



The City of Seattle

Landmarks Preservation Board

Mailing Address: PO Box 94049 Seattle WA 98124-0449
Street Address: 700 5th Ave Suite 1700

Name: SHEARWATER COMMUNITY CENTER/DECATUR ANNEX Year Built: 1945
(Common, present or historic) Historic/Present

Street and Number 7725 43rd Ave NE

Assessor's File No. Parcel No. 6392002220

Legal Description Blocks 45, 46, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 61, 62, 63, & 64 & vacated portion of 41st Ave NE & 42nd Ave NE adjacent less beginning at nxn centerline E 77th Street with centerline 43rd Ave NE th north 110 feet th west 30 feet to the point of beginning th north 220 feet th north 88-49-32 w 100 feet th north 150.9 feet th along curve to lft radius 37.5 feet distance of 24.75 feet th south 29-14-17 w 30.66 feet th along curve to rgt radius 62.5 feet distance of 56.67 feet then south 71.2 feet then n 88-49-43 w 150.9 feet then south 223.33 feet then East to the point of beginning less lots 6 thru 10 block 63 [from tax assessor site]

Plat Name: Oneida Gardens Addition replat Block 45 & 46 see above Lot 7 through 10

Present Owner Seattle Public School District Present Use: Vacant

Address: 2445 3rd Ave S Seattle, WA 98134

Original Owner: Seattle Housing Authority

Original Use: Administration and Community Center for the Navy's Shearwater Housing

Architect: unknown

Builder: Seattle Housing Authority, for United States Navy housing

Preface

I only recently learned about the extraordinary history and meaning of the Decatur Annex. Talking to neighbors who have lived here since the 1950's, and local historians, I discovered this modest building in northeast Seattle was part of the Navy's new policy, beginning in WWII, pushed by President and Mrs. Roosevelt and formalized by President Truman in Executive Order 9981 in 1948, to expand integration to include a broader range of duties and social environments.

[From [Wikipedia](#): **Executive Order 9981** is an executive order issued on July 26, 1948, by President Harry S. Truman. It abolished discrimination "on the basis of race, color, religion or national origin" in the United States Armed Forces. The executive order eventually led to the end of segregation in the services."]

The Navy saw an opportunity in the west at Sand Point Naval Air Station. A black band from Chicago was recruited to replace the white Navy band, called the Jive Bombers when they sold War Bonds, who became the root of Seattle's Jackson Street jazz scene. Servicemen were trained as mechanics and yeomen sailors. WAVES were trained as Navy Officers to replace men serving overseas.

The radical nature of the Navy's non-discrimination policy can only be appreciated in the context of the deeply embedded systemic racism of the time. Navy leadership had the support of the newly minted Seattle Housing Authority under the leadership of Jessie Epstein. He believed that there should be no discrimination by race, creed, or religion for access to low-cost public housing. Indeed, the first integrated public housing in the country was Yesler Terrace, built in Seattle and completed in 1941.

The Second World War diverted federal funding from low-income public housing to low-income military housing for workers and service men and women. Decatur Annex is the only building left from the Navy's Shearwater Housing Project, built in 1945. Originally the Shearwater Administration and Community Center, the building stands for the Navy's policy of integrating their service, Jesse Epstein's vision for equitable low-income housing, and the multi-cultural families who made Shearwater their home.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Valarie Bunn and Lynn Ferguson for their support. Valarie Bunn introduced me to sources in Seattle where historical city documents are available to the public, and her excellent blog, *Wedgwood in Seattle History*, provided much useful information and sources. Lynn Ferguson is the current president of the Friends of Sand Point Magnuson Park Historic District and has provided significant guidance. Her successful landmark nomination for buildings at the Navy's Sand Point Naval Air Station, was inspirational, and a fascinating source of information.

The Johnson Partnership, Decatur Annex "Appendix A" Report (2018) provided substantive documentation and photography relating to the physical environment and condition of Decatur Annex, which was very useful in preparing this Landmark nomination.

Photographs not otherwise credited, are provided by Ruth Fruland, taken in August and September of this year, 2018.

Cynthia Mejia-Giudici is a neighbor who lived in Shearwater housing as a child, and whose Filipino family has lived in Wedgwood since 1956. She has worked with me to preserve the Decatur Annex, because she remembers it vividly from personal experience. It is Cynthia who knows the feeling and meaning of racial discrimination, and the true significance of Decatur Annex in Seattle's history.

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Introduction

The purpose of this Landmark application is to present the case for designating the Decatur Annex in the northeast neighborhood of Wedgwood as a Seattle Landmark. The Seattle Public School District is the owner of the property..

The building stands as a witness to racial integration of the Navy’s military service, the first integration of neighborhoods where the Seattle Housing Authority built low-income homes, and the first integration of the public schools in these communities. Seattle was the first city in the Nation to implement such racial policies peacefully more than a decade before desegregation became an issue in the rest of the country.

For whatever reason, this history was not discovered by previous research, and therefore not presented in the BOLA report, SEPA checklist, or Decatur Annex “Appendix A” Report.

This nomination presents the historic context and evidence that Decatur Annex itself is worth recognizing for its “Historic and Cultural” significance. It is a small building, as Lynn Ferguson has pointed out, but it tells a big story.

Physical Description

Introduction

Originally the Shearwater Community Center, now Decatur Annex, the building is located at 7725 43rd Ave NE, on the eastern edge of the Wedgwood Neighborhood in northeast Seattle. [Figure 1](#) locates Wedgwood within the City of Seattle. [Figure 2](#) shows Wedgwood along with the other neighborhoods that comprise the Northeast District Council (NEDC). [Figure 3](#) locates Decatur Annex and Shearwater housing in the southeast corner of the Wedgwood neighborhood.

Decatur Annex is the last remaining building from the Navy's Shearwater Housing Project, which was built in the Wedgwood neighborhood in 1945-46 (Seattle Housing Authority Report #8, 1948). As WWII expanded, increasing numbers of servicemen and workers were needed to support the US war effort at Sand Point, resulting in a severe shortage of low-cost housing. Wedgwood was chosen because it had an area of undeveloped land that was also near the Sand Point Naval Air Station (NAS, [Figure 4](#)).

The Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) was contracted by the Navy to build and administer the Shearwater Housing Project specifically for military families at Sand Point NAS. With the abrupt end of WWII, housing remained in critical demand, because many people who had moved to Seattle decided to stay. As [Figure 5](#) shows, Shearwater Housing remained in use into the 1960's. [Figure 6](#) is a Google Earth image of present-day Seattle and its northeast communities. [Figure 7](#) shows how close Shearwater was to Sand Point Naval Air Station. [Figure 8](#) is a 2018 Google Earth plan-view close up of the entire block, showing the location of the new Thornton Creek Elementary School, the original Decatur Elementary School, and Decatur Annex.

Decatur Annex Site

Topography

The shape of Seattle's surface has been sculpted by periodic advances and retreats of glaciers over approximately the last 800,000 years. Glacial processes both removed and deposited rocks and sediments, creating a landscape of elongate hills and valleys, lakes, and Puget Sound itself ([Figure 9](#)). Decatur Annex is situated on level ground ~300 feet in elevation toward the top of a drumlinoid hill, which has a relatively steep slope towards the east and Sandpoint. Sand Point Historic District and Magnuson Park include level areas, as well as low hills and vales ([Figure 10](#)).

Geology

Decatur Annex is built on glacial deposits that consist of layers of clayey, sandy, and hard-packed, poorly-sorted, gravelly sediments. [Figure 11](#) is a geologic map of the area. Decatur Annex rests on a hard-packed, gravelly deposit called glacial till. Till is "nature's concrete," and consists of a fine-grained matrix of clay and silt, with pebbles and rocks of all sizes packed together. Unlike sandy and clayey deposits, till does not easily crumble or form slippery surfaces that may lead to landslides or earthquake damage. There have been several notable earthquakes since Decatur Annex was built, but the exterior of the building shows no visible signs of earthquake damage. Potential earthquake damage is always possible, but is much less of a threat to Decatur Annex because there are no nearby active faults, and it is on level ground composed of glacial till.

Thornton Creek Watershed

Ironically, Thornton Creek Elementary School, as well as Decatur Elementary School and Annex, are just south and west of the Thornton Creek Watershed, as indicated in [Figure 12](#). However, several Thornton Creek ravines are within a block or two of the schools. Thornton Creek drains a 7,402-acre (11 sq. mile) urban landscape, extending roughly from NE 190th St. in the City of Shoreline to NE 80th St in the Wedgwood neighbor.

Today, Thornton Creek is the largest watershed in Seattle, and discharges into Lake Washington at Matthews Beach. Historically, it was the natal headwaters of at least five salmon and trout species. The potential for flooding is extremely low at the location of Decatur Annex.

