on civic buildings, as allowed for by the Shaska Company as the land was platted. Civic structures were generally located on City Square, with the park serving as a sort of campus between them. None of these resources, save the square, remain today.

The square has long been a source of pride for the City of Chaska. Native mounds remain from prehistory. Later additions include an early iron fence by Ess Foundry in 1887 (later removed), and the bandstand, whose first iteration was constructed in 1890. Throughout Chaska's history, the square has served as an important gathering spot and the literal heart of the city.

Though Chaska was contested as the county seat periodically (in 1865, 1870, 1872, and 1920), these disputes never got far enough to relocate or diminish any of the civic buildings.

The Courthouse was the first structure completed, in 1857, and was expanded upon in 1864. Jail cells were added in 1866, to replace those in a crude log building that served as the first jail. The original courthouse was torn down in 1966.

With the incorporation of the town as a village in 1871 came a new focus on infrastructure, including gas lights, sidewalks (originally plank boardwalks) and better street surfacing. Public utilities followed slowly, with telephone lines in 1893 and electricity at the turn of the century.

The Fire Department has always been a volunteer force. The first fire truck was acquired in 1876, with an engine house finally built in 1878, followed by a larger headquarters in 1883. This station was soon known for its annual balls, often to raise funds for things such as uniforms. On a more practical matter, several large fires and lobbying by the fire department inspired a cistern and waterworks system throughout the town.

Chaska began public education in 1858, with fairly short, erratic sessions. These schools were supplanted by the parochial schools at Guardian Angels, St. John's, and the Moravian Academy. School buildings were constructed as needed, including in the surrounding rural areas; one building for District 15 remains in the north part of town, at Hundertmark and Bavaria Roads. Other buildings included a building at 4th and Chestnut, which served as a prominent and well-loved City Hall for some time before it was lost, and a new school, which eventually became the high school, was built in 1900. From a small initial start, the Chaska school system became very active, with a wide roster of classes and extracurricular activities. Chaska's public school system has long been a backbone of the community.

Postal service had begun in 1855, within the Fuller Store. It was housed in several other stores and commercial entities for a number of years. It had at least three other locations just by the turn of the century, so Chaskans never had a strong identification with one post office location.

The library was located in the City Hall for many years, and for a time in the Klein Mansion, before the new facility was constructed.

Floods

Chaska's riverside location was beneficial to the town for natural resources and as a transportation hub, but the lowland location had one extreme disadvantage — flooding. Springtime snow-melt flooding was a particular threat, causing annual danger especially to the south end of town, below 1st Street. The first major

flood recorded was in 1862, and in 1867 a major flood caused much damage, with the area below 1st Street being completely submerged. The *Herald*, then located at Walnut and Levee Streets, reported “from a foot to fifteen inches of water on the floor” on April 27, 1867.

One of the most devastating floods was that of 1881, when waters covered much of the town. Obviously the lower portions of the city were immersed, but even the Linenfelser and Faber store was flooded, with clerks walking on the countertops.

The 1893 flood was remarkable in that not only did the river overflow, but also the creek, affecting the “back part” of town. Though floods generally occurred annually to some extent, the next big flood was recorded in 1908, which had particular damage to area crops and fields.

Large floods are recorded periodically throughout the century, especially in 1943, 1944, 1951 and 1952. These were spelled by periods of drought, an equal problem for Minnesota Valley farmers. By this point the low-lying areas of downtown Chaska had been so often flooded that they were no longer deemed habitable.

The levee was finally built following the flood of 1952, and had a major effect on controlling flooding in Chaska. The flood of 1965 breached the levee but caused minimal damage. In 1969, the levee held during similarly high waters. Chaska’s legacy of flooding appears to be a thing of the past.

Property Types

Note: In most of these property types, I have given examples of some specific kinds of businesses. This is not meant to be a comprehensive listing, but rather a representative one demonstrating the development of Chaska’s commercial and industrial base. In many of these cases, the businesses and buildings no longer exist.

Please see the matrix in Appendix A for a list of buildings in the historic core of the city.

Commerce

- Appliances
- Automobile
- Bakeries
- Confectionery
- Dry Goods
- Department Stores
- Drugstores
- Clothing and Shoes
- Farm Implements/ Feed/Seed
- Furniture and Cabinetry

Gas Stations
Grocers/Food Markets/Butchers
Hardware
Harness Shops
Ice Cream Parlors
Ice Houses
Jewelers/Watchmakers
Millinery
Music Stores
Shoemakers

Services

Attorneys
Banks
Barbers
Boarding Houses
Bowling Alleys
Builders and Contractors
Deed Registrars
Doctors
Dentists
Funeral Homes
Gas Stations
Hotels
Insurance
Land Agents
Laundries
Lawyers
Liveries
Machine Shops
Movie Theaters
Newspapers
Notaries
Painters
Photographers
Plumbers
Printers
Realtors
Repair Shops
 Auto
 Blacksmith
Farm Implements
 Railroad
Restaurants and Cafes
Saloons
Shooting Galleries
Tailors

Industry

Agricultural
 Breweries
 Canning/Bottling/Pickling/Preserving Factories
 Nurseries
 Produce
 Grain Elevators
Livestock/Game/Animals
 Dray Lines

- Dairies and Creameries
- Fishing/ Hunting/ Trapping
- Livestock/ Farmer's Market
- Slaughterhouses
- Stockyards
- Veterinarians
- Cigars
- Coopers
- Glass
- Brickyards
- Lumberyards
- Factories
- Foundries
- Ice Plants
- Mills
 - Sawmills
 - Flour Mills
- Quarries

Civic

- Parks and Monuments
- Civic Buildings
 - City Hall
 - Jails
 - Libraries
 - Fire Halls
 - Police Stations
- Meeting Halls and Social Halls
- Nursing Homes
- Post Office
- Poor Houses
- Social Services
- Public Services
 - Electricity
 - Sewer
 - Telephone
 - Telegraph
 - Water
- Hospitals and Clinics
- Public Schools
- Carver County Courthouse

Recommendations and Future Actions

1. As demonstrated above, the volume of commerce, service and industry records in Chaska is large, and also transitory. The *Chaska History Volumes I and II*, as well as other local histories, do an admirable job of chronicling this information; however, due to the amount of history and changes in the various businesses, even the most clear records can become confused. The HPC should create a comprehensive database that cross-references past businesses and buildings.

2. These contexts provide an extremely brief overview as to the significance of Chaska's commercial and industrial operations, as well as its civic services. Further research should be completed on the topic, and complete survey work completed to establish the existence and condition of these resources.
3. The HPC has already completed design guidelines for the downtown area. As businesses in the downtown core complete renovations, they should follow the design guidelines to the best of their ability; in most cases, they work need not be completed all at once, and the suggested renovations would increase the value of the property by adding to its integrity and aesthetics. HPC members should ensure that building owners and local residents know about these guidelines, perhaps through storefront displays.
4. In particular, most of the civic buildings (ranging from the City Hall on down) have been lost. Chaska should try to find ways to interpret these resources that demonstrate the early importance of these properties, perhaps through a display at the History Center. As part of this, the city should consider surveying and cataloging its various sites that have, at some time, served the public, such as the previous post office and library locations.
5. The City Square is a very visual representation of public space, and should be preserved, interpreted, and used accordingly.

Context 4 – Farmsteads and Agricultural Life

Time Span – 1852-1950s

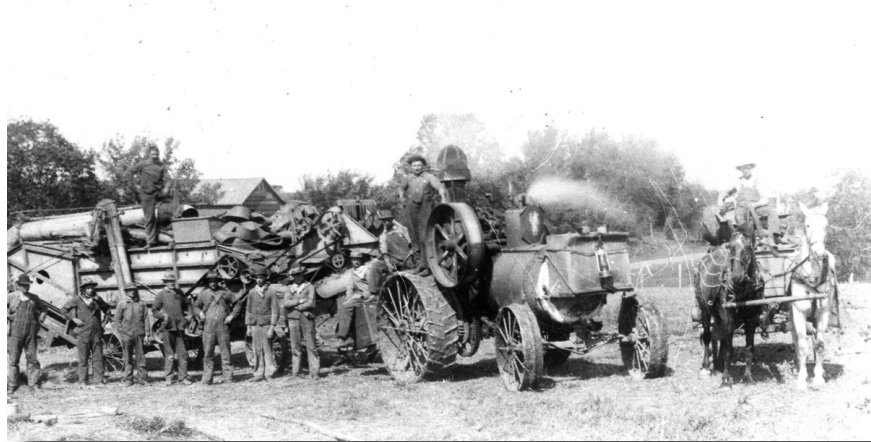
The First Farmsteads

The site of the City of Chaska was an early choice for land speculators as soon as the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux was signed. Early land speculator Thomas Andrew Holmes realized that this location where the Big Woods met the river, which was already an important site for Native Americans, was likely to have good natural resources and easy access. However, the actual platting of the town was delayed due to bonding and litigation, and so the settlement of the township's individual farmsteads was contiguous with the development of the city. As a result, the City of Chaska and its surrounding rural environs have always been very vitally connected.

Most of the early farm settlers of the area were of German or Scandinavian descent. Initially, they often relocated from the eastern United States, though as the century progressed many emigrated directly from Europe. They purchased the land through government programs allowing them to homestead the properties of 160 acres or less for \$1.25 an acre. The Chaska area was one of the earliest to be settled simply because it was one of the closest-in areas to be opened as part of the treaties.

Most farms began on a subsistence basis, as the homesteaders removed the trees on the plot and began creating fields. Early crops were mainly vegetables, including potatoes, onions, cabbage, carrots, and some corn. They also harvested native products, such as sap for maple syrup, ginseng, and wild rice, as well as trading with the native American population. Hunting and fishing were still important to survival.

As the farms began to develop, the relationship to the city became especially important. After Chaska was named the County Seat for Carver County in 1856, it became an important market town for selling produce and livestock, and for conducting farm business such as land acquisition and deed registration.



Chaska farmers, machinery and wagon in the early 1900s

The wood cleared from the farm sites became one of the first cash crops for the farmers, who often sold or traded it to the brickyards in town for kiln fuel or sent it into Minneapolis and St. Paul via river barges. Price ranged from \$3.00-4.50 a cord. Soon after, wheat became a principal crop, selling from between 80¢-\$1.90 a bushel. Other crops included apples, cranberries, grapes, sugar beets, and hops, as well as trade continuing in vegetables and ginseng.

As the farms became more prosperous, they added livestock — first cattle and poultry, followed by swine and some sheep. The City of Chaska began to host a monthly livestock fair beginning in September of 1866. Farmers would come into town to show and sell their animals, then spend money at the local businesses. Many speculate that this is a reason that Chaska developed so many saloons! These fairs were a popular monthly institution in Chaska up until the late 1950s.

