

Parkside Homes and Addition,
Community Building
Northeast Corner of Frankfort
Road and Frankfort Court
Detroit
Wayne County
Michigan

HABS No. MI-409-C

HABS
MICH
82-DETRO,
63C-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Great Lakes Systems Office
1709 Jackson Street
Omaha, Nebraska 68102-2571

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63C.

PARKSIDE HOMES AND ADDITION,
Community Building
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
PARKSIDE HOMES AND ADDITION,
Community Building

Location: Northeast Corner of Frankfort Road and
Frankfort Court, Detroit, Wayne County,
Michigan

Quad: Grosse Pointe, Michigan 1:24,000

UTM: 17.337240.4694910

Dates of
Construction: 1940-41

Architects: Parkside Architectural Associates (Edward A.
Schilling, C. William Palmer, and Clair W.
Ditchy)

Builder: O.W. Burke Company of Detroit

Present
Owner: City of Detroit Housing Department
2211 Orleans Street
Detroit, MI 48207

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: The Community Building was designed to provide
space for a nursery school, various clubs and
social groups, and for recreational activities
for the residents of Parkside Homes and the
Parkside Addition. It replaced the six small
social and recreation rooms scattered through
the original Parkside project and served as
the focal point of community life at Parkside.

Historian: Charles K. Hyde, Wayne State University,
Detroit, Michigan 48202, July 1996.

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The completion of the Community Building in 1941 brought an immediate expansion of social and recreational programs for Parkside residents. The nursery school moved from one of the social rooms in the original complex, expanded enrollment from 25 to 35 students, and became an all-day program which could offer hot lunches to the students. The nursery school was a WPA project run by the Detroit Board of Education, one of only two operating at public housing projects in Detroit. The other one was at the Brewster Homes.

The rest of the programs at the Community Center were under the direction of the Detroit Department of Parks and Recreation, which staffed the facility. The U.S. Housing Authority approved the construction of the building only after the Detroit Common Council agreed to provide the staff to run it. Harry Dowler, the summer play supervisor at Chandler Park, became the first director of the Community building on 10 October 1941.

The Community Building was designed with several "club rooms" and "activity rooms" and the large Assembly Room quickly became the setting for numerous group events. Equipped with a stage, it was used for plays and musical performances, but it was also served as a gymnasium. A youth group held dances there on a regular basis.¹

The Detroit Recreation Department closed the facility around 1990 and the building has been seriously damaged in the intervening years by theft, vandalism, and water damage from leaking pipes and roofs.

¹Detroit Housing Commission, Seventh Annual Report (1940/1941), 53-55.

DESCRIPTION

This is a one- and two-story polygonal building with a steel frame and exterior walls of brown brick construction using the common bond configuration. All the components of the building have flat roofs and narrow rectangular casement windows. There are crawl spaces under the building, but no basements.

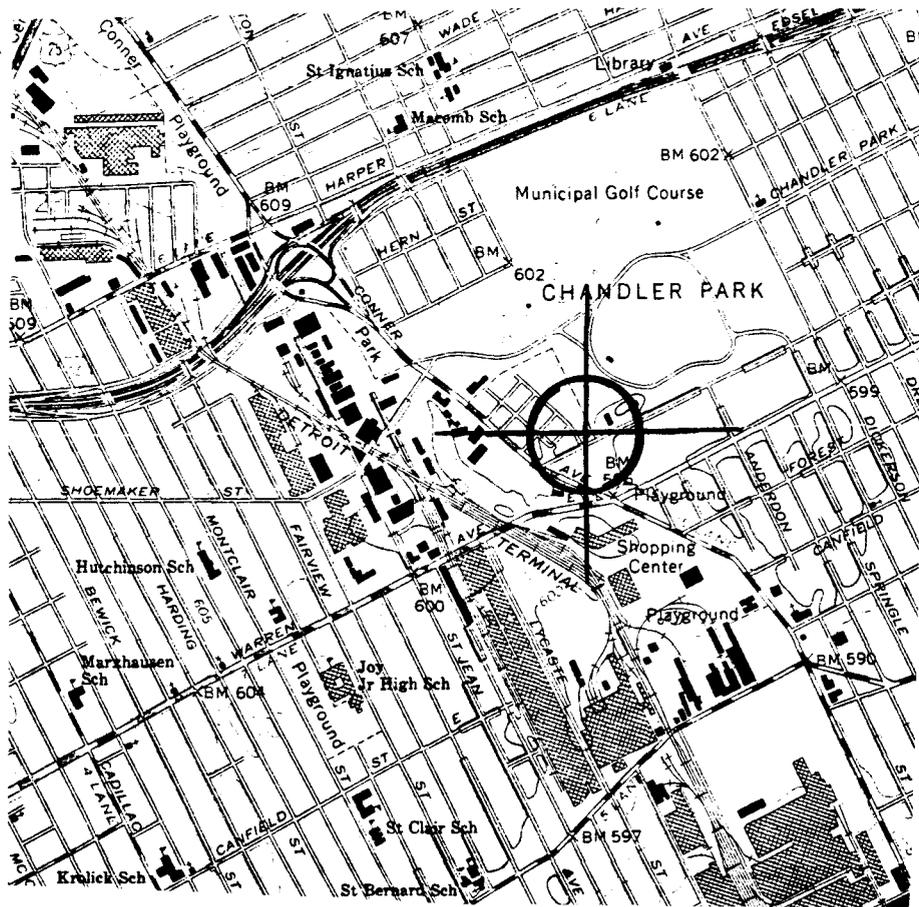
The southern section of the building is the two-story Assembly Room, 62 feet 2 inches wide and 77 feet 10 inches long, with an attached stage (17 feet 8 inches by 53 feet 2 inches) at the west end. A one-story ell adjoins the north and east sides of the Assembly Room. The leg of the ell measures 107 feet 1 inch long and 71 feet 8 inches wide, while the base measures 30 feet 3 inches by 73 feet. A large Activity Room (71 feet 8 inches by 48 feet 9 inches) takes up the northwest part of the building. The rest of the ell includes three Club Rooms, a Boxing Room, Activities Alcove, kitchen, coat rooms, toilets, and two halls. Finally, a rectangular building used for equipment storage, measuring 35 feet by 38 feet, is at the northern corner of this complicated building.

The main entrance to the Community Building, which consists of three doors leading to an entrance hall, is at the southeast corner of the building. Residents waiting to get in were protected by a roof creating a large covered porch measuring 13 feet 9 inches wide and 42 feet 10 inches long. The flat roof is supported by three massive brick pillars, each 1 foot 9 inches wide, 4 feet long, and 12 feet tall. The pillars all have horizontal projecting panels consisting of six brick courses. A brick wall extending south from the building helps define the entrance. It measures 25 feet 5 inches in length, is 4 feet wide, and 1 foot 9 inches in height. The wall is also of brown brick construction, topped by a 3-inch concrete cap.

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GROSSE POINTE, MICHIGAN QUADRANGLE, 1:24,000

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FLOOR PLAN

