

Date November 17, 2014

RESOLUTION CLOSING HEARING ON APPLICATION FROM JACK PORTER TO DESIGNATE THE "RIVERFRONT YMCA" BUILDING LOCATED AT 101 LOCUST STREET AS A LOCAL LANDMARK, AND DENYING SAME

WHEREAS, the City of Des Moines has received an application from Jack Porter to designate the Riverfront YMCA building owned by the YMCA of Greater Des Moines and located at 101 Locust Street, as a Local Landmark; and,

WHEREAS, the Landmark Review Board considered the application at a public hearing on September 16, 2014, and its members voted 16-0 in support of a motion to recommend that the Riverfront YMCA building be determined eligible for landmark designation in accordance with Section 58-58 of the City Code; and,

WHEREAS, the City Plan and Zoning Commission considered the application at a public hearing held on October 2, 2014, its members voted 10-0-1 in support of a motion to recommend DENIAL of the request to designate the Riverfront YMCA building as a Local Landmark, but suggested that City Council work to preserve the art and architecture that can be preserved if possible; and

WHEREAS, on October 20, 2014, by Roll Call No. 14-1631, it was duly resolved by the City Council that the application be set down for public hearing on November 3, 2014, in the Council Chambers; and,

WHEREAS, due notice of said hearing was published in the Des Moines Register on October 23, 2014, as provided by law, setting forth the time and place for hearing; and,

WHEREAS, on November 3, 2014, by Roll Call No. 14-1732, the City Council continued the public hearing on the application until November 17, 2014, at 5:00 p.m.; and,

WHEREAS, in accordance with said notice those interested in the application to designate the Riverfront YMCA building as a local Landmark, both for and against, have been given opportunity to be heard with respect thereto and have presented their views to the City Council; and,

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the City Council of the City of Des Moines, Iowa, as follows:

1. Upon due consideration of the facts, statements of interested persons and arguments of counsel, the objections to the designation of the Riverfront YMCA building as a local Landmark are hereby sustained and the hearing is closed.
2. The City Council hereby makes the following findings of fact:
 - a) While the Riverfront YMCA building may be eligible for designation as a local Landmark under the criteria set forth in Section 58-58 of the City Code, such a designation would not serve the purpose of the Landmark Preservation Ordinance as set forth in Section 58-56 for the reasons identified in the accompanying Council

Date November 17, 2014

Communication.

- b) The site of the Riverfront YMCA building, rather than the building itself, is the most important feature in light of numerous plans and implementation activities undertaken by the City, including the 2020 Community Character Plan, the Rediscovering the Rivers Plan, the What's Next Downtown? Plan, and the existing and planned River Walk improvements.
 - c) There are other examples of YMCA buildings in Des Moines and better examples of Modernist era architecture in Des Moines.
 - d) The constraints of the existing building – small floor plate, low floor-ceiling heights, obsolete mechanical-electrical systems, lack of sprinkler system, small window openings, and unique fitness facility floor plan – present considerable challenges to reuse of the facility. The building entrances are oriented away from the River, discounting the considerable effort expended on the River Walk improvements to enhance views and use of the Des Moines River. Changing the entrances and window pattern on the west side of the YMCA to enhance river usage would compromise the character defining elements of the building.
 - e) There are limited opportunities for redevelopment along the Des Moines River in the downtown. It is critical that additional uses be added to the River Walk that are active in the evenings and weekends.
 - f) The Riverfront YMCA Building is not of sufficient historic or architectural significance to warrant designation of the building as a local Landmark.
3. The application to designate the Riverfront YMCA building as a local Landmark is hereby denied.

MOVED by _____ to adopt and deny the application.

FORM APPROVED:

Roger K. Brown
 Roger K. Brown, Assistant City Attorney

COUNCIL ACTION	YEAS	NAYS	PASS	ABSENT
COWNIE				
COLEMAN				
GATTO				
GRAY				
HENSLEY				
MAHAFFEY				
MOORE				
TOTAL				

MOTION CARRIED

APPROVED

CERTIFICATE

I, DIANE RAUH, City Clerk of said City hereby certify that at a meeting of the City Council of said City of Des Moines, held on the above date, among other proceedings the above was adopted.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal the day and year first above written.

 Mayor

 City Clerk



October 13, 2014

Honorable Mayor and City Council
 City of Des Moines, Iowa

Members:

Communication from the City Plan and Zoning Commission advising that at their meeting held October 2, 2014, the following action was taken regarding a request from Jack Porter (applicant) to designate the "Riverfront YMCA" building located at 101 Locust Street as a Local Landmark. The subject property is owned by the YMCA of Greater Des Moines represented by Vernon Delpesce (officer).

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

After public hearing, the members voted 10-0-1 as follows:

Commission Action:	Yes	Nays	Pass	Absent
Dory Briles	X			
JoAnne Corigliano	X			
Jacqueline Easley				X
Tim Fitzgerald				X
Dann Flaherty	X			
Jann Freed	X			
John "Jack" Hilmes	X			
Ted Irvine				X
Greg Jones	X			
William Page	X			
Christine Pardee	X			
CJ Stephens			X	
Vicki Stogdill	X			
Greg Wattier	X			

APPROVAL of staff recommendation to **DENY** the applicant's request to designate the "Riverfront YMCA" building located at 101 Locust Street as a Local Landmark but asked that the City Council work to preserve the art and architecture that can be preserved if possible.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION TO THE P&Z COMMISSION

Staff recommends that the “Riverfront YMCA” building at 101 Locust Street not be designated as a local Landmark. While the building may be eligible for designation, staff believes that the site is the most important feature in light of numerous plans and implementation activities. The overall interest of the City is to insure that development of the site is maximized from an economic and aesthetic standpoint regardless of whether the building is saved or demolished.

There are other examples of YMCA buildings in Des Moines and better examples of Modernist era architecture in Des Moines, such as Scott Chapel (1955) and the dormitories (1957) at Drake University by master architects Eero and Eliel Saarinen. Much work has been done to preserve the Civic Center National Register Historic District buildings, such as the World Food Prize Center (local landmark), the Municipal Building and the Police Station. The City has encouraged preservation via the Civic Center Historic District and economic development via the construction of the River Walk. A continued balance between preservation and redevelopment on the riverfront is necessary for the River Walk to achieve its potential.

STAFF REPORT TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

- 1. Case Overview:** The subject property is located on the west bank of the Des Moines River and is bound by Grand Avenue to the north, Locust Street to the south and 2nd Avenue to the west. The property contains the Riverfront YMCA building. The building consists of an eight-story tower containing dormitory style residences along the river with a lower section to the west containing community rooms, gymnasium and other facilities. A surface parking lot is located along 2nd Avenue. The original portion of the building was constructed in 1960. The Aliber Youth Center was added to the northwest corner of the building in 1980.

The submitted nomination describes the building as “an excellent example of post-war Modernism, the design uses simple geometric forms to emphasize volume, large expanses of brick, sparse ornamentation and flat roofs. In addition to the extensive use of pinkish-red variegated brick, other exterior materials include slate, granite and stainless steel.” The building was designed by William Wagner with the Des Moines firm of Wetherell and Harrison. The Nation Building Service of the YMCA served as design development consultants. The exterior and interior murals were designed by Stan Hess. Mr. Hess was an art professor at Drake University at the time. The 1980 addition was designed by local architect, Ron Walker.

On September 16, 2014, the Landmark Review Board unanimously approved the recommendation that the “YMCA building at 101 Locust Street be determined eligible for landmark designation in accordance with Section 58-58 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance.” The Board is comprised of the Historic Preservation Commission and the Urban Design Review Board. The Board meets as needed to review nominations and proposed alternations to landmarks not located within a local historic district.

The Landmark Review Board and the Plan and Zoning Commission recommendations will be forwarded to the City Council for review in accordance with Chapter 58-60 and Chapter 82-40 of the City Code. The City Council will receive the recommendations of the Board and Commission on October 20, 2014 and will set a date for their hearing regarding the nomination. It is anticipated that the City Council will hold their hearing on November 3, 2014. The Board and the Commission are recommending bodies in this process. The decision to designate a property or site as a local Landmark is a public policy decision to be made by the City Council.

If the property is designated as a Landmark then any alteration, new construction, or demolition would be subject to review by the Landmark Review Board and require approval by the City Council. The property would become instantly eligible for State Historic Tax Credits if designated as a local Landmark. Federal tax credits require National Register of Historic Places designation. In general, Landmark designation conveys that the community desires a building be retained and when altered that it should be done in a manner that maintains its historic integrity. This is accomplished through a design review process.

2. **Size of Site:** 81,183 square feet (1.86 acres).
3. **Existing Zoning (site):** "D-R" Downtown Riverfront District, "D-O" Downtown Overlay District and the "GGP" Gambling Games Prohibition District.
4. **Adjacent Land Use and Zoning:**
 - North* – "D-R"; Use is MidAmerican Energy facility including the Hansen Triangle Park.
 - South* – "D-R"; Use is the World Food Prize Building.
 - East* – "D-R"; Uses are the Des Moines River and City Hall.
 - West* – "C-3"; Use is multiple-family residential.
5. **Applicable Recognized Neighborhood(s):** The subject property is within the Downtown Des Moines Neighborhood. All recognized neighborhoods were notified of the meeting by mailing of the Preliminary Agenda on September 12, 2014 and the Final Agenda on September 26, 2014. All agendas are mailed to the primary contact(s) designated by the recognized neighborhood association to the City of Des Moines Neighborhood Development Division. The Downtown Des Moines Neighborhood Association mailings were sent to Larry Bradshaw, 418 6th Avenue, Suite 902, Des Moines, IA 50309. Additionally, a notice of public hearing of the request by the Plan and Zoning Commission was published in the Des Moines Register on September 24, 2014
6. **2020 Community Character Land Use Plan Designation:** The Des Moines' 2020 Community Character Plan currently designates the property as Public/Semi-Public, which is described as an area for "uses such as government facilities, schools and hospitals". This designation is a reflection of the current use. A Future Land Use Map amendment may be required should future reuse of the site require a zoning change. The site is currently zoned "D-R" Downtown Riverfront District.

7. Applicable Regulations: Pursuant to Chapter 82-40(a) of the City Code, the Plan and Zoning Commission is an advisory body to the City Council and is a key factor in the growth and development of the city. Therefore, the Commission reviews all local Landmark and Historic District nominations in accordance with the Historic Preservation Ordinance and for compliance with the City's Comprehensive Plan and forwards a recommendation to the City Council.

Section 58-56 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance contains the landmark purpose statement. Section 58-58 contains the criteria for the designation of a landmark and Section 58-60 establishes the nomination process.

Sec. 58-56. Purpose.

It is declared as a matter of public policy that the protection, enhancement, perpetuation and use of improvements of special character or special historical or aesthetic interest or value is a public necessity and is required in the interest of health, prosperity, safety and welfare of the people. The purpose of this article is to:

- (1) Effect and accomplish the protection, enhancement and perpetuation of such improvements which represent or reflect elements of the city's cultural, social, economic, political and architectural history;
- (2) Safeguard the city's historic, aesthetic and cultural heritage, as embodied and reflected in such improvements;
- (3) Stabilize and improve property values;
- (4) Foster civic pride in the beauty and accomplishments of the past;
- (5) Protect and enhance the city's attractions to residents, tourists, and visitors and serve as a support and stimulus to business and industry;
- (6) Strengthen the economy of the city; and
- (7) Promote the use of landmarks for the education, pleasure and welfare of the people of the city.

Sec. 58-58. Designation criteria.

- (a) For purpose of this article, a landmark or landmark site designation may be placed on any site, natural or improved, including any building, improvement or structure located thereon that possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association and that:
 - (1) Is significant in American history, architecture, archaeology and culture;
 - (2) Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history;
 - (3) Is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past;
 - (4) 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 may lack individual distinction; or
 - (5) Has yielded or may be likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Sec. 58-60. Procedures.

- (a) The historic preservation commission shall consider the nomination of landmarks and landmark sites located within historic districts, and make a report and recommendation on such nomination to the city plan and zoning commission and city council as provided below. The landmark review board shall consider the nomination of landmarks and landmark sites located outside historic districts and make a report and recommendation on such nomination to the city plan and zoning commission and city council as provided below.
- (b) Notice that an application for designation of a landmark or landmark site is being considered shall be given to the owner of the parcel on which the proposed landmark is situated or which is part of the proposed landmark site in accordance with the following:
 - (1) Such notice shall be served by certified mail, addressed to the owner at his or her last known address as such appears in the records of the county treasurer's office, or if there is no name on such records, such notice may be served by regular mail addressed to "owner" at the street address of the property in question.
 - (2) Such owner shall have the right to confer with the historic preservation commission or landmark review board, as applicable, prior to final action by the commission or board on the application.
 - (3) The historic preservation commission or landmark review board, as applicable, may, in addition, hold the public hearing of the proposed designation by giving notice as required by law.
- (c) After such investigation by the historic preservation commission or landmark review board as is deemed necessary, but in no case more than 60 days after the receipt of the complete application, the application for designation shall be recommended for approval or disapproval. Such recommendation shall be in writing and signed by the chair of the historic preservation commission or landmark review board, as applicable, and shall state the reasons for recommending approval or disapproval. The recommendation may limit itself to the proposed landmark or landmark site as described in the application or may include modifications thereof. Such recommendation shall be forwarded to and filed with the plan and zoning commission, within five days after making such recommendation.
- (d) Upon receipt of such recommendation, the plan and zoning commission shall schedule a public hearing at a specific place, date and time, not more than 30 days after such receipt, by giving notice as required by law.
- (e) Within 30 days after the public hearing, the plan and zoning commission shall forward such application to the city council, together with the recommendation of the historic preservation commission or landmark review board. The plan and zoning commission may adopt the recommendation of the historic preservation commission or landmark review board as its own or may prepare a written recommendation of its own. The plan and zoning commission may limit itself to the proposed landmark or landmark site or may include modifications thereof. If the modification requires an additional public hearing, the plan and zoning commission shall hold such hearing before forwarding the application to the city council.
- (f) Upon receipt of such recommendation, the council shall schedule a public hearing to consider the recommendation at a specific place, date and time, not more than 30 days after such receipt, by giving notice as required by law.
- (g) The city council, after public hearing, may approve, approve with modification, or disapprove the recommendation of the plan and zoning commission by a majority vote of its membership. If the plan and zoning commission shall have failed to act within the time limit set forth in this section, the city council may, nevertheless, approve, approve with modification, or disapprove the proposed landmark or landmark site as originally proposed or modified by a majority vote of its membership.

II. ANALYSIS

1. **Landmark Nomination Criteria:** A nomination must demonstrate that the subject building or site possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association and meets one or more of the following criterion.
 - (1) Is significant in American history, architecture, archaeology and culture;
 - (2) Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history;
 - (3) Is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past;
 - (4) 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 may lack individual distinction; or
 - (5) Has yielded or may be likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

The submitted nomination includes a State Historical Society of Iowa Site Inventory form for the property that was prepared in 2010. The form was prepared by Shannon Schaefer, Intern, State Historical Society of Iowa and reviewed by Paula Mohr, Ph.D., Architectural Historian, State Historical Preservation Office. On May 7, 2010, Ms. Mohr signed the form as concurring with the survey opinion that the Riverfront YMCA building is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places based on Criterion A and C.

National Register Criterion A is described as properties associated with significant events or a pattern of events or a historic trend that made a significant contribution to the development of a community. This criterion correlates to City of Des Moines Landmark Criterion 2. National Register Criterion C is described as properties having distinctive architectural characteristics that embody a type, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possess high artistic value or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction (a.k.a. "district"). This criterion correlates to City of Des Moines Landmark Criterion 4.

Per Criteria 1, along with other former YMCA buildings in Des Moines (including the former downtown YMCA location at 4th and Park), this building is an example of the historic YMCA development model of men's dormitory housing coupled with a public fitness facility and provides a record of a "broad pattern of our history." Per Criteria 4, the building is an example of late Modernist architecture that emphasizes its materiality in a bold, often geometric manner. This era of Modernist architecture is better exhibited locally at the original limestone building for the Des Moines Art Center (1948) and at Drake University (Scott Chapel, 1955 and dormitories, 1957) by the work of master architects Eero and Eliel Saarinen.

Complete copies of the Nomination are included in the Commission's packet. The following are highlights from the "Historical Significance" section of the nomination.

YMCA History

- The Des Moines YMCA was first organized in 1868 and is noted as being one of the earlier local Y's in the United States. The Des Moines YMCA originally met at the Coskery and Tannahill dry goods store at 4th and Walnut Street. The YMCA moved to a second location in 1891 at 4th and Grand Avenue and then to a location at 4th and Keosauqua Way (1333 Keosauqua Way) in 1912. A Crocker Street YMCA was founded in 1919 at 12th and Crocker Street for young African-American men and boys and operated at this location until the late 1950's. The cornerstone was laid at the southeast entrance of the current downtown building on April 26, 1959. The building was dedicated in 1960 and was noted as costing \$3.9 million dollars to construct and equip including land acquisition.

Architecture

- The YMCA Building Bureau made the decision to adopt Modernism in the late 1940s. Among the buildings that bear a resemblance to the Des Moines facility, include the YMCA in Binghamton, Oklahoma City, and Racine (Wisc). The Des Moines building is an example of post-war Modernism style, which incorporates large geometric blocks, straight lines, flat roofs and the use of building materials that are economical yet durable.
- William Wagner was the chief architect on the YMCA project for the local firm of Wetherell and Harrison. Mr. Wagner graduated from Iowa State University in 1939 and later earned a Masters degree from Drake University. Wager is best known as a preservation architect. His body of work includes the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library in West Branch, Iowa.

Murals

- Stanley O. Hess studied at the University of Oklahoma with Mexican artist Emilio Amero and Lenard Good (who later served as Chair of the art department at Drake University). Hess earned a BFA in commercial art from the University of Oklahoma in 1948 and a MFA in painting in 1950. From 1950 to 1951 he was an instructor of art at the William Woods College in Fulton, Missouri. Later in 1951, Hess joined the faculty at Drake University in Des Moines.
- Hess was commissioned to create murals at the National Travelers Life Insurance Company Building, the Iowa Power and Light Building (moved to former Science Center in 1971), the Des Moines YMCA and the Mercy and Iowa Lutheran hospitals in Des Moines. He created mosaic stations of the cross for the St. Theresa's Church in Des Moines. Along with painting, Hess also designed a typeface called "Hessian."
- Hess' works many times are described as "double images, which require at least a second viewing." Hess and Bracklayers Local Union No. 2 donated their time completing the YMCA murals. The murals are made entirely of multi-colored brick creating images, out of Hess' research on the history of the YMCA, which symbolize the purposed and objectives of the organization. *(See the nomination form for descriptions of the two exterior murals and the four interior murals.)*

- The YMCA World Alliance office in Geneva, Switzerland requested photographs and information regarding the murals to be published in their “World Communique” magazine as the building was being completed. The magazine was distributed to 77 counties. The murals were also published in the Annual Report of the National Council YMCA Board (U.S. & Canada) at the time.

2. Comprehensive Plan Analysis: The following Comprehensive Plan documents are applicable:

2020 Community Character Plan

The following goals from the 2020 Community Character Plan are relevant to this application.

- Promote economic growth and efficiency.
- Enhance and preserve Des Moines’ urban character.
- Establish landmark protection status for key landmark buildings.
- Historic district and landmark structures should be preserved and protected.
- Apply special design standards through site plan review process for properties in vicinity of major landmarks.
- Develop a detailed land use plan for the Downtown working with the principles established in the Destination Downtown Strategic Plan (see “What’s Next, Downtown?” plan)

Rediscovering the Rivers Plan

Rediscovering the Rivers, the 2002 riverfront masterplan states, “the rivers [have] taken on a less prominent role in the city, providing merely a backdrop for the development and revitalization that is occurring in downtown Des Moines.” The plan challenges, “to take advantage of this incredible natural resource -- to reconnect with the rivers, bring them to the forefront once again.” Implementation of a phase 1 with over \$60 M of improvements over several years, concluded in spring 2015 and included the following projects:

- Meredith Trail - 2005
- DM Union Railway Bridge Renovation (a.k.a. Red Bridge) - 2006
- Long Look Garden - 2006
- Brenton Skating Plaza – 2006
- DM River Outfall & Overflow (Sewer) – 2007
- Hansen Triangle - 2007
- Center Street Pedestrian Bridge - 2010
- Armory Parking Lot & Promenade North of Armory – 2011
- Promenade adjacent to Brenton Skating Plaza – 2012
- West End of Center Street Bridge - 2012
- Hub Spot (Court Ave Plaza) – 2013
- Court Ave Pump Station - 2013
- South of Court (East & West) & Y-Block - 2013

What's Next, Downtown? Plan

The following statements are from the "Movement: Celebrate our Rivers" section of the "What's Next, Downtown?" plan.