Decatur Annex Description

Site

The site where Decatur Annex is located is in the southeast corner of a multiple-block site that includes Decatur Elementary School immediately to its north, and Thornton Creek Elementary School to its west. The block is bounded on the east by 43rd Ave NE, the south by NE 77th St, the west by 40th Ave NE, and the north by NE 80th St. There is parking for Thornton Creek Elementary School north of it on the West side of the block, and parking for Decatur Elementary School in the NE corner. The northwestern corner of the block is grassy playing fields, and to the east, there is a memorial and playground areas. The entire site is clearly defined in Figure 8, which is a USGS image downloaded from Google Earth. The level site has about three feet of grade change.

The location is in the suburban neighborhood of Wedgwood, with nice landscaping and many trees around the houses, most built in the second half of the 20th Century. The homes range from modest one-story houses, including early 20th Century houses, multi-family apartments, and, recently, a surge in much larger (oversized for the lots) new houses replacing original ones. The Johnson Partnership “Appendix A” Report (Appendix 1, p. A-2-3) includes photos of the neighborhood around Decatur Annex, as well as a site plan of the entire block site showing city parcels (Appendix 1, p A-4). However, its site plan does not identify the memorial or play ground areas, and Decatur Annex is mislabeled as “7711” 43rd Ave NE” rather than its correct address of 7725 43rd Ave NE (per LPB 282/18, from Erin Doherty, August 29, 2018).

Decatur Annex’s immediate surroundings are landscaped on the south and east sides, and negligible on the north and west. The grounds in front of the southern and eastern sides are grass-covered, with native shrubs and trees ([Figure 13](#)). A large, significant western cedar tree is in the southeast corner of the block (see also Figures 14-20). It has already been determined that the tree is to be protected and will not be removed from the site (SEPA, 2018). The grounds on the northern and western sides are bare asphalt up to the concrete foundation, except for a few weeds. There are no visible signs of black mold on the exterior of the building.

Architecture

The Shearwater Community Center was built in 1945 by the Seattle Housing Authority (*A Place to Live*, The Housing Authority of the City of Seattle 8th Annual Report, 1948). Standard construction methods and materials were used to create the one-story, platform-frame, gable-roofed building in the mid-20th Century “vernacular” style.

Today, Decatur Annex's exterior is white-painted cedar lap siding with dark green painted trim. There are numerous windows on all sides of the building, with more on the south-facing side, of either aluminum, vinyl, or original fixed-wood-sash window construction, a few with decorative shutters. The pitched roof is covered by overlapping asphalt shingles. The building's floor is approximately two feet above ground level, connected to a concrete foundation with crawlspace. Crawlspace openings are currently covered by screens or boards.

Figure 13 is a plan-view close-up of the Decatur Building showing three distinct sections, which will be described below (USGS image, provided on Google Earth, 2018). Figure 14 is a Seattle Public School District floor plan of Decatur Annex dated 1998. It shows the locations of external doors, windows, stairs, and accessibility ramps, as well as interior classrooms, offices, hallways, storage, bathrooms and mechanical.

Together Figures 13 and 14 clearly shows Decatur Annex is composed of three contiguous sections. They are referred to as the Eastern Section, Central Section, and Western Section in *The Johnson Partnership Decatur Annex "Appendix A" Report* (Appendix 1, p. 3). On Decatur's north side, the Western Section's roof extends to cover an interior hallway that connects the Western Section to the Central Section. As seen in Figures 13 and 14, the Central Section is offset to the south by about three feet, so it that much closer to NE 77th St on the south, and inset a similar distance on the north.

Decatur Annex is a long, one-story, irregularly-shaped rectangular building that is difficult to capture in single street views. Figure 15 is an attempt to do so from the west end of the south side. Figure 16 is an attempt to do so from the east end of the north side. The north side faces Decatur Elementary School across a narrow lane. Figure 17 is a tilted aerial Google Maps/Google Earth view of Decatur Annex from the east side looking towards the West; the roofs of all three sections are clearly visible, as well as a chimney and ventilation box.

The Eastern section is the original 1945 Shearwater Community Center, and is both the longest and widest part of the existing structure, the E-W length is ~88 feet, and the N-S width ~36 feet wide ("Appendix A" Report is Appendix 1 of this nomination). The part of its roof that covers the entry way has a slightly lower pitch, which extends about four feet to cover the long porch area.

The Central Section is the shortest and tallest section, measuring approximately 34 feet long (E-W) and 28 feet wide (N-S). It is offset to the south about four feet relative to the Eastern Section, extending about four feet closer to NE 77th St. Although its pitched roof is about three feet higher than the Eastern Section's, its roof and the roof over the entry way porch extend south towards NE 77th St the same distance. On the north side, the roof over the hallway is at the same elevation as the Western Section, and appears to be an extension of the Western Section's roof.

The Western Section is approximately 48 feet long (E-W) by about 24 feet wide (N-S).

All three sections total about 169 feet in length.

Building descriptions are provided below in the following order: beginning with the southern elevation of the original Eastern Section (the original Shearwater Community Center), next, the east-facing elevation of the Eastern Section, then proceeding around the Decatur Annex to the north-facing elevations of the East, North, and West sections, continuing with the west-facing elevation of the Western Section, then the southern elevation of the Western Section, ending with the southern elevation of the Central Section.

Some doors, and a number of windows are original to the Shearwater Community Center. Windows with wooden sashes may be original; vinyl and aluminum sashes indicate replacement windows. All green-painted wooden windows may be original. **More research may be required to determine which windows are original with regard to what criteria.**

[Note: Wooden sashes, muntins, and window frames may indicate original windows from Shearwater Community Center construction (1945). Most Decatur windows are double-sash or double-hung, meaning there are two parts, or sashes, an upper and lower, of which one or both can be moved vertically up or down. The glass part of the sash may be further separated by muntins into separate panes of glass, or “true divided light” panes. A vertical muntin can also be used between windows to strengthen and connect a line of windows.

Eastern Section (Original Shearwater Community Center). The Eastern Section was built in 1945 or 1946 (SHA 8th Annual Report, 1948). The gable roof follows the long East-West axis of the building. A short concrete-capped brick chimney stack is on the north side of the gable roof, along with a covered ventilation box (Figure 17).

- South Side. The main entrance is on the south side of the Eastern Section facing south and NE 77th St, with several long concrete steps, and a ramp from the east end leading up to a covered porch in the center of the building (Figure 18). The ramp is overgrown by shrubbery. The porch has two painted wooden 4”x4” columns, and double entry doors in a recessed alcove about 2 feet deep. The entry doors are double doors with glass panes, surrounded by five-pane side windows, and topped by a three-pane transom, all with wood sashes and frames.

Windows. The south/NE 77th St facing side of the eastern section has sixteen windows, three to the left of the entrance’s recessed doors and entry way windows, and thirteen to the right.

- *west of the entry door is a set of three double hung, two-light [wooden-] sash windows connected by green-painted wood muntins (Figure 18).*
- *East of the entry door is a set of nine double-hung aluminum sash windows, “mulled together” with ~4.5-inch wooden mullions. Each sash has two “lights,” Figure 18.*
- *Further to the east along the eastern end of the south-facing eastern section, is a set of four double-hung wood, two-light [wooden-] sash windows, also mulled together (i.e., contiguous), which may be original. See Figure 19.*

East Side. The eastern façade reveals an outline of the building’s cross section and symmetrical pitched roof. Its exterior wall has louvered ventilation near the apex. White-painted cedar lap siding is peeling in several places. Two pairs of what may be original windows are symmetrically placed toward the south and north sides. The wooden frame structure rests on a concrete foundation roughly two feet above ground level (Figure 20).

Windows. According to the Decatur Annex “Appendix A” Report prepared by The Johnson Partnership (2018), the east side “contains a separated pair of two [mulled together] fixed pane three-light wood sash windows original to the 1961 addition (See Appendix 1, “Appendix A” p. 4).

The original building was built circa 1945. The “Appendix A” report states the original 1945 windows were replaced in 1961. **Note: A closer look may be warranted.**

North side. This side faces the Decatur School building to its north. It has a number of different styles of windows, louvered ventilation openings, metal pipes, rain drains, working and non-working doors, three sets of wooden steps to platforms where doors to the inside can be accessed, a stretch of painted white brick exterior, concrete foundation, and a wheelchair-accessible ramp. Figures 22 through 31.

There are five doors, including on the north side of the Eastern Section (original Shearwater Community Center).

The eastern-most door on the northern side is a white-painted wooden double door with a three light transom [three glass-paneled rectangular window] above it, and a grade-level sill (bottom frame of a door). "Grade-level" means the base of the door is at ground level. It is neither on the concrete foundation (which it appears to be cut into) or at the finished floor level. These doors may be original. See [Figure 22](#).

The next door a few feet to the west, is a single, white-painted wooden door, with its sill at the finished floor level above the concrete foundation. It does not appear to be a working door because there are no steps leading to it from ground level.