Much of the community character of Chaska can be traced back to that early relationship between the city and the farmsteads. Many local industries, such as sugar refineries, dairies, and canning and pickling plants, located in Chaska to be close to their sources, and some of these still produce today. Older farmsteads still remain, scattered throughout the township and sometimes right in the middle of newer subdivisions. Chaska's role as county seat and busy agricultural and industrial town owes much to these farms.

Vernacular Construction on the Farmsteads

The original homes built on the farms were of simple, basic construction — a few sod homes, log cabins, or anything else that could be quickly erected so work on the land could begin. These were slowly replaced by frame houses, though even by 1868 F.E. DuToit noted, as he campaigned throughout the county, that most structures were still log cabins.

The most prestigious building material, however, for farmhouses, barns, and outbuildings was brick, particularly the local Chaska brick. Homeowners were frugal in obtaining the brick, often trading wood for it, or even making their own on-site. Buildings were often constructed in stages, and money and crop sales allowed.

The earliest extant Chaska brick farmhouse in the area appears to be the Vogel house on Bluff Creek Drive, built with homemade bricks in 1864. It is the only known gable-side home in the county. The Olsen farmhouse on Dahlgren Road is another early example, presumably built in 1868 to replace an earlier house elsewhere on the property. Several more were built in the 1870s, with the most built in the 1880s and 1890s.

Chaska brick was the favorite construction material, for any number of reasons. Firstly, it was a practical material — durable, low in maintenance, well insulating, and fire resistant. It was possible for one man who was a good mason to build much of a brick building alone and in stages, rather than the crew and block of time needed to erect a frame home.

Farmers also preferred brick because of its prestige. It became a status symbol, a sign that your farm was doing well and could invest in infrastructure. A third reason for the popularity of brick might have been sentimentality; many of the settlers were northern European, re-creating the brick buildings remembered from their homelands.

This last point is key to identifying the vernacular style of the rural farmhouses. These immigrants were not constructing replicas of existing buildings. Instead, they were building what they remembered, adapted for the new country and for the construction materials. This gave the buildings an ethnic and regional similarity and distinctive style. The buildings were usually of the predominant Chaska brick, constructed in solid, generally two-story geometric forms, with restrained ornamentation — usually just window detailing or perhaps some ornamental wood accents, particularly on the porches.

Some theorize that the design of the houses was also strongly influenced by the form and function of the farm sites. In particular, a recent study argues that the homes were often built in phases, with a more ornamental façade facing the road and a kitchen ell, which overlooked the farmyard, dominating the other side of the home. In any case, most farmhouses, regardless of their construction material, were eminently practical, relatively unadorned homes that were integrally related to the farmyard. This design is generally referred to as “cross-wing,” because the rooflines of the wings cross. Many of the outbuildings, such as the barns, dairies, and smokehouses, were of similar style and construction.

This relationship of the house and outbuildings to the land is also integral. The farmhouses were, in general, well proportioned and designed to stand out, but not dominate the rural setting. Outbuildings supported the main structure. Often the coloring of the house, whether it was of creamy buff Chaska brick or painted clapboard, complemented the natural tones of the surrounding vegetation. Were the property to be too closely encroached upon, or overbuilt, this delicate balance would be destroyed.

A recent survey of rural Carver County has documented at least sixty-six historic farmsteads, all constructed of Chaska brick. Were other farmsteads of similar age but other construction to be added in, there would likely be eighty to one hundred historic farmsteads remaining, demonstrating the above standards of development and construction techniques.

Chaska’s Agricultural Businesses

As discussed above, the close relationship between city and countryside led to a thriving agricultural industry in Chaska. A number of these resources still exist, to some extent, today.

Milling

With wheat as the predominant area crop, mills were of great importance. By the 1860s, over 100,000 bushels of wheat annually were being sent to the Twin Cities to be milled, and local businessmen George Heinline and Simon Moch determined that the “creek in the rear of town” could support a mill. Construction began in 1864, and the mill opened in 1865. With only one mill stone, it was soon under almost continual operation.

A second mill, steam powered and with four runs, soon opened at Cedar Street. It also contained a cooper’s, for which local farmers provided plenty of wood for the staves.

By 1868, wheat was going for \$1.20, while milled flour was retailing for \$5.00 a sack. Local farmers withheld their product in order to negotiate better pricing, and the two mills were forced to close for a short time. By 1872, the Chaska Flouring Mill was again in financial trouble, and closed for a few months before selling to the Reidele/Fuller partnership. They produced about 100 barrels of “Star Drop” flour a day.

In the 1870s a third mill was built, also water driven. Soon, however, it was converted and all three mills were steam-driven. After a fire destroying one mill in 1893, and the reduction of the market during the recession, Chaska mills had generally closed by 1896, though some limited milling continued through the early 1900s.

“Sugar City”

Of course, the agricultural industry most closely identified with Chaska is the sugar industry. For years, Minnesota’s “Sugar City” hosted everything from “Sugar Days” to the “Sugar City Basketball Team.” In many ways, sugar was to agriculture as brickyards were to the construction industry.

The Carver County Sugar Factory first took shape in 1905 when the city donated the Heinecke Tract land to a pair of Michigan businessmen for its construction. The three-story main plant, which had its own railroad spur and was built with over two million bricks, cost over \$750,000 to construct.

Sugar was processed in “campaigns” from late fall to mid-winter. The first campaign began in October 1906 and employed 185 men processing over 40,000 tons of beets.

In 1911 the Carver County Sugar Company was renamed the Minnesota Sugar Company. Almost all the beets were grown within a few miles of the plant, though soon the large harvest from the Red River Valley was also added in.

The company was at its peak in the 1920s. Farmers were guaranteed \$5 a ton for beets, with a bonus as sugar

prices rose. A stable crop that had a reliable market, sugar beets provided a good living for many of Chaska's farmsteads. The sugar fields also brought in an influx of migrant harvesters, one of Chaska's first experiences with this peripatetic group.

The name changed to the American Beet Sugar Company and then to the American Crystal Sugar Company in 1934, and is now called United Sugar Corporation. However, the stock market crash and the Depression decreased production, with workers laid off and taking pay cuts; the president of the company cut his own salary by 25%. The sugar union, formed in 1938, was Chaska's first successful union organizing effort. During sugar rationing in WWII, the plant was converted into a facility for drying potatoes for conversion into industrial alcohol.

There was a small bump after this, with production rising to over 1,600 tons daily. At that point the plant was running campaigns of between 47 and 110 days, employing between 40 and 280 people. As automation changed the industry the processing part of the plant was closed in 1971. To this date United Sugar maintains a small facility in Chaska that serves as a liquid sugar distribution center.

Some historic resources remain, including the old, deco-styled offices.

"It's the Minnesota Pickle" – Pickling and Canning

The M.A. Gedney factory began negotiations with the City of Chaska in 1900 to convert the old creamery building into a pickling plant. In 1902 it contracted with several area farmers for 100 acres each of cabbage, tomatoes, cauliflower and cucumbers. Its main products were the famous pickles, as well as sauerkraut. By 1937, the company reported processing 800 tons of cabbage into 112,500 gallons of sauerkraut. The factory moved to its current location on Stoughton Avenue in 1958.

Chaska's first canning factory opened in 1904, at the old Burkhart brickyard. There was a factory, but no warehouse space, meaning that at peak times every available storage space, from garages to the back rooms of saloons, was pressed into service. The plant began by canning Minnehaha Falls corn, soon adding Minne-Paul and Chaska Bell peas. At its peak the plant processed up to 74,000 cases of corn annually, hiring up to 125 people.

Though the plant ran only seasonally, and closed for longer periods during the Depression, it remained a major economic force through 1957.

Creameries

Though a few smaller creameries had opened in Chaska, the largest did not open until Frank White established the Minnesota Valley Creamery in 1894. Hopes were high, with slogans such as “A Gold Mine in Milk” and pledges for milk from over seven hundred cows. Soon it was running two separators and over 12,000 pounds of milk daily.

Sadly, at this time the city began to discontinue community pasturing. Both the German Pasturage Association and the Chaska Dairy Association had maintained a total of eighty acres of pasture land. Soon, enterprising individual milkmen and the creamery began to handle milk production and sales, and cattle ownership became restricted to the farmsteads. This change expanded the local dairy industry, and at the turn of the century, Chaska creameries, particularly the Sugar City Cooperative Creamery, were a booming business.

Breweries

A number of breweries existed in Chaska, and many local farmers grew hops. Though these were smaller, individually run organizations rather than the large facilities like the mills and canneries, they too had an extensive role in the town’s economy and development.

The first known brewery opened in Chaska in 1862, and by 1866 there were three facilities. The brewers used German recipes to mix the barley, hops, malt and yeast — the beer was then aged in underground cellars until delivered to customers in Chaska and in nearby towns from Watertown to Augusta.

At least two breweries had beer cellars carved into the bluff, neither of which is still accessible.

Summary

Chaska’s agricultural history is an important context for several reasons. From the beginning, the town had a strong agricultural presence. The area farmsteads were influential in both the physical development and the economic stability of the town.

The farms also represent early patterns of settlement. The historic farmsteads are distinctive icons in the Chaska countryside, and the individual resources remaining are equally important.

The influence and “buying power” of the farms is another key indication of their importance. Farmers had a direct economic effect on the city, by paying their taxes and by buying products in town, particularly on the monthly market day. Perhaps more importantly, the farms required corresponding development, such as the mills, canneries, and numerous smaller industries.

Sites Currently Designated

Both the Miesler Farmstead (noted for its distinctive “fachwerk” construction) and the Ortlieb Farmstead were considered National-Register eligible, but were demolished (in 2004 & 2005) before they could be nominated to the Register.

Property Types

- Farms
- Farmhouses
- Barns
 - Stables
 - Dairies
 - Pump Houses
 - Chicken Coops
 - Smokehouses
 - Root Cellars
- Doghouses
- Sheds and Other Outbuildings
- Related Infrastructure
 - Wells
 - Post Roads
 - Livestock Fair Sites within the City of Chaska
- Agricultural Businesses
 - Canning Plants
 - Pickling Facilities – Gedney and other
 - Sugar Factories – Crystal and other
 - Mills and Related Buildings
 - Brewing Facilities
 - Breweries
 - Beer Cellars
 - Dairies and Creameries
 - Stockyards
 - Meat Packing Facilities
 - Farm Implements/Feed/Seed Stores

Recommendations and Future Actions

1. The City of Chaska should identify and inventory all remaining historic farmsteads in Chaska, and secondarily within greater Carver County. Special attention should be paid to those constructed of Chaska brick.
2. The City of Chaska should consider local designation of all remaining historic farmsteads, particularly those which retain significant integrity.

