

Boys Totem Town

# Foundation and Vision

Saint Paul, Ramsey  
County, Minnesota

November 2020



**106GROUP**

*Connecting People + Place + Time*



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Lower Phalen Creek Project (LPCP), in coordination with Boys Totem Town Land Preservation Group (BTT-LPG), received a Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grant in April 2020 to conduct historical and archaeological research on an 80-acre parcel of land on which the Ramsey County Home School for Boys (later named Boys Totem Town Juvenile Detention Center) operated for 113 years until its closure in 2019. Boys Totem Town is located at 398 Totem Road in Saint Paul, which is east of Pigs Eye Lake and Highway 10/61. The property is also southwest of the intersection of Lower Afton Road and McKnight Road. This property lies on the bluffs east of the Mississippi River, known as Haha Wakpa (river of the falls) to the Dakota. The historic Kaposia Village (also known as Little Crow's Village or Kapoza in Dakota), was founded in 1750 by a group of Mdewakanton Dakota, and was located along the east and west banks of the river at different times prior to the 1850s.

LPCP with BTT-LPG hired 106 Group to conduct historical and archaeological research in order to understand the property's natural and cultural history importance. This report is a foundational planning tool to inform potential preservation needs and appropriate redevelopment of the property.

The project team conducted a site visit of the project area on September 29, 2020, to visually assess the architectural and cultural landscape features, and the potential of the property to contain archaeological resources. Taken collectively, these features offer insight into historical and current land use and the potential for future uses and reuses of the property. Digital photographs were taken and have been included in this report, along with summaries of field observations. Online research of aerial photographs, historical maps, and area histories provided greater context to understand who has inhabited this space over time, what activities they engaged in, and how this property fits into the natural and cultural history of Saint Paul and this region of the Mississippi River (Haha Wakpa). Historical and contemporary photographs were accessed online through the Minnesota Historical Society (MNHS) and Ramsey County. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, no research was conducted in-person at area repositories.

This property is a rare gem in our region. Imagine an Environmental and Cultural Education Campus—a place for families, students, hikers, nature lovers, and history lovers to come together to learn, appreciate, and reflect on the meaning of this place or just to simply enjoy the outdoors unhindered by urban intrusions. Re-purposing this property and preserving the historic and natural resources is a major undertaking that requires a clear plan, strong leadership, and engaged partners. The vision must be inspiring and the goals achievable to ensure a successful outcome. A Master Plan is the logical next step for setting goals and objectives, and prioritizing actions over a short and long-term period. The Master Plan should include: Historic District Evaluation, Cultural Landscape Report, Natural Resources Management Plan, Reuse Study and Land Use Plan, Visitor Interpretive Experience Plan, Management and Funding Analysis, and Sustainable Strategies for Implementation. These components may be done separately or in a single effort, depending on funding support.

To re-purpose this property, relationships with stakeholders and potential partners from the beginning are critical. Boys Totem Town Land Preservation Group and LPCP should establish relationships with key partners through a working group. Ongoing community and stakeholder engagement will also be key to building momentum for the project. Partners and stakeholders could include representatives from local and state governments, health and wellness foundations, educational institutions, the event industry, cultural groups, and other civic and/or non-profit organizations.

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## INTRODUCTION

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Totem Pole at Boys Totem Town, 2016, Courtesy of Ramsey County

# PROPERTY HISTORY

## Origins

The earliest American Indian tribes in what is now Ramsey County are the ancestors of many tribes that have strong connections to this same area today. They lived in this region following the retreat of glaciers during the early Holocene epoch at least 12,000 years ago. Living in mobile groups, they were skilled hunters and knowledgeable about the plants and animals that flourished in the Upper Midwest in the wake of the glaciers. Around 5,000 years ago, the southern Minnesota climate gradually became moister and cooler. The big game animals, such as mammoths, that had been abundant during the Holocene, went extinct. During this time, American Indian tribes began using copper deposits in the Upper Midwest. They created tools, clothing, and ceremonial items. They continued to hunt big game animals, but focused on bison and other large grazing animals that lived on the Plains. The bow and arrow were soon added to hunters' arsenal, which also included spears and atlatls (a spear thrower). Gradually, communities grew and moved around less frequently. They began to create ceramics, which would have been less practical for their more mobile ancestors because of the weight and fragility of fired clay vessels. The pottery that American Indians made was excellent for cooking and storage, and showed a variety of decorations.

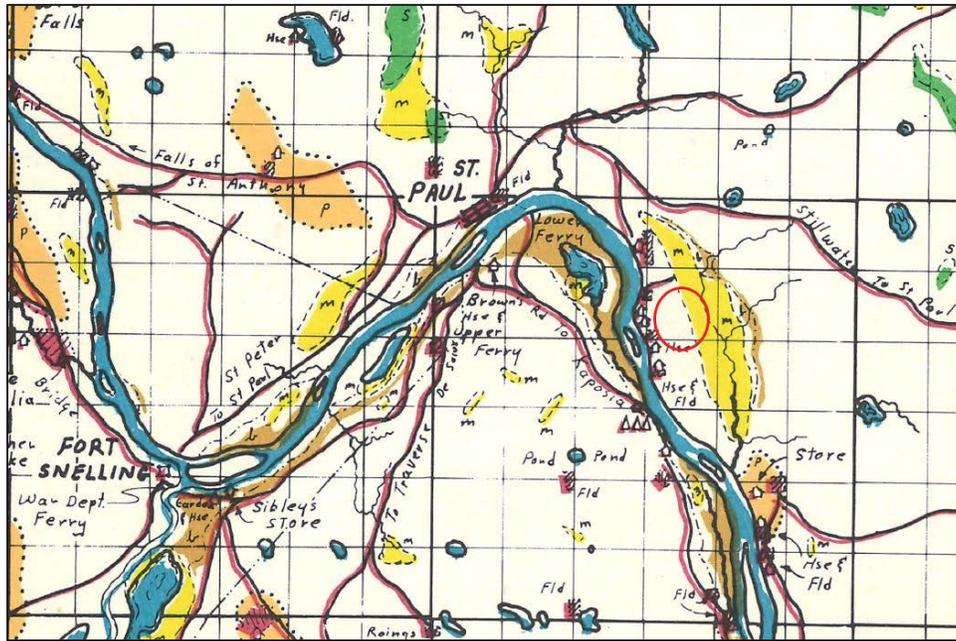
Within southeastern Minnesota, American Indian communities began growing corn about 2,000 years ago. Corn added to their cultivation and harvest of many local plants. Corn became an important part of their diet, along with wild rice, bison, and other local plants. Ceramic technology continued to evolve. Ground shells or grit were used to strengthen vessels and new designs were developed. In the mid-1600s, the first Europeans arrived in the area around the Boys Totem Town property. French missionaries and fur traders arrived during the mid-to-late 1600s, followed by British, and later American, traders and explorers in the early 1800s.