The next door immediately to the right and just past a rain spout, is a functional flush-mounted light-green-painted wooden door, also at finished floor level. There are three wooden steps leading from ground level on the western side, to a top deck and the door. See [Figure 23](#).

A section of windows is immediately to the west of the first three doors.

The first window to the east on the north side of the Eastern Section appears in [Figure 23](#), about four feet to the west of door. It is one of two double-hung wooden sash windows with three glass panes of translucent rather than transparent glass, two in the lower sash. The two windows (N1W, N2W) are separated by a short section of lap board. Both window sills are about three feet above the level of the finished building floor. See [Figures 23 and 24](#).

Another set of taller double-hung windows are about a foot away to the west, with two panes in each sash (total of 4) and mullied together with wood See [Figure 24](#).

The fourth door is immediately to the right of these windows. It is another flush light-green-painted wood panel entry door, with three wooden steps ascending from the east ground level to a four-by-four foot porch. See [Figure 24](#).

To the west of this door, just past another rain spout, the siding changes from over-lapping cedar planks to painted white bricks. The white bricks extend for 23 feet. The features in the brick façade include a door with a ventilation panel above it and four windows that extend to the top of the wall. See [Figure 25](#).

The fifth door is about another foot to the west, set flush with the brick exterior ([Figure 25](#)). The door's hinges are on the left, and its sill is at ground level. Less than a foot above ground level the door has a rectangular louvered ventilation panel, and a wire-glass pane in the upper portion. Immediately above the door is a louvered transom extending up to the top plate of the wall (The Johnson Partnership, Appendix A Report, p. 4, Appendix 1).

Continuing towards the west from the last door described above, there are two separate windows with wire screens on the outside of each of two double-hung single pane windows set into the brick with brick sills. The windows extend to the top of the brick wall.

Figure 26 shows the contact between the brick façade and the cedar lap siding that continues to the western end of the Eastern Section on the north side of the building. Figure 26 also shows that the ventilation box in the roof is over the bricked section; the brick chimney is over the cedar lap siding at the west end. Two windows are set in the cedar lap section. Both are double hung sash windows with sills about 40 inches from the finish floor level. In Figure 26 these are seen to extend to the eaves.

West Side. Around the corner is the west-facing side of the Eastern Section. Its cedar lap siding has a ventilation panel near the roof's apex (Figure 27). The Eastern Section abuts the The Central Section offset to the south, so the west end is only partly visible. The Central Section roof is clearly taller in Figure 18, but does not appear to be from the perspective in Figure 27.

Central Section. This section is offset four feet to the south on the south and north sides.

North side. Similarly, on the northern side, the Central Section is offset to the south with respect to the west-facing exterior wall of the Eastern Section. According to the Decatur Annex "Appendix A" Report by the Johnson Partnership, 2018:

"The plate height of the elevated roof section [of] the central portion of the building measures about 33 feet long by 24 feet wide, and is approximately three feet higher than that of the main portion of the building. This creates a higher offset gable roof, with the main roof continuing above a three-foot wide hallway on the northern side of the Central Section of the building. See Appendix 1.

The following description is also from the Decatur Annex "Appendix A" Report by the Johnson Partnership, 2018 (Appendix 1, this document):

The northern façade of this portion [of the Central Section] contains a single access door at the eastern end. The access door is sheltered by a four-foot-wide shed extension of the main roof. It is accessed by a set of stairs to the north and ramp with wooden guardrail along the northern façade to the west (Figure 27). Two double-hung sash windows with storm-windows are also located on the northern façade of the Central Section of the building (Figure 28). A clearstory of vinyl sash windows separates the lower main roof from the upper roof on the northern façade (also Figure 28).

The western side of the Central Section is largely covered by the Western Section, but Figure 29 shows what little cedar lap siding extends above the roof of the Western Section.

Western Section.

Northern façade. Along the northern side, there is one door on the east end, three windows towards the west end, and a two-foot wide extension of the Eastern Section and roof to the north, on the western end. Another, small wooden, roofed "shed" extends another foot or so to the north at the extreme western end of the northern façade with a small door cut into the wood panel door. A single flush white-painted wood panel door accesses the Western Section at the east end. Its sill is at the finished floor level, and there are wooden steps leading to it from the east. A short, narrow roof extension over it contains a light fixture and provides cover from the rain (Figure 29).

Further to the west, there are three double-hung wood sash windows with two glass panes in each sash and dark-green-painted frames. They are adjacent, but not mulled together, and extend to the top of the cedar boarding. There is a wall-mounted air conditioner just to their right (Figure 30). West of these windows there is about a two-foot extension of the Western Section to the north, with a smaller shed north of that, at the western end of the northern side (Figure 31). The last door, N8D, is to an electrical control panel and some pretty impressive electrical conduits. The door is simply cut out of the shed's wood siding, hinged and locked.

Western façade. Towards the north (left) of the western side of the Western Section, the two wooden extensions are easily discerned because neither have the original cedar lap siding. To the right of these wooden extensions, the original cedar lap siding continues across the remaining western side. There is a wooden door in the cedar lap siding at finished floor level, with wooden steps starting at ground level from the south, leading to a small wooden deck at the top and door. To the right of the door are three boarded windows. It is also apparent that the concrete foundation does not extend as far above ground level as it does on the eastern end (Figure 32).

Southern façade. The western end of the southern façade contains a set of five white vinyl double sash windows with a one-over-two glass pane configuration and a screened slider in the lower sash (Figure 33). At the eastern end of the southern façade of the Western Section, there are two fixed-pane vinyl sash windows with a center mullion (Figure 34).

Central Section Redux. The southern façade of the Central Section contains a set of six mullioned non-original vinyl sash double-hung windows (Figure 35). There is one flush panel door that enters the Central Section from the front porch of main entrance to the Decatur Annex.

ALTERATIONS

The Shearwater Community Building was owned and administered by the US Navy from 1947 to 1961, when the new Decatur Elementary School was built, and the Navy turned ownership over to the Seattle Public School District. At this point, the Shearwater Community Building became known as the Decatur Annex. The following alterations are documented in The Johnson Partnership "Appendix A" report.

1960, Permit # BN 3189:

A small storage shed was moved from the western end of the subject building, but no photographic documentation of the shed, where it was originally located, or where it was moved to have been found. The only description of the change is provided in Appendix A, p. 5, which says, "*Relocate existing maintenance shop building.*" This does not sound like it is the same type of building as a small storage shed, so more research may be required to determine if it is incorporated into the Decatur Annex, or if it was totally removed from the proximity of the Decatur Annex.

Under the same permit, a 22-foot long addition was constructed during the same time period that the Decatur Elementary School was built.

1966, Permit # BN 26111:

The Decatur Annex was remodeled to accommodate classrooms, including "*new restrooms in the old kitchen area, and window-removal along the western façade.*" From the report, "*Alter. ex. building & occupy as classrooms*"

1966, Permit # BN 26747:

"*Alter. ex. building & occupy as classrooms per revision of permit BN 26111.*"

1966, Permit # BN 27123:

This work was for parking around the Decatur Annex and did not alter the Annex itself.

1980, no permit # provided:

Ramps and toilets were added for accessibility by people with disabilities to the Annex. No indication in Appendix A as to whether the ramps were internal or external.

1983, Permit # 608097:

The Decatur Annex was repurposed and remodeled to accommodate the Children's World Montessori Preschool. Apparently this included a second exit from classroom 109, which may have altered the northern façade, but the location of the door is not identified in Appendix A.

1998, Permit # 9804857:

This Decatur Annex remodeling included the addition of two (exterior?) ramps, lowered the existing chimney, and added a concrete chimney cap.

The following are visible alterations to the Decatur Annex building, not all cited in the Appendix A report (e.g., the roof replacement).

- 2009. What may have been the original Decatur Annex roof was replaced in 2009.
- *"Removal and boarding up of windows on the western façade."* – Appendix A Report, p. 6 (2018).
- *"The addition of access doors along the northern façade and off the southern front porch to the Central Section."*
- Replacement and alterations of windows on the southern and northern sides. [Note: the east end windows appear to be original.]
- 1998. Addition of handicap access ramps and stairs to the southern and northern sides of Decatur Annex.

Site alterations include

- the original construction of the Shearwater Administration and Community Center circa 1945.
- the removal and relocation of the storage shed/maintenance shop. [More research is required to determine if it was relocated to the west end of the Annex, becoming the Western Section. Specific documentation of construction of the Western Section is not obvious from the Appendix A Report, also suggesting more research may be needed.]
- There was a pergola (free-standing open frame structure) in front of the southern façade of the Western Section, and a three-foot-high white picket fence around the original Eastern Section. Neither by their nature, were part of the permanent building structure.
- The pergola was removed (date?), and a section of the white picket fence along NE 77th St was also removed (date?). A portion of the picket fence still surrounds the eastern portion of the Eastern Section.

