

Inventory Number:	HE-MPC-22800		
Historic Name:	George Floyd Square Cultural Landscape	Address:	38th Street East and Chicago Avenue South

George Floyd Square was previously inventoried in 2025. At that time, it was recommended potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (National Register), but was not formally determined eligible due to its recent age.¹ A portion of George Floyd Square is located within the D Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Chicago Avenue and 38th Street Platform project's Area of Potential Effect (APE). In consultation with the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), it was determined that George Floyd Square is an exceptionally significant Cultural Landscape under *Criterion A: History* that meets *Criteria Consideration F: Commemorative Properties* and *Criteria Consideration G: Properties That Have Achieved Significance Within the Last Fifty Years*. The following evaluation was prepared to meet compliance requirements for the D Line BRT Chicago Avenue and 38th Street Platform project under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Section 106).

Description Narrative:

The George Floyd Square Cultural Landscape is centered around the intersection of Chicago Avenue South and 38th Street East in Minneapolis. In 2020, George Floyd, a 46-year-old Black man, was murdered while in police custody, north of the subject intersection, outside Unity Foods (formerly Cup Foods, HE-MPC-18020; Not Eligible). Immediately following the event, community members created a memorial for George Floyd at the site where he died. In subsequent days, they established "George Floyd Square" at the intersection and surrounding one-block radius, constructing barricades along Chicago Avenue at 37th and 39th Streets East, and along 38th Street East at Elliot and Columbus Avenues. George Floyd Square developed into a site of memorial and protest against racial injustice and police brutality. This function is expressed through memorials, art installations, murals, and posters displayed in residential and commercial properties (see Figure 1).² The site is evolving and elements are moved or regularly replaced, such as the memorial offerings brought by visitors. It is presently under construction as part of the City of Minneapolis (City)-led 38th and Chicago Re-Envisioned infrastructure improvement project. The following description of George Floyd Square is based on the appearance at the time of survey in August 2026.

George Floyd Square is generally centered on the intersection of Chicago Avenue South and 38th Street East within a densely developed urban neighborhood. Unity Foods is a freestanding commercial building located at the northeast quadrant of the intersection (see Figure 2). Billboards displaying messages of memorial to Floyd are on the roof and a mural depicting him is painted on the side (south) of the building. The memorial site where George Floyd was killed is located directly west of the building, within the sidewalk and Chicago Avenue parking lane. The memorial is surrounded by concrete jersey barriers and extends along the sidewalk and into Chicago Avenue. It is marked with a mural and surrounded by flowers, pieces of art, notes, and other offerings left by visitors. A former bus shelter covered with art, greenhouse, and box planters are located within the barriers.

¹ Steve Gallo, "George Floyd Square-HE-MPC-22800," 2025, Minnesota's Statewide Historic Inventory Portal.

² Murals, posters, and signage on private property are considered outside the landscape boundaries.

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Figure 1. The intersection of Chicago Avenue South and 38th Street East in George Floyd Square, view facing northwest. Note the central Black Power fist sculpture, People's Way on the left, and George Floyd Memorial Site located behind concrete jersey barriers on the right.