Historically, development at the River's edge produced an array of handsome civic buildings and some industrial uses. However, a handful of prime riverfront redevelopment opportunities -- from vacant lots to lingering industrial and warehouse uses to under-utilized, aging properties -- are likely to alter this century-long development pattern, adding a new dimension to the riverfront.

Redevelopment has the opportunity to contribute activity to the riverfront. As handsome as the Beaux Arts civic buildings are, they generally house workers for approximately 40 hours per week. New development should contain a mix of uses in order to contribute to a vibrant, active riverfront.

Though there may be new uses along the River, the continuity of public access along the entire downtown stretch of the riverfront should remain intact. This is a somewhat of a rarity at waterfronts across the country and should be maintained.

- 3. Development Potential:** The YMCA building is currently in a state of flux. The tower portion of the building has been empty as the men's housing portion of the YMCA program moved to a new facility in downtown in 2011. The fitness center will relocate from the Riverfront YMCA later this year/early 2015 to a facility that is currently under construction in downtown. Within the next three years, the site will be sold for redevelopment or for holding by the Des Moines Redevelopment Company.

The site holds high economic development potential and the constraints of the existing building -- small floor plate, low floor-ceiling heights, obsolete mechanical-electrical systems, lack of sprinkler system, small window openings, and unique fitness facility floor plan -- present considerable challenges to reuse of the facility. Further, the building entrances are oriented away from the River, discounting the considerable effort the River Walk expends to enhance views and use of the Des Moines River. Changing the entrances and window pattern on the west side of the YMCA to enhance river usage would compromise the character defining elements of the building as its siting and window pattern provides a record of the "broad pattern of our history". Regulations on use of historic tax credits for renovations may be difficult to comply with given the building changes needed for adaptive reuse and river orientation.

There are limited opportunities for redevelopment along the Des Moines River in the downtown. The City has encouraged historic preservation via the Civic Center Historic District and economic development by construction of the River Walk. It is critical that additional uses be added to the River Walk that are active beyond "8 to 5". All or parts of the building may be able to be incorporated into a redevelopment project. However, requiring preservation of the structure versus encouraging it limits the potential range of projects that could be proposed. Limiting the possibilities reduces the ability to secure a high impact project. Staff does not intend this position as a blanket statement to be used in all redevelopment cases as often the greatest impact involves historic preservation. In this case, staff believes the potential positive impact on the downtown and the tax base is too great to require retention of the building.

If a developer comes forward that wishes to incorporate the building they could nominate the building to the National Register and would be able to access State and Federal tax credits.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Erik Lundy presented the staff report and recommendation.

Dann Flaherty asked what would be the impact of making this building a landmark.

Erik Lundy stated some of the benefits to making this property a landmark include making it eligible for historical tax credits. If they were to receive historical tax credits they would have to follow the Secretary of Interior Standards for rehabilitation. There would be limitations as to how this could be redeveloped which may not be in line with riverfront planning efforts.

Will Page asked staff to clarify the process if the building were designated as a local landmark and changes or redevelopment were to occur and would the Plan and Zoning Commission have a review function.

Erik Lundy stated they would follow Chapter 58 of City Code. Redevelopment or alterations of a local landmark are subject to review by the Landmark Review Board and City Council.

Will Page asked if the property is designated as a local landmark and there were some kind of proposed redevelopment for the site would the Plan and Zoning Commission have a review of that proposal.

Mike Ludwig stated there are other provisions in the City code that would involve Plan and Zoning Commission review on that property. There is the Downtown Riverfront Zoning District which has a site plan review by the Plan and Zoning Commission. In addition, if it is used for multi-family residential there are multi-family site plan criteria that would be applicable to the property. Therefore, any redevelopment of the property would have both Plan and Zoning Commission review at some level and review by the Landmark Review Board pursuant to Chapter 58 of City Code.

CJ Stephens asked if the YMCA owns the building and the land.

Erik Lundy stated yes.

CJ Stephens stated this property is appraised at \$14 million and it has been tax free for 60 plus years. She believes there should be some ownership of the public and the tax payer in this building. The more important thing is that it begin contributing to the tax base that is being carried by the neighborhoods and the tax payers. This is a significant piece of property. She believes they are not getting the entire details of this property.

Erik Lundy stated there are no immediate proposals for the Plan and Zoning Commission to take into account. The Commission's role is to look at this in relation to the Comprehensive Plan.

Mike Ludwig stated the Plan and Zoning Commission will get a chance to review any development of this property. Any redevelopment of the property whether the building is preserved or demolished or any addition would require a site plan review by the developer. The staff recommendation emphasized whatever happens with this property it needs to be a significant development.

Greg Wattier asked can anybody at any time ask that someone else's property be designated as a local landmark.

Erik Lundy stated yes, that is the way it is set up. An individual can petition to make a request to designate any property as a local landmark regarding ownership.

John "Jack" Hilmes asked if landmark status has been granted to other buildings in the downtown area:

Erik Lundy stated yes. One is the neon sign that sits on top of the Des Moines Public Schools Kitchen (the old Colonial Bakery Sign). There are others but staff did not bring the list of local landmarks.

John "Jack" Hilmes asked how often does the owner request a landmark status.

Erik Lundy stated he would have to research the answer.

Jack Porter 815 18th Street stated he is not in agreement with staff recommendation. He shared a PowerPoint to explain his reasons. This building is more than just architecture, it is culture, history of a City and it includes experiences around a building that also make it a landmark. He stressed the amount of work in the late 1950s that went into constructing the building with a huge amount of community involvement. He pointed out some of the sketches and photos of the interior and exterior of the building. He believes that this building should be a landmark and is a great example of architecture/art. He asked that his handout with detailed explanations of why this building should be a landmark be received and filed. He pointed out that this case has been established to designate the downtown YMCA under the landmark ordinance for the Commission's consideration. He believes the YMCA architecture criteria one, it's artistic value criteria two, it's cultural value criteria three or the building's distinguished characteristics criteria four is enough to warrant the Commission's support of that landmark designation. As disappointed as he is in the staff recommendation he understands their position and believe that it is factual. But it does reveal to him a bias against preserving this historic building. The development potential presents argument that new development is the only economic development tool available in the City of Des Moines. He asks that the members of the Plan and Zoning Commission be provided a fair and complete assessment of both existing and proposed development possibilities. He noted a downtown development letter dated September 24 says that Polk County will remove its million dollars for demolition if landmark status is given to this building. He believes a million dollars should have been designated for demolition or rehabilitation. If every landmark needs the owner's consent or is expected to meet economic development criteria then those items should be included in the landmark ordinance and not added after the fact in the evaluation. He believes that if the people of Des Moines wish to live in a world class city then those unique structures that exist in no place else in the world need to be preserved. This building and unique art exist only in one place and that is the City of Des Moines. If we are to achieve the status as a world class

city like the money interest people says is their goal, then the historic and cultural resources that make Des Moines unique will have to be preserved.

John "Jack" Hilmes why now has Mr. Porter come forward wanting to make the YMCA a landmark site.

Jack Porter stated why not. He was told the YMCA would be preserved by city staff in the past. Things have changed. He is now retired and no longer a SHPO employee and is not hampered by any constraints of being a state employee or working for SHPO.

John "Jack" Hilmes asked if what he is hearing is that Mr. Porter felt like it would have been a conflict of interest before July 15, 2014 for him to have raised this issue with the City as he saw the movement of buildings and properties occurring leading to the current situation.

Jack Porter stated yes.

CJ Stephens asked if the Plan and Zoning and the Council would vote to approve the request of the applicant that the same action can be taken to remove the Landmark designation.

Jack Porter stated that is the way he understands the ordinance. He noted that the building does not have to retain its non-profit status. It can be an income producing for profit project. Because it was built as a YMCA it does not have to stay a YMCA. When they evaluate whether a historic tax credit project is going to effect the historic structure they are evaluating what will be done with the character defining historic features like the murals and mosaic not the financial feasibility. The Secretary of Standards provides guidelines on how to evaluate proposed work. The assumption is that historic structures will be rehabilitated for a new use. It is how that new use effects existing historic fabric such as the murals and mosaics that is most important.

Greg Wattier asked Mr. Porter if this as an all or nothing proposition.

Jack Porter stated not necessarily. The Commission has the authority to amend the landmark designation and recommendation to the Council. The Council has that authority also. There is a political factor that is weighing on this entire thing. A complicated deal has been made. He believes the goal is to have a better project but questions why is it a better project with the developer cutting costs.

John "Jack" Hilmes asked if the applicant has had any conversation with the YMCA about things like Professor Hess' murals and adaptation of those components elsewhere. He has read in material supplied today that there have been murals moved from building to building in an effort to preserve that part of the structure.

Jack Porter stated he has had no conversation with the YMCA or the Des Moines Development Corporation or Polk County. He pointed out that the landmark ordinance states "*The purpose is to effect and accomplish the protection, enhancement and perpetuation of such improvements which represent or reflect elements of the city's cultural, social, economic, political and architectural history*". The YMCA does not have to be a new building.

CHAIRPERSON OPENED THE PUBLIC HEARING

Jon Croft 300 Walnut #82 stated he believes that some things are worth saving. The YMCA is worth saving and he would like to see it stay. Currently, there is a good mix of old and new development along the river and he hopes that the Commission will grant the applicant's request.

Pat Meiners 4115 55th Street stated she has spoken to people from the bricklayers union and one other person in town and she has been given very little hope that those murals can be moved, especially the curved one. These murals were the first type to be built anywhere in the world. She agrees with the applicant. Des Moines has been very negligent of its history. Every county in Iowa, every suburb surrounding Des Moines has a great museum and Des Moines has none. The YMCA is next door to the World Food Prize one of the greatest restoration works in this city. Because there has been no tax received from the YMCA property for many years, it makes her a big stakeholder in that property and she believe she has a right to say that she wants that property maintained and eligible for historic status.

Vernon DelPesce President and CEO of the YMCA of Greater Des Moines 101 Locust Street stated on behalf of the YMCA they are not in favor of the landmark designation. They do own the property and have owned the building for over 50 years. They understand the history that has taken place. This is the third permanent location of the YMCA in Des Moines since 1868 and they will be moving to a new location January 1, 2015. Just because the building may technically meet the criteria does not mean it is in the best interest of the community. He believes that they have spent many years exploring what to do with their future and what to do with this building. They looked at renovating it and found it to be cost prohibitive. If they could have paid for rehabilitation the building still would not have met their needs for a modern YMCA. The last several years numerous local developers have looked at the property to see if they could potentially use it for something, renovate it and maybe use the housing components of it No one has been able to come up with a viable plan even using historic tax credits. They were part of the land swap that involved Polk County and Wellmark which resulted in them purchasing the Convention Center where the YMCA will be housed. This opened their site for future redevelopment, which was very important to community leaders. There is a pending purchase agreement from an out of state developer on the riverfront site. There is also an agreement with the Des Moines Redevelopment Corporation to purchase it from the YMCA at a pre-established price at a pre-established date in the event they had not sold it at that time. The YMCA's obligation in that agreement is to deliver to them a site with no building on it that is ready for redevelopment. A landmark designation would greatly hinder the ability to sell the property and would create a tremendous hardship on them because part of their financing package for the new site is utilizing the funds from sale of their current site.

Jann Freed asked if they inquired about moving, preserving or incorporating the murals and mosaics into the new design.

Vernon DelPesce stated the YMCA has been around since 1868 and is the fifth oldest continuous business in Des Moines. They have a very rich history and are going to make a huge effort to preserve that history and preserve what has taken place in the building and the historic elements of the building through pictures and stories and things that you read in history books. But to move those type of elements and try to incorporate them would be

quite expensive. Also, as they do sell the building the owner will have input as to what happens to anything.

Glenn Lyons CEO of the Downtown Community Alliance, 3316 Southern Hills Drive stated he is the author of the September 24th letter that explains how they tried to work with the YMCA, the County and others in the community to raise over \$10 million to support the YMCA project. To find a new site, to allow the court house campus to be developed in the court district and along Walnut Street; to create an opportunity to have a brand new mixed use building hopefully with restaurant at grade and apartments above on the Riverwalk. Those were all good intentions and had very little to do with business scheme. Mr. Knapp started this project and mobilized support for the YMCA. Is the YMCA the bricks and mortar or is it the occurrence in the building. In the new building there will be new sets of experiences and memories created. That is how the YMCA perpetuates itself every 50 years. Finding a way to build a new facility to accommodate the contemporary needs of our society and do things for them that the public sector cannot always provide. This is important for downtown. They bought the old-plex that the County abandoned. They have the ability to do the court house project which is reusing the jail as a criminal court, renovating the historic court house and converting the JC Penney to the civil courts and prosecutors' offices bringing new life and activity to the court district and accommodating the needs of the justice system. The YMCA building cannot be reused in the same way that other historic buildings can. When looking at the Des Moines building, The Fleming building and a lot of the warehouses around town they can be converted to residential use with retail uses at grade. When looking at this building the he does not know how the main floor can be converted to any meaningful use without incredible public subsidy. When looking at the tower there is a very narrow floor plate designed for a hostel, low ceilings and no sprinkler system. Landmark status would make it hard to sell to anyone who could do a good project on this site and it makes it hard for the YMCA to complete their new project which is keeping the YMCA alive in Des Moines. He is asking that the Commission deny the applicant's request.

Will Page is concerned about the art work. If this building is demolished how do they feel about removal of artistic heritage of this City?

Glen Lyons stated the first question to ask is can it be saved. If it can be saved, is it affordable and reasonable to do. If it is not in either case, how can the memory be captured. Weighing the artistic value of the murals against the value of the building and the context of what they have been discussing. It is a hard judgment to make.

Will Page stated from this answer the analysis is not completed.

Glen Lyons stated he did not know.

Rick Tolakson 319 SW 7th Street CEO of Hubbell Realty Company stated they have done a number of historic rehabs in the downtown area. He stated it is very lucrative to do a historic rehab. There is a lot of federal historic tax credits and state historic tax credits available. When looking at a project such as the YMCA they are going to look at a project and say can they utilize the historic part of the building first. Why not, they have a huge incentive to try. He could not figure this out after walking through the tower numerous times. It is expensive to demolish buildings. CBRE Hubbell Commercial has it listed and there is a buyer they are negotiating with and it has a long due diligence period because they have to

get in there and figure it out. The building is just one part of it. What are they going to build? Tax incentives are available if you build what the City wants you to build. That will all be a part of the negotiation which would probably take six months. The Plan and Zoning Commission will be part of it. Mr. Knapp called him and asked to see the building, he believed he could save it. They went through the building and he said that it is a "tear down". It was nothing he had envisioned.

Eric Turner 730 54th Street stated he is a member of the YMCA since 1981. He believes the timing of this is very troubling. At the 11th hour and 59th minute somebody can put in a petition to stall or if not completely end your transaction. This project has been in the works for a long time. He believes the transitional housing piece was done in conjunction with the whole notion that the YMCA was going to have a new location. Work is being done to the Convention Center to renovate it for the new YMCA. Money is being spent. Yet there is conversation tonight about whether or not the YMCA can sell a property that it owns without a third party coming in and saying you cannot for these reasons. It is a chilling effect on any transaction. He understands the concern about the art work and if someone can salvage it he is sure the YMCA will be more than happy to make it available. But to stall this project and end this transaction over those items when the process is already in motion and nothing has been said until recently just seems to be unfair. He believes it is not legal to pass laws on something that has already occurred to make it illegal. In effect that is what the applicant is requesting the Commission do. The Commission would be sending the message saying they are going to reverse this transaction because of these reasons, all of which could have been stated up front as part of the process.

Rebuttal

Jack Porter stated he believes this project is all about money and not about whether it meets the landmark nomination as written in City code. All these arguments are outside of the City code. It wasn't that long ago that the understanding was the YMCA would be preserved, so things changed rapidly. He learns by reading the newspaper and as volunteers you can only do what you can do when you can do it. He believes in preservation of historic resources. He wants the City of Des Moines to be a world class city. If we keep tearing down buildings that make Des Moines unique and unusual then the City of Des Moines will never get there. Des Moines is a wonderful community with great resources and wonderful culture. But every building that's destroyed a little bit of it goes away. He understands the fear and some of the arguments but disagrees with the assumption that preserving historic landmarks in the City of Des Moines is a road block. He believes that it is all about respect, not only our community's tax payers but also respecting the art of art. He believes with a really good architect they could solve this issue and he is hoping and asking the Commission to recommend this building be a historic landmark and have the City Council wrestle with this very critical issue.

CHAIRPERSON CLOSED THE PUBLIC HEARING

CJ Stephens suggested to the Commission that their advice to the City Council would be to take a further in-depth look at this. She believes that there is a lot at stake here and she is not in agreement with staff's recommendation to deny the applicant's request.

Greg Wattier stated he believes there are separate issues and the troubling issue he has is regarding private property owner rights. He loves saving old buildings and new uses. He

has made a livelihood out of it. The timing is very unfortunate. The property owner was well within their rights to make deals, to decide whether they want to tear down the building or sell it years ago.

Tim Fitzgerald commented he has a lot of respect for the comments made on both sides of this issue. He believes the City does a great job of rehabbing old buildings and when the CEO of Hubbell gets up and states that he and the CEO of Knapp Properties believes it is not viable, he tends to believe that. He is also in agreement with Commissioner Stephens in wishing to see if something can be done to preserve the art work.

John "Jack" Hilmes stated when he thinks of the City of Des Moines' reuse of old building he thinks of East Village, Fleming, Des Moines, Liberty, the warehouses along the river and along the MLK corridor, Equitable Building, World Food Prize, Vets Auditorium, Polk County Courthouse, JC Penney Building, the jail etc. It is happening all over the place. The point is it seems like if the rehab could be done they would. Reflecting on ability and deep pockets to be able to do that. If the Hubbell families and the Knapp families look at this building with the intention of trying to do something with it and they cannot see the light of day even with the tax advantages there must be something nearly impossible about the ability to renovate this structure.

Will Page stated nothing is impossible. He commented that this building is not just privately owned building it is a semi-publicly owned building and it was built as a semi-publicly owned building and many people have contributed to the construction of the building. A developer could go in and turn the building into a income producing property (which is fine) but still is going to be an income producing property on a site that has been developed in a semi-public way. He believes the debate tonight is perfectly acceptable. In fact he believes the debate tonight is critical for the City to discuss. Also, he believes there is another option available. The Commission has heard that many people are concerned about the art work. We have discussed removing the art work from this site and what they have heard is that might not be feasible. He would like to see an analysis of the feasibility. He asked why can't some of the facades be preserved that have these exquisite murals or mosaics. Why couldn't a clever architect and developer integrate that into a new design?

Christine Pardee agrees with Commissioner Page and stated if there is an opportunity to flush that out then it needs to occur, if that really has not been done.

COMMISSION ACTION:

CJ Stephens made a motion to APPROVE the applicant's request to designate the "Riverfront YMCA" building located at 101 Locust Street as a Local Landmark.

Motion FAILED 3-8 (CJ Stephens, Dann Flaherty and Will Page voted in favor and Greg Jones, John "Jack" Hilmes, Dory Briles, Jann Freed, Christine Pardee, Greg Wattier, Vicki Stogdill, Tim Fitzgerald vote in opposition)

COMMISSION ACTION:

Dory Briles moved staff recommendation to DENY the applicant's request to designate the "Riverfront YMCA" building located at 101 Locust Street as a Local Landmark.

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Dann Flaherty asked for a friendly amendment to ask the City Council to work to preserve the art and architecture that can be preserved if possible.

Dory Briles accepted the friendly amendment.