Significance

Introduction

In recent years, Seattle Public School District has commissioned several architectural firms to do research and provide information related to the historical integrity and significance of the Decatur Annex. BOLA Architecture + Planning prepared a report on the Decatur/Thornton Creek Elementary Schools that was completed in 2013. Excerpts from the BOLA report were used in the Decatur School Annex “Appendix A” Report (January 2018) that was prepared by The Johnson Partnership, specifically to provide *“information regarding the architectural design and historical significance of the Decatur School Annex in the Wedgwood neighborhood of Seattle, Washington. The Johnson Partnership prepared this report at the request of the Seattle Public School District.”*

Citing both reports, the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) Checklist prepared by ESA (a private Seattle firm) in March of 2018, which stated that “Documentation of on-site conditions and engineering records indicate that the original design is “largely intact” even though there have been modifications and upgrades to the various building systems including roofing, windows, electrical, and interior renovations over the past 50 years (BOLA, 2013; The Johnson Partnership, 2018). “ Between the on-site documentation in previous reports, this nomination, and an additional forensic investigation to be undertaken in the near future, the architectural and historic integrity of the Decatur Annex appears to be on solid ground.

Historic Neighborhood Context: Wedgwood and the City of Seattle

Early history. The first people to live in what is now the northwestern corner of the contiguous United States began to inhabit the area during the terminal phase of the last glaciation, which happened between about 18,000 to 13,000 years ago.

The Northwest Coast peoples adapted and lived sustainably in these resource-rich, dynamic ecosystems for over 10,000 years. They flourished in the area around Puget Sound, and what came to be Seattle, famously named after Chief Seattle, who was a Suquamish and Duwamish chief.

The area around Sand Point, Matthews Beach, and what today is called the Wedgwood Rock (a large boulder left when the glaciers retreated) was a crossroads through the lush forests and bogs for local tribes (<http://www.historylink.org/File/3462>).

Europeans, who “discovered” and spread across the continent beginning in the 1500’s, came from very different environments, with very different cultures, and social, and economic paradigms. They have lived in the Northwest for a few hundred years.

Over time, and out of necessity, a majority of the present-day occupants are recognizing the need to move towards sustainable practices and an equitable society. The challenge is to change quickly enough to prevent the natural and social infrastructure systems from collapsing. The story below gives reason for hope.

Race “Rules” during the Great Depression

It is impossible to understand the radical nature of what happened during and after WWII in Seattle and Wedgwood without knowing about the rules of systemic racial discrimination before 1940. The Great Depression created the opportunity to change some of the rules.

The US Housing Act (AKA “Wagner-Steagall Act”) became law in 1937 with its stated purpose “To provide financial assistance to [state and local governments] for the elimination of unsafe and unsanitary housing conditions, for the eradication of slums, for the provision of decent, safe, and sanitary dwellings for families of low income, and for the reduction of unemployment and the stimulation of business activity, to create a United States Housing Authority, and for other purposes.”

Racial equity was not mentioned, and implementation was given to local city governments. This meant that discrimination on the basis of race could be continued. And it was, except in the Northwest, and Seattle in particular, even in spite of laws that perpetrated segregation.

Redlining. During the 1930’s, there were maps and reports created by the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC), including for Seattle in 1936 (Figure 36), which literally used the color “red” to designate neighborhoods that were considered too “hazardous” to provide home loans to the people living there because they were people of color (Blacks, Filipinos, Hispanics, etc.). The result of this policy guaranteed that there were no investments, no improvement in living conditions, and therefore, no subsequent increase in wealth in black and minority neighborhoods. (c.f., UW online, Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project, *Special Section Segregated Seattle*: <http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/segregated.htm>; KUOW Archives online, *Own a house in Seattle? It might have a racist past.* archives: <http://archive.kuow.org/post/own-house-seattle-it-might-have-racist-past>).

Redlining was not officially declared “unlawful” until the Fair Housing Act of 1968 was passed. If people of color could not get loans to invest in their own neighborhoods, neither could they simply move to other communities.

Neighborhood Covenants. A common practice with regard to housing was to enact racist covenants that kept non-white residents from living outside areas of central Seattle and other poor neighborhoods (c.f., <http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/covenants.htm>).

Below is an example of such a covenant for View Ridge Sand Point Country Club, an exclusive neighborhood between Wedgwood and Sand Point:

*No tract shall be sold, conveyed, rented or leased, in whole or in part, to any **Hebrew or to any person of the Malay, Ethiopian or any other negro or any Asiatic race**; or any descendant of any thereof, except only employees in the domestic service on [the] premises of persons qualifies as herein provided as occupants.*

The terminology is typical of the 1920’s through the 1940’s, in which “Hebrews” meant Jews; “Ethiopians” meant African ancestry; “Malays” meant Filipinos (<http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/covenants.htm>).

Such covenants kept people of color and Jews from living in many areas of Seattle, especially in the neighborhoods north of the ship canal in Seattle. The flip side of this is crystalized by one description of the Central District at the time – “This is the Negro area of Seattle.” (<https://www.seattlepi.com/seattlenews/article/Here-s-how-Seattle-got-so-segregated-10521762.php#photo-7409548>)

Although discriminatory covenants were ruled illegal in 1948, their practice was continued through neighborhood councils and real estate agents.

Sundown Laws. “Sundown” laws prohibited non-white people from being on North Seattle streets after sunset. As stated in the PI in a guest opinion column by James N. Gregory, December 2006,

“Older Seattleites who are African American or Asian American may have a different association [with the term “sundown.”] They remember when the ship canal was a primary boundary of racial segregation, when people of color could not live beyond the canal and could not travel in North Seattle neighborhoods after dark.” (<https://www.seattlepi.com/local/opinion/article/Remember-Seattle-s-segregated-history-1222098.php>).

The law was, of course, the same for workers at Sand Point NAS, who had to be on the south side of Montlake Bridge before sunset if they were Black or Filipino. Thus was the social, economic, and political context of housing and discrimination before the Second World War.

WWII changed everything

Early Wedgwood development. Fast forward to 1940: a private developer named Albert Balch had purchased, platted, and built homes in View Ridge near Sand Point NAS before WWII. He later bought and platted land for his Wedgwood development on the west side of 35th Ave NE, building homes between NE 80th to 85th Streets, and 30th to 35th Avenues NE as early as 1941. It goes without saying that these homes were for white people only. Then the attack on Pearl Harbor happened and the country shifted gears.

The majority of war-time Navy housing projects were built in south Seattle, West Seattle, and further south where most industrial manufacturing of planes and ships was centered, and where the burgeoning war-time workforce needed places to live.

However, Sand Point NAS was also expanding its military and civilian work force, which therefore necessitated war-time housing projects in northeast Seattle: two hundred units in Cedar Vale were built in 1943 along 43 Ave NE between NE 73 and 74th streets for civilians who worked at Sand Point NAS; and the 315-unit Shearwater housing built between 1945-1946 specifically for Navy servicemen and their families who worked at Sandpoint (Figure 36).

At the time, there were few houses and only dirt roads in the southeastern corner where Shearwater was built. Eventually all the small neighborhood housing developments, many built by Balch, coalesced into what was became the Wedgwood neighborhood. Most of Wedgwood was annexed in 1948.

The US Navy's Role. Recognizing the existential challenge that WWII represented, and the necessity to ramp up their wartime efforts and workforce as fast as possible, the US Navy developed a visionary new policy: racial and gender integration of its service. It implemented this new policy in the Pacific Northwest, specifically in the Seattle and Puget Sound area.

US Navy leadership decided upon a holistic approach. They provided incentives and environments designed to attract people of color to their service, especially Filipinos and African-Americans. For example, Filipinos were offered American citizenship if they joined the Navy, and a 24-piece African-American band from Chicago arrived at Sand Point in December 1942.

The US Navy's holistic strategy to integrate their own workforce and onsite housing, extended to the Navy's off-site housing projects, community centers, and schools where the families of military and civilian families lived. However, the Navy was fighting a war and needed to provide housing without taking on the construction and administration itself.

Therefore, the Navy entered into contracts with the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) to build and administer low-income housing projects during the war.

Shearwater housing was designed and constructed at the end of the war in 1945, specifically for the military families at Sand Point. Only nine had moved in by the end of the year (SHA Annual Report #8, 1948). The end of the war did not end the urgent need for low-income housing; the Shearwater project ultimately included 315 homes, mostly two-story, multi-family units. The housing was temporary by design, but remained in use long after the war out of necessity.

In contrast to the housing, the Shearwater Administration Building and Community Center was designed and built to be a permanent addition to the neighborhood. This was SHA policy during the post-war period (Seattle Housing Authority 8th Annual Report, 1948). The role the Navy played in the racial integration of Seattle public housing is only half of the story.