Tribes living in southeastern Minnesota during the early 1600s included the Ioway, Otoe, and Dakota. The Ioway and Otoe tribes eventually moved south and west into Iowa and Nebraska. The Dakota maintained a strong presence in this region of Minnesota, their homeland, until treaties, war, disease, and forced removal reduced their population in the mid-to-late 1800s. Following forced removal of Dakota people to reservations in South Dakota, Nebraska, North Dakota, and Canada in the mid-1850s and then again in the 1860s during the aftermath of the U.S.-Dakota War, settlement of Saint Paul by Euro-American immigrants increased rapidly.<sup>i</sup>

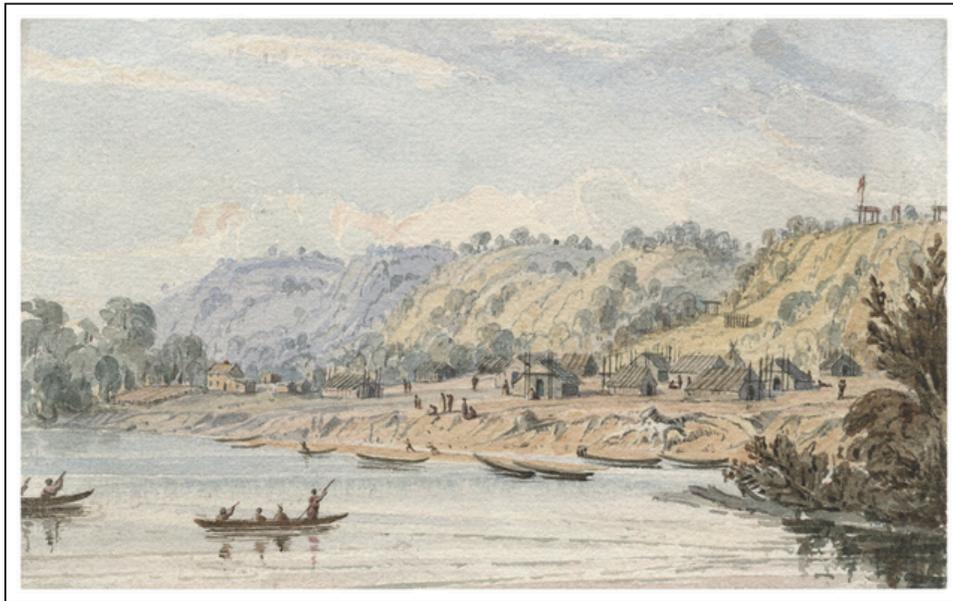
## Kaposia Village (Kapoza)

The Dakota village of Kaposia (Kapoza) was located along the east bank of the Mississippi River (Haha Wakpa) near Pig's Eye Lake and below Dayton's Bluff, not far from the Boys Totem Town property. The village moved a lot during its century-long existence. Kaposia (Kapoza) translates to "they travel lightly." A band of Mdewakanton Dakota established the village around 1750. A succession of sons whose Dakota names were originally translated into English as "Little Crow" by early Euro-Americans in the area led the village. The actual name of the first recorded Little Crow was Wakinyan Tanka (Big Thunder), who was succeeded by Cetan Wakuwa Mani (He Who Walks Pursuing a Hawk), and then Taóyate Dúta (His Red People/Nation).<sup>ii</sup> American Indians, specifically the Dakota, lived in this area continuously through

the early-to-mid-1800s. Trygg's map of the area as it appeared in the 1850s (see below), shows a road leading from the Mississippi River (Haha Wakpa) to Kaposia Village (Kapoza), labeled "Rd to Kaposia."<sup>iii</sup> The Boys Totem Town property is denoted with a red oval.



Portion of Trygg's *Composite Map of U.S. Land Surveyors' Original Plats and Field Notes*, Sheet 7, 1850s



*Little Crow's Village on the Mississippi* by Seth Eastman, Courtesy of MNHS

In the early 1800s, the village was home to about 400 residents.<sup>iv</sup> The Treaty of 1837 ceded Dakota lands east of the Mississippi to the United States, after which the village relocated to the west bank in present-day South Saint Paul.<sup>v</sup> Missionaries arrived at the village in 1834 and, as of 1849, the village included teepees for winter dwelling, bark houses for summer dwelling, and frame houses for the missionaries. As

of 1851, the village was home to about 300 residents.<sup>vi</sup> The activities of its residents were not confined to the village; the Dakota used adjacent areas as hunting grounds.<sup>vii</sup> The Dakota left Kaposia Village (Kapoza) in 1853 after the ratification of the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux resulted in their forced removal to the Redwood Agency Reservation on the Minnesota River.<sup>viii</sup> Following the relocation, the Dakota visited their former home each winter until the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862, after which the Dakota were exiled from Minnesota.<sup>ix</sup>

## Post-Contact Agricultural Period

The 1874 Andreas map of Ramsey County places the Boys Totem Town property in McLean Township, which was covered in vegetation. This portion of McLean Township was labeled May Meadows.<sup>x</sup> The 1888 Lowry map of the Twin Cities shows that curving streets were laid out for part of the property, but that most of it was farmland.<sup>xi</sup> Similarly, the 1892 Donnelley map (pictured below) shows that the land north and west of present-day Totem Road and Burlington Road, respectively, had been subdivided into lots, but the future Boys Totem Town property was undeveloped.<sup>xii</sup> At an unknown date, this property was owned by Ambrose Tighe and operated as a farm.<sup>xiii</sup> Tighe was a prominent Saint Paul resident and attorney, whose permanent home was at 505 Summit Avenue. He passed away in 1928.<sup>xiv</sup>



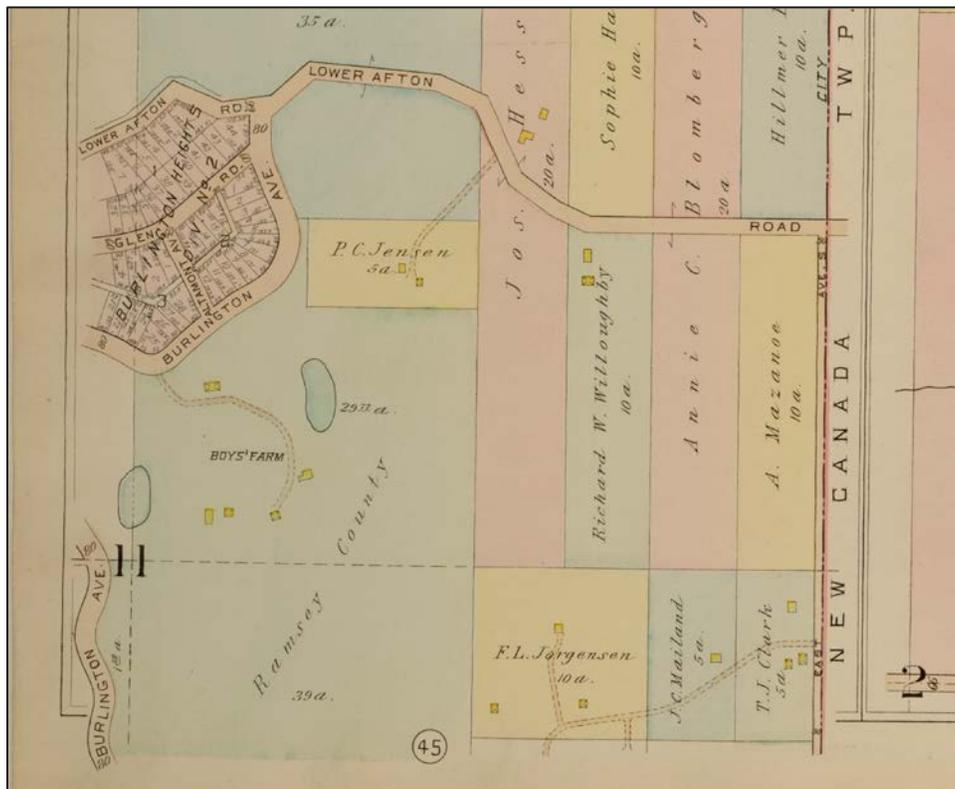
Portion of Plate 28 of *Donnelley's Atlas of St. Paul*, Courtesy of the John R. Borchert Map Library

Newport Avenue, which runs from southeast to northwest on the Donnelley map above, connects to Point Douglas and Fort Ripley Military Road, which was one of the first roads built by the federal government in the Minnesota Territory. This road was essential to the fur trade as the main transportation link between Saint Paul and the Red River Valley.<sup>xv</sup> Near the project area, this road is still called Point Douglas Road.