Motion passed 10-0-1 (CJ Stephens abstained)

Respectfully submitted,



Michael G. Ludwig, AICP
Planning Administrator

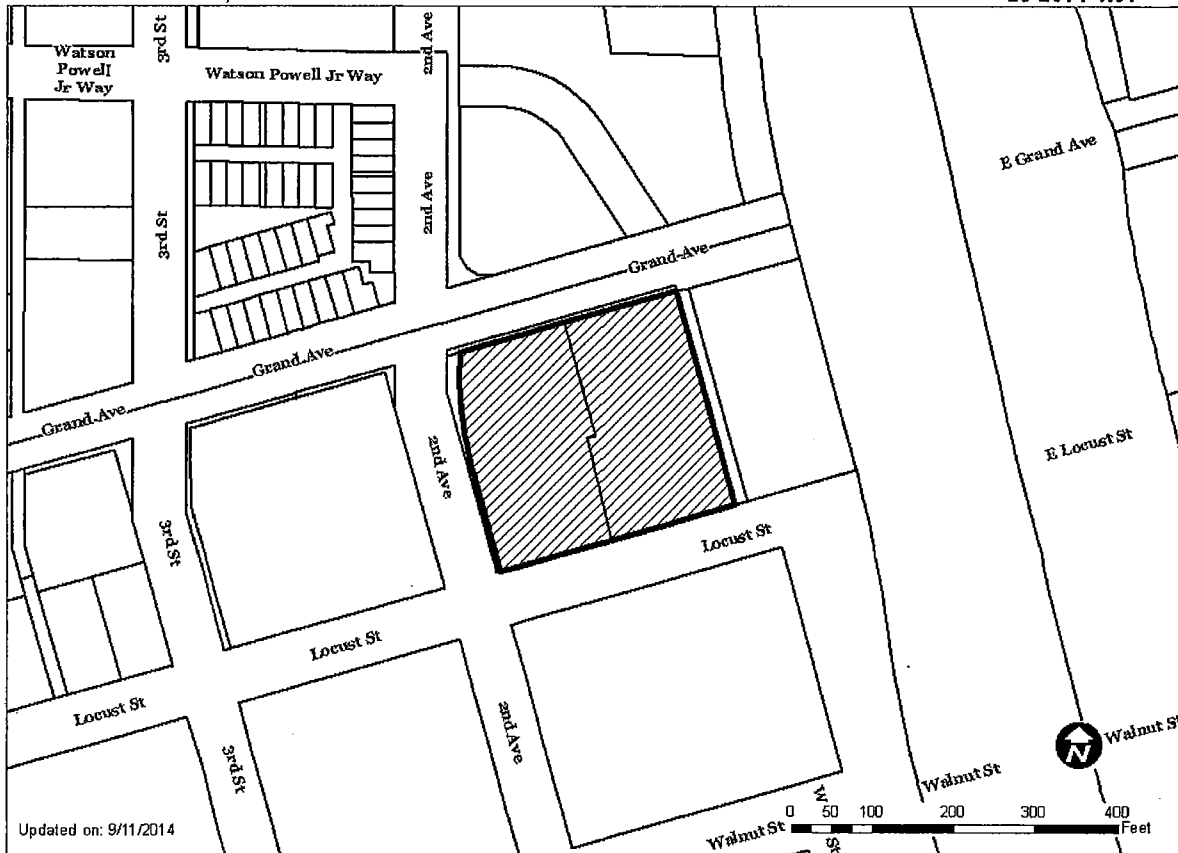
MGL:clw

Attachment

Jack Porter (applicant) on property at 101 Locust Street. The subject property is owned by the YMCA of Greater Des Moines represented by Vernon Delpesce (officer).		File #		
		20-2015-4.01		
Description of Action	Denial of request to designate the "Riverfront YMCA" building located at 101 Locust Street as a Local Landmark.			
2020 Community Character Plan	Current: Public/Semi-Public. Proposed: N/A/.			
Horizon 2035 Transportation Plan	No planned improvements.			
Current Zoning District	"D-R" Downtown Riverfront District.			
Proposed Zoning District	N/A.			
Consent Card Responses	In Favor	Not In Favor	Undetermined	% Opposition
Inside Area				
Outside Area				
Plan and Zoning Commission Action	Approval		Required 6/7 Vote of the City Council	Yes
	Denial	7-2-1		No
				X

Riverfront YMCA, 101 Locust Street

20-2014-4.01



1 inch = 137 feet

Plan & Zoning Board

Oct. 2, 2014

Jack C. Porter

815 18th Street

Des Moines, IA.

Chair and Members of the Board,

I am here to seek your approval to recommend the Downtown YMCA as worthy of Landmark status. I hope to convince you the Y is significant because of architectural design – it embodies distinctive characteristics of Mid-Century Modern architecture; it possesses high artistic value representative of that era; and finally, is associated with a person significant to our cultural heritage – William J. Wagner, FAIA.

Architecture:

Built between 1957 and 1960, the era commonly referred to as Mid-Century Modern (MCM) and was designed by Wetherell-Harrison Architects with William J. Wagner as chief architect.

PLEASE REFERANCE THE SITE INVENTORY FORM PREVIOUSLY PROVIDED.

Use of materials such as unique masonry in structural and artistic details, the Y is representative of Post WW II designs. Details such as use of aluminum railings and window detailing and finishes; geometric and building masses broken by sweeping walls, marble columns, and unique mosaics; proportions and interplay of the many functions within the building are reflected in strong exterior forms connected both on the exterior and interior circulation and common spaces. All are characteristic of MCM architecture. (The Downtown Y building was recognized by the Iowa AIA's Century of Iowa Architecture: 50 Most Significant Iowa Buildings of the 20th Century for the decade 1950–1960. This honor included such other buildings as the Walter House (Cedar Rock), FLW; Lamberson House, FLW; Ero Saarinen's chapel and hall at Drake mentioned by staff; and the Crites House No. 1, Crites & McConnell.

High Artistic Values:

PLEASE REFER TO THE SITE INVENTORY FORM

Stan Hess was the chair of the Art Department at Drake University. Besides the exterior and interior mosaics and murals in the Y, his work also adorns National Travelers Life Insurance Company building, Iowa Power & Light (relocated to the former Science Center building), and work at both Mercy and Lutheran hospitals. Noted for his “double images” – a close look is encouraged. His work is labeled as modernist, surrealist, and pop in style and material, all typical of MCM art.

Association:

William J. Wagner, FAIA

Writer, jeweler, artist, researcher and a true preservation architect, “Bill” Wagner is known for his American Federal calendar sketches of Iowa’s landmarks. Recognized by the Iowan magazine as one of our unique and honored citizens. Bill associated with many of our Presidents, but is probably best known for his design of the Hoover Presidential Library and Burial Grounds in West Branch. His vast collection of work is housed in the Dallas County Museum outside Perry in a new addition dedicated to his memory.

ARGUMENT

The case has been established to designate the Downtown YMCA under the Landmarks Ordinance for your consideration. It would seem reasonable to assume the Y’s architecture (criteria 1); artistic or cultural value (criteria 3); or the building’s distinguished characteristics (criteria 4) is not enough to warrant landmark designation. As disappointing the staff report is to read, it does reveal a bias against preserving this historic building.

The introduction of Development Potential creates an argument that seems to assure only “New Development” is the only economic development tool available in OUR city. I am not going to address each of the statements submitted by your staff, but rather ask you to insist the members of the P&Z Board be provided a fair and complete assessment of **BOTH** existing and proposed development possibilities. If the historic features are inadequate, then most certainly a new building should include features and a design that is of superior quality.

The staff position has put you in a very awkward position. If every landmark needs the owner’s consent or is expected to meet economic development criteria, then those items should be included in the landmark ordinance not added after the fact in your evaluation. Staff should provide a detailed and factual report to the P&Z Board for your review and evaluation.

Without such an assessment historic buildings are placed at a huge disadvantage in evaluating their development potential and value. Leave it to say \$15M of investment in either a historic or new building is \$15M worth of investment, however the historic building has the added benefit of its cultural value.

Landmark designation provides the potential to use the State Historic Tax Credit program whose value is 25% of the Qualified Rehabilitation Costs for the project.

In closing, I make this observation. If the people of Des Moines wish to live in a World Class City – then those unique structures that exist in no place else in the world need to be preserved. Our Y building and its unique art exists in only one place – OUR CITY – our Des Moines. It seems to me the moneyed interest say their goal is to create a world class city but Des Moines will never achieve that recognition without the historic and cultural resources that make Des Moines unique.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

I will attempt to answer your questions with the best of my ability.

49A



401 Main Street, Suite 5 Keokuk, Iowa 52632
Phone: (319) 526 8474 Fax: (319) 526 8963
www.preservationiowa.org

Attn: City of Des Moines, Iowa
YMCA of Greater Des Moines Iowa
September 25, 2014

To whom it may concern,

We have recently been made aware of efforts, in regards to the YMCA of Greater Des Moines, Iowa located at 101 Locust St Des Moines, IA 50309, to place this building on a listing of Historic Places in the Downtown Des Moines, Iowa area. Preservation Iowa is aware of this structure and recognizes the YMCA for its historical significance and importance to the local culture. Preservation Iowa supports efforts to give this structure recognition on state and federal levels to preserve its name and status as a building of historical significance. Preservation Iowa also believes the building to be of value for the Downtown Des Moines area as a structure to be placed in use. Thank you for considering our recommendation at this time.

Sincerely,

Kevin J. Kuckelman, President
Preservation Iowa

Our mission is to build partnerships that enhance our economic and cultural future through the preservation of Iowa's historic resources.



September 15, 2014

Dear Members of the Landmark Review Board:

The Des Moines Historical Society submits this letter in support of the nomination of the Riverfront YMCA building for Local Landmark status.

Built in 1957, the building under consideration is an excellent example of Mid-Century Modern architecture and as such, is worthy of our efforts to maintain and celebrate it. Its association with artist and Drake professor Stan Hess, who created the spectacular murals, is in and of itself a notable reason this building has such interest. Not only do these murals depict the values of the YMCA organization, but also they are the first like them in the country.

Some people may not understand why we would want to preserve a building like the Riverfront YMCA. And if it is allowed to be torn down, they will never have the opportunity to understand it. And that is certainly a shame. Having been named one of the 50 most significant Iowa buildings of the 20th century by the American Institute of Architects Iowa Chapter, the YMCA building may not be as ornate as the much older World Food Prize Hall of Laureates or as stately as the State Capitol. But there are merits to being able to look back 100 years from now and view the YMCA building as part of a larger architectural movement that influenced the American experience throughout the mid-19th century, and the organization itself as one that provided valuable resources and transitional housing for homeless adult men in Des Moines.

Please approve this request for Local Landmark status so that we may continue to learn from this building and the art housed as part of it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sarah Oltrogge". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Sarah Oltrogge
President

cc: Jack Porter
Jason Van Essen
Mike Ludwig

September 24, 2014

**City of Des Moines
Plan and Zoning Commission**

City Hall
400 Robert D Ray Drive
Des Moines, Iowa 50309

Attention: Chairman, Plan & Zoning Commission

Regarding: Possible Landmark Status for Existing YMCA Site in Downtown Des Moines

Dear Mr. Greg Jones:

The Downtown Community Alliance Board of Directors reviewed this matter at our Meeting of September 18, 2016, and voted unanimously to oppose the proposed landmark status for the existing YMCA site along the Des Moines River in Downtown.

The Board made its decision after considering both the pros and cons of the proposed landmark status and concluded that the community benefits of obtaining landmark status are marginal in comparison to the community costs incurred in preserving the building.

As you are aware, demolition of the existing YMCA building and its redevelopment as a new, high-density, mixed-use site along the Riverwalk is a key element in the implementation of a broader Downtown revitalization strategy now underway. Elements of that strategy include:

1. Acquisition of the former County Convention Complex on Grand Avenue by the YMCA (completed);
2. Renovation and reuse of the 'Plex' as the new YMCA in Downtown (underway);
3. Donation of the adjacent Wellmark lands to the YMCA (completed);
4. Development of an enclosed, Olympic-sized pool on the former Wellmark lands and its integration into the new YMCA building (underway);

Downtown Community Alliance
601 Locust Street, Suite 700, Des Moines, IA 50309
515-286-4950 | 515-243-6684 fax | DowntownDesMoines.com



5. Acquisition by Polk County of the former JC Penny Building owned by Wellmark, using funds received from the sale of the 'Plex' (completed);
6. Renovation and reuse of the former JC Penny Building for court purposes (underway);
7. Inclusion of the 'new' Court House Annex in the broader Court House campus renovations (underway);
8. Sale of the Existing YMCA to a developer with the proceeds from that sale being used to help finance the new YMCA project; and
9. Redevelopment of the existing YMCA site as a new high-density mixed use project immediately adjacent to the Riverwalk.

Taken together, this is undoubtedly one of the most significant public-private partnerships undertaken in Downtown Des Moines. All three projects, each in their own way, will provide support to the broader Downtown revitalization effort. For example:

- The new YMCA will provide enhanced recreational amenities to Downtown residents and employees alike.
- The Court House Campus will result in the provision of increased space for the justice system, the renovation of our historic Court House, and new pedestrian activity along Walnut Street and in the Court District.
- The development of a mixed use project on the former YMCA site will bring the first commercial (i.e. restaurant) and residential uses directly to the Riverwalk.

The existing YMCA site, in fact, is the only potential development site directly adjacent to the Riverwalk. The remaining uses that front the Riverwalk are public buildings and a power station.



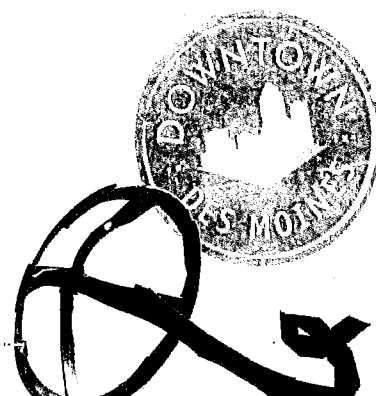
A decision to award landmark status to the existing YMCA building would have significant, negative effects in Downtown. For example:

- The YMCA would not be able to sell the site free and clear of the existing development; this would result in a severe devaluation of the property's market value and a significantly lower financial contribution to the new YMCA project, if a sale was to be realized.
- The County's pledge to provide \$1 million toward the demolition of the existing building would be nullified.
- The Des Moines Redevelopment's pledge to pay \$4.5 million for the cleared site, if a buyer cannot be found, would also be nullified.
- The possibility of developing a new, high-density, mixed-use site on the Riverwalk would be negated.

The ability to reuse the existing single-purpose built structure would be severely constrained by its design and condition. It is hard to imagine, for example, any viable commercial use occupying the lower floors of the building. And, it is also hard to imagine, any economically viable residential use of the Tower, with its extremely narrow floor plate, low ceilings, lack of sprinkler system, etc.

The only conclusion that can be drawn is that:

- The YMCA will face a severe financial hardship if the existing YMCA is to be given landmark status;
- The opportunity to add new vitality to the Riverwalk will be lost; and
- The community will face the very real possibility of having an abandoned building on the Riverwalk for years to come.



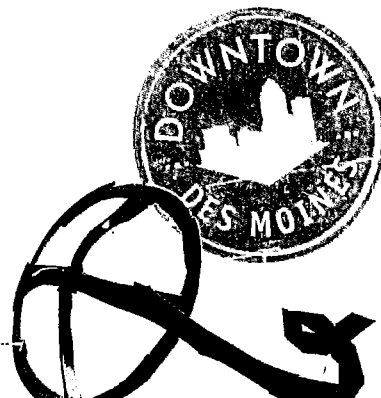
It is for these reasons that the DCA Board of Directors is asking the Plan & Zoning Commission to reject the proposed landmark designation for this building.

Sincerely,



Glenn F. Lyons MCIP
President and CEO
Downtown Community Alliance

Downtown Community Alliance
601 Locust Street, Suite 700, Des Moines, IA 50309
515-286-4950 | 515-243-6684 fax | DowntownDesMoines.com



49A

Landmark Nomination Form

Landmark Review Board

IDENTIFICATION:

SITE NAME: Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA)
LEGAL LOCATION (description): Coliseum Place, Lots 1,2,3 and 4.

OWNER(S) NAME: YMCA of Greater Des Moines

OWNER(S) ADDRESS: 101 Locust Street, Des Moines, IA 50309

CATEGORY: STRUCTURAL/ARCHITECTURAL
LANDSCAPE: (check one)
ARCHEOLOGY:

COMPONENTS: nomination includes original YMCA building, additions and adjacent parking lot and site.

USE (present) recreational and multiple dwelling (past) recreational and multiple dwelling

DESCRIPTION:

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1957-1960 and c. 1980 addition

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Wetherell Harrison -
William J. Wagner, chief architect

BUILDING TYPE:
Single-family dwelling Industrial Other institutional Religious
Multiple-family dwelling Educational Public Agricultural
Commercial

EXTERIOR WALLS: clapboard stone brick board and batten shingles stucco
other _____

STRUCTURAL SYSTEM: wood frame with interlocking joints masonry load-bearing walls
wood frame with light members (balloon frame) iron frame steel frame with curtain walls
reinforced concrete other

CONDITION: excellent good fair deteriorated

INTEGRITY: original site moved--if so, when _____
from where _____

Information on alterations, additions (with dates and architect, if known) and any other notable features of building/site: Addition was added to building in 1980. Addition was designed by Ron Walker. Multiple interior work has been done over the last several years.

RELATED OUTBUILDINGS AND PROPERTY: barn other farm structures carriage house
garage privy other _____

SURROUNDINGS OF THE SITE: open land woodland scattered outbuildings commercial
 industrial residential densely built-up other downtown riverfront

Prepared by: Jack C. Porter

Date: July 15, 2014

Address: 815 18th Street, Des Moines, IA 50314 **Telephone:** (515) 243-7064

Organization: _____

SIGNIFICANCE: (Indicate all sources of information for all statements)

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE:

Please see attached nomination to the National Register of Historic Places under section on architectural and historic significance.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE Theme(s)

SOURCES (for primary and secondary sources give complete facts of publication: author, title, place of publication, date, etc.):

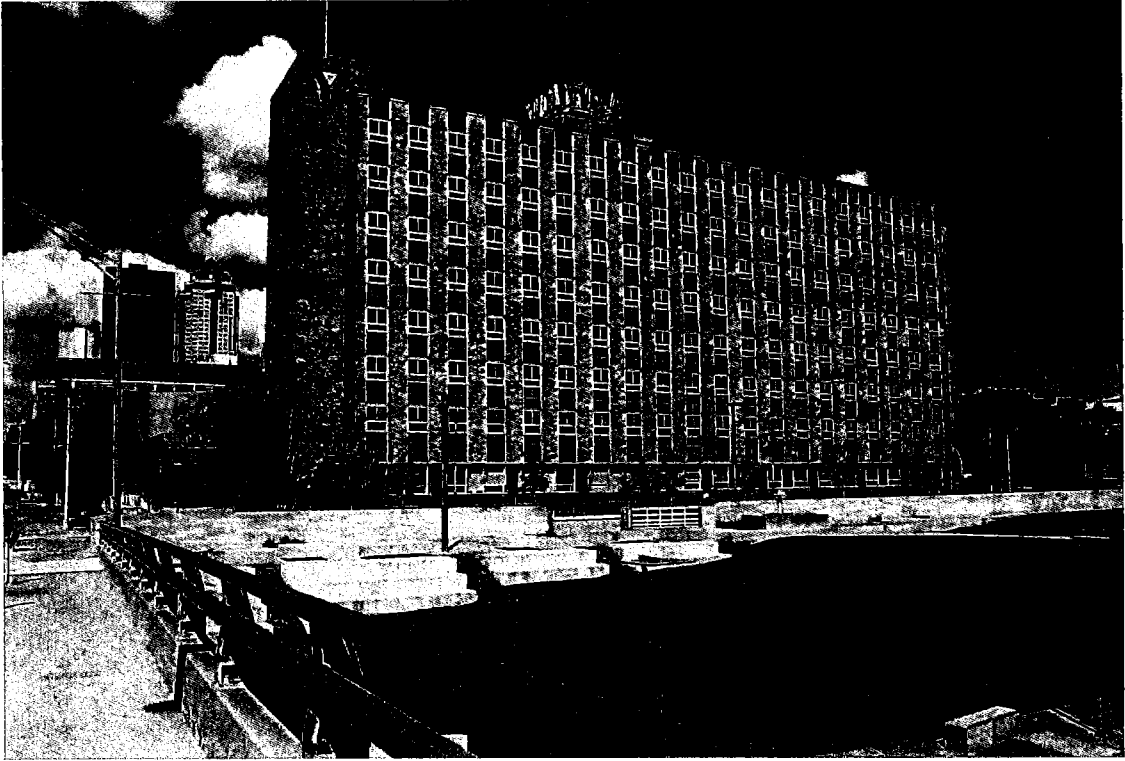
National Register nomination evaluated on May 7, 2010

Polk County Assessor web site printed July 15, 2014.