3. The Minnesota Department of Transportation is currently in the process of submitting to the National Register a Multiple Property Nomination for Chaska brick farmhouses in Carver County. The City of Chaska should support these efforts.
4. The city and county government should work together to try to preserve the feeling of agricultural life on the rural farmsteads. While many of these may not continue to be viable farms, visual elements representative of an agricultural setting, such as open, field-like space, the preservation of mature plantings (the “Big Woods”), and the retention of outbuildings should be retained. A rural farmhouse will not feel like a farm site if narrowly encroached upon by new construction.
5. The City of Chaska should consider local and/or national designation of its remaining agricultural industry resources. Examples of such include:
 - the mill and related buildings
 - remaining sugar factory resources
 - remaining Gedney (and other pickling) resources
6. Chaska should continue and expand efforts to interpret its agricultural past, such as the “Chaska: Sugar City” exhibit prepared by the Chaska Historical Society for the Carver County Historical Society, and exhibits at the History Center.
7. Chaska should work with Gedney to preserve portions of its current factory (built 1958) as representative of the relatively recent past.
8. The City of Chaska should support efforts to nominate the Mill and related buildings, such as the Mill House Gallery building, to the National Register.

Context 5 – Transportation

Time Span – 1700-1950s

River, Road, and Rail

Paradoxically, the Transportation context is simultaneously one of Chaska's most influential contexts, while perhaps its least represented. Chaska's siting has always been predicated on transportation; the river was a crucial early Native American transportation network; the town's easy boat access allowed later settlement; the congruence of rail and river traffic led to its importance as a trading center; and Chaska's roads, from early plank roads to the current intersections of Highways 212 and 41, have always been important in its development. However, so many of these transportation elements —boats, trains, roadways, depots, and cargo stops — are ephemeral and have long ago been lost. Chaska is left with a rich transportation history, but with relatively few examples remaining of it.

The River

The river was an important early means of transportation for the Mdewankaton, and by early fur traders, who used log rafts, canoes, and larger keel boats. The keel boats were described as somewhat like a shallow barge, propelled by six pole-men to each side, and able to carry between seven and twenty tons of goods and passengers (including the pole-men, a cook, and a trader/agent). For quite some time, these smaller boats, which were fairly easy to navigate and able to support the volume of trade, dominated the Minnesota River (or the St. Peter's River, as it was called by early explorers).

As Minnesota land opened up to claims, the volume of passenger travel and the larger amount of goods imported necessitated a more powerful means of transport. Barges provided early service, and sporadic steamers ran up the Minnesota River as early as 1850. The first regular service recorded was the *Antelope*, piloted by George Houghton, which first began daily round-trips from Carver to St. Paul, with a stop in Chaska, in 1857. Rates to St. Paul were \$1.25, which was cheaper than by stagecoach. In 1862 the *Clara Hine* was added to Captain Houghton's fleet to allow expanded service, as well as the related *Ariel* and the *Albany* making upstream runs twice a week. By the late 1860s, the river level had fallen and some of the boats had begun to age, so Houghton ran the *Ariel* (with the *Antelope's* whistle!) and the *Mollie Mohler* to Saint Paul.

The river continued to sediment, however, and sandbars and low water levels began to preclude steamers from running the Chaska route. Low barges, keel boats, and even a steam powered flat boar called the *Polly Hawkins* began to run freight — including wood, bricks, and grain. Passengers switched to the newly inaugurated railroad line.

Barge traffic did pick up briefly in the late 1880s-early 1890s, when brick owners in particular sought an alternative to the railroads, whose rates they called “exorbitant.” The *Lorna Doone* began a brief bout of daily service from Chaska to St. Paul in 1895, and some excursion boats also ran. In general this renaissance was short-lived, and for the State of Minnesota and particularly in the Chaska area, river traffic had all but died out. Today, with the levee in place, no remnants of the formerly busy docks remain.

Roads

A second early method of transportation was upon crude roads. The first roads were based on early “Indian trails.” Road legislation passed by the 1849 territorial legislature required roads to be at least sixty feet wide, and required adult males to work two days per year on his area roads (four days if in lieu of all tax payments). The legislation also allowed for stock companies to build plank roads, and to erect toll gates upon them. Though early settler Thomas Holmes had originally planned to build such a road, it was never erected, and for quite some time the nearest major roadway was the stage line between Shakopee and Saint Paul.

By the late 1850s, however, a small network of roads had been created. The Chaska-Excelsior road intersected a road between Fort Ridgely and Fort Snelling. The Waconia Road (also called the Clearwater Road, later changed to the Creek Road), connected Waconia and Chaska. In 1858 the township dedicated \$1,500 for road and bridge repairs, including the purchase of two road scrapers for \$11 each.

None of these roads provided a direct route from Chaska to Minneapolis/St. Paul. In 1863, the legislature granted a petition for the Yorkville Road, to be built as a joint project between Carver and Hennepin Counties. This road was to have been completed, by legislative provision, within six months, but was almost lost because of delays by Hennepin County in particular. Soon after it opened, a Chanhassen settler who claimed the land put a fence over the road and blocked off traffic, and farm owner Henry Teach sued for damages in regards to the easement over his farmland. The road did eventually, however, open, and became the precursor to Highway 212.

Meanwhile, Chestnut Street expanded, eventually becoming busy Highway 41.



Historic truss bridge on Highway 41

Early stage routes were minimal — one between Chaska and Redfield, and another between Chaska and Glencoe. In 1865 Porter and Strait began service between Shakopee, Chaska, and Carver, with the trip between Chaska and Shakopee running about ninety minutes.

Cars began to replace horses, and in 1903 George DuToit purchased Chaska's first automobile, a Rambler. Motor vehicles soon became popular, and by 1915 Carver County had 907 autos — roughly one for every twenty-two people. Soon there were several auto dealerships, including The Ess Brothers who sold Jackson and Maxwell cars, Habegge and Sons with the Overland, National, and Garfield brands, and Dr. P.O. Hecklin who distributed Cuttings. A garage was added to the Ess Foundry holdings, and for a short time it even looked as if a manufacturing plant, presumably for Maxwells, might open in town.

The Railroad

Though rail service began in Minnesota in the 1860s, it did not come immediately to Chaska. The Minnesota Valley Railroad first served Shakopee and Belle Plaine, resulting in a stage or river connection for Chaska residents wishing to travel to Minneapolis or St. Paul. Soon after both Carver County and Chaska Township agreed to issue railroad bonds, and the rail era began. By 1872, the Hastings & Dakota line and the Minneapolis & St. Louis railroads served the area. Business was immediately brisk, hurting in particular the river steamers.

Rail rates were expensive, however, particularly for freight. The companies were known for high rates and for denying shipments, which led to local brick and grain merchants to look for other options. Both for speed for passengers and efficiency for freight, the railroads were uncontested. Rail service soon became essential for agricultural businesses such as the sugar factory, which had its own spur—which still runs.

Rail service was soon supplanted, this time by automobile traffic as Highways 212 and 41 grew. Today, very few historic transportation-related artifacts remain — just a few tracks, potentially some small warehouses on Stoughton Avenue, and a former passenger depot in downtown Chaska.

Other Transportation

The Shaska Company envisioned a canal project — the Chaska, Minnetonka, and Liverpool Canal — connecting Chaska with Lake Minnetonka. Similar to Holmes' early plank road project plan, however, funding never came through and the idea was abandoned.

Lost Resources

Today, roads provide Chaska's main transportation network. River traffic is long gone, and there is very limited rail service, relating only to agricultural freight. There are very few reminders left of the city's transportation history, with river and railroad resources generally lost (the exception to this is the small passenger depot remaining downtown, currently used as a wine store). Identification of remaining cultural resources related to this context should be a priority for the HPC.

Property Types

River Traffic

Ferries

Ferry Crossings and Landings

Yorkville

Walnut Street

Chestnut Street (used for a brief period)

Ferry boats

Steamers

Albany

Antelope

Ariel

Clara Hine

Daisy

Mollie Mohler

Barges

Leviathan

Landings and Docks

Excursion Boats

Riverboats

Rescue and Coast Guard

Warehouses

Dams

Levees

Flood Plains

Navigation Aids

Railroad

Tracks

Depots (freight and passenger)

Bridges and Crossings

Repair Shops

Roundhouses and Section Houses

Railroad Cars

Telegraph

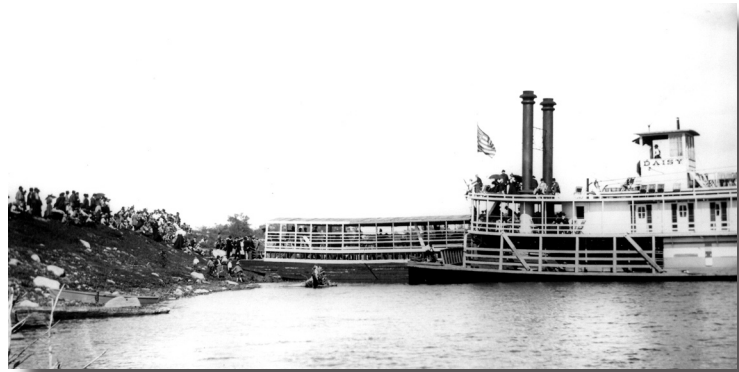
Warehouses

Support Buildings

Roads

Current roads

Remnants of Early Roads and Trails



The Daisy Steamer in the late 1800s

Stage Stops
Truck Stops and Facilities
Gas Stations

Recommendations and Future Actions

1. As discussed at length in this section, very few transportation-related resources still exist. Those that do, such as remaining warehouses and support buildings, should be surveyed and cataloged with particular attention paid to the importance of this context.
2. As some items, especially boats, were sometimes rebuilt and reconfigured (such as the placement of the *Antelope's* whistle on the *Ariel*), it is possible that some parts of previous resources still exist. The HPC should attempt to catalog these as they come to their attention.
3. The HPC should investigate a transportation-related exhibit at the History Center, which would give people a better sense of the importance of river, rails, and road to the city.
4. Currently, Highways 212 and 41 provide more of a dividing line than a historic resource. The City of Chaska and State of Minnesota should work to make it easier to cross these roads, and to incorporate them into the community traffic patterns.
5. The expansion of roadways, such as the Highway 41 river crossing, could threaten fragile historic resources. The Minnesota Department of Transportation should locate such expansions where they do not threaten resources of historic character, and should provide appropriate mitigation should any resources be affected.
6. Re-connecting to the river could strengthen the historic connection between the Chaska settlement site and its natural environment. The City of Chaska might consider the introduction of such features as an historic walking trail along the levee, and the re-establishment of the docks with excursion and other leisure boating activities.