## Transition to a Juvenile Detention Center

The State of Minnesota’s first reform school for boys was the House of Refuge of the State of Minnesota, opened in 1868 and relocated to Red Wing in 1891. As reform ideas evolved, the State Legislature authorized the building of boys detention centers in three counties, including Ramsey, in 1907. That year, a parental school opened at 507 Lafayette in Saint Paul as a “day school for truants and incorrigibles.”<sup>xvi</sup> The following year, the school moved to 753 East Seventh Street and added a detention home for more serious offenders who were awaiting court action or had already been sentenced.<sup>xvii</sup> Meanwhile, Hennepin County established the Hennepin County Detention Home for Boys at Glen Lake in 1909, sited on 92 acres of meadows and farmland. This location among others in the Midwest served as a model for Ramsey County’s development of a similar institution.<sup>xviii</sup> Hattie Fox, matron of the parental school, recommended that the new facility should have individual rooms instead of dormitories and that the City of Saint Paul should provide teachers since most of the boys were from Saint Paul.<sup>xix</sup>

Ramsey County opened the Ramsey County Detention Home-Highwood in this location in 1913. The facility’s purpose was to “alter the behavior of Ramsey County’s ‘incorrigible’ or ‘unfortunate’ boys between the ages of eight and eighteen, who had committed lesser offenses, and keep them out of adult jails and the Minnesota State Training School at Red Wing.”<sup>xx</sup> It was also called the Boys’ Farm, which is noted on the 1916 G.M. Hopkins Co. map of Saint Paul (pictured below). After 1935, it was known as the Ramsey County Home School for Boys.<sup>xxi</sup>



G.M Hopkins Co. Map, 1916, Courtesy of the John R. Borchert Map Library



Ramsey County Detention Home-Highwood (former farmhouse), c. 1933, Courtesy of MNHS

The boys began carving totem poles from dead trees as part of Boy Scout troop activities and the nickname “Boys Totem Town” was introduced by Superintendent George Reif. This became the official name in 1957. Reif wanted the facility to feel like a home for the boys. In order to uphold the institution’s founding purpose, there was a system of earning rewards and losing privileges when rules were broken. Boys were not typically locked up and there was never a fence surrounding the property.<sup>xxii</sup> As described by Ramsey County, “Boys Totem Town provided a safe, secure and healthy environment for residents and helped facilitate community safety by providing specialized evidence-based services to youth and empowering families to prevent future out-of-home placements.”<sup>xxiii</sup>

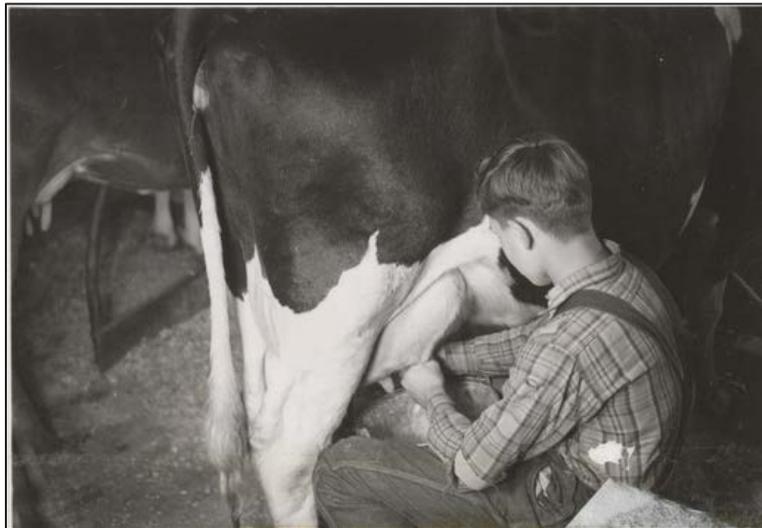


Residents Painting a Totem Pole, 1942, Courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society

Saint Paul Public School teachers taught the boys a variety of activities, including fishing, farming, and how to build a greenhouse or a canoe.<sup>xxiv</sup> For several decades, staff and students grew their own produce and tended to many animals, including horses, cattle, pigs, and chickens.<sup>xxv</sup> After several food safety concerns, such as food poisoning, the farming operation ceased around 1959.<sup>xxvi</sup> The boys also issued a newspaper called *The Totem Pole*. Recreational activities included sports, swimming, ice skating, tobogganing, skiing, and ski jumping.<sup>xxvii</sup> At an unknown date, the boys built a woodchip trail that loops throughout the site. Along the trail, which still exists, they built exercise stations, of which several remain. They also developed a low ropes course (popular in the 1970s) and a Frisbee golf course.<sup>xxviii</sup>



Residents Working in the Fields, 1942, Courtesy of MNHS



Resident Milking a Cow, 1942, Courtesy of MNHS



Resident Working on a Craft, 1942, Courtesy of MNHS



Residents Building a Fence Under Supervision, 1942, Courtesy of MNHS



Boy Scout Knot-Tying Contest, 1942, Courtesy of MNHS

The 1916 G.M. Hopkins Co. map of Saint Paul (on page 5) shows five buildings on the property, including three barns.<sup>xxix</sup> Several fires during the institution's first few decades resulted in several building losses, including the first school in 1927, a barn in 1934, and the original farmhouse in 1936, which served as the main house for the facility. The farmhouse was replaced by a three-classroom school building and dormitory, both of which still stand today.<sup>xxx</sup> In 1964-1965, the facility expanded significantly. The expansion included a new dormitory that added 40 beds to the existing 70 beds, a large gymnasium, two classrooms, a dining room, a library, and arts and crafts rooms. Two brick buildings were also renovated at this time.<sup>xxxi</sup> In 1988, a capital project was authorized to build a medical facility at Boys Totem Town.<sup>xxxii</sup> Kohler Hall was built in 1994-1995 with 24 beds to alleviate an overflow of youth at the Juvenile Detention Center in downtown Saint Paul. Because these individuals were awaiting court dates, the building has added security features, including gates. After the overflow problem was resolved, the building was used for orientation and then a day treatment program until the additional space was no longer needed. .<sup>xxxiii</sup>



Residential Dorm, 2016, Courtesy of Ramsey County



Classroom, 2016, Courtesy of Ramsey County

The number of residents varied over the facility's more than 100-year history as did the length of their stay. In 1936, there were four boys. By the 1960s, there were over 100 and the average stay was four to five months. Around that time, racial demographics began to change with fewer white boys and more Black and Hmong boys, among other racial and ethnic groups.<sup>xxxiv</sup> By 2014, the facility's resident population was 36. Although resident demographics changed, the staff remained mostly white, which led to cultural competency issues. In 1975, there were several incidents that threatened the facility's closure: physical assaults by residents, high incidence of runaways, and physical abuse of residents by staff. Instead of closing, the new superintendent, Steve Dornbach, worked to update policies and upgrade the facility. In the 2000s, Ramsey County engaged in the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) to bring a variety of voices to the table and work with kids in the juvenile justice system to find solutions, expand community-based alternatives, and diversify staff at Boys Totem Town. However, the facility continued to face challenges regarding "questionable record keeping, and abuse and other safety concerns."<sup>xxxv</sup>



Residents Building a Fence, 1942, Courtesy of MNHS

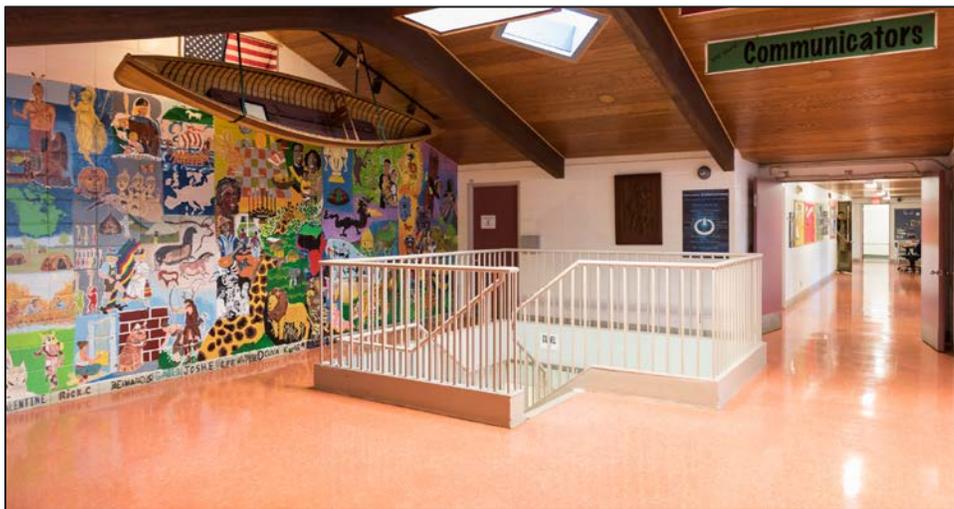
In 2016, Ramsey County hired Keith Lattimore as superintendent and Kim Stubblefield as assistant superintendent of Boys Totem Town—the first African American leadership team in the facility's history and within Community Corrections. They worked to upgrade staff training, install additional security cameras, and make other changes.<sup>xxxvi</sup> In May 2019, only six boys remained.<sup>xxxvii</sup> The county board voted to close the facility when the final six boys completed the program and a public commemoration for current and former staff, judges, volunteers, and residents was held on August 14, 2019.<sup>xxxviii</sup>



