

FINAL

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Northside Boulevard Riverwall  
other names/site number Northside Boulevard WPA Project 141-597-36421

2. Location

street & number 600-1100 Northside Boulevard N/A  not for publication  
city or town South Bend N/A  vicinity  
state Indiana code IN county St. Joseph code 141 zip code 46617/46615

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Indiana Department of Natural Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date \_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Northside Boulevard Riverwall  
Name of Property

St. Joseph IN  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	0	buildings
1	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

New Deal Work Relief Projects in St. Joseph County, IN

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

LANDSCAPE: Park  
RECREATION/CULTURE: Outdoor Recreation

LANDSCAPE: Park  
RECREATION/CULTURE: Outdoor Recreation

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

NO STYLE

foundation CONCRETE  
walls STONE: Fieldstone  
roof  
other

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION \_\_\_\_\_

SOCIAL HISTORY \_\_\_\_\_

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1935-1955 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1935 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A \_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Works Progress Administration (WPA) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographic References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Northside Boulevard Riverwall  
Name of Property

St. Joseph IN  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 3.8 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	16	563010	4613490	3	16	563530	4612380
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	16	563390	4613490	4	16	563630	4612780

See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Glory-June Greiff  
organization \_\_\_\_\_ date 08-01-2005  
street & number 1753 S. Talbott St. telephone 317/637-6163  
city or town Indianapolis state IN zip code 46225

## Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

#### Photographs

Representative **black and white** photographs of the property.

### Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

## Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name South Bend Parks & Recreation, Phil St. Clair, Supt.  
street & number 321 E. Walter St. telephone 574/299-4765  
city or town South Bend state IN zip code 46614

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Northside Boulevard Riverwall

St. Joseph County, IN

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The City of South Bend, the seat of government in St. Joseph County, lies in the central north section of the county a few miles south of the Michigan state line. The St. Joseph River winds through the city skirting the east side of the downtown commercial area before turning in a westerly direction. Howard Park lies just east across the river from downtown South Bend, and the Sample Street bridge carries its route over the river to Northside Boulevard. The Northside Boulevard riverwall extends southward, and then eastward along the north bank of the St. Joseph River from the south boundary of Howard Park nearly two-thirds of a mile to the Sample Street bridge.

Apart from the interruption created in 1962 when the construction of the SR 23 bridge caused the demolition of a section of wall, the riverwall is continuous for about 3360 feet<sup>1</sup>. The site includes the riverwall (photos 1,12), a fieldstone bridge, a fieldstone grandstand located in Viewing Park, and five additional fieldstone stairways at irregular intervals, leading down the bank from the boulevard to the water's edge. Another small stair descends a shallow slope but does not reach the water. The two sets of stairs that lie between the Sample Street bridge and the SR 23 bridge are the most elaborate. A paved walk – dubbed the Riverwalk – created in 1984, runs along the upper bank at the top of the stairs, is routed behind the grandstand, then curves toward the river and continues alongside the riverwall. Only at this point is the Riverwalk within the boundaries of the historic site. While this was not part of the original development, it does not destroy the overall integrity of the WPA work. The stonework is dislodged, even missing in places, especially along the river, where the bank has eroded away from the wall. The concrete mortar needs attention and is gone in some areas. Even so, this is not so great as to compromise the integrity of the structure.

A fieldstone wall, an extension of the northwest abutment for the Sample Street bridge, flanks a stairway whose outside wall curves down to the river (photo 2). The entire ensemble is composed of fieldstone of random sizes. The walls taper at their top. There is not a comparable structure on the other side of the bridge approach.

The next stairway, 243 feet downstream, is more elaborate (photos 3, 4). The top of the stair is set off by low fieldstone piers with roughly conical tops. The stair, which is about twelve feet in width, as well as the associated features are composed of fieldstone in mortar. The landing expands on each side to form exhedras composed of the fieldstone and concrete for the seating. Conical-topped piers form a midpoint punctuation and then the stairway continues straight toward the water, finally set off again by conical-topped piers.

The next stairway (photo 5), 150 feet farther downstream, is the most fanciful of all. The main stair is entered by way of two sets of curving steps that flank an exhedra-shaped space with a seat projecting from its riverside wall at the first landing. Smaller semi-circular benches also extend into the landing area to more or less face the larger seat. From this landing, the main stair extends to the water's edge where there is opening in the riverwall. Like the stairway

<sup>1</sup>The SR 23 bridge underwent major repairs and reconstruction in 1984 and 1994.

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St. Joseph County, IN

upstream, this entire structure is composed of round-topped fieldstone walls punctuated at fairly even intervals by piers with conical tops. The seats are smooth concrete.

A grandstand (photo 6), located 741 feet downstream along the riverwall and past SR 23, was constructed to accommodate the audiences of boat races that were commonplace in the 1930s. This feature is located in a space known as Viewing Park, originally named LaSalle Park. The entire park has not been included in this nomination due to the number of modern intrusions it contains. The grandstand is 110 feet wide; its outside walls composed of the same fieldstone construction already seen in the previously described stairways. The concrete tiers within the walls replaced of the original concrete-capped fieldstone tiers at the time the Riverwalk was created. A staging area (photo 7) immediately in front of the grandstand juts into the river twelve feet and is surrounded by fieldstone-constructed riverwall. Prior to the construction of the Riverwalk, this area was surfaced in grass.