Seattle Housing Authority's (SHA) Role. The Navy's policy dovetailed with the equalitarian and democratic vision of one Seattle man, Jesse Epstein. Epstein was a lawyer who had worked hard to create the Seattle Housing Authority in order for Seattle to qualify for Federal funds for low-income housing (Wagner-Seagull Act of 1937).

The Yesler Terrace Housing Project was the first of these, built in 1940. A significant aspect of the Yesler Terrace Housing project was Epstein's belief that it is "the right of all citizens to benefit equally from government-funded low-income housing..." To Epstein it was "self-evident and debate unnecessary." In a 1973 interview, Epstein said, "*So far as racial composition or considerations were concerned, I made the decision administratively, early, that there would be no discrimination, no segregations...*" (John Caldbick, 2014: <http://www.historylink.org/File/10940>, Retrieved August 5, 2018).

With the advent of WWII, funds for civilian housing projects were diverted to military housing projects. The Shearwater Administration and Community Center embodies a fascinating, but under-reported history, not only of the Navy's new policy of racial integration, but also of how it leveraged Seattle Housing Authority's integration policies under Jesse Epstein (and vice versa), One might say his appointment as the first Executive Director of the SHA in 1939 was "just in time."

Seattle Housing Authority Reports: The War Years

The SHA reports include evaluations of their non-discrimination policies, which they had "scrupulously adhered to...in the housing of families in all of their projects." Addressing race, they report that

"Negroes, as well as other racial groups who [had been brought to Seattle by the US Employment Service] worked side by side in this city's war industries with white workers... Workers represented all races from [every part of the country] and all types of backgrounds...farmers, businessmen, laboring men, housewives, Alaskan Indians and Alabama Negroes...Each of them needed housing. Their eligibility for war housing units was never considered on the basis of race, creed, religion or politics, but rather on their contribution to the war effort. "

"Never at any time during the war period did the SHA have any serious racial difficulty in its family projects."

One reason suggested for peaceful relations credited the workers themselves:

"...everyone was intent on doing his job, and appreciated that his neighbor was there for the same purpose."

Another reason gave credit to "an alert management:

"An alert management frankly discussed its non-segregation policy with any resident who expressed an interest, or wanted a question answered. Any sign of friction was quickly dispelled by this forthright policy. Problems were openly met, and tenants were quick to realize that all persons housed by the SHA were equally essential in the important business of producing war goods."

The expectation was that each person would be considerate of his or her neighbors, and they were. All the SHA housing projects included racial minority groups, which "proved to be not only feasible but administratively most practical." Also obvious in the reports is that the principle of non-

discrimination was part and parcel with the provisioning. Figure 36 is the cover of the 1945 Sixth Annual Seattle Housing Report, featuring a diverse group of young children.

SHA Annual Reports. Between 1940 and 1945, the population of Seattle grew from 368,000 to 475,000 (SHA Annual Report #6, 1945). The reports document not only how the increasing population was housed, but also details of the numbers of people by locations and races working in either military or civilian capacities, of housing units provided and occupied over time, and of the costs and benefits accrued by the provision of war-time, low-cost housing.

There were two types of war housing built: temporary and permanent. Only veterans and military families were eligible for temporary housing, which was “lightly constructed of wartime materials and built to last only five years.” Permanent housing was made of standard materials and methods. Figure 37 is the cover for the SHA Housing the People, Sixth Annual Report (1945).

Role of Community Centers. In a page out of the 1945 SHA Annual Report there is a description of what community centers like Shearwater’s, provided to the families living in Navy housing. Community centers had libraries and librarians, reading clubs in association with public schools, medical support such as screenings by the Anti-Tuberculosis League of King County and Well-Baby Clinics, and free medical examination from the Seattle Public Health Department, sports leagues, religious services under the guidance of the Seattle Council of Churches, and individual recreational activities.

Just as important is how people actually used community centers as an “extension of their own living rooms...for weddings, christenings, private parties, birthday celebrations and wedding anniversary parties...” Cynthia Mejia-Giudici remembers the potlucks and birthday parties that her own family enjoyed the most (personal communication, August 7, 2018).

From the perspective of the Seattle Housing Authority, community centers were intended to function “to help residents who were new to the city and experienced a feeling of insecurity...to find stability in a community which offered them the chance to integrate their activities first through project activities, and then into the city itself “ (SHA Annual Report, 1945).

After the war. As the years went by, and the war ended, two problems emerged with the temporary housing: maintenance costs rose, and so did pressure to clear them away. Some the earliest temporary buildings built (in 1941) were already eight years old and maintenance costs were increasing as a result, from \$35 per dwelling in 1944-45 to \$114 per dwelling unit in 1948-49. The other problem was the pressure from local community groups and developers to demolish the temporary buildings so as to improve the appearance of the neighborhood and clear the land for new homes (Figure 38, SHA Annual Report #8, 1948).

However, even after the war, there was still a great need for low-income housing. The Navy and the SHA had a responsibility to the families in temporary low-cost houses, many of which did not make enough to pay the higher rental costs elsewhere, according to a joint survey conducted by the SHA and the University of Washington (SHA Annual Report, 1948). The SHA had to wait for families to move into affordable permanent housing.

Potent Combination. Military leaders at Sand Point NAS, and civilian leaders at the Seattle Housing Authority both had the financial resources to meet urgent housing needs thanks to the Federal government’s responses first, to the Great Depression, and then to WWII. Motives aside, they both shared the radical objective of racial integration, which facilitated the design and construction of integrated work, housing, schools, and community centers.

The outcomes were the first successful experiences of racial integration in the United States. We have a local example in the racial diversity of the Shearwater Housing Project, elementary schools,

and Shearwater Community Center in the Wedgwood neighborhood. The Shearwater Community Center (AKA Decatur Annex) is the last building standing that was witness to the first shift towards a peaceful and multi-cultural society implemented by visionary military and civic leaders without fanfare or violence.

Architecture. The architecture is not particularly special, nor is the building of superior construction. The Shearwater Community Center/Decatur Annex was built with standard American materials and methods representative of a “*typical vernacular tradition with lap siding and double-hung windows placed for functionality.*” The style is typical of its time, and arguably less visually jarring in the neighborhood than some of the new houses built on small Wedgwood lots.

Conclusion

World War II profoundly affected the Seattle area by necessitating a burst of manufacturing, a surge in population, and because of Navy policies and the Seattle Housing Authority, racial integration. What is today the Wedgwood Neighborhood was a nexus of these changes due to its proximity to the Sand Point Naval Air Station on Lake Washington. The Sand Point Naval Air Station and Magnuson Park was designated as a Seattle Landmark District in 2011.

The Shearwater Community Center/Decatur Annex also merits landmark status:

- At 5,784 square feet, it is well over 4000 square feet in area;
- Built in 1945, Decatur Annex is 73 years old;
- As the Shearwater Community Center it was the neighborhood meeting place for one of the first integrated neighborhoods in the Nation – the Shearwater Housing Project, which became an annex to one of the first integrated schools in the country, Decatur Elementary ;
- Historical integrity is intact (essentially the same as when built);
- Able to convey its significance because it has been used for educational purposes for the last fifty years.

The Shearwater Community Center/ Decatur Annex also meets the following criteria:

(A) It is significantly associated with the Sand Point Naval Air Station and WWII. It was the community center for the Navy’s Shearwater Housing project designed and built for military families who worked at Sand Point NAS.

Military Context: World War II and the Navy’s Sand Point Naval Air Station (NAS). The history of the Sand Point NAS is so compelling that Sand Point and Magnuson Park have been designated a historic landmark district (c.f., Friends of Sand Point Naval Air Station, http://www.sandptnavsta.org/_home/home.php).

(C) Not to diminish its patriotic historical association with the Navy and WWII, Decatur Annex has another, longer-term, significant historic association because of its relationship with the Navy. When it was the Shearwater Community Center, it played a role in one of the major social, cultural, and economic changes of the 20th Century: desegregation.

Social Context: Redlining, discriminatory housing covenants, and sunset laws were deeply embedded, systemic racist practices in Seattle and the country in 1940. Yet, Shearwater Community Center, built in 1945, was an integrated community center, in one of the first integrated neighborhoods, along side one of the first integrated schools in America.

Association #1, US Navy. The Navy's early inclusion of culturally and ethnically diverse people including many Filipino and African-Americans was a bold policy for the time, but so thoughtfully implemented that it was also successful.

Association #2, Seattle Housing Authority. The Navy's housing was built and administered by the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA). Jesse Epstein was the first Executive Director of the Seattle Housing Authority and he believed in non-discrimination policies for public housing, whether it was for civilian or military people. His leadership guaranteed that the Navy's non-discrimination policies would be implemented in their housing projects, in the same way that Jesse Epstein built desegregated public housing in Yesler Terrace.