Map

Photo

49A



APR 22 2010

Site Inventory Form

State Historical Society of Iowa
(April 2010)

State Inventory No. 77-10696

New Supplemental

Part of a district with known boundaries (enter inventory no.) _____

Relationship: Contributing Noncontributing

Contributes to a potential district with yet unknown boundaries

National Register Status:(any that apply) Listed De-listed NHL DO

9-Digit SHPO Review & Compliance (R&C) Number _____

Non-Extant (enter year) _____

ELIGIBLE

1. Name of Property

historic name YMCA

other names/site number Central YMCA

2. Location

street & number 101 Locust Street

city or town Des Moines

vicinity, county Polk

Legal Description: (If Rural) Township Name _____

Township No _____

Range No. _____

Section _____

Quarter of Quarter _____

(If Urban) Subdivision Coliseum Place

Block(s) _____

Lot(s) 1, 3, 4, 5

3. State/Federal Agency Certification [Skip this Section]

4. National Park Service Certification [Skip this Section]

5. Classification

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

If Non-Eligible Property

Enter number of:

If Eligible Property, enter number of:

Contributing

Noncontributing

— buildings
 — sites
 — structures
 — objects
 — Total

1
 —
 —
 —
 1

Name of related project report or multiple property study (Enter "N/A" if the property is not part of a multiple property examination)

Title _____

Historical Architectural Data Base Number _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

01B-multiple dwelling

01D-transitory housing

03C01-facility of volunteer or public service organization

03C01-facility of volunteer or public service organization

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

08-Modern movement

foundation

walls (visible material) 03-brick, 04A-granite, 04E-slate, 05F-stainless steel

roof

other

Narrative Description (SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS, WHICH MUST BE COMPLETED)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" representing your opinion of eligibility after applying relevant National Register criteria)

- Yes No More Research Recommended
- Yes No More Research Recommended
- Yes No More Research Recommended
- Yes No More Research Recommended

- A Property is associated with significant events.
- B Property is associated with the lives of significant persons
- C Property has distinctive architectural characteristics
- D Property yields significant information in archaeology or history

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Criteria Considerations

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

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

02-Architecture

04-Art

29-Social History

Significant Dates

Construction date 1957-60 check if circa or estimated date
Other dates, including renovation

Significant Person

(Complete if National Register Criterion B is marked above)

Architect/Builder

Architect
Wetherell & Harrison; William Wagner-Chief Architect
National Building Service of the YMCA, consultants
Builder
Weitz Construction

Narrative Statement of Significance (SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS, WHICH MUST BE COMPLETED)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography See continuation sheet for citations of the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form

10. Geographic Data

UTM References (OPTIONAL)

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	_____	_____	2	_____	_____
3	_____	_____	4	_____	_____

See continuation sheet for additional UTM references or comments

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Shannon Schaefer (Intern) date 4/23/2010
organization State Historical Society of Iowa telephone 515-451-1464
street & number 600 E Locust St state IA zip code 50319-0290
city or town Des Moines

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION (Submit the following items with the completed form)

FOR ALL PROPERTIES

- 1 **Map:** showing the property's location in a town/city or township
- 2 **Site plan:** showing position of buildings and structures on the site in relation to public road(s)
- 3 **Photographs:** representative black and white photos. If the photos are taken as part of a survey for which the Society is to be curator of the negatives or color slides, a photo/catalog sheet needs to be included with the negatives/slides and the following needs to be provided below on this particular inventory site:

Roll/slide sheet # _____	Frame/slot # _____	Date Taken _____
Roll/slide sheet # _____	Frame/slot # _____	Date Taken _____
Roll/slide sheet # _____	Frame/slot # _____	Date Taken _____

See continuation sheet or attached photo & slide catalog sheet for list of photo roll or slide entries.

Photos/illustrations without negatives are also in this site inventory file.

FOR CERTAIN KINDS OF PROPERTIES, INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING AS WELL

1. **Farmstead & District:** (List of structures and buildings, known or estimated year built, and contributing or noncontributing status)
2. **Barn:**
 - a. A sketch of the frame/truss configuration in the form of drawing a typical middle bent of the barn.
 - b. A photograph of the loft showing the frame configuration along one side.
 - c. A sketch floor plan of the interior space arrangements along with the barn's exterior dimensions in feet.

State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) Use Only Below This Line

Concur with above survey opinion on National Register eligibility: Yes No More Research Recommended
 This is a locally designated property or part of a locally designated district

Comments: _____

Evaluated by (name/title):

Shannon Schaefer, Architectural Historian Date: 5/7/2010

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Narrative Description

The Central YMCA (built in 1957-60) is located in the eastern edge of downtown Des Moines, Iowa. Des Moines occupies the southwest quadrant of Polk County and is the capital city of Iowa. The YMCA property is bound on the east by the Des Moines River and Principal Riverwalk, which is currently under construction, on the north by Grand Avenue, and on the south by Locust Street. Immediately west of the building is a parking lot controlled by the YMCA and west of that is Second Avenue. Today, the immediate area around the YMCA is a combination of public space and residential buildings. As noted above, the Principal Riverwalk runs along the east side and also extends into the block immediately north of the YMCA. Brownstones on Grand and Civic Center Court Apartments are located to the northwest and west, respectively. To the southwest is the Des Moines Civic Center and to the south is the former public library.

The Central YMCA as completed in 1960 consisted of an 8-story residential block facing the Des Moines River with a lower section containing community rooms, gymnasium, auditorium, natatorium and other public facilities attached to the west. In 1980, the Aliber Youth Center, was added to the northwest corner of the building. The YMCA continues to serve its original function as a residential and educational facility for the citizens of Des Moines. Designed by William Wagner of the Des Moines firm Wetherell & Harrison with the National Building Service of the YMCA serving as consultants, the Central YMCA is an important example of post-war Modernism.

Exterior

The YMCA is a reinforced concrete building with a brick exterior. The original building is composed of two primary parts—on the east is the eight-story rectangular tower facing the Des Moines River. On the west is an attached lower section containing community rooms, gymnasium, auditorium, natatorium and other public facilities. An excellent example of post-war Modernism, the design uses simple geometric forms to emphasize volume, large expanses of brick, sparse ornamentation and flat roofs. In addition to the extensive use of pinkish-red variegated brick, other exterior materials include slate, granite and stainless steel. The Aliber Youth Center on the northwest corner represents the only major alteration to the exterior. This wing was built in 1980 but was designed using an aesthetic similar to the original building and using brick comparable in coloration.

As the tallest element, the residential block along the river is the dominant portion of the building (Fig. 4). A row of eleven engaged columns of polished dark grey granite are located at the first floor of the east elevation (Fig. 5). In between each column are three windows. The grey granite columns are continued in the consecutive floors of the east elevation by vertical brick piers running uninterrupted to the roof of the building. These brick piers alternate with a bay containing a three-part metal window. Under each window is a panel in-filled with dark grey slate. (The west elevation of the residential block visible above the lower wing is arranged similarly.) The south and north ends of the residential section are large brick vertical blocks with no windows, containing interior stairs. A square tower containing elevators is attached on the west side in the center of the residential block (Fig. 8 & 9). This tower is topped with the large four-sided sign spelling out "YMCA" in red neon sans serif letters, which is visible from blocks away (Fig. 10).

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While the residential block is the tallest portion of the building, the western portion of the building occupies the largest footprint. Composed of volumetric forms of two to three stories, this portion of the building is constructed of the same brick and continues the modern aesthetic of the residential block. The boys' entrance (marked with a large granite column and a wall of random granite ashlar) was originally on the north side of the building (it is now the primary entrance for the adult transitional housing for men) (Fig. 11 & 12). Immediately over this entrance is the brick mural titled "Passing the Torch" (described in greater detail below) (Fig. 13). To the west of the entrance is a row of five one-story engaged polished granite columns in between which are windows (Fig. 12). The wall above is brick with no windows. Further to the west is a recessed loading dock and beyond that the blank wall of the Aliber addition (Fig. 14).

The original adult entrance (now the primary public entrance for the athletic facility) was on the south elevation through a portico that spans from the southwestern corner of the building to the east end of the residential block (Fig. 8). There is one set of stairs of dark granite that wraps around two sides of the southwest corner and a straight flight of stairs at the southeast corner. The portico is supported with polished dark granite columns (both freestanding and engaged). The roof of the portico serves as a balcony at the second story and has a stainless steel railing (Fig. 15, 17 & 18). The rear wall of this balcony is curved and is the location of the building's other exterior mural, containing three sections (this south façade mural will be discussed in further detail below) (Fig. 6 & 7).

The west elevation of the building consists of the brick volumetric walls that make up the other functions of the YMCA besides the residential areas, such as the community rooms, gymnasium, auditorium, natatorium and other public facilities. On the southwest side of the building is the Y's parking, with a raised portion of the building held up by concrete columns, allowing for some covered parking (Fig. 19 & 20).

The northwest side of the building is the Aliber Youth Center's plain brick square mass added to the YMCA in 1980 (Fig. 21). The Youth Center was a gift from the Aliber family foundation. This \$300,000 gift was contingent on a matching amount raised by the Y's fund-raising.¹ The original Aliber family members were Russian immigrants, and their children had no offspring, so they set up this foundation as their legacy, which "sought to help young people through the YMCA's new youth center."² This center would give inner-city youths a place to play and gather, as well as before and after-school programs and activities.³ The addition of the Aliber Youth Center is the one significant alteration to the exterior, however, its design is consistent with that of the original building and it does not detract from the building's design.

The exterior is notable for two large murals by former Drake professor of art, Stan Hess. The north elevation mural is titled "Passing the Torch" and depicts a profile of a youth's head, and he is holding a torch (Fig. 13). This torch is a triangle, which is the traditional Y.M.C.A.'s emblem, symbolic of light, truth, and guidance.⁴ The mural on the south elevation, title unknown, is the largest of the two.

¹ "YMCA is given \$300,000 gift" *Des Moines Register*. 23 Sept. 1980.

² "Youth Center Dedication set at YMCA." *Des Moines Register*. 24 Oct. 1980.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ "Brick Murals for the New 'Y'" *Des Moines Sunday Register*. 25 May 1958: 9.

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murals, approximately 20 feet by 94 feet. Its composition of three panels expresses the "Trinity within man, that of 'the spirit, the mind, and the body,' which is symbolized in the red triangle of the Y M C.A."⁵ One panel depicts three hands (black, white, and gold) symbolizing interracial, worldwide Christian fellowship. The center panel is of a youth who symbolizes enlightenment and mental alertness. The third panel is of a hand holding the Greek letters Chi Rho, which are the first two letters of the word "Christos"(Fig. 7).⁶ The architect William Wagner of the Des Moines architectural firm, Wetherell & Harrison, correlated the architectural elements with the compositions of Hess' murals.⁷

Interior

The interior of the Des Moines riverfront YMCA, contains several functional areas, each with their own use. In the southeast corner of the interior, visitors are welcomed by the adult lobby made up of sturdy materials, such as polished granite at the reception desk, tile floors, brick walls and ceramic tile pillars, exuding the feeling of permanence and wealth.⁸ Another interior space that exemplifies durability is the World Service Meeting Room, one of three committee dining rooms and contains one of Hess' interior murals.⁹ This tempera mural illustrates the unfolding of a world globe and a teacher explaining to his pupils the brotherhood of the races (Fig. 29).¹⁰ Hess also designed the mural made of ceramic tile located in the boys' clubroom featuring a young boy reading from the "Book of Life" (Fig. 27).¹¹ The book is open to the page that stresses the importance of developing the youth's spirit, mind and body.¹²

Another area in the Y containing a Hess mural is the room with the swimming pool. One of the walls is adorned with pictorial representations of interlocking fish (Fig. 32). The Y also houses two gymnasiums, as well as rooms for weight-lifting, boxing-wrestling, and courts for handball and squash (Fig 26).¹³ Just off the lobby area contains a cafeteria/coffee shop allowing for gathering and another location for dining (Fig. 28).¹⁴

The upper six floors of the eight story section of the residential building contains 198 residence rooms, furnished and decorated to give a good environment for young men to be housed and grow in, while settling in Des Moines.¹⁵ Each room is nine feet by 12 feet with a ¾ bed, two chairs, desk/dresser, and phone.¹⁶

⁵ "Brick Murals for the New 'Y'" *Des Moines Sunday Register* 25 May 1958: 9.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ *Iowa Architect*. "Y.M.C.A. Des Moines" Architects Wetherell & Harrison, Des Moines. Official publication of Iowa Chapter Directory American Institute of Architects. January-February, Vol. VII. No. 1, 1960

⁹ "It's Here 'Finest Y Building in The Land!'" *Des Moines Tribune*, p 11. 12 Jan 1960.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ "A Boy's 'Book of Life'." *Des Moines Tribune* 28 Dec 1959.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ "It's Here 'Finest Y Building in The Land!'" *Des Moines Tribune*, p 11 12 Jan 1960

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Ibid

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The chapel located on the second floor is dedicated "to God, for the purpose of meditation and prayer, for the strengthening of the spiritual life of people of all faiths. It was built in loving memory of H. Howard Crawford (former YMCA camp directory and boys' secretary) and Kenneth M. May" (former member of the YMCA board of directors).¹⁷ Designed by William Wagner as an interfaith chapel he wanted it to be acceptable to all three faiths, Catholicism, Protestantism, and Judaism.¹⁸ In the front of the chapel stand Bibles from all three faiths. The walls are covered with grey, green and purple slate. Stan Hess designed an interior "window" panel composed of a grid of wood fitted with colored Plexiglas in shades of green, blue, grey and yellow, giving the illusion of an outside, stained glass window (Fig. 30).¹⁹

All murals will be discussed in further detail below.

The YMCA appears to have retained very good structural integrity. The building sits in its original location and retains the original materials and workmanship on its exterior and interior.

Historical Significance of the Des Moines Y.M.C.A. on the Riverfront

The Y.M.C.A. (Young Men's Christian Association) began in London, England in 1844 by the 20-year old, George Williams.²⁰ He began inviting friends to his room in the evenings for Bible study, because he believed his fellow workers and himself deserved to have a place to go to after work besides "places of iniquity."²¹ One of Williams' friends decided this group should be made into an official organization, and became known as the Young Men's Christian Association.²² The number in attendance quickly increased. The organization even spread soon to the United States, starting with the first branch in Boston, Massachusetts.²³ In the U.S. the organization aimed at "young men who were new to the country's larger cities and guiding them to a church."²⁴ Many Y's opened across the U.S. in the early 1850s focusing on religion. Some religious organizations felt the YMCA groups were taking the place of churches, so in the late 1800s and early 1900s an understanding was met between the two groups.²⁵ Local YMCA's helped to mold young boys into manhood not only through religious themes, but also through various programs offered, including physical and recreational activities, and education.²⁶ The Des Moines YMCA was one of the earlier local Y's in the U.S., organized in 1868.²⁷

¹⁷ "Design for 3 Faiths at YMCA" Iowa Young Men's Christian Association Des Moines Tribune 4 June, 1960

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ "Design for 3 Faiths at YMCA" Iowa Young Men's Christian Association Des Moines Tribune 4 June, 1960

²⁰ "The Des Moines Y.M.C.A. - One of Earliest in U.S." Des Moines Tribune 19 April 1958

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ "The Des Moines Y.M.C.A. - One of Earliest in U.S." Des Moines Tribune. 19 April 1958.

²⁷ Ibid.

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The first Des Moines YMCA was organized in the rear room of Coskery and Tannahill's dry good store, which was owned by George Osgood at 4th and Walnut.²⁸ Young men of the city were invited to gather for prayer, literary discussion, discuss missionary work, and assist the needy. By the 1880's, the purpose of the YMCA organization extended from literary and religious meetings to physical activities for boys, night schooling and other ways to train young men's "body, mind and spirit."²⁹ As the Y continued to expand its number of activities and membership, additional facilities were constructed. The "Crocker Street Y" was founded in 1919 at 12th and Crocker Streets for young African-American men and boys and operated until the late 1950s. The second designated location for the Des Moines YMCA was at Fourth and Grand Avenue in 1891.³⁰ After some years at this location, the organization still needed space, pushing them to raise funds to build their next location at Fourth St. and Keosauqua Way (1333 Keosauqua Way).³¹ Beginning in 1912, this location housed the Y for 48 years until the organization outgrew the building, and moved to their present location at First and Locust in 1960.³² The new building was intended to help youth become solid and dependable citizens with adequate character foundations to face the intricate problems of the atomic and space age.³³

On April 26, 1959, the cornerstone was laid at the southeast entrance on Locust Street by James W. Wallace, the immediate past president of the YMCA, Angus K. Campbell, chairman of the new building committee, and A.B. Lundahl, president of the YMCA (Fig. 22).³⁴ Some of the items placed in the cornerstone were a 1957 proof set of U.S. coins, April 1959 Issue of "Your Y.M.C.A.", a street map of Des Moines at the time, and other items that contained information about life at that time.³⁵

Dedicated in January 1960, the land, building and equipment for the new Y reportedly cost \$3.9 million.³⁶ At the dedication ceremony, James Hilton, president of Iowa State University, spoke to the youth in the audience and remarked "This beautiful and useful building which we are dedicating today, built by the citizens of Des Moines because they believe in you and the ideals and purposes for which the Y.M.C.A. stands, will provide for you and your friends the opportunity to develop spiritually, morally and physically."³⁷ Hilton also remarked how proud he was of the new Y, how "It represents the growing spirit among Iowans for establishing things that will have a lasting value in peace."³⁸ The new Des Moines YMCA not only helped current Des Moines residents and youth, but the organization also helped men who recently moved to Des Moines from other countries such as Hungary and South Africa.³⁹

²⁸ "100th Annual Meeting: Historic 'Y' Occasion." Iowa Young Men's Christian Association. Des Moines Tribune. 15 April 1969.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ "Crocker 'Y' Ends 40 Yrs. Of Service" Des Moines Sunday Register. 31 May 1959.

³² "Crocker 'Y' Ends 40 Yrs Of Service" Des Moines Sunday Register. 31 May 1959

³³ A.B. Lundal as quoted in *Your YMCA*, March 1959.

³⁴ "Cornerstone Laid at New Y Building" Des Moines Register. 27 April 1959.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ "New 'Y' is Hailed as a 'Dream Come True'." Des Moines Register 17 Jan. 1960

³⁷ "New Y M C A. is Dedicated Before 1,500," *Des Moines Register* 17 January 1960.

³⁸ "Dedicate New Y M C A Today" Des Moines Register. 17 Jan. 1960.

³⁹ "Y' Residence Houses Men From Many Lands." *Your YMCA*. Vol. IV, No. 4, 1957

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In the fall of 1964, an old two-story garage located at the southeast corner of Second and Grand avenues was demolished. This enabled the YMCA to complete the masonry on the north half of the west wall. At the same time, the parking lot on the west side of the building along Second Avenue was resurfaced and outfitted with gates and lights.

In 1980, the YMCA added the youth center to the west side of the main building. Named the Aliber Youth Center after the Foundation, which provided a portion of the funds for its construction, this wing provided a play area for inner-city youth as explained in the Narrative Description above.⁴⁰

Architects and Artist

Architects

Frank E. Wetherell and Roland G. Harrison formed the partnership Wetherell & Harrison in 1925. Wetherell's firm however dates back to 1894 when Wetherell started his architectural practice in Oskaloosa. The firm evolved several times, becoming Smith & Wetherell around 1906, later Smith, Wetherell & Gage, Wetherell & Gage. William Wagner was an architect in the Wetherell & Harrison architectural firm at the time of the Des Moines YMCA commission. Wagner became the chief architect on the YMCA project.

William Wagner (1916-2001) was born in Porterville, California but grew up in Iowa.⁴¹ In 1939, he graduated from Iowa State University's architecture program and later earned a Masters degree from Drake.⁴² While Wagner is best known for his work as a preservation architect, his body of work also included the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library in West Branch, Iowa, and the Des Moines Riverfront YMCA. As a preservation architect he helped restore such important buildings in Iowa as Marshall and Dallas county courthouses as well as the governor's home at Terrace Hill.⁴³ John Wetherell said of Mr. Wagner that he "was bothered that many old buildings were torn down instead of restored" and "He was somewhat outspoken about the bastardization of a unique historic building."⁴⁴

Breaking grounds in 1957, the YMCA is locally significant under National Register Criterion C as an example of architecturally significant post-war Modernism style. According to Paula Lupkin, the YMCA Building Bureau made the decision to adopt Modernism in the late 1940s.⁴⁵ Among the buildings that bear a resemblance to the Des Moines facility, include the YMCA in Binghamton, Oklahoma City (1952) and Racine, Wisconsin (c. 1961).⁴⁶ The Des Moines YMCA board of directors decided to construct a modern and centrally located new building in 1946. They purchased the river front site in 1955 with the intention of building a new building at this location. This style of Modernism would incorporate the

⁴⁰ "Youth Center Dedication set at YMCA." Des Moines Register. 24 Oct. 1980.