Context 6 – Religion

Time Span – 1842-1950s

Three Pillars of the Community

Chaska's three major churches and associated faiths — Guardian Angels Catholic Church, St. John's Lutheran Church, and the Moravian Church, provided more than religious anchors for the town. Indeed, they inform Chaska's physical layout, with the First Ward centered around Guardian Angels, the Third Ward clustered around St. John's, and the Moravian Church on City Square in the middle. The city is defined by the spires of these churches, particularly the 165-foot steeple of Guardian Angels. The clock bells, ringing at 15 minute intervals from the Guardian Angels spire, is perhaps Chaska's most recognizable sound.

Even more than this physical iteration, the three congregations (plus other, less prominent ones) reflect the spirit of the town — the wide range of ethnic groups and faiths, the religious values of the area, the educational opportunities, and the over-arching theme of faith and community. Churches provided the gathering spots in town, and one's congregation was as important a factor as one's home and occupation. In short, religious institutions in Chaska provided the town with three major initiatives — social organizing and opportunity, networks for community interaction, and acculturation for newly-arrived immigrants.

Guardian Angels

The history of Catholic worship in Chaska began in 1842, when Jean-Baptiste Faribault asked Father Augustin Ravoux to open a missionary outpost in the Little Prairie area. Though he built a small log chapel, the apparently un-converted Dakota threatened to burn it down, and it was sold to Catholics in Wabasha and floated down the river to them.

In 1858, when Minnesota achieved statehood, the Benedictine fathers decided to try again. Founding members of the church were George Faber, Conrad Fink, William Glatzel, Michael Guenser, Mathias Jacobs, Florian Linenfelser, Andrew Riedele, Joseph Schindler, Martin Schneider, John Schug, William Schwie, and Mathias Zimmer. It was said that the choice of the name came from Guensler's two-year-old daughter Margaret, who chose the guardian angel icon from a stack of saint's pictures.

As in other Chaska congregations, members first met in each others' homes. Between 1858 and 1860 a small brick structure built on East Third and Ash Streets, with simple wooden planks as pews, became the first Guardian Angels Church of Chaska. In 1863 a group of recently arrived Dutch immigrants purchased new pews and in 1864 a "large gallery" was added. However, growth was exponential, and in 1868 work began

on a new church at Second and Cedar Streets (the current location), designed by architect Charles Bachman. The church campus also included a rectory, and cost six thousand dollars in total to build. The dedication was on September 3, 1870, with the congregation walking from the old to the new church. An 1871 lottery financed much of the construction, with the top prizes being the old church buildings and lots.

The next issue the congregation addressed was that of a school. In September 1877, Sisters Brigitta, Melanis and Martha were brought in from Pennsylvania to begin a curriculum. The school initially enrolled one hundred students, and had grown by half again within two months. Students came from Chaska and surrounding communities, for a fee of 50¢ per month. A fourth teacher, Sister Baptista, arrived later that year to specialize in music.

In 1880 the church added two structures to the complex. The first, built across the street at a cost of \$7,000, was a large, two story building with a twenty-foot steeple. It was used for classes, plus living and sleeping rooms for boarding students and later for housing the Sisters. The second project was smaller — a two-story brick addition to the parsonage at the cost of \$2,500.



Early photograph of the Guardian Angels complex

Soon, however, even the additions could not keep pace with a growing congregation, and a new church was planned. The new church was dedicated on October 1, 1885. Built at the cost of \$28,000, it was considered one of the “most adorned” buildings in the area. The steeple, at 162 feet, was the tallest landmark in the area, with four large bells, ranging from 350 to 1,500 pounds. Inside, the ceiling soared to 39 feet.

In 1902 the church building succumbed to fire, leaving only a brick shell and the picture of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. The steeple had toppled onto the George DuToit house next door. It was noted as one of the most spectacular fires in Chaska’s history, and underscored the need for a municipal water system.

Just one year later, the church had been rebuilt to much the same configuration and was dedicated by Archbishop John Ireland.

Guardian Angels then focused its efforts on its high school, which opened in 1922 and remained open through 1973. In the beginning, classes were very small, with only two students graduating in the first two years. Students were very active in raising funds for school improvements, and were also involved in extra-curricular

activities ranging from the basketball team to the orchestra to class plays. Some of these were reduced or eliminated during the Depression, but expanded afterwards — including bowling, since the school had its own alleys. Other traditions ranged from the crowning of the May Queen to the popular class ring exchanges. Guardian Angels High School was well-regarded by Chaska residents for the quality of its programs and the integrity of its students, a reputation that carries forward to the congregation and the remaining elementary school today.

St. John's

In the same way that Guardian Angels defines the 1st ward of Chaska, St. John's represents the 3rd ward. The origins of the Lutheran church in Chaska also pre-date the establishment of St. John's. In 1856, the Reverend Ferdinand Sievers was the first missionary of the Missouri Synods Precursor to be sent to Minnesota. He traveled the valley with a particular eye toward German Lutherans. In 1868 Carver gained its first Lutheran pastor, and Chaska residents traveled there for services. As more farmsteads were settled and as the brickyard employment expanded, more and more settlers arrived, many of whom were German Lutherans. The need for a church of their own was great.



St. John's Church and School, circa 1891

In 1884 Carl Nimmer, Charles Buschkowsky, Albert Buschkowsky, Edward Molnau, and William Teske Sr. became the first officers of the new congregation. They made a formal call for a pastor, and the Reverend Henry Raedeke from Carver began to serve both congregations. The congregants met in homes until the church building was completed in 1885. Services were held in German.

Integral to the church's mission from the beginning was the idea of religious instruction. Initially, classes in religious

instruction and German language were held at the church, three days a week. However, the congregation soon determined the need for a fuller education, so in 1892 built the adjoining school. Classes were then expanded to five days a week and included regular academics, with the Reverend Raedeke teaching the upper classes and his daughter, Louise, the lower grades. Soon after, they added Henry Raedeke, Jr. as an assistant pastor.

By 1920, the congregation was outgrowing the original building and was beginning to fundraise for a new church. These plans were accelerated, however, when the church burned down on August 23, 1921. Following the fire, each member of the congregation was charged with one day of work in clearing the rubble. Guild groups, such as the young people's society and the Ladies Auxiliary, increased fundraising efforts, and construction began soon after the fire. In the meantime, services were conducted in the courthouse, and English language services were added for the first time, on the last Sunday of the month.

The new church was dedicated soon after in 1922 with a performance by its choir. When it celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1935 eight of the original charter members were still living and able to participate in the events. Today, St. John's church and expanded school remain vibrant parts of the city's religious life.

Chaska Moravian Church

The Moravian Church, sitting directly on City Square Park, provides the middle ground of Chaska's religious denominations. It is both the oldest church and congregation in Chaska.

The Moravians came early to Chaska, with some of its first settlers being members of the Hopedale, Pennsylvania congregation. The Home Mission sent Reverend Martin Erdmann to Chaska in late 1857. The Shaska Company donated land to build a parsonage, and Erdman began missionary work in the area in the spring of 1858. Early services were held in the parsonage, the public school, the courthouse, Howe's Hall, and in private homes, with Ferdinand Theis being the first host. The congregation grew quickly, though, and with the itinerant services growing untenable, the church council voted to build a church in 1859.

The Shaska Company also donated the land for the church, and a plain, rather unfinished new structure became incorporated in January, 1860. In 1863 a bell was purchased for the bell tower, and in 1864 a melodeon was purchased and Sunday School for youth added. In 1865 the first church choir was formed.

Since services were held both in English and in German, a bilingual pastor was a necessity. This language



Moravian Church circa 1935

and cultural split also caused no small amount of tension in a rather divided congregation. Financial problems exacerbated the situation, and the original parsonage was sold off in 1879.

Things had improved, however, within a few years. In 1882, the Reverend Joseph Hillman accepted a call to the church, and a new parsonage was constructed. The members of the church became very socially and charitably active — a tradition that continues to this day. Activities included donations and a public Reading Room.

In 1889, a new church building replaced the original one, though constructed on the same site. The cornerstone was dedicated to the four-year-old daughter of Fred Greiner, Jr., who had died of diphtheria four weeks earlier. In accordance with church rules, the building could not be dedicated until the entire construction amount was raised or pledged, so a last minute campaign was waged by Greiner and HC Eder to guarantee the funds. The building opened on time, though the pulpit and pews did not arrive until a few weeks later.

The record of church capital expenditures, as kept in a purchase log between 1888 and 1890, demonstrates some typical church expenditures for that period:

Pulpit chairs	\$12
Communion table	\$6
Carpeting	\$13
Lamp for pulpit	\$4
10 choir chairs	\$16
Silver tea set	\$15

In 1898, the church also purchased a new set of bells.

In 1864 the church put in a request to the synod to open a school; that request was quickly approved, and the academy opened just six months later. Though most of the furniture and supplies had arrived by the time the school opened on November 14, 1864, the piano was icebound at LaCrosse. The Moravian Academy was very popular, both with local residents who could avail themselves of only three months of public education a year and for those from as far away as Belle Plaine and Fort Snelling who boarded at the school — first at the parsonage, then in a dormitory completed in 1866.

In 1870 the school was forced to close due to financial problems and a drop in enrollment. The building was sold to the City of Chaska, first for use as the city hall and later as part of the public schools.

The church itself, however, remained one of



Chaska's strongest religious institutions. In 1933, as part of its 75-year celebration the church received a gift of a 3,000-year-old lamp from Mizpah, a city near Jerusalem. The church today is an important part of the Moravian faith and of the City of Chaska.

Other Congregations

Early Methodist services were held in Chaska homes tracing back to 1855, with the Reverends Black and Stephenson acting as circuit riders. In 1857 the St. Anthony Falls Church Mission, assumed to be a Methodist missionary, purchased land on Walnut and Fourth for a church, but soon lost the land for failure to pay taxes.

At roughly the same time, the local German Evangelical Church was led by Reverend Ludlow. That congregation constructed a church in 1878 on cedar between Third and Fourth Streets, with Reverend Heilscher as its first pastor. At that point, the Evangelicals and the Methodist congregations appear to have merged. In 1887, the joint church added a brick parsonage and frame barn.

There also appears to have been a Baptist congregation early on in Chaska's history, as it was mentioned in one of Lucius Howe's letters. That congregation likely met in member's homes.

Associated Properties

Though the church buildings and parochial schools represent the bulk of the religious cultural resources in the city, there are a number of associated properties.

Primary among these are the cemeteries. The public (non church-affiliated) Mount Pleasant cemetery is located on "the old burying ground" just north of current Highway 212 at Chestnut Street (Highway 41). A cemetery association for the site was formed in 1863. Mount Pleasant was the site of at least one sensational grave robbery in 1884, in the "body snatching" of the corpse of Eugene Mattaz.