(D) Decatur Annex is a modest, but attractive, sturdy one-story "vernacular" building with many large windows, pitched-roof, cedar lap siding style on a concrete foundation with crawlspace. No architectural wonder, it fits the esthetics of the neighborhood better than some of the new houses that clash stylistically with homes that were built during the second half of the 20th Century in northeast Seattle.

(F) The Shearwater Community Center is an easily identifiable corner building at 7711 43rd Ave NE, next to a beautiful tree, and was the neighborhood meeting place for a diverse community during and after WWII.

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Photographs (included in Figures section below)

Submitted by: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Date: _____

Reviewed: _____ Date: _____

Historic Preservation Officer

Figures (including photographs)

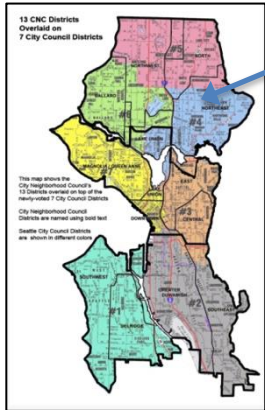


Figure 1. Wedgwood location within the city limits of Seattle.

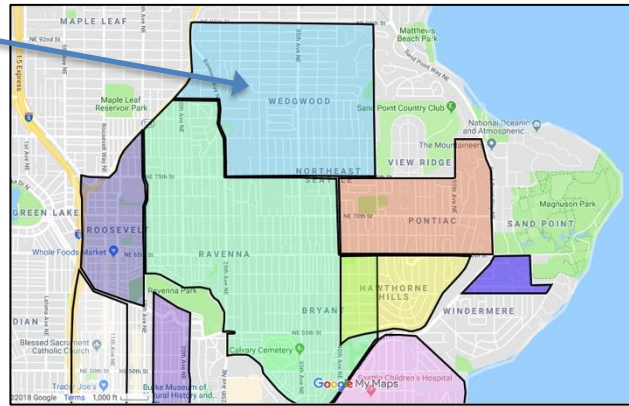
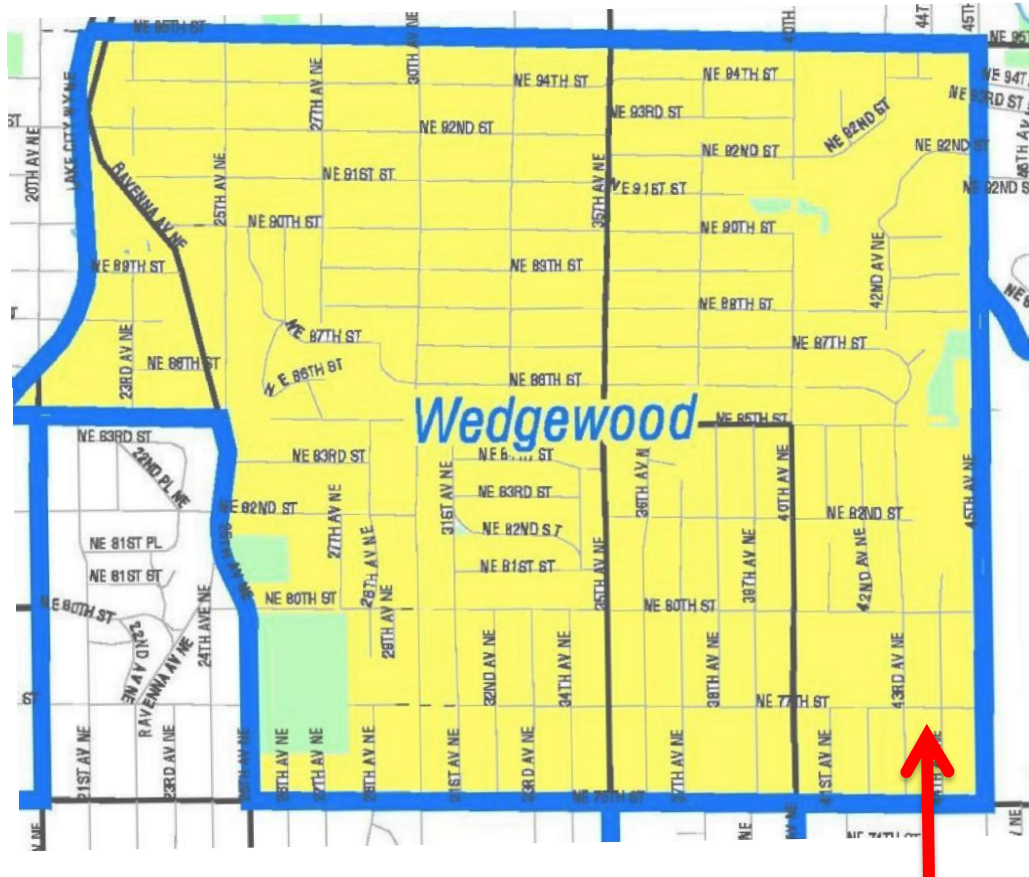


Figure 2. Wedgwood in relation to the Northeast District Council, neighborhoods in the NE quadrant. Source: Seattle City Clerk.

North
↑



North
↑

Figure 3. Street map of Wedgwood. The red arrow shows the location of Decatur Annex. The whole block is the site of the majority of Shearwater housing.

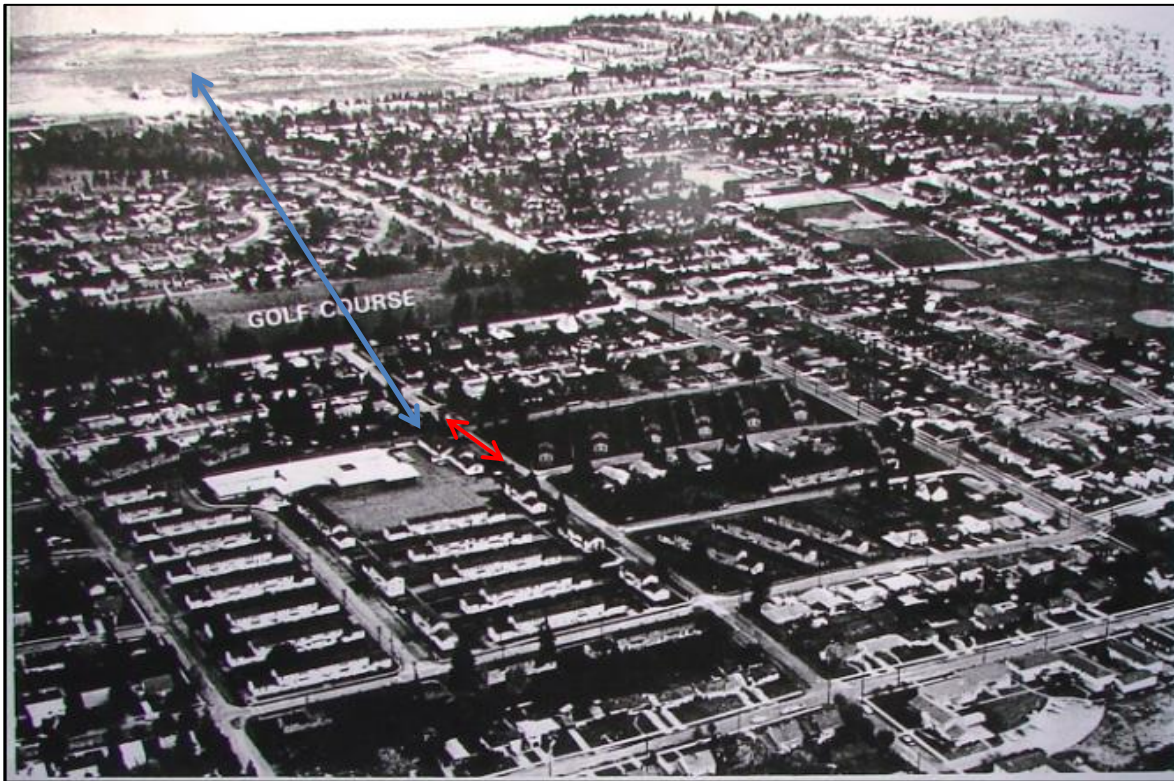


Figure 4. North is to the left. This is a 1963 aerial image looking across Shearwater housing towards Sand Point NAS, at the top left of the photo (blue arrow). Decatur Elementary School is the long white-roofed building, center left. Decatur Annex is just south of it (red arrow). Shearwater barracks nearly surround the entire school and annex buildings.



Figure 5. Aerial view showing that years after Decatur Elementary School had been built in 1961, Shearwater housing and Community Center remained in use. City of Seattle Archives, 1965.