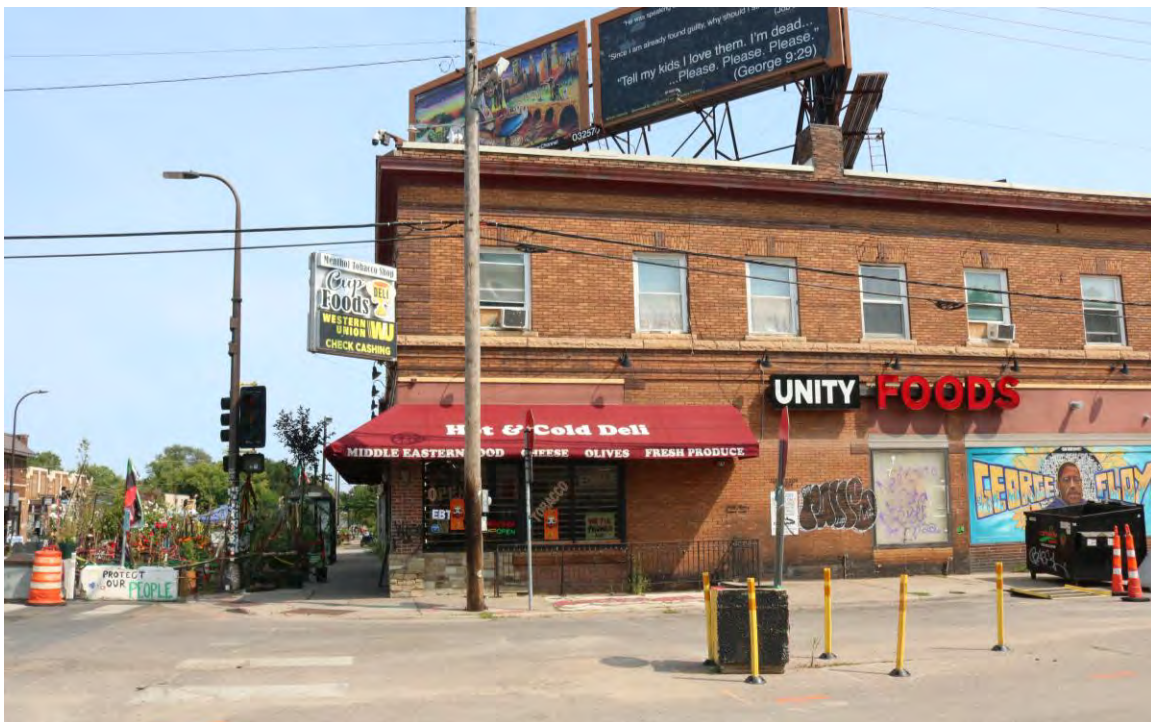


Figure 2. Unity Foods, located at the northeast corner of Chicago Avenue and 38th Street, and the George Floyd Memorial Site, located partially within the sidewalk and Chicago Avenue, view facing north. Note the mural on the side of the building and the billboards on the roof.

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The People's Way, a former Speedway gas station (HE-MPC-18024; Not Eligible) located at the northwest quadrant of the intersection, now primarily serves as a gathering space for regular meetings and events. It consists of the former store (now vacant and covered in murals and artwork), gas pump canopy, and secondary outbuildings (see Figure 3). The standalone canopy, which previously sheltered gas pumps that have since been removed, shelters a gathering area with tables and chairs (see Figure 4). Storage sheds are located south and northeast of the building, and two former bus shelters that have been repurposed as the People's Closet where donated clothing is freely available, are located to the south, partially within the sidewalk along 38th Street. The standalone sign associated with the gas station, located at the southeast corner of the property, welcomes visitors to the Square. A fourth former bus shelter, repurposed as an art installation, is located behind the sidewalk along Chicago Avenue.



Figure 3. The People's Way, located at the northwest corner of Chicago Avenue and 38th Street, includes a now vacant former Speedway store and a plywood storage structure (at the far left), view facing northwest.

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Figure 4. The People's Way canopy that shelters tables, chairs, and sign, view facing north. Note the former bus shelter behind the sidewalk on the far right that has been repurposed as an art installation.

The cultural landscape extends one block north and south along Chicago Avenue and one block east and west along 38th Street, ending at plywood fist sculptures roughly sited at 37th Street East, 39th Street East, Elliot Avenue, and Columbus Avenue. The Say Their Names Cemetery art installation, located north of the intersection of 37th Street East and Columbus Avenue, is also considered part of the cultural landscape.

Within the cultural landscape, Chicago Avenue and 38th Street East are two-way streets with two central driving lanes flanked by parking lanes, bike lanes, curb and gutter, and sidewalk. Artistic expressions throughout the landscape include painted trash cans, murals, posters, and anti-racist messages and art painted on the sidewalk. North of the intersection, Chicago Avenue is lined with early-twentieth-century commercial buildings and some modern commercial infill. Immediately south of the intersection, Chicago Avenue is lined with early-twentieth-century commercial buildings. This transitions to early-twentieth-century single- and multi-family residences. Early-twentieth-century commercial buildings and residences also line 38th Street on either side of the intersection.