⁴¹ "Wagner was a champion of preservation." The Des Moines Register. 25 Jan. 2001.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Email correspondence with Dr. Paula Lupkin, 17 October 2007.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

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overall design of large geometric blocks, straight lines, flat roof, and use of building materials that are economical yet sturdy and durable.

Described by the *Des Moines Tribune* as having "a United Nations look."⁴⁷ The plan of the building was designed to be flexible so that as programs expanded, the physical space could be reconfigured. Materials were selected with ease of maintenance in mind. For example, the interior finishes included tile, brick, wood and slate and very little plastered wall space or painted walls.

In line with using durable materials Wagner also employed a new type of glazed brick called "Glazed Provincials."⁴⁸ In 1958 the Mason City Brick and Tile Company developed a brick with more variety of color for architects to use, but still retained the durable character of hard burned clay brick.⁴⁹ Wagner with other top architects helped the finalization of colors in this new line of bricks, and also was one of the first to utilize the glazed provincials in the Des Moines YMCA building.⁵⁰ The brick was manufactured in ten colors by the Des Moines Clay Company. The tangerine colored brick from this line was used in the staircase off the main lobby.

William Wagner wanted to incorporate artwork in the YMCA building, and asked Stanley Hess to be the designer. Wagner first met Mr. Hess in a printmaking class at Drake University, which Professor Hess taught.⁵¹ Hess donated most of his time to the projects at the YMCA.

Artist

Stanley O. Hess (1923-present) was born in Weatherford, Oklahoma.⁵² He studied art at the University of Oklahoma with Mexican artist Emilio Amero and Leonard Good (who later served as Chair of the art department at Drake University).⁵³ Hess earned a BFA in commercial art from the University of Oklahoma in 1948 and a MFA in painting in 1950.⁵⁴ From 1950 to 1951 he was an instructor of art at William Woods College in Fulton, Missouri. Later in 1951, Hess joined the faculty at Drake University in Des Moines.⁵⁵ His work was published in *Time*, *Fortune* and *Newsweek*.⁵⁶ Hess was commissioned to create murals at the National Travelers Life Insurance Company Building, Iowa Power & Light (moved to the former Science Center in 1971), Des Moines YMCA, and the Mercy and Iowa Lutheran hospitals in Des Moines.⁵⁷ He created mosaic stations of the cross for St. Theresa's Church in Des Moines. Along with painting, Hess also designed a typeface called "Hessian".⁵⁸ His book, *The Modification of*

⁴⁷ Robert H. Spiegel, 'Finest Y Building in The Land!' *Des Moines Tribune* 12 Jan. 1960: 11

⁴⁸ "New Kind of Glazed Brick Manufactured in 10 Colors." *Mason City Globe Gazette*. 13 Sept. 1958.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Phone Interview with Stan Hess by Paula Mohr 17 Oct. 2007

⁵² "Leonard Good and Stanley Hess: An Emeritus Exhibition" Anderson Gallery, Drake University. Sept. 1997.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Stanley O. Hess, Instructor. *Drake Faculty Biography*. 2 Oct. 1951

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Stanley O. Hess, Instructor. *Drake Faculty Biography* 11 Sept 1979

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

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Letterforms, published by the Art Direction Book Company in 1973, explained the principles of designing new typefaces.⁵⁹

Stan Hess has a unique approach in creating his murals, which results in distinctive works of art. His work has been displayed in galleries, in the mass media, as well as permanent structures such as in the architecture of the YMCA in Des Moines, Iowa. Hess' works many times are described as "double images, which require at least a second viewing" and the artist says about his own works, "It is true that things are not always what they at first seem"⁶⁰ His murals, paintings, and drawings have been described as Modernist, surrealist, pop, 'Magic Realism' and optical illusions.⁶¹ Whatever his art may be described as, it is an irreplaceable part of the art history of central Iowa that has combined with the architectural history of some of Des Moines' most prominent buildings.

In regards to the Des Moines Riverfront YMCA, Stan Hess had almost as a significant influence over the finished product as the architect. The collaboration of Wagner's architectural design and Hess' murals has made the YMCA not only an important architectural landmark but also an artistic one. The most recognizable murals that Hess created for the YMCA would be on the exteriors that all who pass by can enjoy. These murals are made out entirely of multi-colored brick creating images, out of Hess' research on the history of the Y.M.C.A., which symbolize the purpose and objectives of the organization.⁶² Though not as widely seen as the exterior murals, the interior murals are just as impressive, spreading throughout different rooms of the building. Hess donated most of his time to complete these murals, but also the members of the Bricklayers Local Union No. 2 donated their time in constructing these masterpiece murals.⁶³

Exterior Murals

North Façade Mural, Grand Ave – 16 feet high by 43 feet wide (Fig. 13)

This "Passing the Torch" mural portrays the head of a youth in profile holding a torch. The torch design is in the shape of the traditional triangle emblem of the Y.M.C.A., which symbolizes light, truth and guidance.⁶⁴

South and East Façade Mural, Locust St. – 20 feet high by 94 feet wide (Fig. 7)

The largest of the two exterior murals, divided up into three sections, expresses the Trinity within man.⁶⁵ This idea, of the Trinity within man, is also denoted in the triangle symbol of the YMCA, standing for "the spirit, the mind and the body."⁶⁶ The central section depicts a "head of a youth, suggesting enlightenment and mental alertness."⁶⁷ The left section shows the boy's right hand joined with two other

⁵⁹ Press Release from Drake University: *The Modification of Letterforms* by Stan Hess. Drake University: Des Moines, IA. 15 Jan. 1973

⁶⁰ "Leonard Good and Stanley Hess: An Emeritus Exhibition." Anderson Gallery, Drake University. Sept. 1997.

⁶¹ "Images Within Images" by Stanley Hess." Drake University News clipping. Des Moines, IA: 1972

⁶² "Brick Murals for New 'Y'." Des Moines Sunday Register, p. 9. 25 May 1958

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

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hands, "symbolic of inter-racial, world-wide Christian fellowship and teamwork."⁶⁸ In the right section of the mural, the boy's left hand holds the Greek letters CHI RHO (XP) meaning "Christ", and was "the emblem of early Christians, and now a part of the international emblem of the Y.M.C.A."⁶⁹

Interior Murals

'Book of Life' Mural – 9 feet high by 14 feet wide (Fig. 27)

Located in the Lincoln room, which is a clubroom for boys on the second floor, this ceramic tile mural depicts a boy reading from the "Book of Life."⁷⁰ The design of the open book and the pedestal forms a "Y". The book is opened to a marked page that stresses the "importance of youth development in spirit, mind and body."⁷¹

World Service Meeting Room (Fig. 29)

This tempera oil mural on plaster illustrates the unfolding of a world globe and a teacher explaining to his pupils the brotherhood of the races.⁷² It features a quote by Marcus Aurelius "Men Exist for the sake of one another. Teach them then or bear with them."⁷³ The mural was painted by Wagner, the architect, along with Hess' supervision and assistance.

Swimming Pool Room – 16 feet square (Fig. 32)

On one wall of the swimming pool room there is another Hess designed mural of interlocking "kissing fish" out of colored ceramic tile.⁷⁴ This square design is repeated along the wall four times, rotated each time

Chapel Window – floor to ceiling window panels of varying sizes (Fig. 30)

Wagner asked Hess to design one of the walls of windows in the multi-faith chapel on the second floor of the YMCA. At first Hess designed 5-7 windows with various pictorial symbols to represent God.⁷⁵ He was then asked to change his design because it was believed the windows placed too much emphasis on Christianity and did not include the other faiths of the chapel. Hess was hesitant to change, but finally redesigned the windows to be an abstract design of three different colors of plexi-glass layered to create multiple colors.⁷⁶ These "windows" are actually panels in front of a double wall, with concealed lighting between the two walls to give the illusion of outside light.⁷⁷

The Hess murals that cover the Y.M.C.A. architecture gained international notice. Reported in the Des Moines copy of the monthly newsletter, "Your YMCA", for members of the organization, the

⁶⁸ "Brick Murals for New 'Y'." Des Moines Sunday Register, p 9 25 May 1958

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ "A Boy's 'Book of Life'" Des Moines Tribune 28 Dec 1959.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ "Look What's Been Added to the River-Front Skyline." Des Moines Tribune. 11 April 1959

⁷⁵ Phone interview with Stan Hess by Paula Mohr. 17 Oct 2007

⁷⁶ Ibid

⁷⁷ "Design for 3 Faiths At Y M C A. Chapel." Des Moines Tribune. 4 June 1960.

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new murals sparked interest across the U.S. and foreign countries.⁷⁸ The YMCA World Alliance office in Geneva, Switzerland requested from the Des Moines YMCA photographs and information regarding these new murals, to publish in their "World Communique" magazine, which is distributed to 77 countries.⁷⁹ The murals, especially the Locust Street mural, (Fig. 7), were also published in the Annual Report of the National Council YMCA Board that is mailed to YMCAs in the U.S. and Canada.⁸⁰ The finished murals did not go unnoticed in 1960 by locals or other Y's across the world. The purpose of the Y organization is to link mankind through the goodness of people, as well as the expansion of the mind, body, and spirit through various means. Through the creative murals of Stan Hess, the purpose of the Y organization was communicated to viewers, and it also expanded viewers' minds artistically. The YMCA is a unique organization, and made its mark in Des Moines through its architecture as well as the murals. This building of art became a part of Des Moines' architectural and art history, which should be preserved just as a rare piece of artwork is preserved for future generations to appreciate. If the building cannot be maintained, at least the walls should be disassembled to safeguard the murals for the works of art they are.

Considering the thoughts of Architect, Mr. Wagner, tearing down the Des Moines Y.M.C.A. on the Riverfront would be a "bastardization of a unique historic building."⁸¹

⁷⁸ "New Building Murals Attract International Attention." Your YMCA: An Influence for Good in Des Moines. Vol. VI, No. 3. Nov. 1959.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ "New Building Murals Attract International Attention." Your YMCA: An Influence for Good in Des Moines. Vol. VI, No. 3. Nov. 1959

⁸¹ "Wagner was a champion of preservation." The Des Moines Register 25 Jan. 2001

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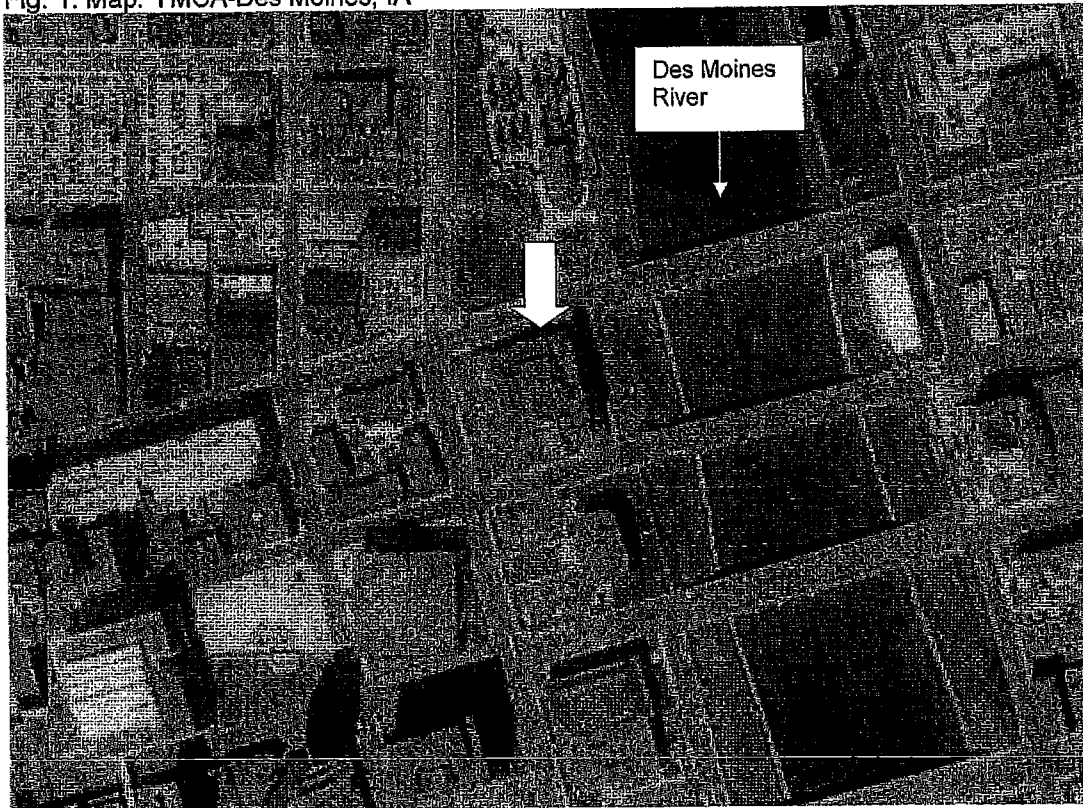
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Fig. 1: Map: YMCA-Des Moines, IA



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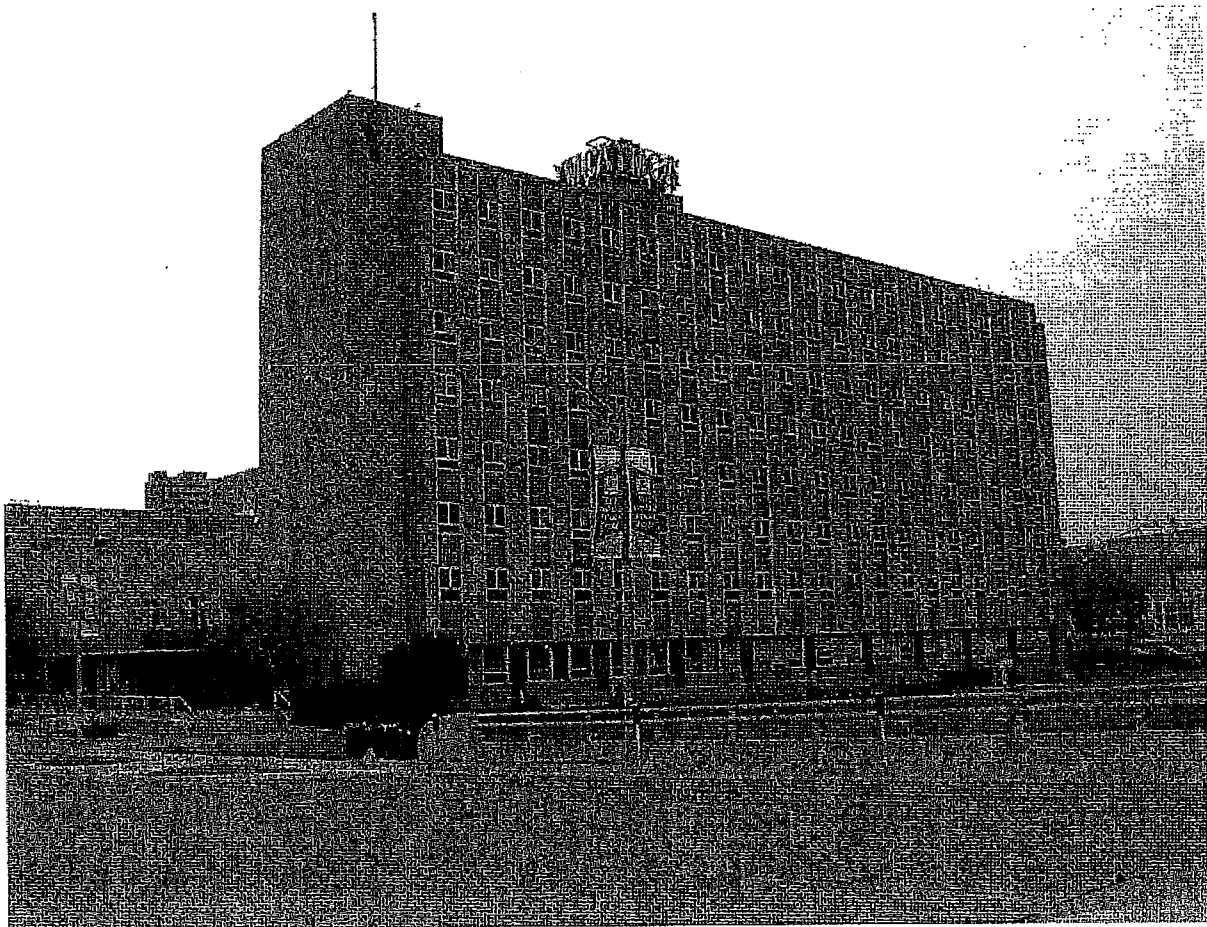
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The following photographs created on April 8, 2010 were taken by Shannon Noelle Schaefer, for the State Historical Society of Iowa to complete the Site Inventory form for site 77-10696 (see note below). All others are either scanned records, as indicated, or photographed in 2007 by Paula Mohr.

Note: These photographs were created by Shannon N. Schaefer as of April 8, 2010. Use of these images in any form without written permission from the photographer is strictly prohibited, with the exception for the initial purpose of the photographs to aid the Iowa Site Inventory form for site number 77-10696.