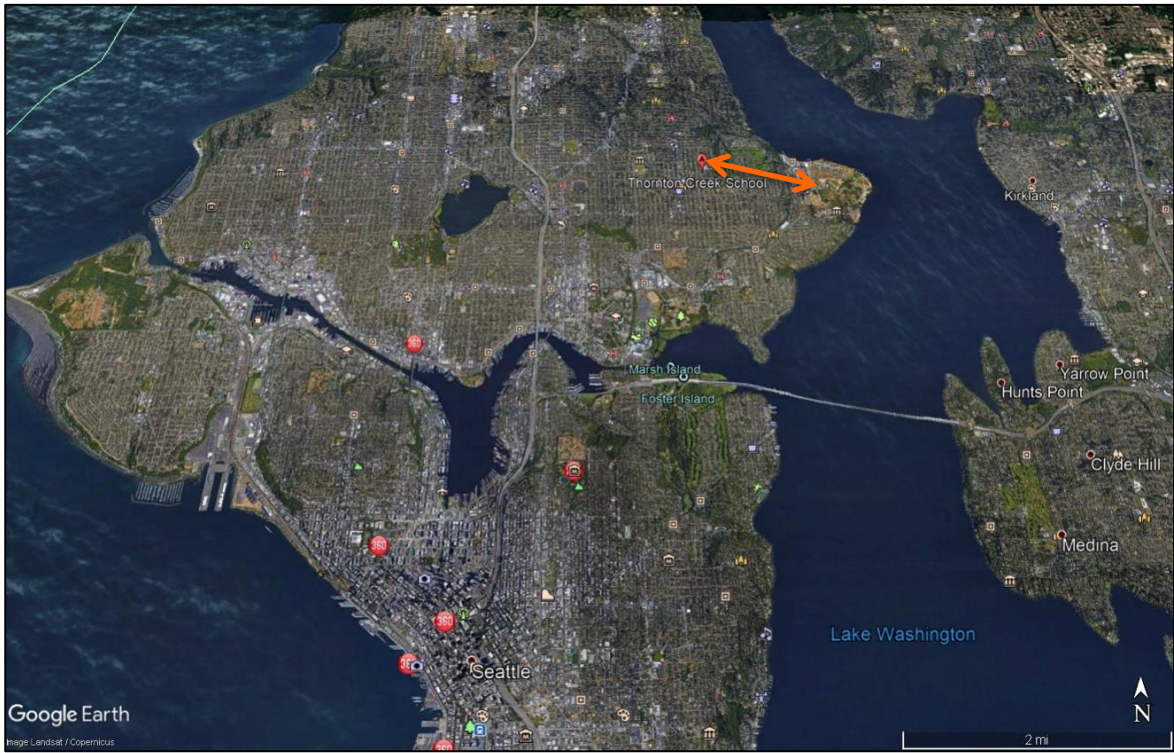


Figure 6. Location of Decatur Annex and Sand Point NAS north of Seattle (Google Earth (2018)).



Figure 7. Google Earth image of Decatur Annex and Sand Point Historic District.

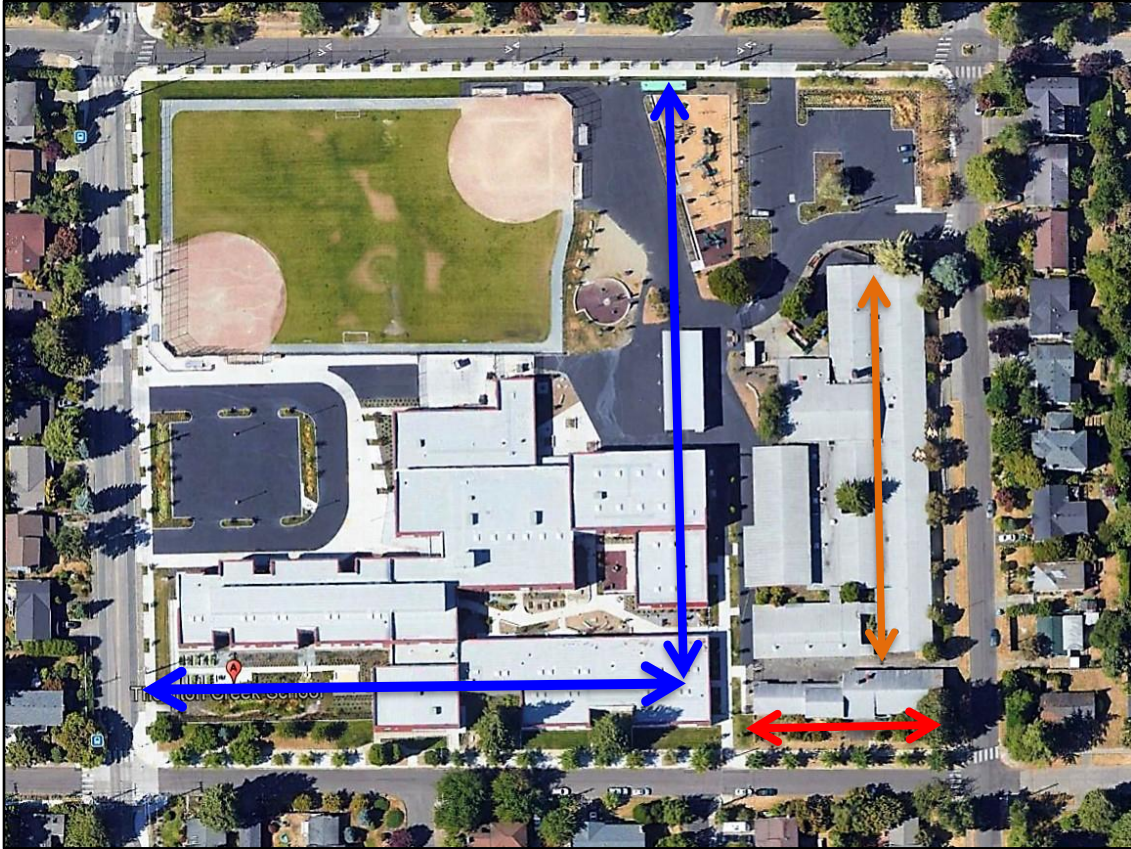


Figure 8. Plan view of Decatur Elementary School (gold arrow), Thornton Creek Elementary School (inside blue arrows), and the Decatur Annex (red arrow), downloaded from Google Earth (USGS image, 2018).

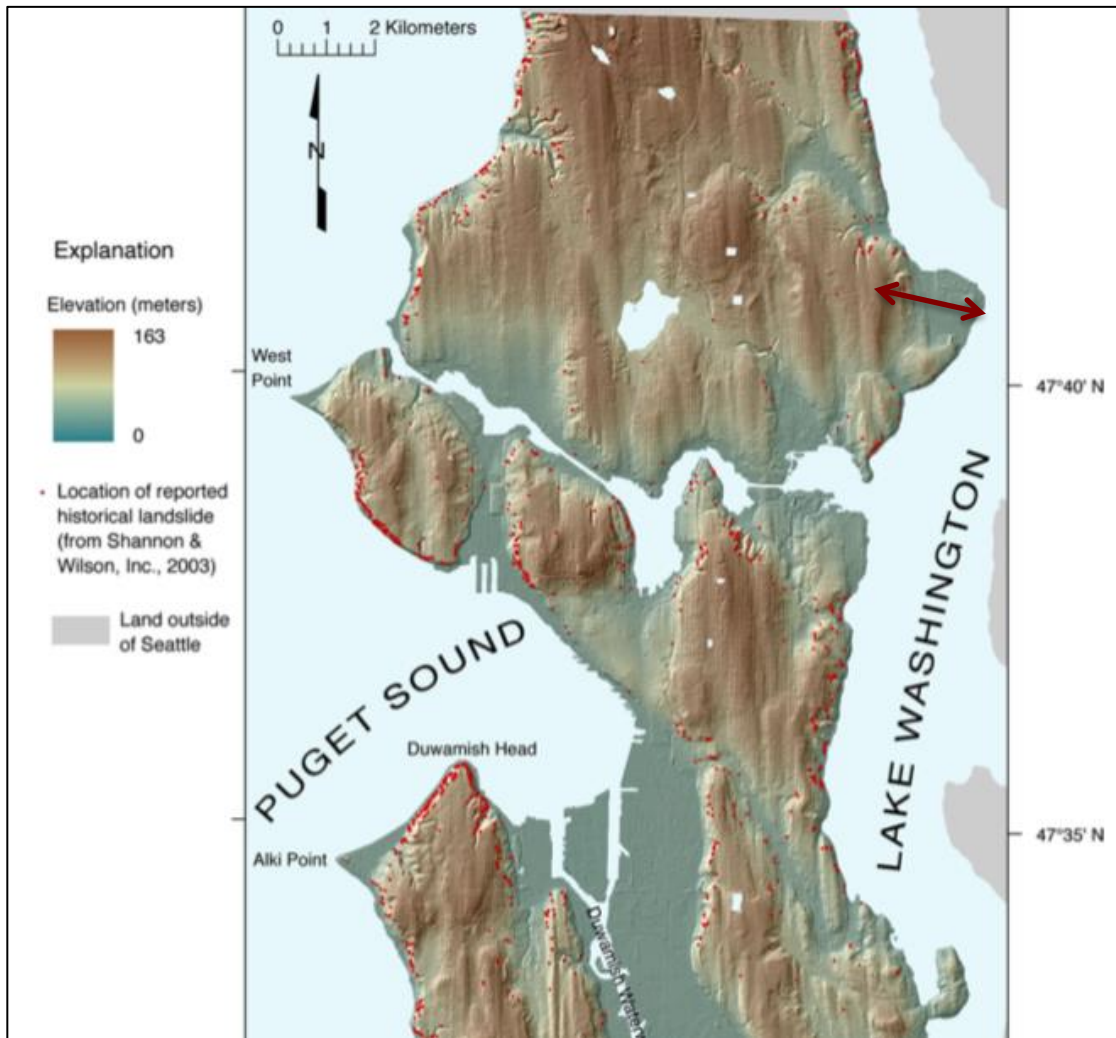


Figure 9. Image of Seattle land surface shape (topography) illustrating the elongate hills (drumlinoid hills) and valleys resulting from advancing and retreating glaciers. Blue arrow indicates location of Decatur Annex (left end) and Sand Point NAS (right end).