Another fieldstone stair, located 420 feet further downstream, extends directly down the bank to the water's edge with a landing about two-thirds there. These stairs are 8 feet wide and flanked by the same low fieldstone walls already described. The bank is interrupted by additional stairways 152 feet further downstream (photo 10) and 428 feet beyond that (photo 11) plus a shorter flight (photo 8) in the flatter part of Viewing Park. All are characterized by the same fieldstone construction already identified.

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Northside Boulevard Riverwall

St. Joseph County, IN

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Southeast of downtown South Bend, following the St. Joseph River, the fanciful fieldstone walls and stairs along Northside Boulevard, built of glacial stones gathered from fields around the county, could be called the quintessential WPA project. As described in the multiple property listing document, "New Deal Work Relief Projects in St. Joseph County, Indiana", the identified property type, "New Deal work projects related to parks and recreation", the Northside Boulevard riverwall is eligible for the National Register for its significance in the areas of recreation and social history (Criterion A). It is also eligible under Criterion C because the site as a whole and its individual elements are representative of the style of construction and site development created by the WPA in St. Joseph County. The site retains integrity of location and setting. Its design and materials remain largely intact and display typical WPA workmanship, specifically the fieldstone construction. The site's high level of integrity confirms its association with New Deal Work Relief Projects in St. Joseph County.

At least on paper, Northside Boulevard along the St. Joseph River was part of George Kessler's 1912 plan for the city's park and boulevard system. His ambitious ideas, typical of his work, called for a system of greenways surrounding the city and running along both sides of the river with parks at intervals. Northside Boulevard was constructed to connect the extant Howard Park (itself to be enlarged) to the smaller property then called LaSalle Park and proceed on to the Mishawaka city limit.

Among the first WPA projects undertaken in South Bend upon its inception in August 1935 was the construction and improvement of Northside Boulevard along the St. Joseph River southeastward from downtown. None of the original work on the boulevard roadway itself survives; later improvements built upon that foundation. The original surface of the roadway was gravel. Actually, work on the boulevard had begun before 1935 under the auspices of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA). Part of the development was the beautification of the riverbank itself, which was done in stages until all was completed in 1938. From Howard Park to Sample Street, WPA workers erected a riverwall using abundant fieldstone found throughout St. Joseph County. The wall was primarily decorative but helpful in flood control to some degree. At irregular intervals fieldstone stairways gave access from the boulevard to the river's edge. Improvement of the area, then called LaSalle Park<sup>2</sup>, was the concluding phase completed in June 1938. Here the stairways were especially decorative, and WPA workers constructed a grandstand suitable for watching the boat races that were held on the river in that area. The park was adjacent to the National Guard Armory, on which the WPA also worked, building additions that included a garage. The riverbank beautification project was highly visible and a point of community pride.

WPA Projects related to parks and recreation often were constructed of recycled or locally acquired materials and assembled in a way that put less emphasis on high finish and refinement and

<sup>2</sup> Part of the former LaSalle Park became today's Viewing Park, which is the triangular area of land, the widest section between the river and the boulevard, that includes the fieldstone grandstand. The name LaSalle Park was transferred to another small park developed after World War II west of downtown South Bend.

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Northside Boulevard Riverwall

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more on direct application and simplicity. The stonework found in all elements of the riverwall site displays those qualities. The fieldstone, irregular in size and shape, was embedded in the mortar in such a way that it created irregular segments of wall and step surface that yielded an impression of rusticity. In summary, the site is locally significant and meets the registration requirements enumerated for its class of property type in the multiple property listing document. It merits listing in the National Register of Historic Places.



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Northside Boulevard Riverwall

St. Joseph County, IN

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

(See bibliography in "New Deal Work Relief Project in St. Joseph County" multiple property listing document)

Kessler, George E. & Co. "Plan of the Park and Boulevard System for South Bend, Indiana".  
1912.

Report of the Department of Public Parks, South Bend. 1913.

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

From the point at which the east bank of the St. Joseph River meets the southern boundary of Howard Park, follow the edge of the river upstream (southeasterly) to the Sample Street bridge, a distance of 3360 feet. From this point, proceed northeast along the bridge to the near edge of Northside Boulevard, a distance of 49 feet. From there proceed northwesterly along a line exactly paralleling the river's edge to a line extending due east from the point of origin.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary includes all of the continuous WPA-built fieldstone structures along the bank of the St. Joseph River along Northside Boulevard southeastward from Howard Park to the Sample Street bridge.



NORTHSHORE BOULEVARD  
 RIVERWALK  
 ST JOSEPH CHURCH  
 1) 16563010 4613490  
 2) 16563390 4613360  
 3) 16563530 4612380  
 4) 16563680 4612780  
 UTM 5 DEGREE  
 A LINEAR  
 FEATURE