A large metal Black Power fist sculpture is centered in the intersection of Chicago Avenue and 38th Street. It is surrounded by a garden that is lined by concrete blocks and functions as an informal roundabout (see Figure 5). Two similar plywood fists situated on plywood stands mark the extent of the Square at 37th Street East and Columbus Avenue (see Figure 6). The Pan-African flag is attached to each statue. At the time of survey, the two additional fist sculptures marking the entrance at 37th Street and

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Elliot Avenue were temporarily removed due to an ongoing City-led infrastructure improvement project. The five fists were created by artist Jordan Powell-Karis.³

The large-scale art installations along Chicago Avenue are located in the block north of the 38th Street intersection. The Mourning Passage installation is painted directly on the street and extends mid-block between 37th Street and 38th Street (see Figure 7). Created by artist Mari Mansfield, it is a growing list of names of individuals killed by the police. Since its installation in 2023, the names have been repainted annually by volunteers.⁴



Figure 5. The central fist sculpture and garden in the intersection of Chicago Avenue and 38th Street, view facing northeast toward Unity Foods.

³ In some instances, the artist does not capitalize his name. One fist was stored at the People's Way, a former Speedway gas station, while the other was sent to Madison, Wisconsin, as an offering of solidarity to Corey Ruiz, who was killed in police custody in July 2026; "At Corey Ruiz's Vigil, a Minneapolis Statue Stands for Solidarity," *The Cap Times*, July 29, 2026, https://captimes.com/news/community/at-corey-ruiz-s-vigil-a-minneapolis-statue-stands-for-solidarity/article_ed17e6c1-bda5-4611-b114-fb7be70b26df.html.

⁴ Susan Du, "Vestiges of Strife in Limbo," *The Minnesota Star Tribune*, October 1, 2024; Mari Mansfield, "Mourning Passage," *George Floyd & Anti-Racist Street Art*, 2023, <https://georgefloydstreetart.omeka.net/items/show/3597>.

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Figure 6. Plywood entrance fist located in 38th Street just east of Columbus Avenue South, view facing northeast.



Figure 7. The Mourning Passage installation along Chicago Avenue, view facing south.

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The Say Their Names Cemetery installation is located west of Chicago Avenue and separated from the street by a stormwater infiltration basin known as Memorial Ponds. It was created by artists Anna Barber and Connor Wright and consists of approximately 150 corrugated plastic grave markers bearing the names of those killed by police.⁵ The markers are situated in a grid pattern in a depressed grassy field, and a small circle of mirrors and potted plants are present just south of the marker memorializing George Floyd (see Figure 8). Some chairs are located within the field to provide visitors a place to rest and reflect. Wooden letters spelling out “Say Their Names” are located on the west side of the field along Park Avenue South. Signs directing visitors to the installation are present at Columbus Avenue and along Chicago Avenue (see Figure 9).



Figure 8. Grave markers in the Say Their Names Cemetery, view facing southwest. Note the letters spelling out “Say Their Names” at the far right.

⁵ Anna Barber and Connor Wright, “Say Their Names Cemetery,” June 5, 2020, George Floyd & Anti-Racist Street Art, <https://georgefloydstreetart.omeka.net/items/show/1607>; Du, “Vestiges of Strife in Limbo.”

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Figure 9. The Say Their Names marker, which is situated on the west side of Chicago Avenue, south of 37th Street, overlooking Memorial Pond and the art installation, view facing west.

The cultural landscape serves as a living tribute to George Floyd and others affected by police brutality, created and maintained by community-led efforts. It is characterized by the expression of memorial and protest, presented through artistic offerings and community gathering. Character-defining features that reflect this function include the following:

- George Floyd Memorial Site, as a living and evolving tribute to George Floyd
- Large-scale art installations, including the five fist statues, Mourning Passage, and Say Their Names Cemetery
- The People's Way, as a gathering site
- Unity Foods, as a key site in the events of 2020
- Those collective elements that contribute to the streetscape as a creative expression of memorial and protest, including murals, billboards, and other memorial and artistic offerings.