Cafeteria, 2016, Courtesy of Ramsey County



Gymnasium and Exercise Equipment, 2016, Courtesy of Ramsey County



Inside Boys Totem Town Facility, 2016, Courtesy of Ramsey County

## Current Use

Today, the Boys Totem Town buildings remain largely vacant. In May 2020, the Saint Paul City Council voted unanimously to approve the temporary use of three buildings, including Kohler Hall, to shelter homeless people who are suspected or known to have COVID-19.<sup>xxxix</sup> The surrounding undeveloped land is enjoyed by neighbors for its trails and natural landscape. The Highwood Plan, adopted by the District One Council in 1989 and recertified as recently as 2009, calls for retaining the property as public open space when it is no longer needed by the Department of Corrections. Much of the property features oak savanna, which predates European settlement and is much degraded.<sup>xl</sup> Volunteer vegetation, including buckthorn, covers much of the property. The natural landscape provides a habitat for pollinators and several species of wildlife.



Workshop Area Used in Partnership with Urban Boat Builders, 2016, Courtesy of Ramsey County

# ARCHITECTURAL AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

## Methodology and Research

Patty McDonald led the site visit on September 29, 2020, and shared first-hand knowledge about the property based on her experiences as a substitute teacher at Boys Totem Town, long-time neighbor, and Lead Organizer with Boys Totem Town Land Preservation Group. The project team entered the site from the west end of Mailand Road East and followed the main trail that connects to the main cluster of buildings. The architectural historian observed the topography, vegetation, and evidence of human activity, such as buildings, structures, designed landscapes, and objects. Field notes and digital photographs were taken. Following the site visit, the architectural historian consulted aerial photographs to determine when various features were built or added to the property.

## Previous Studies

According to information on file at the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), no architectural history studies have been conducted on this property and none of the resources have been studied for their potential historical significance.

## Summary of Architectural and Cultural Landscape Resources

The 72-acre parcel on which Boys Totem Town is located is largely undeveloped; only about 10 acres have been developed. An unpaved trail forms a loop around the middle of the parcel with several spur trails cutting across the middle. The topography varies considerably. The lowest point is a pond in the northwest quadrant of the property and the elevation increases about 100 feet to the highest point in the southeast quadrant. Vegetation includes native and non-native plants and flowers, and many mature deciduous trees, most of which are burr oak.<sup>xli</sup> The property includes a variety of resources, such as:

- Buildings, which shelter any form of human activity, such as a dormitory or garage
- Structures, which function for any purpose other than creating human shelter, such as a stone wall
- Objects, which are small in scale and may be artistic in nature, such as a sign, a bench, or exercise stations
- Sites, which mark the location of events or activities and may be natural features, such as a trail or a former American Indian village site<sup>xlii</sup>

Many of these resources are depicted on Figure 1. Some objects observed during the site visit are not shown because of their small scale. The trail is minimally visible on Figure 1 next to the Fire Pit.

Collectively, these resources may form a district because they are historically and physically associated. They also may comprise a cultural landscape. The National Park Service defines a cultural landscape as “a geographic area, including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals therein, associated with a historic event, activity, or person, or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values.”<sup>xliii</sup> Considering the Boys Totem Town property as a cultural landscape more fully encompasses the property’s natural and cultural history.



Service Layer Credits: MnGeo Composite Imagery Service

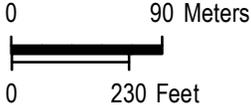
Source: 106 Group; MnDOT; Ramsey County, MN

Map Produced by 106 Group 11/12/2020

**Boys Totem Town:  
Foundation and Vision**  
Saint Paul, Ramsey County, Minnesota

**Architectural and Cultural  
Landscape Resources**

-  Boys Totem Town Property Boundary
-  Identified Resource
-  Main Building



1:4,500



**Figure 1**

## Buildings

All of the buildings are concentrated near the center of the western half of the property. The main gate and access point are on Totem Road and lead to a driveway that surrounds a sports field. There is a parking lot to the west of the driveway. The Main Building is sited along the opposite (south) side of the driveway with additional support buildings to the west. On the south side of the Main Building, there is another parking lot between Kohler Hall and another sports field. The rest of the property is natural and undeveloped. The buildings are described briefly below, starting with the Main Building and continuing counterclockwise.

The **Main Building** was constructed over several decades. The original dormitory section of the Main Building (pictured below, at left) was built in 1936, according to the cornerstone. This was designed in the Art Deco style, which was popular in the 1930s. A T-shaped schoolhouse (pictured below, at right) was built in 1928, according to the cornerstone, to hold three classrooms on the upper story and a gym in the basement.<sup>xliv</sup> A tunnel runs between the two buildings and was used as a fallout shelter. A small addition was built on the south side of the dormitory between 1947 and 1957, according to aerial photographs.<sup>xlv</sup>



In 1964-1965, a large addition to the Main Building (pictured below, at left) was built on the south side of the original section and the T-shaped building for dormitories, two classrooms, a dining room, a library, and arts and crafts rooms, and at the east end for a gymnasium (pictured below, at right).<sup>xlvi</sup>



**G-1** (pictured below), which likely stands for garage, was built to the northwest of the Main Building in the mid-1950s, according to former BTT Mechanic Demetri Thomas and confirmed by aerial photographs.<sup>xlvi</sup>



**C-1** (pictured below) is located south of G-1 and had been constructed by 1947, according to aerial photographs.<sup>xlviii</sup> The origin of the name C-1 is unknown, but the upper story was used for staff housing and the lower story was used for storage.<sup>xlix</sup>



**P-1** (pictured below) is located south of C-1 and was built between 1972 and 1979.<sup>i</sup> The reason the building is named P-1 could not be determined, but this building was used as an external temporary school house and built when there was a high number of residents. The basement was used for storage.<sup>ii</sup>



**S-1** (pictured below), which likely stands for shed, is located south of P-1. This building was likely built in the 1990s.<sup>lii</sup> Additionally, the building does not have a permanent foundation, which means it may not have been constructed in its current spot.



**Kohler Hall** (pictured below, at left) was built southeast of the Main Building in 1994-1995 to provide overflow space for the Juvenile Detention Center in downtown Saint Paul. There is a **Garage** (pictured below, at right) near the southeast corner of the building. It was built at the same time as Kohler Hall and appears on a 2003 aerial photograph.<sup>liii</sup>



To the east of the gymnasium addition to the Main Building, there is a parged concrete block building (pictured below), which was originally the Well House and is now known as the **Gas House**. A warning sign on the door indicates the presence of natural gas. It was built in the 1950s to house the well and well pump, and was redone in the 1980s and turned into the Gas House.<sup>liv</sup>



## Structures

The structures on the property are generally located around the buildings, near the center of the western half of the property. They are described below in relation to the Main Building and in counterclockwise order.