Fig. 3: East and South Façade-YMCA, view from Locust Street looking Northwest, October 2007



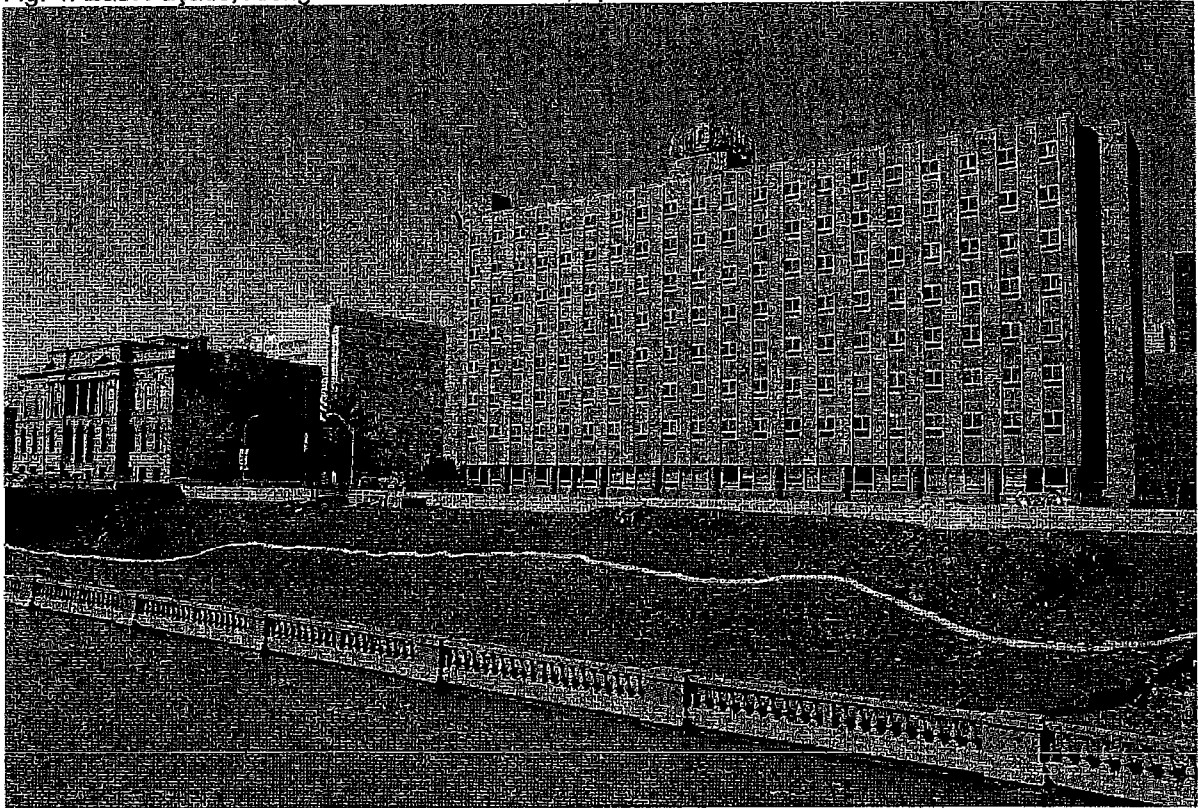
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Fig. 4: East Façade, Along the Des Moines River, April 2010



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Fig. 5: East Façade, grey granite columns, April 2010



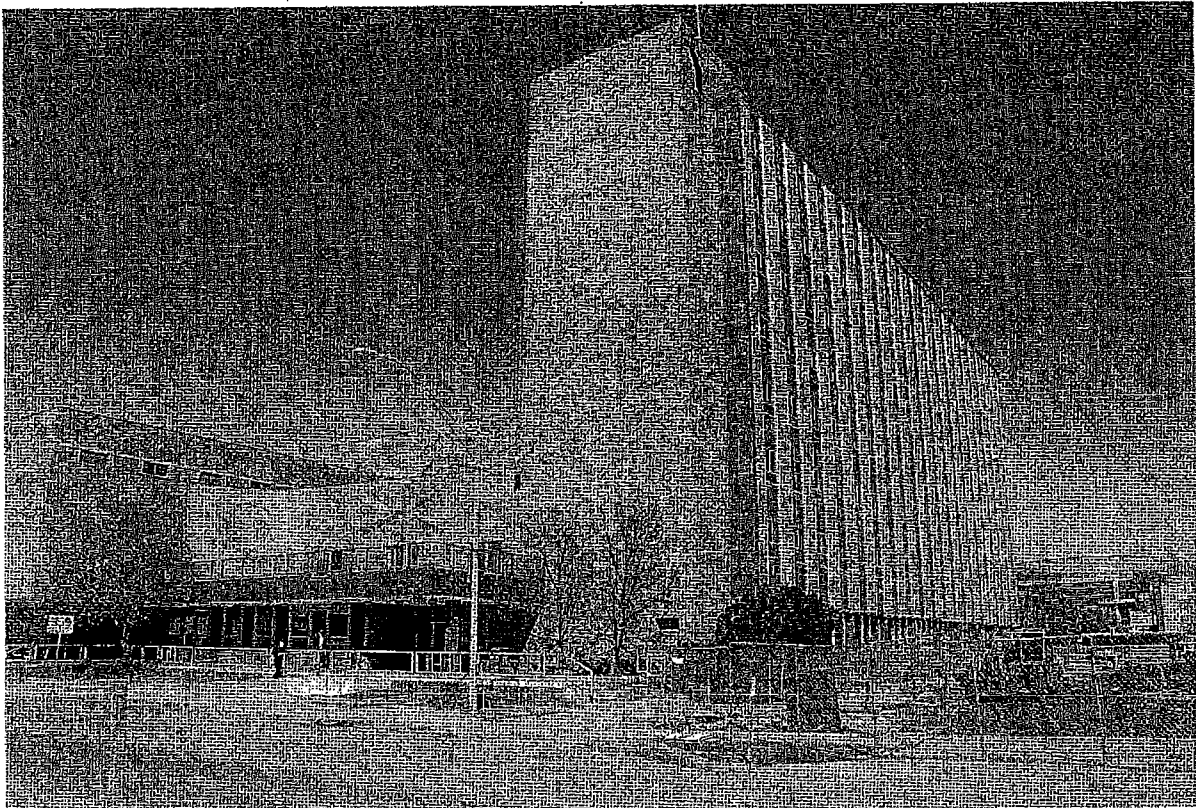
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Fig. 6: YMCA, looking NW, April 2010



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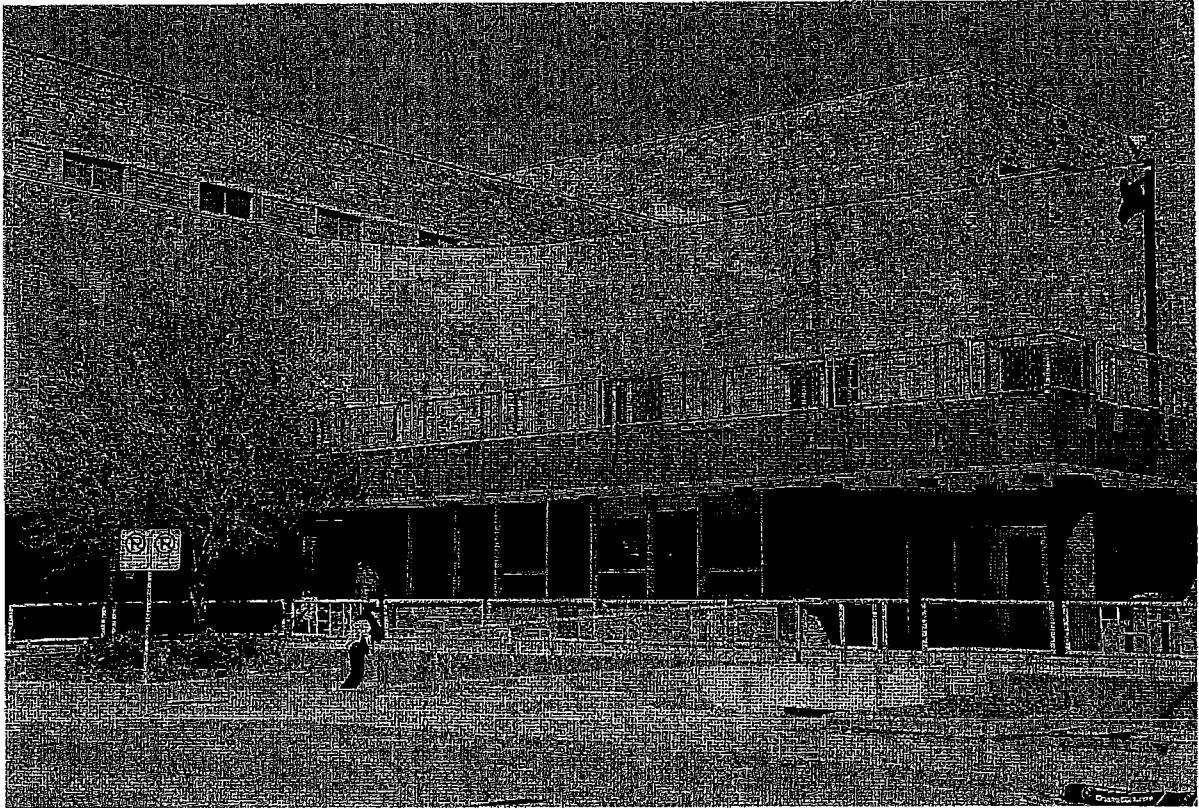
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Fig 7: YMCA, detail of South side mural on Locust Street, looking NW, April 2010



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Fig. 8: YMCA, looking N, Locust St. view, central square tower containing elevators, October 2007



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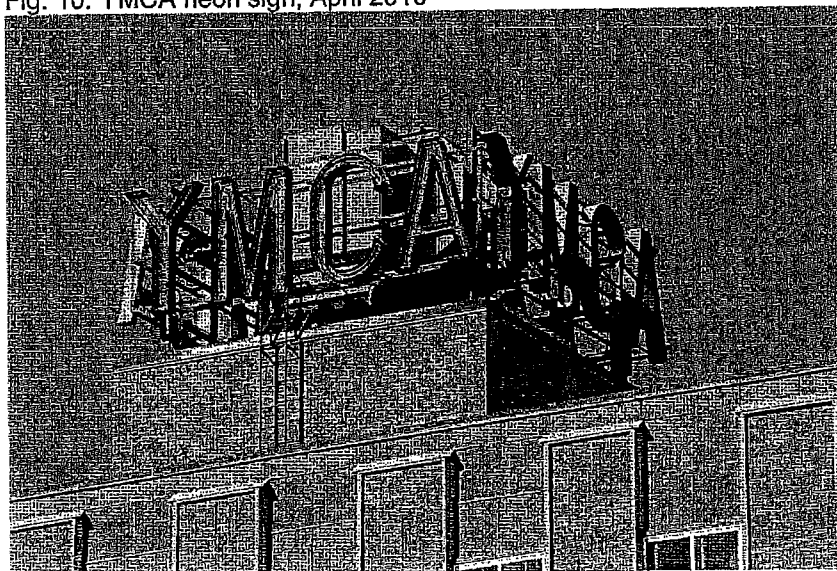
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Fig 9: YMCA, detail of neon sign on top of roof, looking NE, October 2007



Fig. 10: YMCA neon sign, April 2010



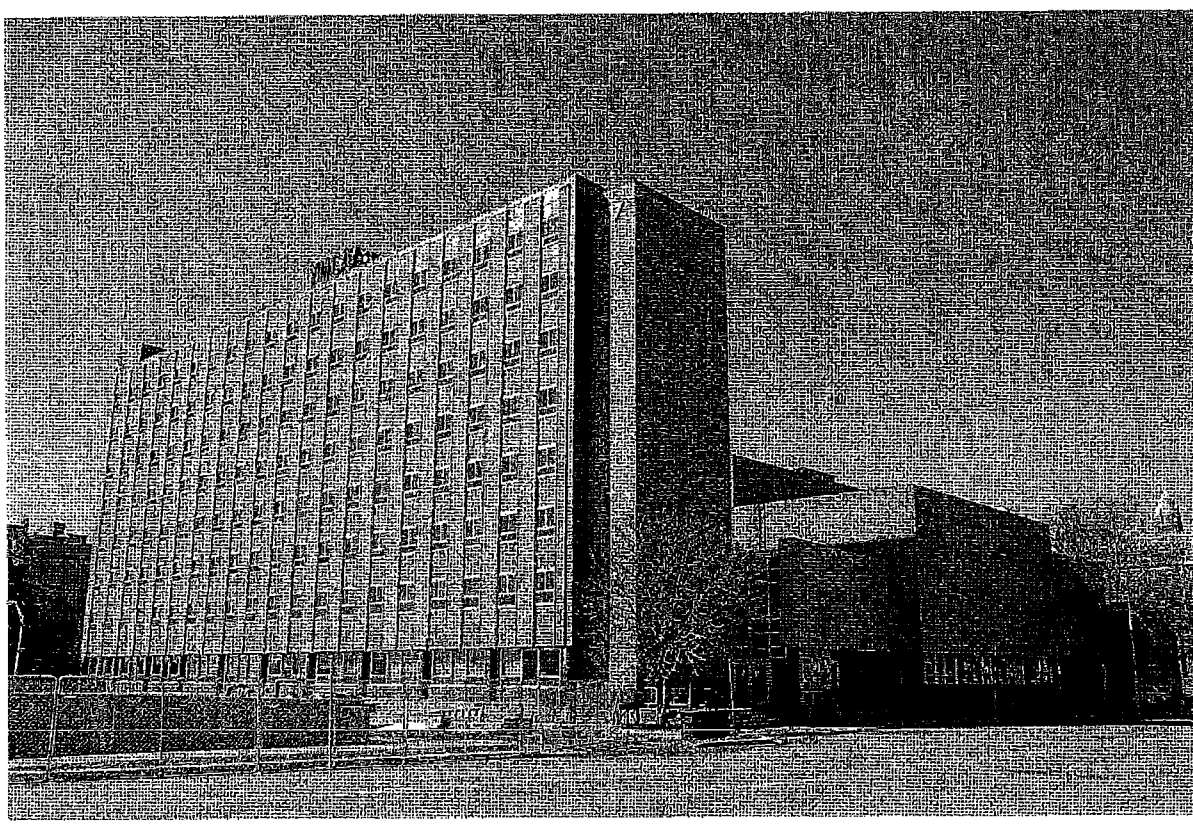
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Fig. 11: NE corner façade, "Residence" entrance with the "Passing the Torch" mural, April 2010



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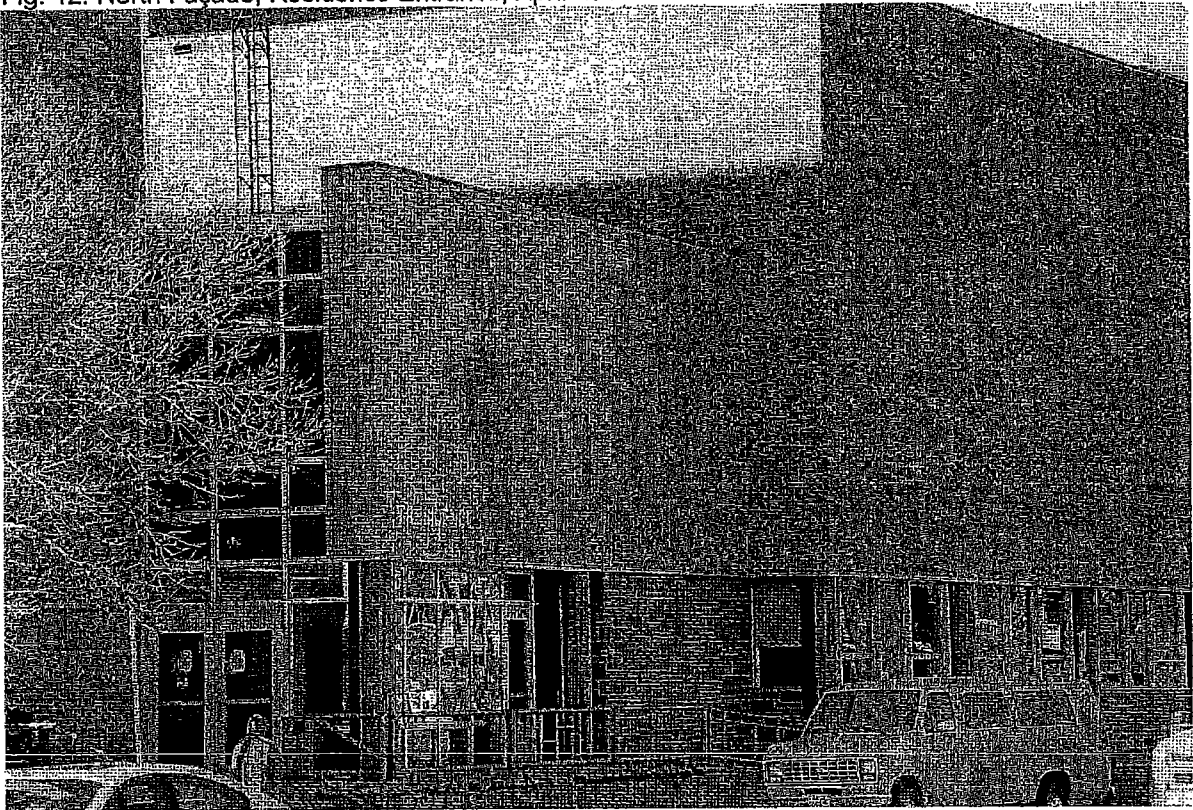
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Fig. 12: North Façade, Residence Entrance, April 2010



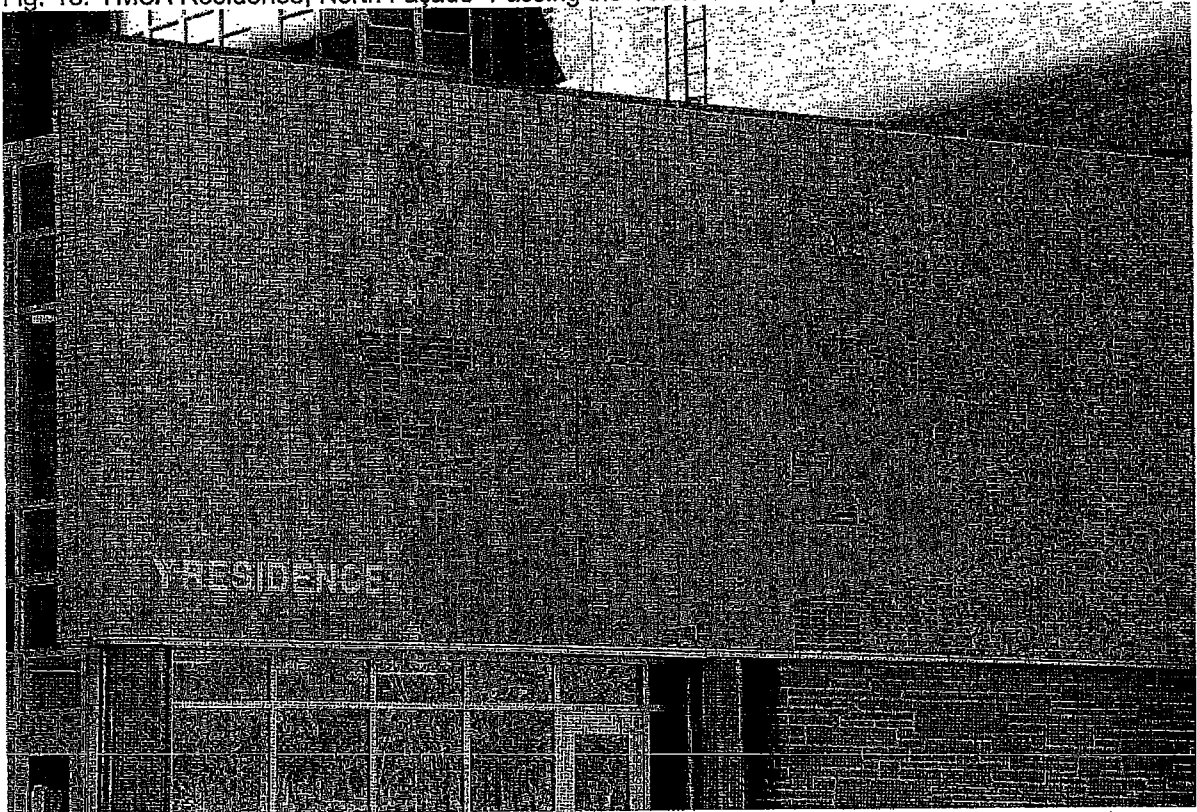
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Fig. 13: YMCA Residence, North Façade "Passing the Torch" Mural, April 2010



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Fig. 14: Looking SE- North Façade, October 2007



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Fig. 15: South Façade mural along Locust St , looking N, October 2007



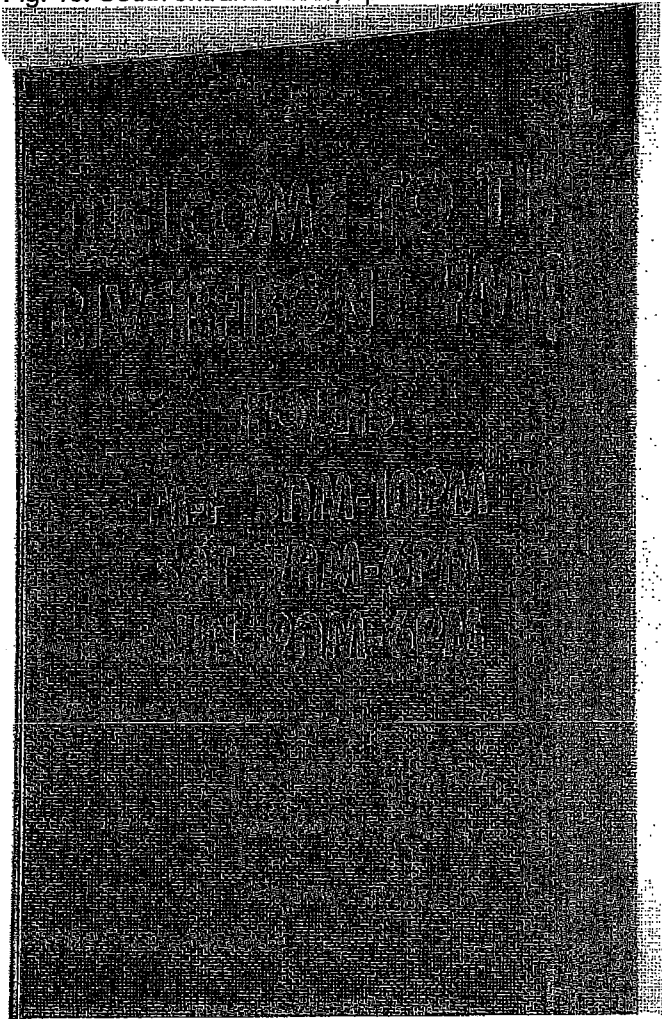
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Fig. 16: South entrance door, April 2010