There are also three congregational cemeteries.

St. John's opened its own cemetery in 1921 as an alternative to Mount Pleasant. It was originally privately run by congregation volunteers, but was deeded to the church in 1939. It is located on Stoughton Avenue, at the edge of town.

The Guardian Angels Cemetery is sited on County Road 140. It is on the old Foos farm site, which was purchased in 1867 by parish member Michael Guenser on behalf of the church. The grounds were deeded to the church in 1869. It replaces an earlier site, and the bodies were re-interred as part of the transfer process.

The Moravian Church established a cemetery in 1860, on land located on Victoria Road, donated by early settler John Humpel. The site could hold about 160 plots. Located within the main cemetery is the private, Priebe family graveyard. The church also opened two outposts in nearby Laketown Township. One of these, the Zoar Moravian Church, as added to the National Register in 1980.

Lost Resources

Since the three main churches remain influential in the Chaska community, the city has fortunately lost very few religious resources. The German Evangelical church has been torn down, as has the Moravian Academy and previous iterations of Guardian Angels. Several smaller buildings and parsonages have been lost as well. In general, though, the three main church complexes retain their historic integrity.

Property Types

- Chapels
- Churches
- Guardian Angels
- St. John's
- Moravian
- Cemeteries
 - Mount Pleasant
 - Guardian Angels
 - St. John's
 - Moravian
 - Priebe Family
- Parsonages and Rectories
- Convents and Monasteries
- Schools
 - Guardian Angels
 - St. John's
- Also:
 - Residence Halls
 - Facilities (fields, gyms, labs, etc.)



Guardian Angels Church today

Recommendations and Future Actions

1. A recent Section 106 survey recommended consideration of Guardian Angels church for the National Register. Particularly compelling are some of the associated resources, such as the other buildings in the complex and even in the surrounding stone and brick wall. The HPC should explore the possibility of this nomination.
2. The Moravian Church might also be a National Register candidate, particularly as its nearby Zoar outpost is already listed.
3. In many cases, religious cultural resources are lost because congregations need to expand on limited budgets, and are ineligible for tax credits that non-profits can use in preservation efforts. The HPC should work with local churches to ensure that resources are protected.
4. The HPC should work with the congregations of Guardian Angels, St. John's, and the Moravian Church in order to promote and interpret the histories of these churches.
5. Cemeteries are generally not eligible for National Register nomination. However, in many communities, they have generated much interest and their own preservation societies. Chaska's cemeteries should consider similar initiatives.



St. John's Lutheran Church today

Context 7 – Residential Time Span – 1857-1950s

Chaska's Residential History

Downtown Chaska, in the area bounded by Beech Street, First Street, Hickory Street, and Sixth Street, contains the bulk of historic residences in the town. There are, however, other scattered sites, including former worker's residences along Stoughton Avenue, other scattered houses on the outskirts of town, and former farmsteads such as the Eitel House, Karen House, and the Ortlieb House.

Though Chaska was founded in 1851 and settled by the mid-to-late 1850s, the major development of the town occurred from 1870-1900. The town was determined a city by special legislative action in 1891, and was already the county seat and held a busy monthly farm market. Thus, many of the historic buildings are commerce-related. There are, however, many homes scattered throughout the business district, and the majority of Wards 1 and 3 are residential neighborhoods.

Chaska brick was a very popular building material, and many of the town's most distinctive homes, such as the Schmidt House, Greiner House, DuToit House, Young House, and Eder-Baer House are made of the brick. There were, in the late 1800s, many distinctive frame homes as well, but in general proved not to be as durable, and many were lost to the periodic floods before the levee was constructed. Others were simply torn down to make room for new development. Today, though Chaska's housing stock is less varied than it was at the turn of the century, it still contains many well-preserved, beautiful historic homes.

Housing Styles

Chaska's main focus has often been on the materials that its homes are made of (mainly in reference to Chaska brick), rather than the styles of homes represented. Nevertheless, even within the relatively small central core of the city exists a wide range of different kinds of homes, many of which are historic. It is important to understand the types of architecture present in order to understand how to preserve these homes and to guide sympathetic future development.

To this end, the following pages of this context spend no small amount of time on defining and clarifying various styles of vernacular architecture, as well as giving examples and visual references. The end of the context touches on some associated issues, including design elements such as outbuildings and fencing, as well as considering apartment units.

Greek Revival Cottage

Predominant period 1850s to 1860s

Classical models of architecture were of particular interest to a young, idealistic nation based on the Greek and Roman democratic principles. Indeed, the style was so prevalent in the mid-eighteen hundreds that it grew to be called the “National Style.” Examples of Greek Revival buildings ranged from high style public buildings and institutions such as banks to grand Southern plantations to diminutive, small cottages. Greek Revival influences are found on many of the early Chaska brick cottages.

Identifying cottage characteristics:

- gabled, low-pitched roof
- symmetrical plan
- low-pitched pedimented window and door crowns
- Front gabled with no porch

Examples in Chaska include:

209 Maple Street

109 Walnut Street



*Greek Revival cottage a in Chaska brick at
109 Walnut Street*

Gothic Revival

Predominant period 1850s to early 1880s

Gothic inspired homes, often referred to as “cottages,” were popularized by Andrew Jackson Downing in two successful pattern books, *Cottage Residences* and *The Architecture of Country Houses*, and are based loosely on ecclesiastical architecture.

Identifying cottage characteristics:

- gothic arched detailing
- steeply pitched roofs, often with steep cross gables
- strong vertical orientation, often with full porch or one-story entry
- heavy decorative ornamentation, made possible by the innovation of the scroll saw

An example in Chaska is:

113 Oak Street by pumping station.



*House with Gothic influences at
113 Oak Street*

Italianate

Predominant period 1850s to late 1880s

The Italianate style evolved from the romantic notion of the northern Italian houses and landscapes depicted in late eighteenth-century paintings. These residences often strongly influenced the architecture of the commercial storefront of the late nineteenth century. A typical Italianate is two to three stories high, is characterized by a square or rectangular shape, and is of stone or wood frame construction. The style is particularly prevalent in rapidly expanding Midwestern towns such as Chaska.

Identifying characteristics:

- rectangular or square plan
- vertical orientation, with tall windows and doors
- wide eaves supported on large ornamental brackets
- projecting door and window crowns, often arched or hooded

An examples in Chaska is 322 W. 1st. Street



Italianate influences can be seen at 322 W. 1st Street

Queen Anne

Predominant period 1880s to approximately 1910

This popular style, considered by many to be the quintessential Victorian style, mixes medieval, Elizabethan, and Jacobean elements in asymmetrical collections of architectural details. In particular, the use of highly ornate spindle work was an American interpretation of the style popularized by the distribution of pre-cut architectural elements through the rapidly expanding railway system. Whether architect-designed or vernacular, Queen Anne homes, with their distinctive ornamentation, wide front porches, and romantic towers and turrets, are a favorite Midwestern house style.

Identifying characteristics:

- asymmetrical composition of towers, tall chimneys, and steeply pitched roofs
- front facing gable
- wrap around, one-story porches with ornate spindle work
- exterior texture through shingles, bay windows, and other details

Examples in Chaska include:

105 Elm Street

111000 Bavaria Road • The Koehnen House



105 Elm Street is a good example of a "high-style" Queen Anne house

Gabled-ElI Cottage

Predominant period 1880s to late 1950s

The Gabled -ElI layout refers to the non-style conscious house design which evolved from the rural dwelling of the 1870s to the modern home after the turn of the century. Simple in layout, and home to an emerging working class, the Homestead dwelling rejected the ornate architectural detailing of the former century and remained simple, utilitarian, and popular through the mid-century.

Identifying characteristics:

- minimal architectural detailing
- defined by shape, rather than architectural detailing
- tri-gabled, in the shape of an L, with the front porch tucked into the crook of the L
- brick or wood frame construction with clapboard siding
- simple, box-like massing

Examples in Chaska include:

322 Cedar Street

116 Maple Street

115 Elm Street

906 Stoughton Avenue



322 Cedar Street, a Gabled-ElI Cottage rendered in clapboard siding

Colonial Revival Cottage

Predominant period early 1880s to late 1950s

The Colonial Revival style draws its influence from the Georgian, Adams, and Dutch architecture of the east coast. The revival style usually strays from strict historical interpretation and tends to be eclectic, using a mixture of details (often exaggerated) from the high styles of colonial architectures and contemporary elements.

Identifying characteristics:

- symmetrical façade with central entrance
- slender columned porch
- door defined with fanlight and sidelights
- windows often double hung with multi-pane glazing, frequently in adjacent pairs

Examples in Chaska include:

415 Walnut Street

209 Cedar Street



Colonial Revival details are found in the Chaska brick home at 415 Walnut Street

Italian Renaissance

Predominant period 1890s to late 1930s

The Italian Renaissance revival style, in the first quarter of the 20th century, recalled grand architectural forms and asserted itself as an icon of “civilized” Mediterranean style over the regional American architectural types. The style was partially popularized by Edith Wharton’s popular 1904 publication titled, *Italian Villas and Their Gardens*—illustrated by Maxfield Perish.

The style received national attention with the design of the 1883 Villard Houses in New York by the renowned architecture firm of McKim, Mead & White. The style was introduced as a strong contrast to the medieval inspired Shingle and Queen Anne styles.

Characteristics and Details

- Low pitched hipped roofs
- Upper story windows less elaborate than lower windows
- Upper story often followed the Italian tradition of being shorter than the first
- Entrances usually accented with classical columns and/or pilasters
- Second story porches over entries
- Quoins may appear on building corners
- Light-hued stone or brick facades

Examples in Chaska include:

Peacock Inn, 314 Walnut Street

215 E. 4th Street • The Klein House



The Klein House at 215 E. 4th Street

Craftsman Bugelow

Predominant period approximately 1905 to 1930s

The Craftsman style home was popularized in the early 1900s by magazines including *House Beautiful*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *Ladies Home Journal*, which led to a plethora of pattern books. The style was developed and refined around the turn of the century by California architects and brothers Charles Sumner Greene and Henry Mather Greene (“Greene and Greene.”) The Greenses were influenced by the English Arts and Crafts movement, oriental aesthetics, and an interest in both wooden construction techniques and the manual arts. The vast majority of vernacular Craftsman homes were bungalows, praised for their efficient use of space.