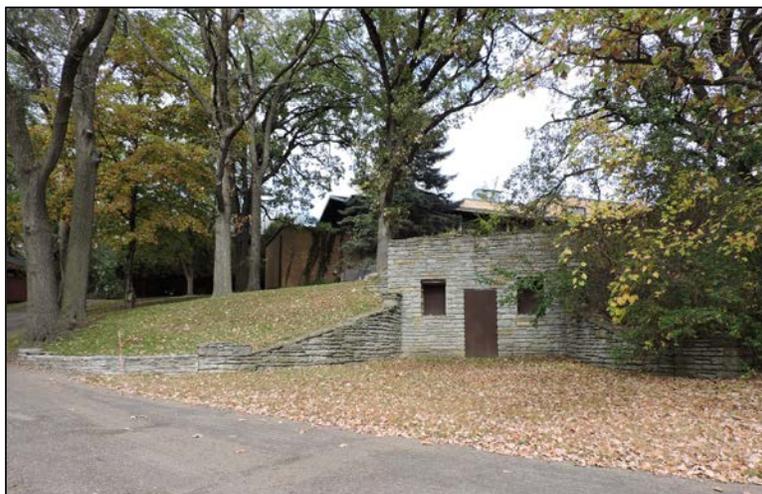
The **Bell Tower** (pictured below) is located to the northwest of the original dormitory. Because of its scale, it is difficult to see on aerial photographs. Because it is made of limestone, it was likely built around 1936, around the time the original dormitory was constructed.



Between P-1 and C-1, there is a low **Stone Wall** (pictured below) that was built from large river rock and limestone. It is sited on a descending slope and serves as a retaining wall. In the middle of the wall, there are concrete steps. It is difficult to see this wall on aerial photographs due to mature trees. However, based on material and the construction date of P-1, it may have been built in the 1930s or 1940s.



To the east of S-1, a **Limestone Entry** (pictured below) is comprised of a limestone wall with a door and two window openings and limestone wing walls. It is visible on a 1947 aerial photograph, and was likely built around 1936. The Limestone Entry is built into the slope. It was originally used as an underground food cellar to store produce from the farm. Now it is used for storage. The 1947 aerial photograph shows a rectangular structure to the northeast, which was possibly a courtyard or recreational court. However, this structure may not have been related to the Limestone Entry.<sup>lv</sup>



To the east of the Main Building and south of the Gas House, a wooden structure supports **Generators** (pictured below). It was built around 1995.<sup>lvi</sup>



On the north edge of the Pond, is a wooden **Fishing Platform** that was built in the 1990s (pictured below, in the background). North of the Fishing Platform, there is a collapsed wooden structure (pictured below, in the foreground), which was a walkway to the Fishing Platform.<sup>lvii</sup>



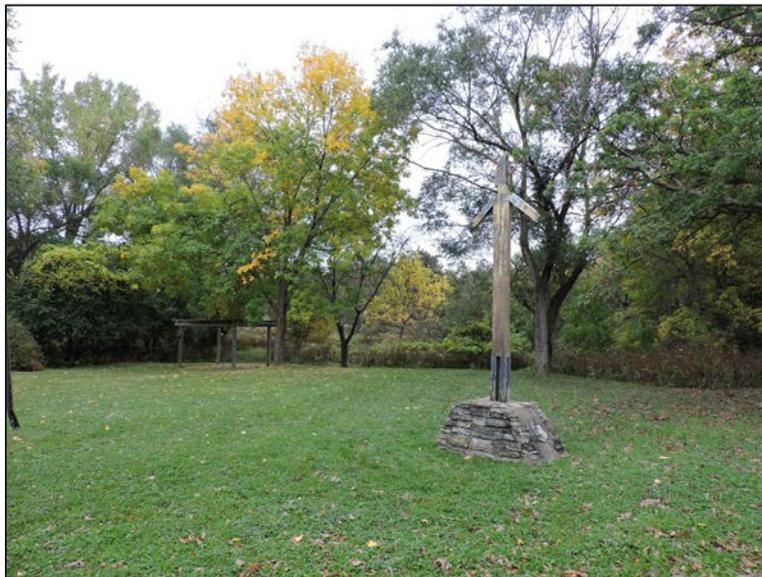
## Objects

There are several objects on the property, near the main entrance on Totem Road and along the trail network. The locations of these objects confirm that human activity occurred throughout the property, not just in the buildings.

The main driveway from Totem Road has a wood **Entrance Sign**, similar in style to those found at the entrance to state parks, and limestone walls on either side of the driveway. The limestone walls date to the 1930s.<sup>lviii</sup>



To the southeast of the Entrance Sign, there is a **Totem Pole** (pictured below, at right). This was likely built in the 1980s.<sup>lix</sup>



Farther south along the circle driveway, near the Pond, there are two **benches** (pictured below). They were likely built in the 1950s or 1960s, however, the wood has been replaced.<sup>lx</sup>



Near the Fishing Platform, there is a **metal table** (pictured below), whose original purpose is not known.



Along the main trail loop, there are various **exercise stations** (pictured below), which were built by the residents. These include: monkey bars, parallel bars, weights, a high bar, tires used for Frisbee golf, and wood planks and a suspended balancing log as part of a low ropes course. The ropes course was built in the 1970s followed by the exercise stations in the 1980s and the Frisbee golf course in the 1990s.<sup>lxi</sup>



The residents also built a **nesting pole** or platform for birds of prey, however, it is believed that it was not high enough for the intended birds.<sup>lxii</sup>



To the south of the group of buildings, there is a clearing for a **Fire Pit** (pictured below) surrounded by benches. It may have been built in the 1980s.<sup>lxiii</sup>



To the east of the Fire Pit, there are two wooden frames that were the base of **sweat lodges** (pictured below) created by the residents. They were likely built in the 1990s or early 2000s.<sup>lxiv</sup>



Lastly, off the main trail loop, there is a **frame** of a Ford Model A (pictured below), which ran a tow rope for the ski hill.



## Sites

The **North Sports Field** (so named for the purpose of this report and pictured below) is located to the north of the Main Building and surrounded by the circle driveway. A 1947 aerial photograph depicts a baseball diamond in this field, in a similar location as the current baseball diamond.<sup>lxv</sup> At one point, this field had a pool that was later filled in. Then the field was used for a volleyball court and horseshoes/game area.<sup>lxvi</sup>



The **South Sports Field** (so named for the purpose of this report and pictured below) is located to the south of the Main Building and west of Kohler Hall. It used to be farmland and was established between 1966 and 1972. There was a horse corral in the present location of Kohler Hall. A round structure, presumably the horse corral, is visible in a 1966 aerial photograph.<sup>lxvii</sup>



There is a **Garden** (pictured below) south of S-1, which was established in the 1990s.<sup>lxviii</sup>



A **Pond** (pictured below) is east of the Main Building. It is depicted on the 1916 G.M. Hopkins Co. map and is visible on a 1923 aerial photograph.<sup>lxix</sup> The residents used this natural pond for fishing and swimming in the summer, and skating and hockey in the winter. It was naturally populated with bullheads and stocked with other fish for some time. However, the water quality declined due to runoff and nearby construction/development.<sup>lxx</sup>



Near the Pond, the residents built a **Cascade** (pictured below). Water was pumped from the Pond to the top of the Cascade and came out of the pipe, which remains. It may have been built in the 1950s or 1960s.<sup>lxxi</sup>



Just north of the Pond, there is a **mowed area** (pictured below) that may have served as an exercise court.



The **natural landscape** (pictured below) was also considered a place for recreation for residents, and continues to be used by neighbors for recreation today. There used to be a ski hill and a ski jump, and neighbors continue to cross-country ski here in winter.



Throughout the south half of the property, there is an extensive **Trail Network** (pictured below and minimally visible on Figure 1), with one main loop and several off-shoots. Some of the trails formed naturally and others were built by the residents.