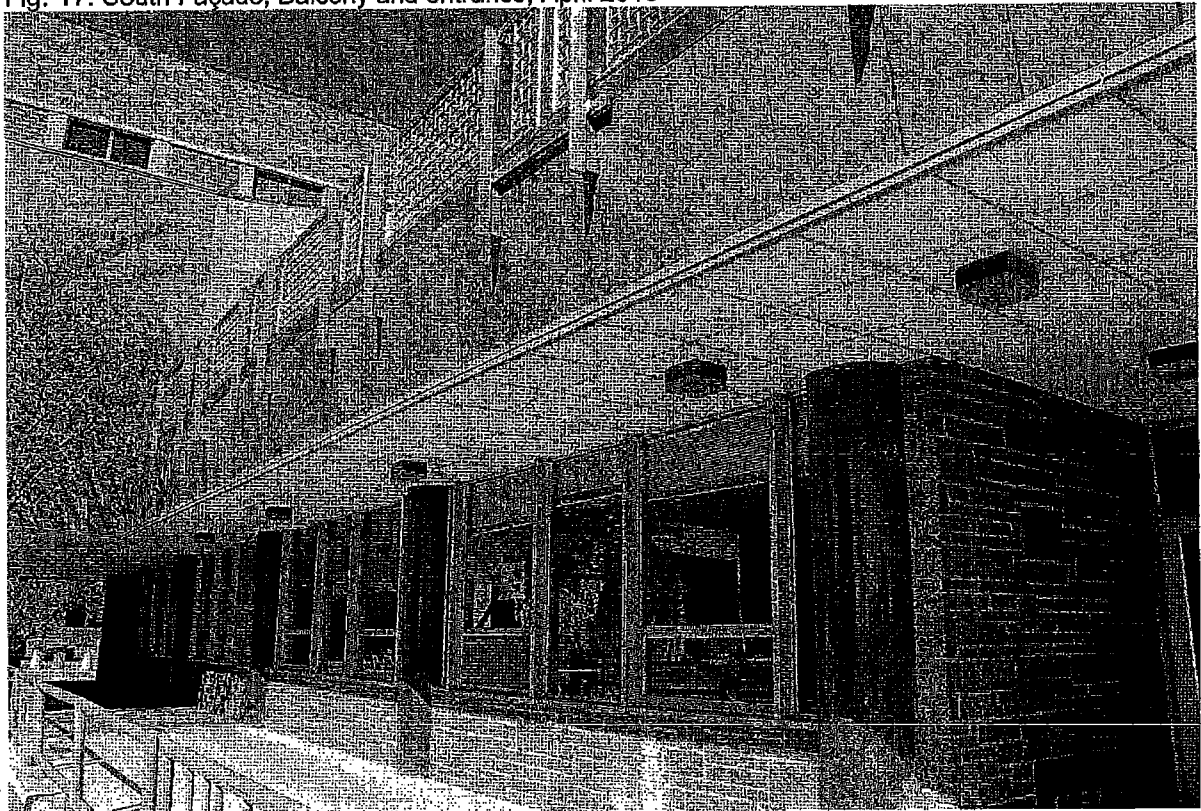
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Fig. 17: South Façade, Balcony and entrance, April 2010



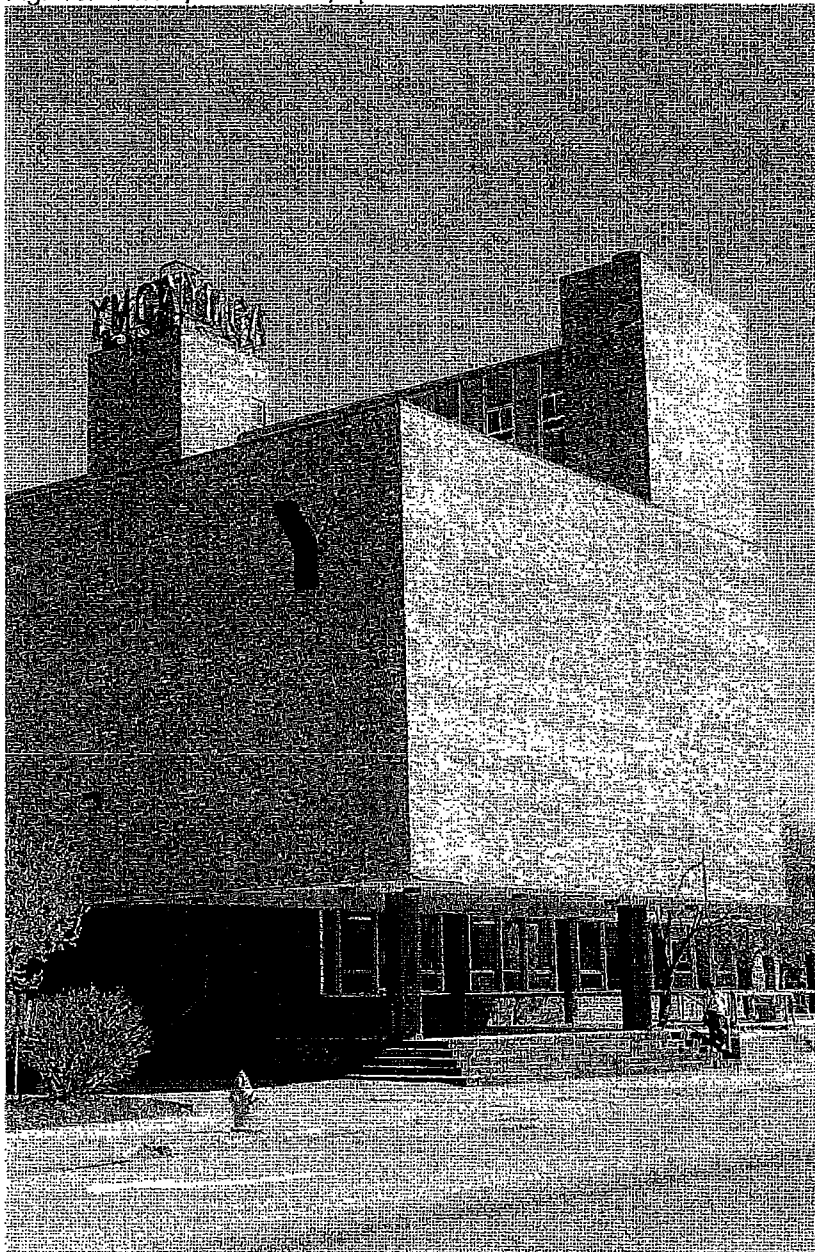
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Fig. 18: YMCA, SW Corner, April 2010



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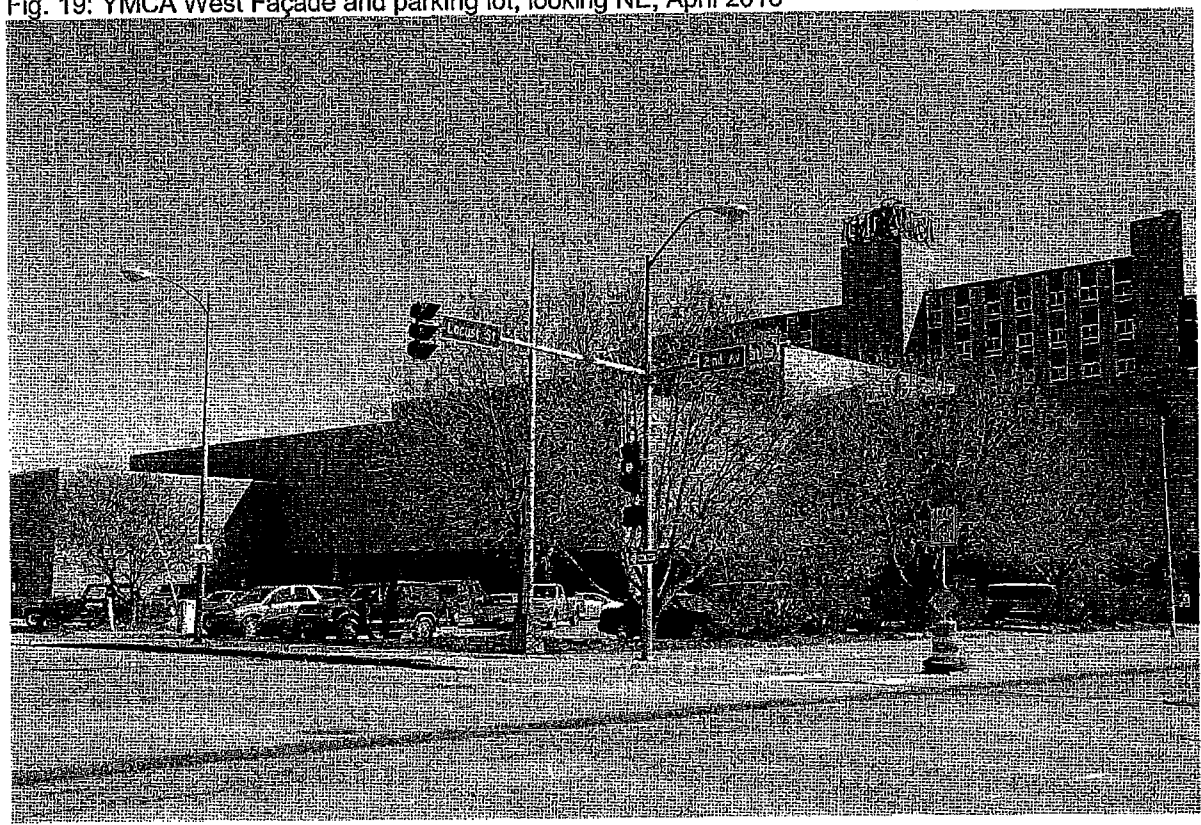
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Fig. 19: YMCA West Façade and parking lot, looking NE, April 2010



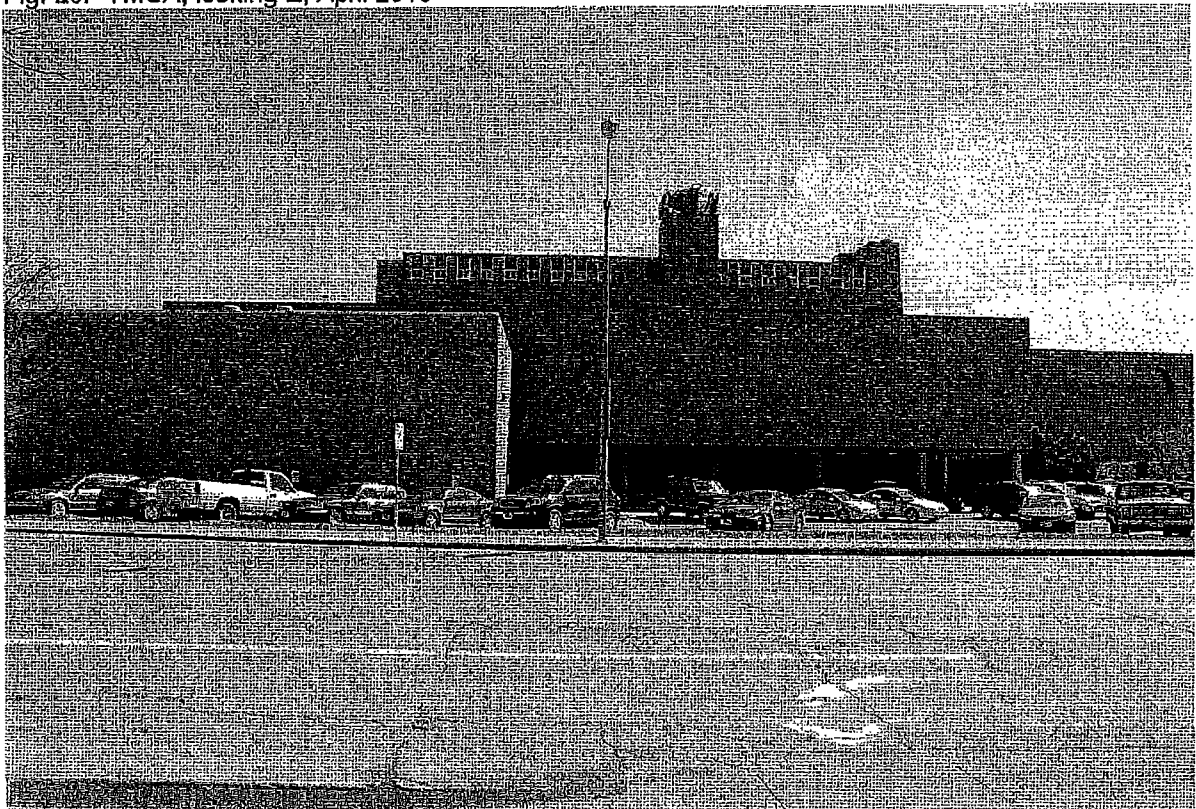
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Fig. 20: YMCA, looking E, April 2010



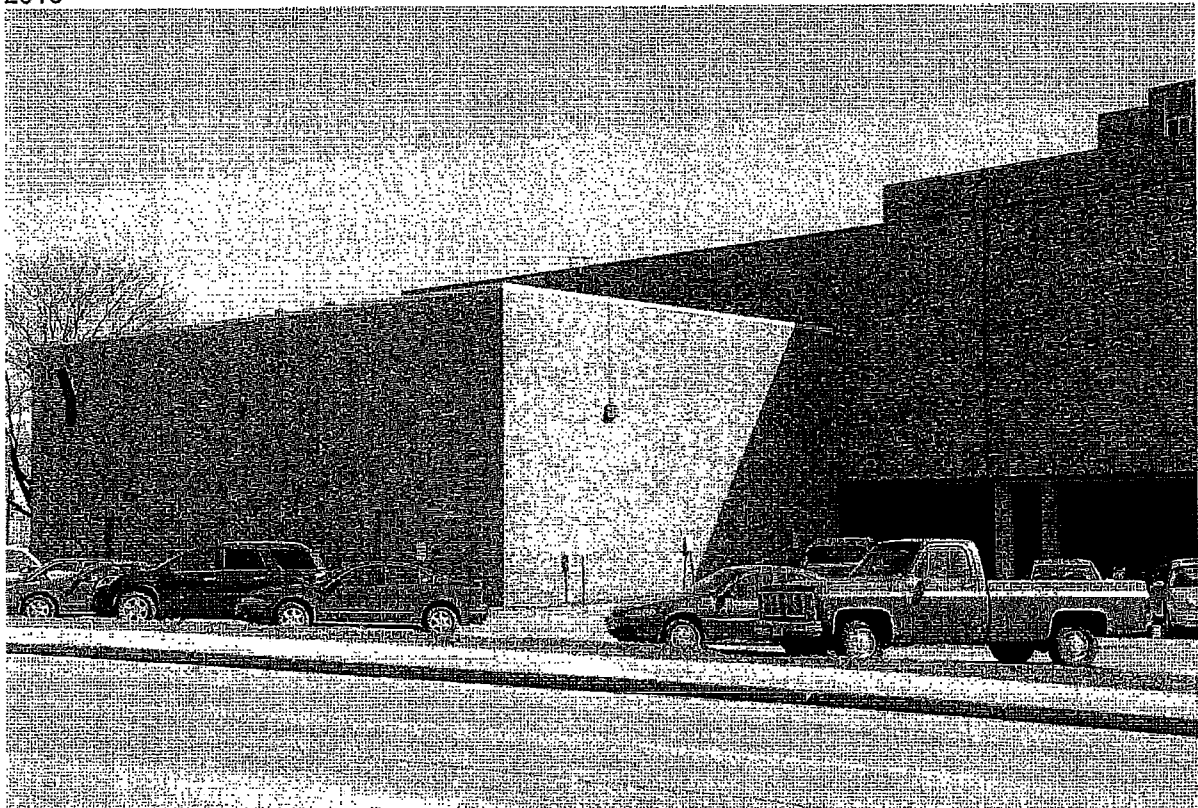
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Fig. 21: YMCA showing West side of the Aliber Youth Center addition built in 1980, looking NE, April 2010



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Fig. 22: 1957 Cornerstone, South side entrance, April 2010



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Fig. 23: Study for YMCA, c. 1955, Wetherell & Harrison Architects (State Historical Society of Iowa, scanned image)

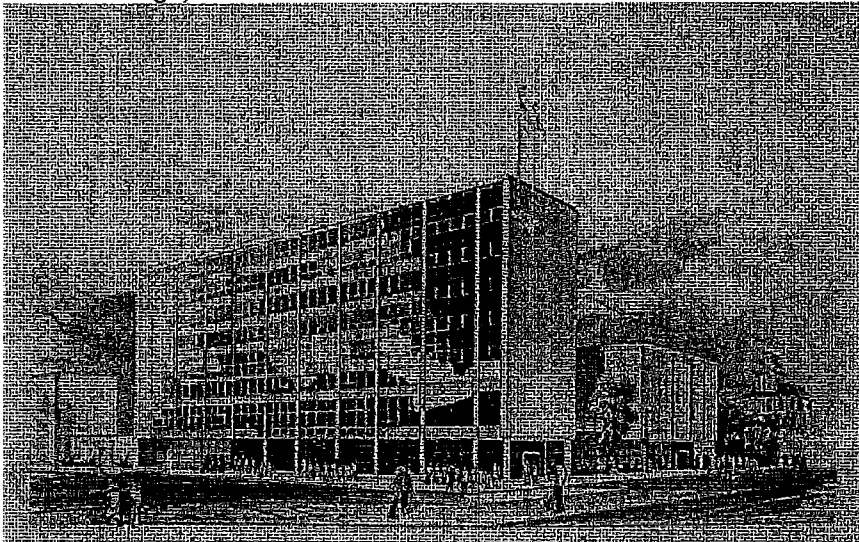
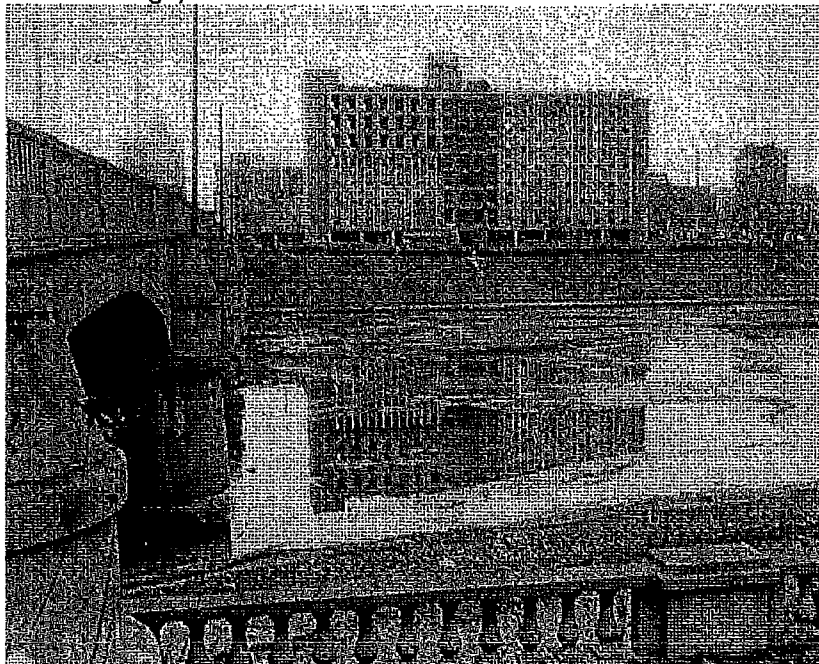


Fig. 24: YMCA during construction, looking west, December 1958 (State Historical Society of Iowa, scanned image)