Significance Narrative:

A detailed historic context that covers early residential and commercial development at this intersection is presented in *Phase I and II Architectural History Studies for the D Line Bus Rapid Transit Project*.⁶ The following historic context is specific to George Floyd Square.

⁶ Hess, Roise and Company and Streamline Associates, LLC, *Phase I and II Architectural History Studies for the D Line Bus Rapid Transit Project* (Prepared for Metro Transit Division of the Metropolitan Council and the Federal Transit Administration, 2018).

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Event and Immediate Response

On May 25, 2020, George Floyd, a 46-year-old Black man, was murdered while in police custody at this intersection. Four Minneapolis police officers responded to a call that Floyd was accused of using a counterfeit \$20 bill to purchase cigarettes at Cup Foods (now Unity Foods). Outside the building, Mr. Floyd was handcuffed and pinned to the ground, where one officer knelt on his neck for nine minutes and 29 seconds. The entire incident was recorded on video and shared on social media.⁷

Hearing the altercation, neighbors arrived at the intersection to investigate and a memorial was immediately established at the site where he died. Throughout the day, neighbors and other city residents arrived at the site, bringing flowers, art, notes, and other tokens. That evening thousands marched from the site to the Minneapolis Police Department's Third Precinct, chanting and carrying signs with messages associated with the Black Lives Matter movement.⁸

Aftermath

The intersection of Chicago Avenue and 38th Street was quickly established as "George Floyd Square." Ongoing protests throughout the city turned violent and destructive as police responded with tear gas and rubber bullets, and local and visiting demonstrators vandalized businesses, namely along Lake Street.⁹ The National Guard was deployed and curfews were instated throughout the city. National Guard vehicles drove through the subject intersection, threatening the growing memorial. In response, neighbors constructed barricades out of garbage cans, old refrigerators, wood, and other materials to protect the intersection from vandalism and vehicular traffic.¹⁰ Inspired by the events in Minneapolis, similar protests in support of the Black Lives Matter movement, racial injustice, and police brutality against people of color were held in at least 75 cities across the nation. Curfews were instated and the National Guard was deployed to at least two dozen states. A June 2020 *Star Tribune* article highlighted the international attention from the United Kingdom, Germany, Brazil, Iran, Israel, and Russia.¹¹ CNN coverage of the global response included similar protests in other European countries, as well as Tunisia, South Africa, Australia, Hong Kong, South Korea, and Japan. Protestors carried signs bearing George Floyd's name and other messages related to the Black Lives Matter movement.¹²

⁷ 106 Group et al., *Minneapolis African American Historic and Cultural Context Study: Minneapolis, Hennepin County, Minnesota* (Prepared for the City of Minneapolis, Community Planning and Economic Development, May 2025), 142.

⁸ Ryan Faircloth, "Thousands March in Tide of Anger, Grief," *Star Tribune*, May 27, 2020; 106 Group et al., *Minneapolis African American Historic and Cultural Context Study: Minneapolis, Hennepin County, Minnesota*.

⁹ 106 Group et al., *Minneapolis African American Historic and Cultural Context Study: Minneapolis, Hennepin County, Minnesota*, 142.

¹⁰ Megan Burks, Christine T. Nguyen, and Evan Frost, "Six Months in, the Call for Justice at 38th and Chicago Persists," *MPR News*, November 25, 2020, <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2020/11/25/timeline-building-george-floyd-square>.

¹¹ Tim Sullivan and Stephen Groves, "Protests Fill Streets around the World," *Star Tribune*, June 1, 2020; 106 Group et al., *Minneapolis African American Historic and Cultural Context Study: Minneapolis, Hennepin County, Minnesota*, 143.

¹² "Protests across the Globe after George Floyd's Death," News platform, *CNN World*, (June 13, 2020), <https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/06/world/gallery/intl-george-floyd-protests>.