Finally, there are many old growth oaks on the property, but one **oak tree** (pictured below) may date back to 1776, located in the northeast quadrant of the property.<sup>lxxii</sup>



# ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

## Methodology

During the site visit on September 29, 2020, Patty McDonald of BTT-LPG shared first-hand knowledge about the property and region relevant to the archaeological assessment. The project team followed the main trail and observed the topography, vegetation, and evidence of human activity, and Patty shared stories regarding previous land use. Notably, Patty pointed out an area northeast of the main cluster of buildings on the property that was rumored to contain a burial mound. Following this tour, the archaeologist hiked through the woods and prairies off the main trail to identify signs of human activity that were not included in Patty's tour. No obvious signs of the burial mound were found, but a high point in the landscape typical of burial mounds was located. The archaeologist took field notes and digital photographs. After the site visit, the archaeologist consulted historical maps and aerial photographs to assess the potential for archaeological resources.

Initial research, stories of the property, and the surrounding landscape suggest the potential for the property to contain archaeological resources that tell us about the history of Boys Totem Town and American Indian use of the land. Such resources could include artifact deposits related to Boys Totem Town residents' activities near the historic buildings and on trails made by the residents, as well as American Indian campsites, workshops, or burial mounds. Assessing archaeological potential of the Boys Totem Town property includes identifying portions of the property that contain indicators of either low or high potential to contain intact archaeological resources. Indicators of low potential include areas that have been previously disturbed, areas with intense landscape slope, poorly drained areas, and former or existing wetland areas. It is unlikely that any archaeological resources were deposited in these types of areas, or if any were deposited, it would be unlikely remain intact. Indicators of high potential include areas located nearby existing or former water sources, located near a previously reported site, near historical structures, and/or on or near prominent landscape features. Areas such as these are generally a locus of human activity and, as long as they have not been disturbed, archaeological materials related to those activities are likely to exist within them.

## Previous Studies and Sites

Based on information at the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the Minnesota Office of the State Archaeologist (OSA), no archaeological surveys have been conducted on the Boys Totem Town property. Two archaeological sites are within one mile of the property. One of these sites, the Pigs Eye Lake site, is a set of two Dakota burial mounds. This site was investigated in 1979. The other site, the Crooked Tree site, is a single Dakota burial mound. This site was recorded in 1980 but never confirmed by archaeological field work. Burial mounds need to be approached with great sensitivity, and to support their protection, specific locations of the mounds are not accessible to the public. For this reason, no map showing the mounds locations is included in the report. The nature of sites in the general vicinity of Boys Totem Town property can shed light on the type of archaeological resources that may be present at the property itself.

There is one archaeological site located within the boundaries of the Boys Totem Town property, the Carlson site. This site was identified by a local resident, Lawrence Carlson, in his community garden plot south of the Afton View Apartments as he tilled the ground. He discovered a small projectile point in the soil, and it was turned over to the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC). The community garden is next to a compost site, where materials are brought from throughout the larger community. It is unclear if the projectile point was brought to the community garden in a load of compostable material from elsewhere, or if it originates from the Boys Totem Town property.

## Historical Research

The earliest available map that depicts the Boys Totem Town property is an 1848 Bureau of Land Management General Land Office (BLM GLO) survey map. This map depicts the area as lightly wooded prairie situated on a bluff top with the Mississippi River (Haha Wakpa) to the west.<sup>lxxiii</sup> This map shows no development, such as trails, roads, or structures, located on the property. An 1874 Ramsey County map similarly depicts the area as without development.<sup>lxxiv</sup> Both of these maps depict a stream within the Boys Totem Town property that is not present today. Minnesota state plat maps from 1916 depict the Boys Totem Town property as largely undeveloped, but the surrounding area is divided amongst numerous landowners and roadways surround the property itself on three sides.<sup>lxxv</sup> These roads match the alignment of the present-day Burlington Road, Totem Road, and London Lane East.

A historical aerial photograph from 1923 (pictured below) shows the majority of the Boys Totem Town property (identified by a red oval) as prairie and oak savanna, and the areas that are not prairie are either buildings or a small plowed agricultural field.<sup>lxxvi</sup>



1923 Aerial Photograph, Courtesy of Minnesota Historical Aerial Photographs Online

In the 1930s and 1940s, the area surrounding the Boys Totem Town property began to develop as houses were constructed. This residential development is visible on a historical aerial photograph from 1957 (pictured below). On the Boys Totem Town property, some of the agricultural areas were cleared for recreational uses. Surrounding the Boys Totem property, the area remained primarily rural.<sup>lxxvii</sup> The Boys Totem Town property is identified by a red oval.



1957 Aerial Photograph, Courtesy of Minnesota Historical Aerial Photographs Online

By 1972, additional structures had been built on the Boys Totem Town property, as summarized above in the Property History, and Architectural and Cultural Landscape Assessment sections, and the landscape itself appeared to be less open and additional trees and scrubland had begun to occupy larger portions of the property.<sup>lxxviii</sup> Recent development includes the presence of a community garden and compost site to the northeast of the main cluster of buildings between 1981 and 1990, and the construction of additional buildings near the central cluster.<sup>lxxixlxxx</sup>