Identifying characteristics:

- low pitched roof, usually gabled
- usually one story tall, especially in vernacular examples
- un-enclosed wide overhanging eaves, with exposed roof rafters
- decorative beams often added under gables
- front porch supported by tapered square battered columns

Examples in Chaska include:

315 W. 2nd Street

516 Pine Street • Mill House Gallery

307 W. 1st Street

307 Cedar Street

203 Oak Street



Craftsman home at 307 Cedar Street

Ranch

Predominant period 1945 to late 1970s

The Ranch home is a twentieth-century vernacular style that grew out of expansion of the middle-class domestic needs of America's postwar population explosion. As soldiers returned from World War II and started new families, there was a growing need for quickly constructed, simple in plan, and affordable homes.

The single-story Ranch home was influenced in style, by the Prairie School work of Midwest architect Frank Lloyd Wright, with its long, horizontal orientation, its low pitched roof, and window banding (ribbon windows). However, the Ranch often took advantage of factory made materials such as imitation stone, pressed fiber wood siding, and metal siding. Short of the vague references to Prairie School, and some use of stone, as influenced by California residential architecture, the Ranch home is generally devoid of historic stylistic detailing.

The Split Level, popular starting in the 1950s, is a variation on the one-story Ranch. The Split Level incorporated an additional story to allow for better separation of living functions, and providing interior interest to the floor plan.

Characteristics and Details

- Single-story residence with a strong horizontal orientation
- Low pitched gable and hipped roofs

- Often an exterior attached brick fireplace stack on the gable end
- Use of a variety of exterior materials including face brick, stone, artificial stone, horizontal wood siding, particle board siding, and/or metal siding
- Window banding
- Wide use of “picture windows” with or without flanking side windows
- Often displaying a garage door at one end of the front facade

Examples in Chaska include:

509 Beech Street

611 E. Sixth Street



611 E. 6th Street

Modern Shed

Predominant period 1960 to present

This variation on modern residential architecture evolved from the writings and teachings of modern architects such as Charles Moore and Robert Venturi. These residences generally appear to be architectural blocks with multi-directional shed roofs creating visual interest. With the development of Jonathan in Chaska, many of this type of residence were constructed.

Characteristics and Details

- Multi-angled, low pitched shed roofs
- Extensive use of wood siding, sometimes at a diagonal
- Upper story often followed the Italian tradition of being shorter than the first
- Entrances usually recessed and obscured

An example in Chaska is:

67 Jonathan Neighborhood 1



Notice the multi-angled shed roof and the vertical wood siding on this home in Jonathan's Neighborhood One

Residential Special Features

In addition to the main dwellings, many houses have notable special features that add to the character of the home. These features, while often not remarkable in their own right, contribute substantially to the character of the home, and should be recognized.

The most evident example of these features are garages, carriage houses, and outbuildings. Often, these structures are not original to the home; if they are, they should be treated with special care, as they represent part of the historic fabric of the home. Even if an outbuilding was added later, it demonstrates the house's history and period of influence, and ought to be treated in a similar way to the main building. In Chaska, these outbuildings were often used as small factories located on the same lot as a residential structure

Other examples of exterior detailing includes sidewalks, walls, and fencing. Original walks are also uncommon, but should be preserved if available. Fences and walls are important because, like front porches, they mark the transition between the public streetscape and the private yard. A few examples of historic walls include the tall wall surrounding the back of Guardian Angels Church, and the stone retaining wall of the house at 208 Second Street W.

Another consideration is the relationship of the street to the home. The city has not tended to retain original curbing, or carriage-related elements such as carriage steps and horse posts. If these elements are in existence anywhere in the city, or discovered during future construction, they should be preserved and retained.

In all of these cases, any repairs and new construction should be compatible with the original materials and design of the home.

Multi-Family Housing

The majority of the houses in Chaska, as described above, are single-family homes. Presumably, some duplexes or triplexes were constructed, and there is a good example of rowhouses — the O. Goodrich rowhouses at 414-22 North Walnut Street. There are no historic, multi-family units, such as the apartment buildings or “flats” that were so fashionable in larger metropolitan areas by the 1920s.

However, several of the downtown commercial buildings were constructed with apartments overhead. Often, this was a situation of convenience, where the shopkeeper lived above his store to make access and service easier. In other cases, the upstairs living quarters simply provided extra income for the landlord. Today, most of these units have been converted to offices or storage.

National Register Properties

The following Chaska residences are currently individually listed on the National Register of Historic Place:

- Frederick Greiner House
319 E. 3rd Street
associated with Chaska merchants history
- Frederick E. DuToit House
121 Hickory Street
founder of the Chaska Herald
- Eder-Baer House
105 Elm Street
distinctive Queen Anne styling
- Conrad Fink House – National Register eligible but not listed
322 W. 1st Street
- EH Lewis House
321 W. 2nd Street
associated with Lucius Faber and Dr. E.H. Lewis families
- Ortlieb Farmstead – National Register eligible but not listed
Chaska Township
- William Scott House – NR eligible but not listed
516 Pine, currently a gallery (Mill House Gallery and Gifts)
9/05 – nomination in process by owner
Criterion B – association with mill owner, next to mill
- Walnut Street Historic District
a number of houses, as well as commercial buildings

Property Types

Single-family Homes

Vernacular

Architect Designed

Apartments and Multi-unit Homes

Rowhouses

Apartments Above Storefronts

Multi-family Units

Outbuildings

Carriage Houses

Garages

Sheds

Barns

Other Outbuildings

Landscaping and Gardens

Sidewalks
Fences
Walls
Carriage Steps

Recommendations and Future actions

1. In order to accurately assess cultural resources, and prior to initiating any kind of historic district, the entire residential housing stock of downtown Chaska should be fully surveyed. This could be done as part of the CLG process.
2. Based on this survey, the Chaska HPC should consider local nominations of more residences. The commission should then update the outreach materials on the locally nominated properties. The HPC may want to update the walking tour maps, and perhaps even lead occasional guided tours.
3. Two houses are National Register-eligible, but have not yet been listed. These include:

Conrad Fink House	322 W. 1 st Street
William Scott House	516 Pine Street

The Chaska HPC should work with these property owners to complete the nomination process and secure National Register listings.

4. A recent Department of Transportation survey suggested several residential properties that may be appropriate for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places as individual properties. These include:

Eiden House	115 Elm Street N.
Ottinger House	821 Howard Lane
Riedele House	122 US Highway 12
Nobel-Sell House	301 3 rd Street E.
DuToit House	208 2 nd Street W

The Chaska HPC should pursue nominating these to the National Register.

5. Chaska should pursue a Multiple Property nomination to the National Register of Chaska brick structures, as suggested in Context 2. This nomination should include a strong representation of residential properties.
6. Other houses may be identified as National Register-eligible or likely as part of the inventory process, and the HPC should investigate nomination of any such properties at that time.

7. Based on the inventory research, Chaska may also want to consider designating more historic districts, either locally or as a district designation to the National Register. One possibility for this may be (depending on research), the area around Guardian Angels as a parish neighborhood.
8. The city could also investigate establishing historic conservation districts. These districts are a unique blend of preservation and planning. Such districts generally seek to preserve a specific neighborhood's "sense of place," rather than individual structures, and make use of zoning and land use regulations to influence future development through historic patterns.
9. The HPC should conduct outreach to city residents regarding architectural styles and preservation techniques. Such information would allow homeowners to understand their home's distinguishing features, and assist them in planning for the preservation of their property. Such outreach should not ignore elements such as outbuildings, landscape, fences, walks, and other details. Ideally, this process would occur through some sort of residential design guidelines.

Context 8 - Preservation of the Recent Past Time Span – 1956 to present

A Controversial Topic

The issue of how to treat the recent past is one of the most often discussed topics in the preservation world today. In strict practice, the field of historic preservation has a “clear line” — when the National Preservation Act of 1966 was adopted, it included a 50-year lookback in order to assure historical perspective and to avoid judgments based on trends or fads.

However, the post-World War II era has proved to be a prolific period in both architectural design and community development, and any number of cases have arisen to challenge the fifty-year designation. From the significant works of Frank Lloyd Wright to eminently fragile examples such as the 1960s diner, many resources have achieved exceptional significance or been deemed worthy of protection. The topic has become a large issue in preservation circles, fostering a number of articles and publications, attention from the National Trust and the American Institute of Architects, and even a dedicated non-profit association, the Recent Past Preservation Network. Even the venerable National Park Service has added a National Register criteria covering the topic — “Criteria G: Guidelines for Evaluating and Nominating Properties that Have Achieved Significance Within the Last Fifty Years.”

On a smaller scale, preservation of more current resources has become of major interest to communities in our fast-moving current world. Many people can remember their neighborhood as it was when they were growing up, or enjoy their parents’ recollections. When our everyday life changes too rapidly, we quickly lose what we value in our community to “progress” — and all too soon realize what we have lost. Preservation of our vital past, from the movie theater to the gas station to the dome home, has become of particular importance to quickly-expanding communities such as Chaska.

Recent Past in Chaska

The City of Chaska should be especially cognizant of its recent past, and make efforts to preserve it. In some instances, preservation of the elements will reflect local pride, such as The Chaska Cubs and the levee. In other instances, such as Hazeltine Golf Club, the resource is of statewide significance. In particular, however, Chaska needs to tread carefully in how it treats Jonathan, an important element of national history and development.

Jonathan

Jonathan is part of the American “New Towns” movement. “New Towns” are defined as new communities, usually built from scratch in an undeveloped area, intending to be self-governing and self-contained units. These communities included a mix of residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional facilities, as well as parks, public facilities such as schools and community centers, and other shared space. While Washington, D.C. might be considered the country’s first “new town” under this definition, the general movement did not begin until the middle of the twentieth century. The first American examples were the Levittowns of New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey in the late 1950s, though these were privately built. The modern “New Town,” built as part of federal government planning, began in 1963 with Reston, Virginia, followed by Columbia, Maryland.

This planning model was particularly receptive to the political and social considerations of the period. The 1970s began in the United States with many of the same sentiments that had been dominant in the 1960s — civil rights and social change. The civil rights concept, however, had expanded from race-focused turbulence to equal rights movements for women, students, homosexuals, and the poor. President Nixon began a domestic approach titled The New Federalism, in which urban development, housing, energy efficiency, civil rights progress and the elimination of poverty were considered priorities.

As part of the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1970, the federal government became far more involved in a new-town development program. The legislation built upon the New Communities Act of 1968, and provided developers with a comprehensive package of financial aid — including infrastructure grants and guaranteed construction bonds — designed to ensure return on investment and thus encourage extensive new town construction. In return, the developer was to: provide an alternative to disorderly urban growth, demonstrate that the new town had a viable economic base, provide for low/moderate income housing, and incorporate advanced technological design, including energy efficiency.

At the same time, the federal government was completing the first phase of the Interstate Highway System, first authorized by Congress in 1944. Finally, the State of Minnesota made a major advancement in urban planning when the state legislature began discussing the Fiscal Disparities Law, in which Twin Cities communities participated in tax-base sharing under the Metropolitan Council (the act finally passed in 1974).