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Response at the Intersection of Chicago Avenue and 38th Street

George Floyd Square became the epicenter of a developing movement against racial inequality experienced by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and the role of police in the United States. Within months, the intersection of Chicago Avenue and 38th Street had developed from a protected memorial site to an autonomous zone, maintained by volunteers in the surrounding community. Security patrols were organized, largely by the Agape Movement organization, to control traffic and patrol the surrounding areas.¹³ The square became a center for mutual aid. 612 MASH, a volunteer medic station, provided basic medical care in a former school bus (nonextant). A former bus shelter was converted into the People's Closet to serve as a clothing donation site. A lending library and community gardens were also established.¹⁴ The People's Way, a former gas station, was boarded up and tables and chairs were placed under the pump canopy to be used for twice-daily meetings. It continues to be a primary gathering space for meetings and community events. The streetscape at the intersection became emblematic of the movement through artistic offerings. Visitors continued to leave memorial offerings and more permanent expressions of protest and memorial were installed, such as the fist sculptures, Say Their Names Cemetery, Mourning Passage, and murals. Many of these items have been maintained, conserved, and archived by community caretakers, organized by Rise and Remember, a community founded and led organization.¹⁵

Ongoing and the Future

In August 2020, the City of Minneapolis announced it would reopen the intersection to vehicular traffic. In response, the community issued "The 24 Demands of Justice," a resolution that outlined the boundaries of George Floyd Square and 24 terms for the City to meet before it could reopen. In 2021, the City of Minneapolis reopened the intersection to vehicular traffic. Shortly thereafter, the George Floyd Square at 38th & Chicago project began, which included infrastructure improvements and work to preserve the function of the square as a site of memorial and protest. While many of the 24 Demands of Justice have been met, some remain unaddressed. In June 2023, the City purchased the People's Way with the intention of transferring the property to a permanent community owner.¹⁶

¹³ Megan Burks, "From 'schoolmarm' to Sentry: Mpls. Teacher Responds to George Floyd Killing," *MPR News*, December 16, 2020, <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2020/12/15/from-schoolmarm-to-sentry-mpls-teacher-responds-to-george-floyd-killing>.

¹⁴ Leo Peterson and Ashlyn Ziegler, "'Right Thing to Do': Volunteers Turned Bus into 'MASH Unit' at George Floyd Square. They're Not Done Yet.," *MPR News*, December 23, 2020, <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2020/12/23/volunteers-turned-a-bus-into-a-mash-unit-at-george-floyd-square>.

¹⁵ Megan Burks, "Preserving George Floyd's Memorial: 'Allow These Pieces to Continue to Protest,'" *MPR News*, December 2, 2020, <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2020/12/02/preserving-the-george-floyd-memorial>; Christine T. Nguyen, "A Tender Act of Resistance: Caring for George Floyd's Square," *MPR News*, December 21, 2020, <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2020/12/21/caring-for-george-floyds-square>.

¹⁶ "The 24 Demands," August 7, 2020, Southwest Voices, <https://www.swconnector.com/gfsquare/>; 106 Group et al., *Minneapolis African American Historic and Cultural Context Study: Minneapolis, Hennepin County, Minnesota*, 145.

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The community considers George Floyd Square as sacred ground and maintains it as a site of gathering, memorial, and protest. Morning and evening meetings are still held at the People's Way to organize volunteer efforts and events within the square. Brass Solidarity, a community brass ensemble, holds a weekly public rehearsal at the People's Way to practice for protest performances. The community continues to gather for memorial and celebratory events, and visitors continue to pay their respects to George Floyd and others affected by police brutality, leaving flowers and tokens of remembrance.

Statement of Significance

George Floyd Square is a recent and evolving cultural landscape. This evaluation is limited and intended to satisfy the needs of Section 106 for the D Line BRT Chicago Avenue and 38th Street station project. Further intensive investigation may be necessary to sufficiently evaluate this resource and consider significance under each of the National Register criteria.