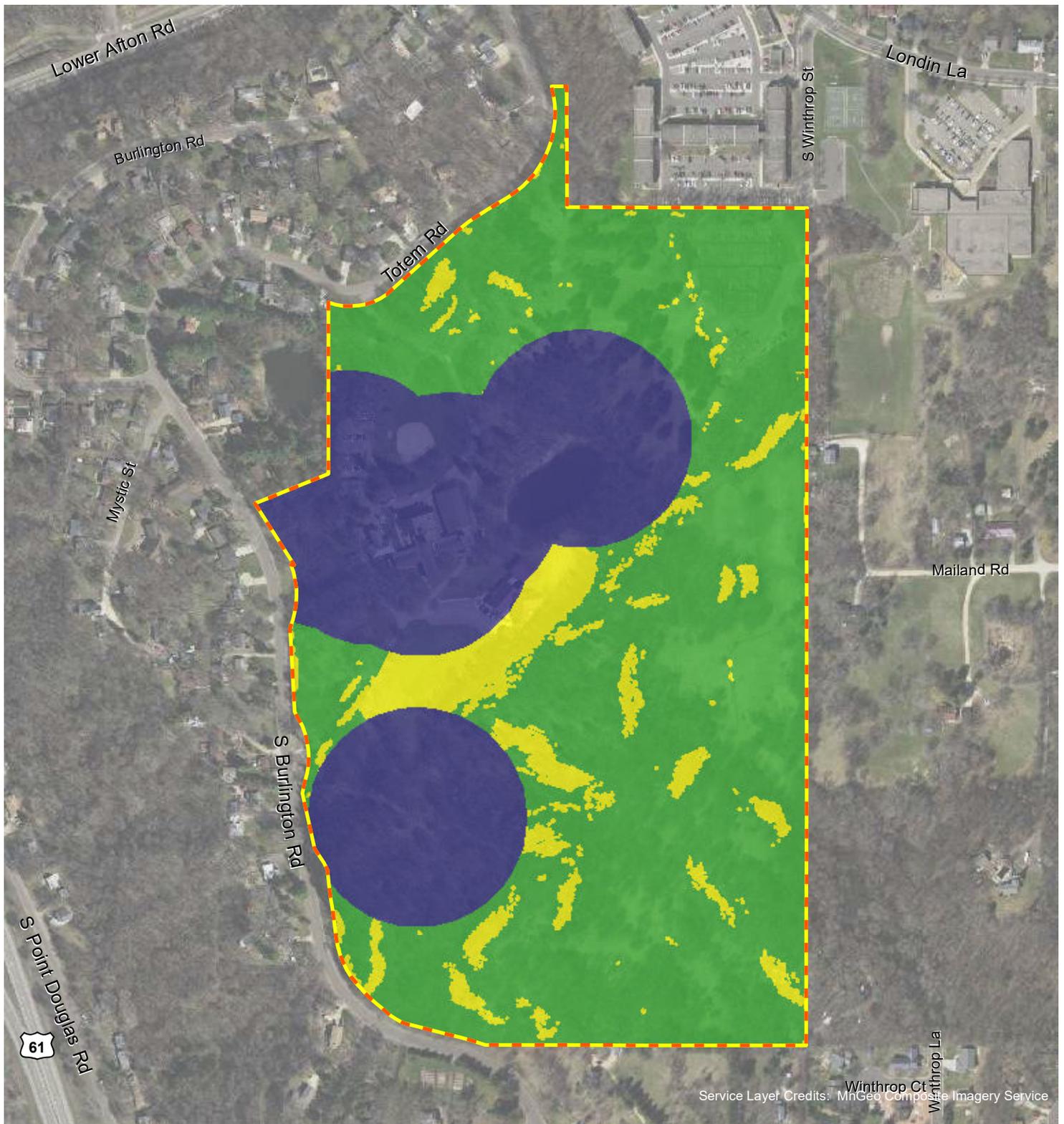
## Assessment of Potential

In general, the potential for archaeological resources to be located within the Boys Totem Town property is high (see Figure 2). This is due to the long history of use by residents of Boys Totem Town and extensive use of the entire Mississippi River (Haha Wakpa) channel by the Dakota. These resources can be grouped into precontact archaeological resources (before the arrival of European settlers) and post-contact archaeological resources (after settlement).

Any areas on the property that are located on very steep slopes or within the ponds have low potential to include either precontact or post-contact archaeological resources. Additionally, any areas that have been subjected to intense ground disturbance, either through the construction of buildings or significant alteration of the landscape for recreational activities, have low potential to contain either precontact or post-contact archaeological resources.

The portion of the property near the Carlson Site has high potential to contain precontact archaeological resources, as such resources have already been recovered from that area. Regardless if the archaeological resources from the Carlson Site originate from outside the Boys Totem Town property, there may be other resources within and near the site. High spots of the property that are near the rumored burial mound have a high potential to contain precontact archaeological resources. Additionally, due to the nature of the landform and its position relative to the Mississippi River (Haha Wakpa), any portions of the property that have not been subjected to past disturbance have high potential to contain precontact archaeological resources.

The yards and general vicinity of the historic buildings near the center of the property that have not been previously disturbed have high potential to contain post-contact archaeological resources. Any historic-period recreational areas located along trails and in the forest on the property, including permanent fire pits, the top or bottom of the ski lift and ski jump, and sweat lodges, have high potential to contain post-contact archaeological resources.



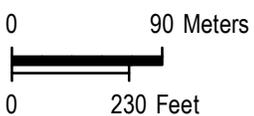
Source: 106 Group; MnDOT; Ramsey County, MN

Map Produced by 106 Group 10/20/2020

**Boys Totem Town:  
Foundation and Vision**  
Saint Paul, Ramsey County, Minnesota

**Archaeology Assessment Results**

-  Boys Totem Town Property Boundary
-  Low Potential
-  High Precontact Archaeological Potential
-  High Post-Contact Archaeological Potential



1:4,500



**Figure 2**

## NEXT STEPS

### A Vision

The Boys Totem Town property is a rare gem in our region. It is a special place that provides a connection to the past, a respite for today, and a potential model for future re-use. What makes this place special?

- The Boys Totem Town property is one of the last mostly undisturbed places along the Mississippi River in Ramsey County
- The Boys Totem Town property includes historical and archaeological resources that are potentially significant from millennia of human activity and offer opportunities for cultural learning
- The grounds and trails can be repurposed to promote human health and wellness, ecological health, and environmental stewardship
- There is sound building stock that can be repurposed for a range of functions
- The Boys Totem Town property could feature new gathering places for recreation and leisure close to a major urban center, accessible by a range of transit options, yet also provide a natural, outdoor experience
- The Boys Totem Town property could be managed through creative partnerships and funding sources

Imagine an Environmental and Cultural Education Campus—a place for families, students, hikers, nature lovers, and history lovers to come together to learn, appreciate, and reflect on the meaning of this place or just to simply enjoy the outdoors unhindered by urban intrusions. *A Place to Preserve + Explore*

### Key Topics & Resources

This report includes an initial property history, an architectural and cultural landscape assessment, and an archaeological assessment. The Boys Totem Town property may be historically and culturally significant for numerous reasons and associated with multiple key topics and resources.

The property may carry meaning for American Indian tribes, given its proximity to Kaposia Village (Kapoza). In the late 1800s, the property became a farm and may reflect important agricultural patterns. In its conversion to a detention home in the early 1900s and operation for over 100 years, the property may also be significant within the history of juvenile detention centers as Boys Totem Town represented a different approach to previous models and encouraged education. Boys Totem Town may also be significant to the communities from which the residents came and for the impacts of the facility on these communities. Some of the later history of the detention facility also provide an opportunity to continue to address issues of inequality and social justice in our public policies. Within the context of the Highwood neighborhood, it may also be significant as a largely undeveloped parcel of land used by residents and neighbors for recreation. As there are buildings on the property that were constructed from the 1930s to the 1990s, this property may also reflect important events in local history that have not yet been identified.

There are suspected and known burial sites in and near the property and a high potential for uncovering many more archaeological resources, associated with both Indigenous history and Euro-American history from the Boys Totem Town era. This foundational research provides a baseline of understanding from which a variety of future studies can develop.

## Master Planning Framework

Re-purposing this property, and preserving the historic and natural resources, is a major undertaking that requires a clear plan, strong leadership, and engaged partners. The vision must be inspiring and the goals achievable to ensure reaching a successful outcome.

A Master Plan is the next logical step for setting goals and objectives, and prioritizing actions over a short and long-term period. The Master Plan should include:

1. Historic District Evaluation for National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) Eligibility
  - a. Architectural History
  - b. Archaeology
  - c. Burial Mounds
2. Cultural Landscape Report
3. Natural Resources Management Plan
4. Reuse Study and Land Use Plan
5. Visitor Interpretive Experience Plan
6. Management and Funding Analysis
7. Sustainable Strategies for Implementation

These components may be done separately or in a single effort, depending on funding support.

## Historic District Evaluation

Depending on the development of the property, future activity and any historical documentation may need to comply with federal, state, and/or local cultural resources laws or regulations. Specific laws are described in Appendix A.

Regardless of the regulatory framework that may apply to future development, there should be:

1. Appropriate archaeological investigations prior to any ground disturbing activities. Any archaeological investigations should include consultation with local Tribes, particularly the four Dakota communities
2. Appropriate historical evaluation of the Boys Totem Town property as a potential historic district or cultural landscape

The evaluation would include addressing the following key components for cultural resources: architectural history, cultural landscape, archaeology, and burial mounds.

## Architectural History

The architectural and cultural landscape assessment indicated that there are several resources on the Boys Totem Town property that are 50 years of age or older and may be eligible for listing in the NRHP. Additionally, the Boys Totem Town property may have significance as a cultural landscape due to its various uses over time. Regardless of the type of development planned, an intensive (or Phase II) architectural history survey by a qualified architectural historian is recommended to investigate the eligibility of the property for listing in the NRHP.

## Archaeology

The archaeological assessment identified numerous areas within the Boys Totem Town property that have high potential to contain either or both precontact and post-contact archaeological resources. If future planning and development does not include significant ground disturbance, the best way to preserve any archaeological resources is to leave them uninvestigated.

If development would require ground disturbance in any areas of high archaeological potential, additional archaeological research and potentially field work is recommended. While the exact nature of future archaeological work will vary depending on the type of development planned, a Phase I archaeological survey by a qualified archaeologist in all areas that contain high potential for archaeological resources that may be impacted by development would be an appropriate way to investigate if any and what type of archaeological resources are located in these areas. If any development is to occur near the Carlson Site, Phase I archaeological survey is recommended to investigate if the soils in and near the site are intact or have been brought in from other locations in the community.