Into this perfect situation, Jonathan was born. The community had originally been envisioned by Henry McKnight, a former state senator and heir to a milling and logging fortune. McKnight’s main interest, however, lay in community development. His Utopian models were the European New Towns, especially those in Britain such as Stevenage and Milton Keynes. These towns were built from scratch and designed to control the post-WWII suburban expansion. They were envisioned as self-sustaining, ecologically friendly, and economically diverse.

McKnight's dream was to be anchored by a central "mega-center," in which residents could catch a light rail line to the Twin Cities. A total of five villages, with 10,000 people each, would surround the main core, each with 30% of their land set aside for parks, trails, playgrounds, and other common areas. Reduced construction costs and the unique industrial parks ringing the main area would provide more jobs and a stronger tax base. There would be a small shopping center and ecumenical worship center for each village, and a rapid transit light rail departing from a large central shopping area directly to the central downtowns of Minneapolis and St. Paul. The houses would be technologically advanced, including energy conservation models and communication devices that would allow telecommuting to work and school as well as remote control of the homes' appliances and heating/cooling systems.

Unlike stand-alone New Towns, Jonathan was envisioned as part of the Chaska Community, much like the planned Cedar-Riverside development in Minneapolis.

Jonathan became the first of thirteen communities nationally to receive new town assistance; Cedar-Riverside Towers in Minneapolis also received funding under the program. Construction of Jonathan began in 1970 with great attention from national press. Homeowners moved in from all over the state and the country, lured by the idealism of the project. The community, with its nod to history in naming itself after early area explorer Jonathan Carver, was moving enthusiastically into the future.

Jonathan was planned in the Radburn tradition (also harkening back to British "garden cities" of the 1800s), with the principal of connecting urban residences to the rural countryside, encouraging community use of open spaces, separating pedestrians from vehicular traffic. Houses were built on small lots, fairly close together, in order to make the most efficient use of infrastructure such as sewer and other utilities. They then shared a generous amount of common space, green space that provided "the backbone of the community." The first two neighborhoods of Jonathan included sixteen miles of trails running behind the homes (all of which still exist), a wetland meadow, a central lake, wooded ravines, several playgrounds, and a circular basketball court/amphitheater. A school and a community center were also planned.

The architecture, ranging from basic to extensive, reflected the unique design trends of the 1970s. A Jonathan sales brochure claims that a variety of styles was the goal, though "good design is... encouraged...drawing national attention for its pioneering in completely new types of housing." The ideal was to mix affordable and market-price housing, single and multi-family, for a community as varied socially and economically as it was physically.

Many of the homes feature modernist lines, exposed wood siding, neutral tones, varied shapes and rooflines, and super-graphic house numbers. Some residences, such as Rapson's Idea House and the "Treeloft" townhouses (built into a grove of trees, with various levels connected by wooden bridges and stairways), were particularly distinctive, and the first village center was conceived as a contemporary take on a traditional barn.

Socially, Jonathan was also a grand experiment. Many moved from far away just to be part of the experiment, and quickly formed a community. “The street partied continuously,” recalls one resident, “we were always getting together.” There were street dances, consciousness-raising groups, childcare cooperatives, and ice cream socials. Organizations, from the Renaissance Festival to the North Star Ski Club, got their starts at Jonathan. Another benefit to the entire Chaska area were the upgrades in utilities and infrastructure, included as part of the HUD program.

However, the tide quickly turned. McKnight died suddenly in late 1972, and in the beginning throes of the Watergate scandal, President Nixon ended new federal funding for housing; HUD was slow to pay the money already allocated, and the housing market had collapsed under the recession. Jonathan, in the middle of its first stage with 1,500 residents and about 30 small industries and commercial ventures, stayed afloat for another few years, but HUD foreclosed in 1976. The complicated legal structure, along with a friendly yet sometimes unclear relationship to the City of Chaska government, led to confusion about the governance and maintenance requirements for the development.

Jonathan did continue to grow and foster a sense of community. Today, it is still composed of a loose association of numbered neighborhoods, though few of these later additions bear resemblance to the originally envisioned developments. A few of the neighborhoods, especially Neighborhood One and Two, are representative of the original ideals, and some businesses and industries still remain.

In addition, two houses of Chaska brick pre-date the new neighborhoods of Jonathan. These two homes, the Karen House and the Eitel House, instill a sense of rural ambience and demonstrate early settlement patterns of the community.

Finally, the parks, trails, and infrastructure present a unique and important preservation challenge. Jonathan is still remembered as the one of the best examples of the New Town movement in the United States, and is an especially important example of the physical elements and social ideals of that influential period. It is also an example of how New Towns pre-date the New Urbanism movement of today.

Hazeltine Golf Course

At first glance, nothing would seem more opposite to the egalitarian goals of Jonathan than the exclusive, members-only Hazeltine Golf Club. However, the two actually developed nearly simultaneously, sharing many of the early infrastructure costs such as sewers, water, and other utilities. Hazeltine reminds us that it is more than a historic downtown or residential structures that define a community’s history. Its recreational opportunities are also an important part of its past, particularly as they bring in visitors and prominence to a city.

In 1955, Minneapolis' premier Minikahda Club was threatened by nearby development and began to envision a new course. When plans for that course were abandoned, club member Totton P. Heffelfinger identified the area around Lake Hazeltine as an ideal place for a new premier golf facility, and began planning the course with pre-eminent golf course designer Robert Trent Jones in 1959.

Marked by runway-styled tees, wide-open, undulating greens, and Jones' "Hard par, easy bogey" philosophy, the private club opened for play in 1962. The club was originally envisioned as a link in a chain of exclusive clubs targeted toward mobile executives called the "Executive Golf Club," but response to the theme was unenthusiastic, and it soon was renamed simply "Hazeltine National Golf Club" after nearby Lake Hazeltine, which had in turn been named for Susan Hazeltine, the first schoolteacher in Carver County.

The club was awarded the US Women's Open in 1966 and soon after, the US Open in 1970. Response to the difficult course was poor, with pro golfer Dave Hill quipping that all the course lacked was "80 acres of corn and a few cows."

In 1977 the US Women's Open returned, with the historic 1991 US Open played on the course as well — following yet another redesign, this time by Rees Jones, the son of the original designer. The 1991 Open was marked the first of several tragic lightning strikes to hit major golf courses that summer. The strike at Hazeltine, at a tree near the sixteenth hole, injured five and killed one spectator.

Hazeltine is still considered one of the best clubs in the country, and will host both the PGA Championship and the Ryder Cup in the early 2000s. Most importantly, it is a reminder to the community that history can have many faces, including those of some of the club founders, who still play the course weekly. The course's design has changed substantially over the years, but it has hosted some of the most important moments in the history of US professional golf.

Chaska residents are also likely to use the Par 30 course, maintained by the City of Chaska after the Jonathan foreclosure.

Other Elements

Though the river's importance to the development of the City of Chaska is discussed more extensively in Context 5, the levee is a more recent development. Construction began in 1952 with work completed as recently as 1998 as part of the Flood Damage Reduction Grant Program.

The levee has a very discernible impact on the City of Chaska. Thankfully, it has eliminated the flooding issues. It has provided a beautiful, park-like walking area, and allowed for the construction of new public

buildings ranging from pump houses to the new Carver County Courthouse complex. But it has changed the relationship of residents to the river. The levee eliminated the uncertainty Chaska residents faced about town flooding. Prior to the levee the low-lying areas were virtually uninhabitable, with no new construction permitted and severe municipal limits on remodeling. This significantly stalled development near the river.

As time goes by, it will become clearer how the levee affects the city, and to respect and preserve the new infrastructure it creates, without losing any more of the historic development pattern of the town.



Pumping Station constructed in 1995

Another important part of the city’s recreational history are the beloved Chaska Cubs, and the athletic park. Though the current stadium dates only from 1950 (the Cubs began in 1929), it provides a home and a context for local amateur athletics and the role they play in community identity and pride. The athletic park serves an important civic and recreation function.

Property Types

Note: Because “recent past” is a context that encompasses a time period rather than a building style, the kinds of properties it could include are very broad. Any significant property constructed within the last fifty years could conceivably be included. For the purpose of exemplifying these contexts, we have tried to identify examples of the particular areas described above.

Within Jonathan:

Particular residences:

- Idea House
- High-end homes on King’s Lane
- A-frame and other standardized homes
- Karen House
- Eitel House

- Former Commercial and Industrial Areas
- Original Signage
- Trails and Ravine System
- Common Areas

Hazeltine Golf Course:
Original Greens
Clubhouse

Other potential sites:

Levee
Stadium
Diners
Gas Stations
Motels
Automobile Showrooms
Bowling Alleys
Bus Stations
Movie Theaters and Drive-ins
Drive-in Restaurants
Dome Homes
Quonset Huts
Other Modern Residential – Lustron, ranch homes, etc.
Fairgrounds
Television and Radio Stations and Towers
Bridges and Other Transportation-related Elements
Stores and shopping experiences
Roadside Icons
Themed Experiences: Tiki, cowboy, space-age, etc.
Par 30 Golf Course

Recommendations and Future Actions

1. The City of Chaska should inventory all of the properties associated with the original Jonathan development (through 1976, the year foreclosed upon by HUD).
2. Based on its national significance, the City of Chaska should pursue designation of parts of Jonathan to the National Register under Criteria G: Properties that Have Achieved Significance Within the Last Fifty Years. This nomination is particularly time-sensitive due to the rapidly expanding developments in the immediate area, such as Clover Ridge, which complicate and may compromise the original landscape.

The inventory suggested above would provide the best information for these nominations, however as a starting point the Associates would recommend particular consideration to the following invaluable resources:

- King's Lane in Neighborhood Two, particularly Ralph Rapson's Idea House. Many of these homes are still in excellent condition and demonstrate some of the best remaining examples of the Jonathan ideals.
- Parts of Neighborhood One as a more modest neighborhood. These properties should be identified through the inventory.

- Karen House and Eitel House, as the only remaining examples of pre-Jonathan development. These properties are integral in demonstrating why the area was chosen by McKnight for development, and how the community was envisioned.
 - Remaining commercial structures, such as the childcare center.
 - The trails and common spaces in the original infrastructure.
3. Because the governmental relationship between the City of Chaska and the Jonathan Association is unclear, special care should be taken to ensure that preservation issues in Jonathan be collaboratively addressed.
 4. The City of Chaska should work with Hazeltine Golf Course to identify associated resources to target for preservation. The course and the City could work together to promote its unique history.
 5. The City of Chaska should consider local designation for the levee and the Cubs athletic park.
 6. Because of the unique value of these recent resources, the City of Chaska should ensure that they are comprehensively included in preservation efforts and interpretation, though they may not be the most obvious elements.