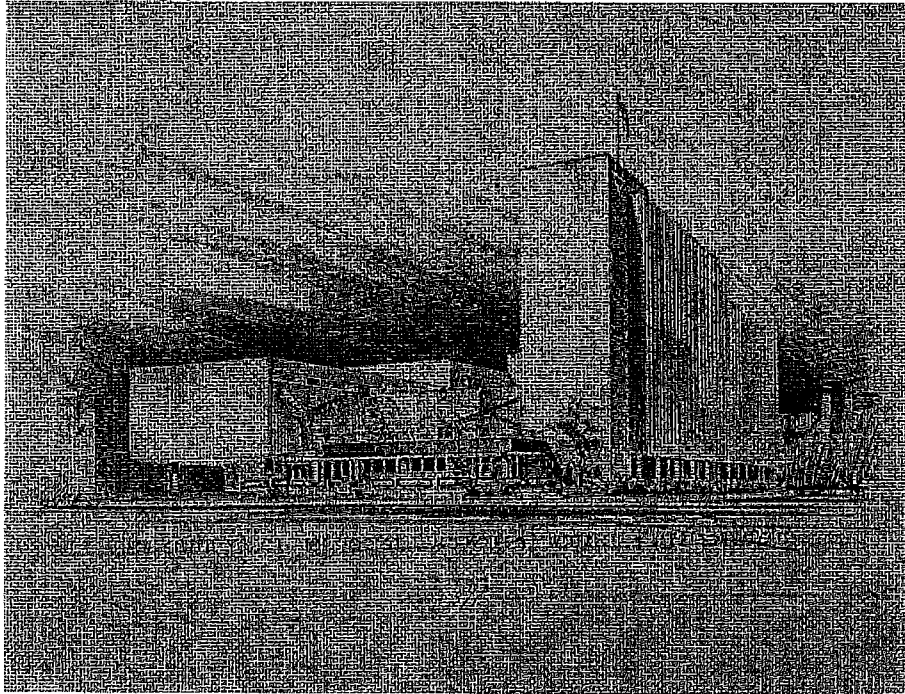
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Fig. 25: Study for YMCA, c 1955, Wetherell & Harrison Architects (State Historical Society of Iowa, scanned image)



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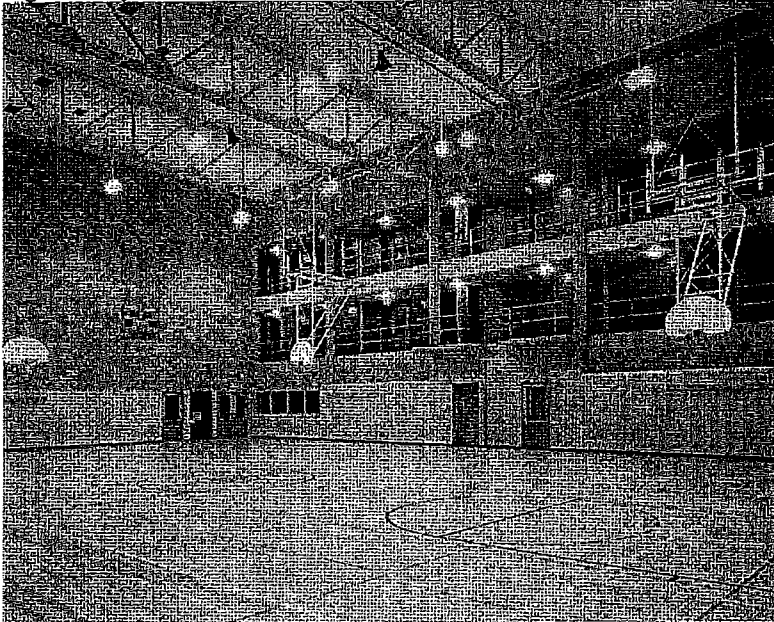
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Fig. 26: Gymnasium, c. 1960 (Weitz Collection State Historical Society of Iowa, scanned image)



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Fig. 27: "Book of Life" Mural, boys' clubroom, c. 1960 (Weitz Collection, State Historical Society of Iowa, scanned image)

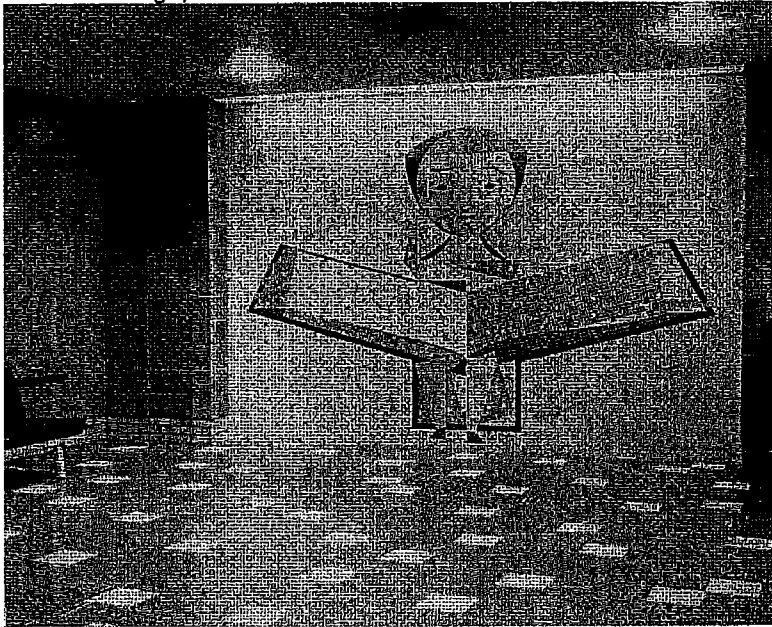


Fig. 28: Cafeteria, c. 1960 (Weitz Collection, State Historical Society of Iowa, scanned image)



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Fig. 29: World Service, Dining Room, c. 1960 (Weitz Collection, State Historical Society of Iowa, scanned image)

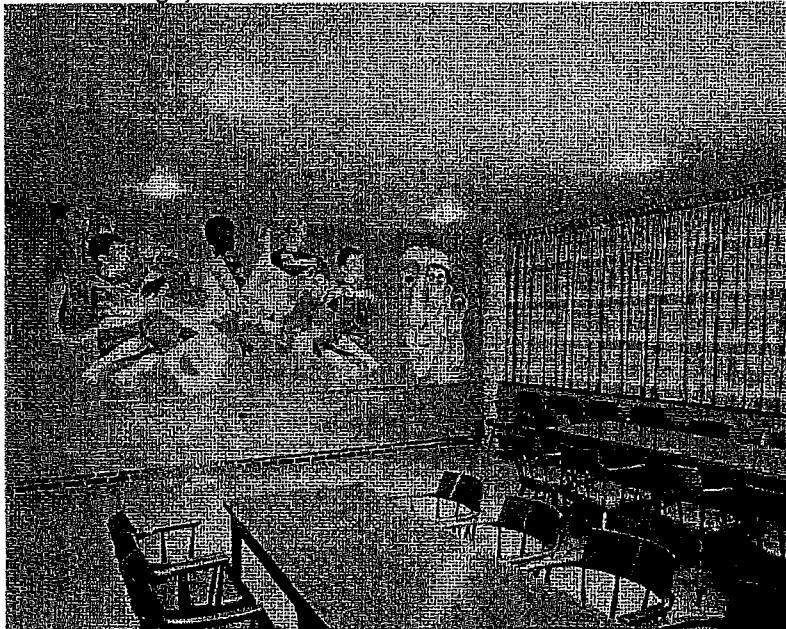
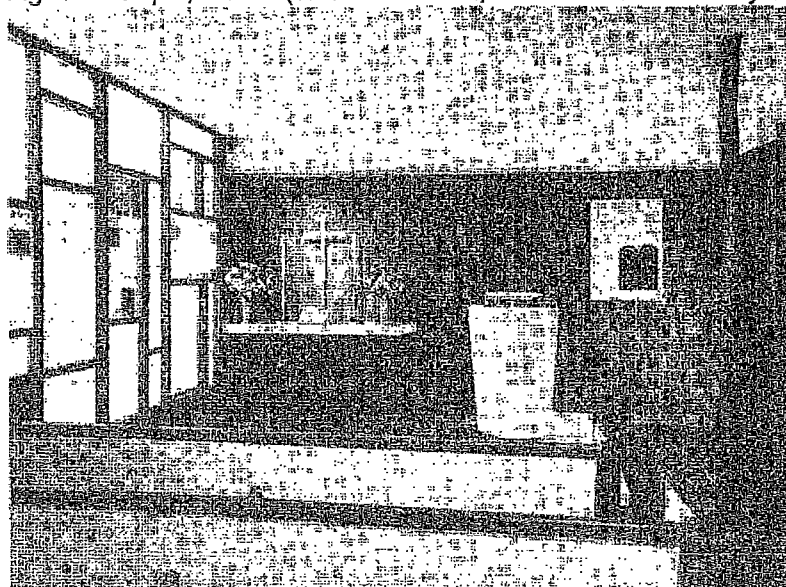


Fig. 30: Chapel, c. 1960 (Weitz Collection, State Historical Society of Iowa, scanned image)



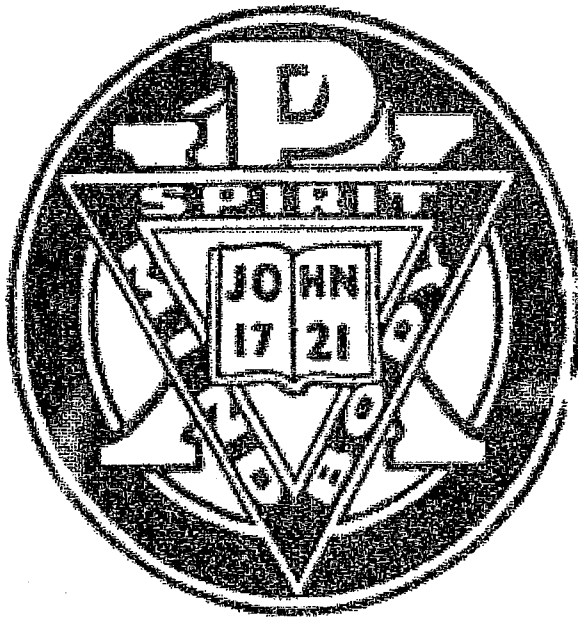
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Fig. 31: Spirit, Mind and Body Symbol of the Y.M.C.A., 1959 (scanned image)



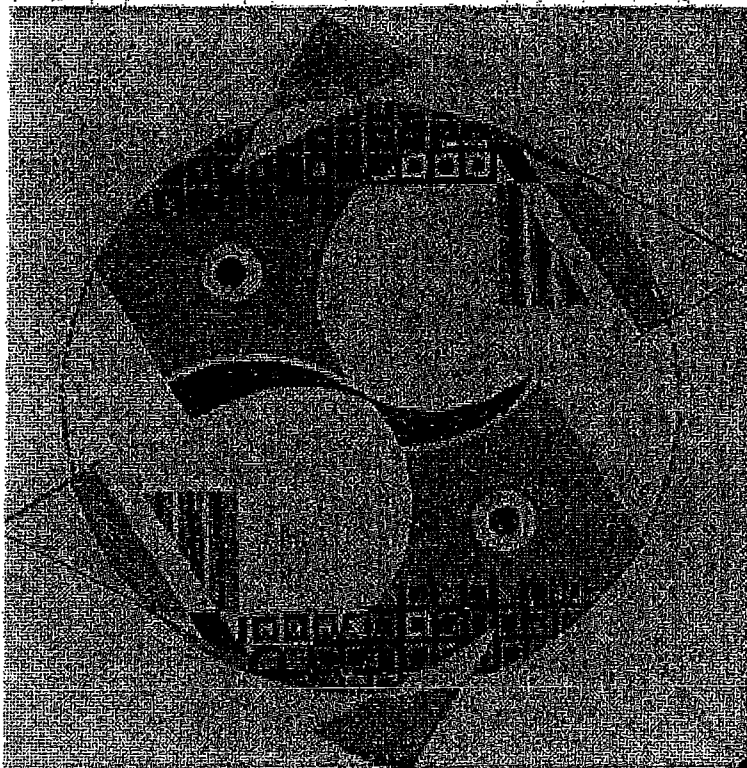
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Fig 32: Color Ceramic Tile Mural of interlocking fish, Swimming Pool Room 1959 (scanned image)

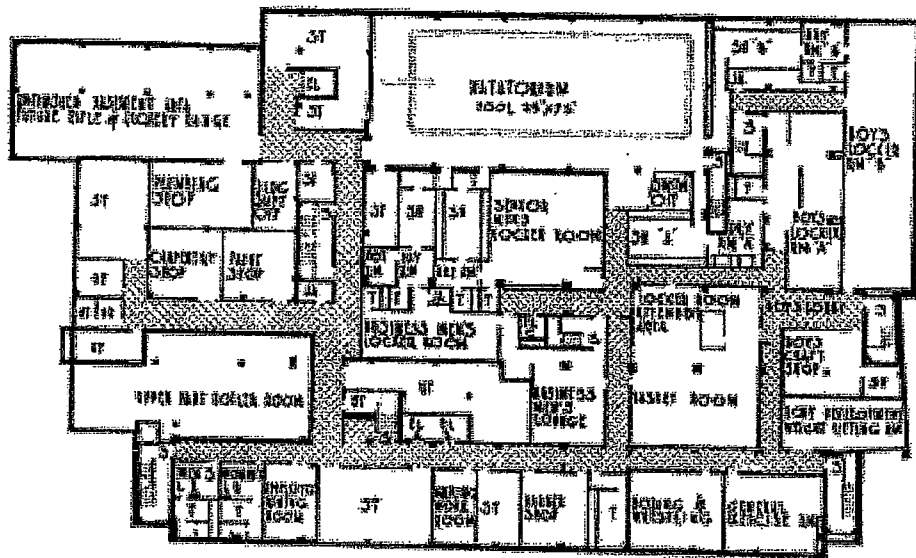


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BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN

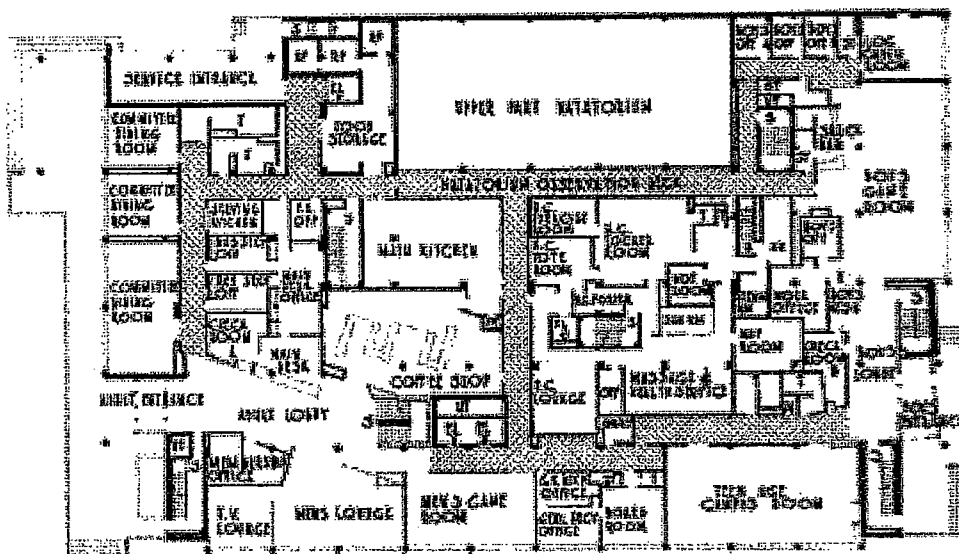
Fig. 33: YMCA Floor Plan-Basement Floor (scanned image)

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FIRST FLOOR PLAN

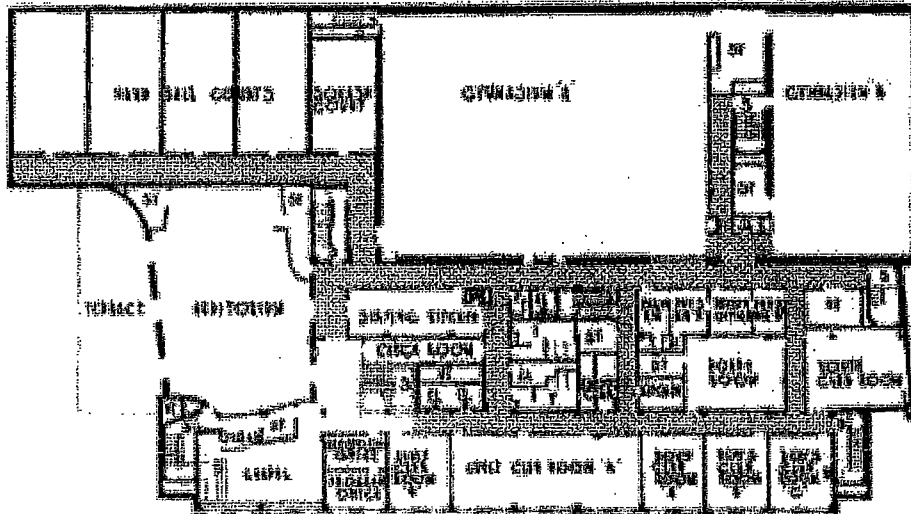
Fig 34: YMCA Floor Plan- First Floor (scanned image)

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SECOND FLOOR PLAN

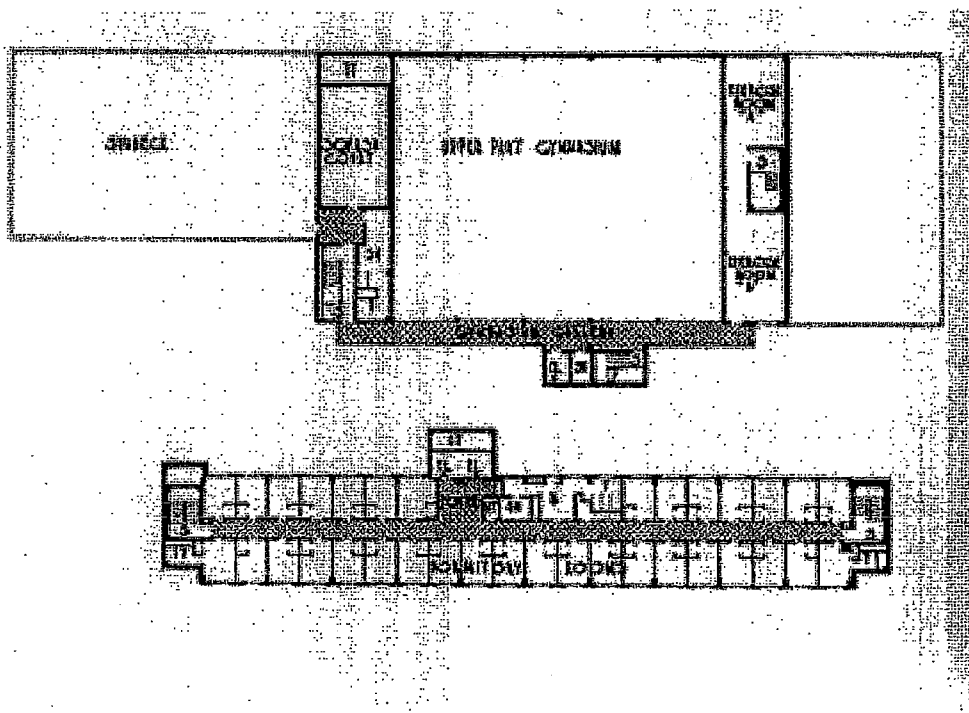
Fig. 35: YMCA Floor Plan- Second Floor (scanned image)

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THIRD FLOOR PLAN
Typical Residence Floor Plan—third through eighth floors providing 140 rooms

Fig. 36: YMCA Floor Plan- Third Floor (scanned image)

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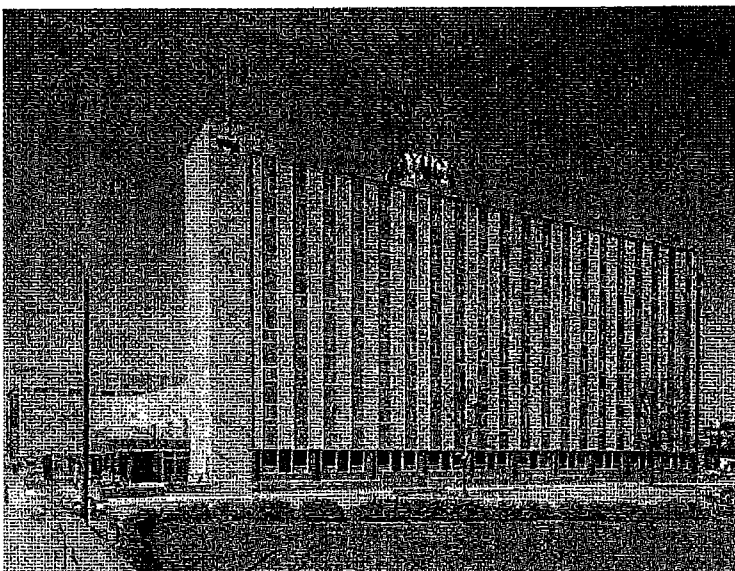


Fig. 37: View looking NW, c 1960 (Weitz Collection, State Historical Society of Iowa, scanned image)