Another consideration is that an archaeological survey could be set up as a training opportunity for youth, particularly Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC). It could be part of future educational programming in collaboration with Tribes, local colleges and schools, and youth programs. See partnerships below for further discussion. We also recommend that all work related to archaeological sites and burial mounds be done in consultation with Dakota Tribal Historic Preservation Officers.

## Burial Mounds

Additionally, if any development is to occur near the prominent landscape rise that may be a burial mound, coordination with the MIAC and OSA is recommended.

## Cultural Landscape Report

Because of the Boys Totem Town property's diverse history, a Cultural Landscape Report (CLR) would be beneficial to guide "management and treatment decisions about a landscape's physical attributes, biotic systems, and use when that use contributes to historic significance."<sup>lxxxi</sup> Such a report would encompass archaeological, architectural, and landscape investigations and serve as a comprehensive planning tool.

## Natural Resources Management Plan

A natural resources inventory should be conducted for the property. Nature-based activities such as wildlife observation, environmental education and interpretation, and enjoying quiet places in nature are a few of the possibilities for this place. The plan should include recommendations for landscape resource

management programs; eco-system (oak savanna) restoration; habitat restoration, enhancement, and protection; and education to protect natural resources and encourage broader support for long-term environmental stewardship.

## Reuse Study and Land Use Plan

As the facility was only closed in 2019, the buildings are assumed to be in good condition. A reuse study and land-use plan should be prepared by a qualified preservation architect, landscape architect, and/or other qualified professional to understand how and for what purposes the existing buildings and surrounding lands can be reused. This process should include extensive consultation with a variety of stakeholders. If the property is found to be historically significant at the local or national level, this study must consider what character-defining features must be retained and preserved to convey the property's historical significance. Potential reuse of the Boys Totem Town buildings could include a wacipi (pow wow) grounds, an interpretive and visitor center, a community center, an event center for gatherings such as weddings, and/or an environmental learning center (ELC).

## Visitor Interpretive Experience Plan

The outcome of the reuse study and land use plan will inform the appropriate type of interpretive study. Interpretive planning is a strategic process that defines the overall interpretive and educational goals of a place. This process focuses on visitor experiences, including audience identification, sensory connections, and accessibility. A visitor interpretive experience plan documents the goals and actions needed to create these experiences, meet management goals, and consider resource protection as visitors use and enjoy the place. The plan should anticipate short-term and long-term goals and needs.<sup>lxxxii</sup>

## Management and Funding Analysis

The county's limited funding resources and the investment required to recognize the proposed opportunities, indicates that new collaborative models for developing and managing the property and services should be explored and developed. Innovative public and private partnerships are one way to develop new facilities. Events or recreation facilities can be supported with private vendors and program facilitators, and integrated into public use areas on privately owned sites. Several potential partners have been identified, including nonprofit organizations, to protect and interpret important natural, historic, cultural, and archaeological sites. Partnerships with other public entities, will be vitally important to address environmental and recreational needs and to better connect the Boys Totem Town property to the larger metropolitan area and the region.

## Sustainable Strategies for Implementation

Identifying long-term and short-term needs and goals, and well as linking implementation with key stakeholder groups can effectively establish and build momentum for site reuse and a meaningful next chapter for Boys Totem Town. Consolidated, sustainable strategies for implementation, a dedicated stewardship structure, a clear vision for the future, and strong leadership will be central to the implementation of the Master Plan.

## Partnerships, Stakeholders, and Funding

To repurpose a property of this nature, relationships with stakeholders and potential partners from the beginning cannot be underestimated. Boys Totem Town Land Preservation Group and Lower Phalen Creek Project should establish long-term relationships with key partners through a working group. Ongoing community and stakeholder engagement will also be key to build momentum for the project. Following are some suggested partners and stakeholders. The list is a starting place for consideration, not a complete list.

### Government

- Ramsey County
- City of Saint Paul (Parks and Recreation, Heritage Preservation Commission, Community Planning & Economic Development)
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- Metropolitan Council
- Capitol Region Watershed District and/or Ramsey Washington Metro Watershed District
- Councilmember Ward 7

### Health & Wellness

- Health and wellness foundations such as Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation, Wilder Foundation, the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation

### Educational Institutions

- Saint Paul Schools District
- Metropolitan State University
- Center for Global Environmental Education at Hamline University
- Community Colleges
- Other regional environmental education centers, e.g., Dodge Nature Center
- Minnesota Historical Society
- Minnesota Humanities Center

### Events Industry

- Events planners and developers, especially businesses owned by and catering to Black, Indigenous, and people of color.

### Cultural Groups

- Boys Totem Town former residents and staff
- Wakan Tipi Center/Lower Phalen Creek Project

- Shakopee Mdewakanton Dakota Community
- Prairie Island Indian Community
- Upper Sioux Indian Community
- Lower Sioux Indian Community
- Minnesota Indian Affairs Council
- Hmong Cultural Center
- Hmong American Partnership
- St. Paul NAACP
- St. Paul Urban League

### Other Civic and/or Non-Profit Organizations

- Highwood area neighbors
- Friends of Ramsey County Parks and Trails
- Friends of the Mississippi River
- Urban Boat Builders
- East Side Arts Council
- East Side Freedom Library

# APPENDIX A

## Cultural Resources Laws & Regulations

### Federal

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) requires federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic and cultural resources. If development of the Boys Totem Town property requires federal agency permitting or approval, such as from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) or U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), then next steps would include identification of historic properties and evaluation of eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). This process requires consultation with the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) for each federally recognized tribe. Once historic properties are identified, the federal agency, in consultation with the above-mentioned parties, the public, and other stakeholders, determines which if any historic properties will be adversely affected. If the undertaking will result in an adverse effect, and the adverse effect cannot be avoided, it must be minimized and mitigated. Mitigation may include further documentation or interpretation. Listing in the NRHP may provide access to funding for rehabilitation and re-use, such as the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives.

### State

The following state statutes address cultural resources in Minnesota:

- Minnesota Field Archaeology Act
- Minnesota Historic Sites Act
- Minnesota Historic Districts Act
- Minnesota Private Cemeteries Act
- Minnesota Environmental Policy Act
- Minnesota Environmental Rights Act

For archaeological resources, because Boys Totem Town is non-federal public land, it is critical that all activities that may impact archaeological resources involves consultation with SHPO, OSA, and MIAC.

For architectural history resources, state cultural resources laws only consider those resources that are either listed in the State Register of Historic Places and/or part of the State Historic Sites Network or NRHP. State-level designation is possible only through an act of legislation.

### Local

The City of Saint Paul is a Certified Local Government (CLG) in the National Historic Preservation Program. Accordingly, it supports a qualified heritage preservation commission (HPC), maintains a system for the survey and inventory of historic properties, enforces appropriate state and local legislation for the designation and protection of historic properties, and provides for public participation in its

preservation program. Local landmark designation recognizes the importance of a building's historical, architectural, cultural, or geographical value in a community. These designations can be applied to an individual building/site or to a collection of buildings/area, known as a historic district. The purpose of designating a site locally is not to prevent change, but to recognize the structure's contribution to the community and provide guidance through alterations, restorations, or improvements. Once locally designated for heritage preservation, a property cannot be modified or demolished without being reviewed by Saint Paul's Heritage Preservation staff and the HPC. Alterations, demolitions, and new construction activities remain possible, but are first reviewed by the HPC to ensure that compatibility is maintained with the historic character recognized through a property's designation.

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- <sup>xii</sup> Reuben H. Donnelley, *Donnelley's Atlas of St. Paul* (Reuben H. Donnelley, Saint Paul, Minnesota, 1892), Plate 28.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Bobbi Scott, "Snapshots of Boys Totem Town," *Ramsey County History* 54 no. 4 (Winter 2020):4.
- <sup>xiv</sup> *Minneapolis Tribune*, "Ambrose Tighe, 69, Dies in St. Paul," November 13, 1928, 14.
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- <sup>xvii</sup> Bobbi Scott, "Snapshots of Boys Totem Town," *Ramsey County History* 54 no. 4 (Winter 2020):3.
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