



Carpenter Street Underpass & Archaeological Site

Frequently Asked Questions

1) What is the Carpenter Street Underpass Project?

The project is the initial funded segment of the Springfield Rail Improvements Project and is a recipient of a 2013 U.S. Department of Transportation's, Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) Grant. The Project is intended to reduce congestion, improve safety and provide improved access to area hospitals from locations east of Eleventh Street. It involves lowering Carpenter Street between Ninth and Eleventh Streets, constructing new dual track railroad bridges, and completing three blocks of drainage, grading and sub-ballast south of Carpenter Street to support future phases of the Springfield Rail Improvements Project.

2) What is the timeline for the Carpenter Street Underpass project?

The project was approved by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) under the 2012 Springfield Rail Improvements Project Record of Decision (ROD). The ROD included a commitment for continuing coordination between FRA and the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency for the evaluation of potential archaeological resources within the project area. Work on the Carpenter Street Underpass began in September of 2014. The archaeological site work does not affect the project, and construction is on schedule and on budget. The project is anticipated to be completed in early 2016.

3) What is contained in the archaeological site?

The portion of the archaeological site in the Carpenter Street Underpass Project area contains the brick foundations and basements of seven residences and associated artifacts.

4) What is the significance of the archaeological site?

The house foundations date back to pre-1870s. A Madeiran Portuguese community resided in the project area and represented one of the earliest and largest Portuguese settlements in the Midwest. By the early twentieth century, the project area represented the western extension of a neighborhood known as the "Badlands." The Badlands was included in the widespread destruction and violence of the Springfield Race Riot in August 1908, an event that led to the formation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The Carpenter Street archaeological site possesses local and national significance for its potential to contribute to an understanding of the lifestyles of multiple ethnic/racial groups in Springfield during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

5) How big is the archaeological site?

The portion of the archaeological site in the Project area is approximately three blocks (500-foot-long by 50-foot-wide). Based on archival research and the archaeological investigations conducted to date, it is likely that the archaeological site extends westward from the railroad right-of-way between Carpenter and Madison Streets beneath the existing St. John's Hospital parking lot, where it is currently preserved in place and would not be affected by the railroad project.



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6) What is Section 106?

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires federal agencies to consider the effects on historic properties of projects they carry out, approve, or fund. Throughout the Section 106 review process, federal agencies must give the public a chance to learn about the project and provide their views. Through the Section 106 process, the public is able to learn and ask questions about the project; provide information on cultural resources and historic properties in the project area; discuss how the project might affect those resources; and identify and discuss possible ways to address those effects.

7) Who are the Section 106 consulting parties?

The following parties are entitled to participate as consulting parties during the Section 106 review:

- Advisory Council on Historic Preservation;
- State Historic Preservation Officers;
- Federally recognized Indian tribes/THPOs;
- Native Hawaiian organizations;
- Local governments; and
- Applicants for federal assistance, permits, licenses, and other approvals.

Other individuals and organizations with a demonstrated interest in the project may participate in the Section 106 review as consulting parties “due to the nature of their legal or economic relation to the undertaking or affected properties, or their concern with the undertaking’s effects on historic properties.” Such participation is subject to approval by the responsible federal agency.

Two public meetings were held in the spring of 2015 to identify consulting parties with an interest in the archaeological site. Consulting parties on the Carpenter Street Archaeological Site Section 106 process include: Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.; Epsilon Sigma Chapter of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc.; Faith Coalition for the Common Good; Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce; Hospital Sisters Health System; Illinois Legislative Black Caucus; Illinois State Museum Research and Collections Center, Landmarks Illinois; NAACP - Springfield Chapter; Sangamon County Historical Society; Save Old Springfield; Southern Illinois University School of Medicine; Springfield & Central Illinois African-American History Museum; St. John’s Hospital; State Representative Al Riley; State Representative Tim Butler; and The Springfield Historic Sites Commission.

Contact Information

If you are interested in being included on an email and/or mailing list to receive updates about the Section 106 process for the Carpenter Street archaeological site, including future public meetings, please contact:

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