Context Study Recommendations and Future Actions General Summary

As mentioned in the Introduction, the primary purpose of historic contexts is as a framework for evaluating historic resources, a set of organizational tools for categorizing the past, as a planning tool for guiding future development while incorporating the past, and as a rallying point for educational and outreach activities. These contexts will help Chaska with “building its future from its past.” They will also grow and change as the city develops its cultural resource priorities.

Each individual context in this study contains its own list of “Recommendations and Future Actions,” which can be changed, amended, added to, or deleted as priorities change. These recommendations offer specific, context-related suggestions to further the historic preservation agenda in the City of Chaska, particularly with regards to increasing the number of locally and nationally designated properties.

The most important next preservation step that the city could take would be to complete a full cultural resources survey. Such an initiative is quite large and time-consuming, but could be done by a team of enthusiastic volunteers under professional leadership. Some smaller surveying efforts have already been completed.

Based upon this survey and other efforts, the City of Chaska should investigate increasing its inventory of locally designated properties. This should be accompanied by expanded interpretation of these properties. A corollary would be increasing the number of national register properties, based on suggestions made within the individual context discussions.

Although the city already has a design manual for the downtown core, it may want to consider other design guidelines, such as for residential structures.

The City should continue its low interest loan program for historic buildings, and add a technical assistance component.

Chaska also needs to be cognizant of its lost resources and diligent in retaining important remaining ones.

The Chaska Historical Society is an important interpretive resource, and these efforts should be encouraged and expanded.

Other cities have been successful in using completed context studies as a kind of training and introduction manual for new HPC members. Such a use would be an excellent way to ensure that the Commission has a standard basis of knowledge and shared goals for the future.

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- *Simons Building*
- *Eder-Bauer House*
- *DuToit House*
- *Lewis-Faber House*
- *Chaska Herald Building*
- *Brinkhaus Saloon Livery Barn*
- *Iltis Brewery*
- *Walnut Street Historic District*

Determinations of Eligibility for:

- *Conrad Fink House (2001)*
- *Ortlieb Farmstead (1992)*
- *Miesler Farmstead (2004)*
- *William Scott House (2005)*

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Appendix A – Chaska Designated Properties

Address	Property Name	Local Site	NR Site	NR District	Notes
423 N. Walnut Street	Nord Residence			X	
414-422 N. Walnut Street	Rowhouses/ Tenement Houses	X		X	
415 N. Walnut Street	Casper Schmidt House	X		X	
412 N. Walnut Street	Dienlake House			X	
4th and Walnut Street	Moravian Church	X		X	
205 E. 4th Street	C.P. Klein Mansion	X		X	
300 E. 4th Street	St. John's Lutheran	X			
403 E. 3rd Street	Taylor House	X			
319 E. 3rd Street	Greiner House	X	X		
301 E. 3rd Street	Nobel-Sell House	X			
320 N. Walnut Street	Steinberger Residence			X	
314 N. Walnut Street	C.H. Klein Mansion	X		X	
308 N. Walnut Street	Gibson Residence			X	
302 N. Walnut Street	Stege-Klammer House	X		X	
218 N. Walnut Street	Ess Foundry			X	
217 N. Walnut Street	Joseph Ess House	X		X	
212 N. Walnut Street	Ess House			X	
211 N. Walnut Street	Ess House			X	
207 N. Walnut Street		X			
206 N. Walnut Street	Miessler/Schutz House			X	
200 N. Walnut Street	Linenfelter & Faber Building (2)	X		X	
202 N. Walnut Street	Faber Building	X			
123 N. Walnut Street	Linenfelter & Faber Building (1)			X	
123 E. 2nd Street	National Hotel Building	X		X	
122 E. 2nd Street	Phillip Henk Store			X	
115 E. 2nd Street	Chaska Auto Body			X	
112 E. 2nd Street	Carver County State Bank	X			
111 E. 2nd Street	Hammer & Beierstettel	X			
109 E. 2nd Street	Young Family Home	X		X	
107 E. 2nd Street	Hammer & Bierstettel House			X	
100 E. 2nd Street	Diedrick Building	X		X	tax credit nomination complete
E. 2nd Street	Werner Store			X	
E. 2nd Street	DuToit Bank			X	
210 N. Chestnut Street	Muyres Hardware	X			
214 N. Chestnut Street	First National Bank	X			
224 N. Chestnut Street	Ann Marne Decorating			X	
123 W. 3rd Street	Simons Building	X	X		
218 N. Pine Street	Simons Livery Stable	X			
322 W. 1st Street	Conrad Fink House	X	(X)		NR-eligible (2001)
105 N. Elm Street	Eder-Bauer House	X	X		
512 W. 1st Street	T.D. Smith Mansion	X			
121 W. Hickory Street	F.E. DuToit Sr. House	X	X		
125 N. Hickory Street	Caspar Teipel Building	X			
321 W. 2nd Street	Lewis-Faber House	X	X		
W. 2nd & Cedar Streets	Guardian Angels			X	
208 W. 2nd Street	George A. DuToit House	X			
123 W. 2nd Street	Chaska Herald Building	X	X		
107-109 W. 2nd Street	Deuhs-Baxter Buildings	X			
105 W. 2nd Street	Diacon Building	X			
103 W. 2nd Street	Oesterreich Hardware	X			
112 W. 2nd Street	Gehl's Meat Market	X			
112 W. 4th Street	Brinkhaus Livery Stable	X	X		
500 N. Pine Street	Chaska Flour Mill	X			
500 N. Chestnut Street	Chaska Bakery	X			
140 E. 6th Street	Sugar City Cooperative Creamery	X			
County Road 140	Guardian Angels Catholic Cemetery	X			
122 W. 6th Street	Riedele House	X			
Highways 212 & 41	Fireman's Park	X			
N. Chestnut Street	Mount Pleasant Cemetery	X			
1092 Cardinal Street	Henry Hammers House/Saloon	X			
Victoria Drive	Moravian Cemetery	X			
111000 Bavaria Road	Koehnen House	X			
1700 N. Chestnut Street	District 12 School	X			
1201 Valley Street	Jaspers-Heller House	X			
Stoughton Avenue	St. John's Lutheran Cemetery	X			
1060 Stoughton Avenue	Sugar Factory	X			
Stoughton Ave. & 5th Street	Iltis Brewery		(X)		demolished 1989, de-listed 1991
	Miesler Farmstead		(X)		NR-eligible but demolished 2004
	Ortlieb Farmstead		(X)		NR-eligible but demolished 2005
516 Pine	William Scott House		(X)		NR-eligible, nomination in process

Appendix B – Proposed Designation Guidelines

National Register Designation

The National Park Service criteria for listing a property on the National Register of Historic Places stipulates that the property must fall into one of the following four categories:

1. Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

Once these patterns are identified through the context study, these properties will be easier to identify. Examples would include the Mill and its relationship to Chaska's agricultural history, or the Herald Block and its journalistic importance.

2. Associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

Chaska examples would appear to include the residences of significant leaders, such as the Greiner and Dutoit Houses.

3. Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

Recent examples would have included the Miesler Farmstead (demolished 2004) and its Fachwerk method of construction.

4. Have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Examples would potentially include the Native American mounds in the area, or other similar sites.

Properties that are generally not eligible for National Register inclusion include:

Cemeteries

Properties that are primarily used solely for religious purposes and whose significance stems only from that use

Properties that have been moved

Reconstructed buildings

Birthplaces (if no other significance)

Properties that are mainly commemorative in nature

Properties less than 50 years old

However, if these properties are contributing properties to larger districts, or if they are particularly unusual or important in nature, they may still be eligible, and there are many examples of such situations on the Register.

Often, an entire area is nominated as a **National Historic District**. In these cases, the area must be contiguous, and the bulk of properties must demonstrate the evaluation criteria (generally outbuildings and accessory buildings are exempt.) In Chaska, the Walnut Street Historic District demonstrates a National Register Historic District.

Another method of nomination is the **Multiple Property Submission**. In this case, historic themes, trends, and patterns are identified and organized into contexts (as this study has done), and the property types that represent this context are identified, defined, and nominated.

For example, in *Chaska Agricultural Processing Buildings* might be construed as a theme, and the original sugar factory buildings that still remain, plus the Mill and its associated buildings, thus listed. Another potential context could be *Chaska Brick*, though in this case, the Associates would recommend limiting the associated properties to a representative sample of structures, rather than every Chaska brick building in the city. The HPC might try to identify particularly strong examples of Chaska brick houses, and/or varied styles (Queen Anne, Craftsman, etc.), and/or look into including scattered houses that remain in zones of otherwise newer construction, such as the Eitel and Karen Houses in Jonathan, and the house remaining on State Street.

Benefits of National Register inclusion include:

- Prominence
- Historic Tourism
- Eligibility for federal tax credits, as appropriate
- Qualification for federal preservation funds, when available

The Associates recommend that all properties listed on the National Register in the City of Chaska are, by default, also locally designated.

Local Designation

In many cases, a property may be of local importance, but may not meet the criteria listed above for National Register inclusion. Or, in some cases, the property owner may not want a property to be listed on the National Register (their approval is required), but may be amenable to a lesser level of designation. For these reasons, the Associates recommend that the City of Chaska maintains a Local Designation process.

Suggested areas of local designation might include:

1. Properties associated with local community leaders, but which might not be of larger prominence. This might include birthplaces.
2. Properties that have been moved or reconstructed and are thus not National Register eligible, but which retain significance.
3. Properties that have been so greatly altered that they are not National Register eligible, but which, in the eyes of the community, are still important.
4. Religious properties and cemeteries.
5. Natural sites with no remaining associated properties, such as the clay holes.
6. Neighborhoods that might not maintain enough integrity to be meet the standards of a National Register Historic District. The vernacular housing on Stoughton Avenue, originally used by the sugar workers, might be a good example. The city may also want to consider designating these areas as Historic Conservation Districts, in which the focus is placed more upon the flavor of the neighborhood and infrastructure as a whole, rather than on individual structures.
7. Properties that demonstrate a significant method of construction. For example, the HPC might give

every Chaska brick home local designation, and then select a few for a national Multiple Property submission as discussed above.

8. Properties representative of the recent past. Obviously, significant Jonathan properties come to mind. These may later be converted into National Register properties once the 50-year marker is passed.

The Associates recommend that, given the number and variability of historic structures in Chaska, that the HPC adopt local designation as well as National Register criteria. This would allow the City of Chaska maximum flexibility in protecting and enhancing its historic resources. If the HPC does pursue local designation, they will need to ensure that the process is fair and complete, covering: what is eligible, how a property gets nominated, what nomination means, and what authority the HPC has over locally designated structures.