To be eligible under *Criterion A: History*, a property must be associated in an important way with a significant historic event or broad pattern in history, as well as demonstrate that the event was important to the development in Minneapolis, Hennepin County, or Minnesota. George Floyd Square is significant as the site where George Floyd died, which quickly became the epicenter for the global Black Lives Matter movement. The significance of the square derives not only from the murder of George Floyd and subsequent local and global response, but its continued function as a site for memorial, protest, and racial healing, facilitated through community gathering and creative expression. As such, George Floyd Square is significant as a cultural landscape under *Criterion A: History* in the areas of Black Ethnic Heritage, Social History, and Art. Due to the recent and evolving nature of the property, it was not evaluated under *Criterion B: Significant Person*, *Criterion C: Architecture*, or *Criterion D: Information Potential* at this time. Future evaluations may better consider these areas of significance.

The period of significance begins in 2020 and extends to 2026, encompassing the initial event and continuing community efforts at the square through the present. The character-defining features support its significance as a site for memorial, protest, and racial healing, facilitated through community gathering and creative expression, and include the following:

- George Floyd Memorial Site
- Large-scale art installations, including the five fist statues, Mourning Passage, and Say Their Names Cemetery
- The People's Way, as a gathering site
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- Those collective elements that contribute to the streetscape as a creative expression of memorial and protest

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The historic boundary is recommended to follow the area initially defined by the community in the 24 Demands for Justice and is depicted on the attached Preliminary George Floyd Square Cultural Landscape Boundary map. Starting at the intersection of 38th Street and Chicago Avenue, the boundary generally extends for one block in each cardinal direction, to include each entrance fist. It follows the back edge of sidewalk on both sides of Chicago Avenue and 38th Street to include the public right-of-way and exclude adjacent parcels with the exception of those associated with Unity Foods and the People's Way, both of which played an important role in the initial event and ongoing efforts. In the north, the boundary extends to the west to include the Memorial Pond and Say Their Names Cemetery.

The cultural landscape serves a commemorative function and therefore must meet *Criteria Consideration F: Commemorative Properties*. To be eligible, the significance of the property must be based on its own value, not the value of the associated event or person. The significance of George Floyd Square derives not only from the murder of George Floyd, but from the site as a catalyst for a global response to racial injustice and police brutality against BIPOC. The cultural landscape is also significant as an ongoing site of memorial and protest, facilitated through community-led efforts. The significance of the property surpasses the initial event and therefore meets *Criteria Consideration F*.

Because George Floyd Square was established in 2020, it must possess exceptional significance to meet *Criteria Consideration G: Properties That Have Achieved Significance Within the Last Fifty Years*. Collective organizing conducted at this site resulted in protests in the city, which inspired similar protests and demonstrations on a global scale. George Floyd Square therefore meets the consideration thresholds for exceptional significance.

Integrity

To be eligible for the National Register, a property must possess sufficient integrity of location, setting, feeling, association, design, workmanship, and materials. The cultural landscape maintains its original features, such as the George Floyd Memorial Site, art installations, People's Way, Unity Foods, and memorial offerings. Although some elements have changed, namely the removal of original barricades and memorial offerings left by visitors, this is indicative of the evolving nature of the square and does not impact its function as a site of memorial and protest. George Floyd Square remains intact and retains all aspects of integrity.

Recommendation

For the purposes of the D Line BRT Chicago and 38th Platform project, the George Floyd Square Cultural Landscape is recommended eligible for the National Register at the state level under *Criterion A* in areas of Black Ethnic Heritage, Social History, and Art meeting *Criteria Consideration F: Commemorative Properties* and *Criteria Consideration G: Properties That Have Achieved Significance Within the Last Fifty Years*. Its period of significance spans from 2020 to 2026. Future intensive-level evaluation is recommended to fully evaluate the significance of the property under each National Register criteria.

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Photographs, Figures and Maps:

Photos are presented throughout this evaluation. A map of the George Floyd Square Cultural Landscape preliminary boundary and character-defining features is provided on the next page.

