

## 2019 Most Endangered Historic Places in Illinois

### Sheffield National Register Historic District

#### QUICK STATS

- **Location:** Chicago's Lincoln Park neighborhood. (Approx. Willow Street to the south, Larabee Street & Lincoln Avenue to the east, Fullerton Parkway to the north, and Southport, Lakewood & Maud Avenues to the west).
- **Built:** Mixed, many mid- to late-19<sup>th</sup> century
- **Architect:** Various
- **Historic significance:** This Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is one of the best examples of a late-19<sup>th</sup> century neighborhood in Chicago.
- **Why it is endangered:** For over 25 years, historic buildings have been torn down at an alarming rate to make space for new construction. National Register listing is honorific and does not provide protection.
- **Take Action:** Voice your support with local alderman and community organizations for potential additional protective historic districts at the local level and help us advocate for potential new citywide policies that protect places like these historic homes. (Read more below)



*Credit: Matt Wicklund*

#### BACKGROUND

The [footprint](#) of the Sheffield National Register Historic District includes much of the western part of Chicago's Lincoln Park neighborhood. The area is primarily residential, interlaced with well-defined and popular commercial streets such as Halsted and Armitage. The district is also home to a number of historic schools, churches and parks, as well as DePaul University.

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Although it contains a variety of building types, the easily recognizable urban, middle-class character of Sheffield is valued by residents and visitors alike. The neighborhood was largely built from the 1860s through the early 20th century, and it remains one of the best-preserved late-19<sup>th</sup> century neighborhoods in the city. Homes in the neighborhood display a wonderful range of historic building styles, including early wooden Italianate cottages and brick Italianate row houses, which are becoming increasingly rare in Chicago due to demolition and redevelopment. The neighborhood also features a number of larger masonry homes in variations on the Queen Anne and Romanesque styles. Commercial buildings in the district are particularly notable, with many brightly colored examples of Queen Anne architecture.



*(Demolished)*

From the 1920s through the 1950s, the neighborhood suffered a period of decline as many Chicago residents left urban neighborhoods in favor of the growing suburbs. Luckily, most of Sheffield's historic buildings survived until the 1960s, when the neighborhood again began to flourish. Since then, property values have skyrocketed and Lincoln Park has become one of the more popular and fashionable neighborhoods in Chicago.

In 1976, the historic nature of the Sheffield area received national recognition when it was added to the National Register of Historic Places as a Historic District. Over the next decade, the district received three extensions in the 1980s to its current footprint. While this designation provided no formal protections, it served as an indicator of the historic and architectural value of the neighborhood.

#### **CURRENT THREAT**

Since the National Register recognition, the Sheffield district has suffered from a tear-down epidemic, losing its irreplaceable 19<sup>th</sup>-century buildings at an alarming rate. As property values continue to rise, developers have torn down more historic homes and multi-unit flats to make way for new single-family mansions and condominium buildings that are largely unsympathetic to the neighborhood's historic character.



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Some areas of the Sheffield National Register Historic District have received protection through designation as Chicago Landmark Districts, including the McCormick Row House (1977), Burling Row House (2000), Armitage-Halsted (2003), Fremont Row House (2004) and Bissell Street (2007) Chicago Landmark Districts. A small section of the Mid North (1977) Landmark District is located in the Sheffield National Register District as well. Unfortunately, these protected areas still make up the minority of the district, protecting only 20 blocks.<sup>1</sup> To date, [over 350 properties in the historic district have been demolished](#), approximately a third of its building stock.

#### WHAT YOU CAN DO

If you are a resident of the Sheffield National Register Historic District, continue to [voice support with the alderman](#) and community organizations for finding solutions to discourage demolition of historic properties. While additional local historic districts should be encouraged, new citywide policies such as a higher fees for the demolition of National Register-listed buildings and [allowances for accessory dwelling units \(ADU\)](#), which may give building owners who feel priced out of their neighborhoods to seek new income-options for their historic properties, should be studied.

#### FURTHER READING

- [Map of tear-downs in the Historic District](#)
- [Data on demolished or significantly altered properties within the Historic District \(PDF\)](#)
- [910-912 W. Webster demolition](#)  
Preservation Chicago
- [Teardown makes way for mansion](#)  
Chicago Cityscape
- [See Chicago Cityscape's detailed map of the district.](#)

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<sup>1</sup> Roughly 253 of the 1000+ structures within the Sheffield National Register Historic District are protected by Chicago Landmark District status.