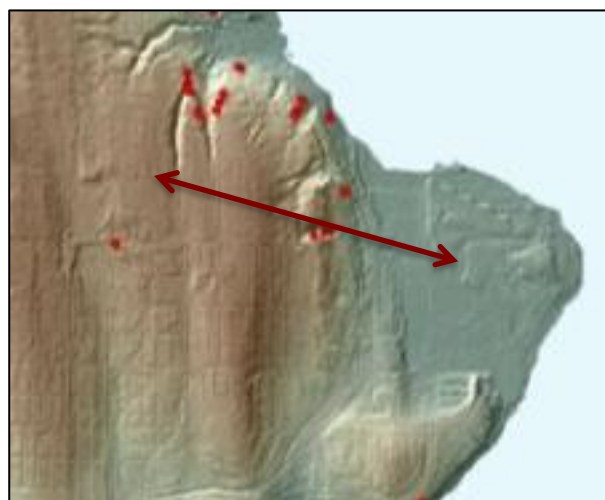


Figure 10. Close up of LIDAR image. Decatur is at the left end of the arrow; Sand Point NAS, the area at the right end of the arrow.

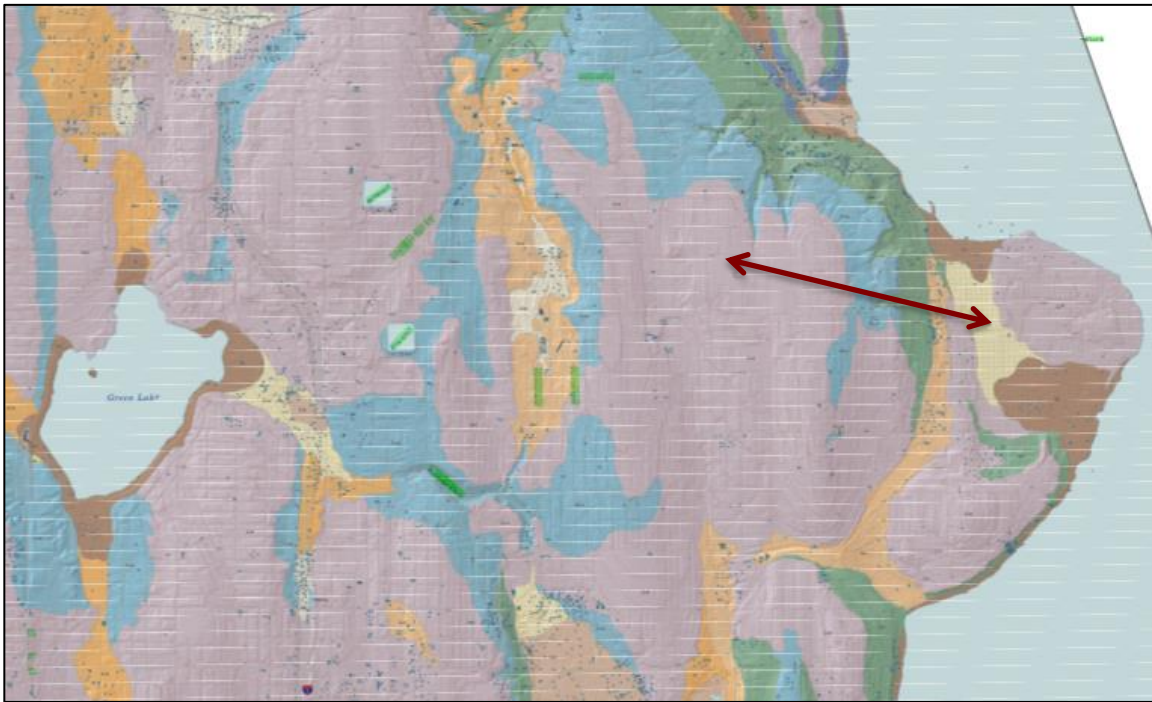


Figure 11. Geologic map of NE Seattle. The red arrow points between Decatur Annex and Sand Point NAS. **Light purple** areas are covered by glacial till, a hard-packed, poorly-sorted deposit formed under a glacier. Whatever sediments are trapped under the ice-rocks, sand, clay-get compressed into a conglomerate called “till” by the weight of the glacier as it rolls over the land. **Blue** areas are sandy layers formed by braided melt-water streams that carry and then deposit silt, sand, and pebbles in front of the advancing/retreating glaciers. **Green areas** are finer-grained clays and silts deposited where melt-water accumulated in front of the glacier.

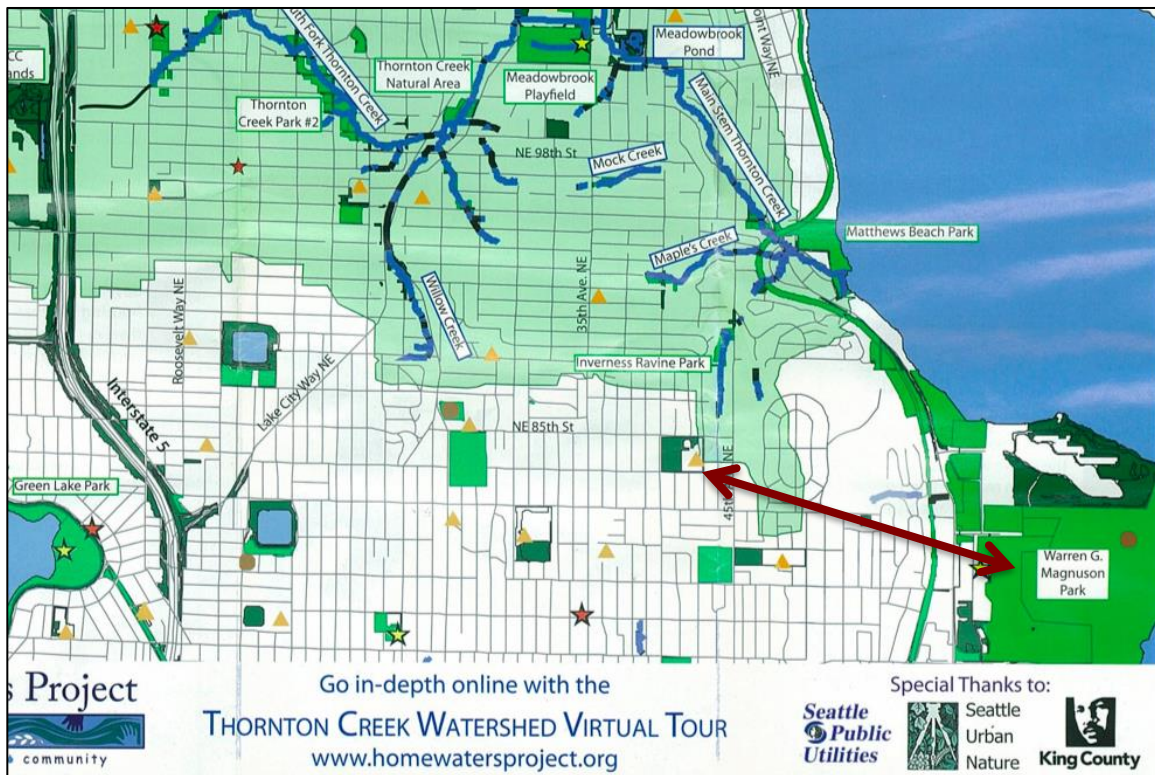


Figure 12. Light green area shows proximity of Thornton Creek Watershed.



Figure 13. Close up of Decatur Annex, plan view. North is towards the top of the image. The three sections are clearly visible: Eastern (right), Central, Western (left). Google Maps, 2018.

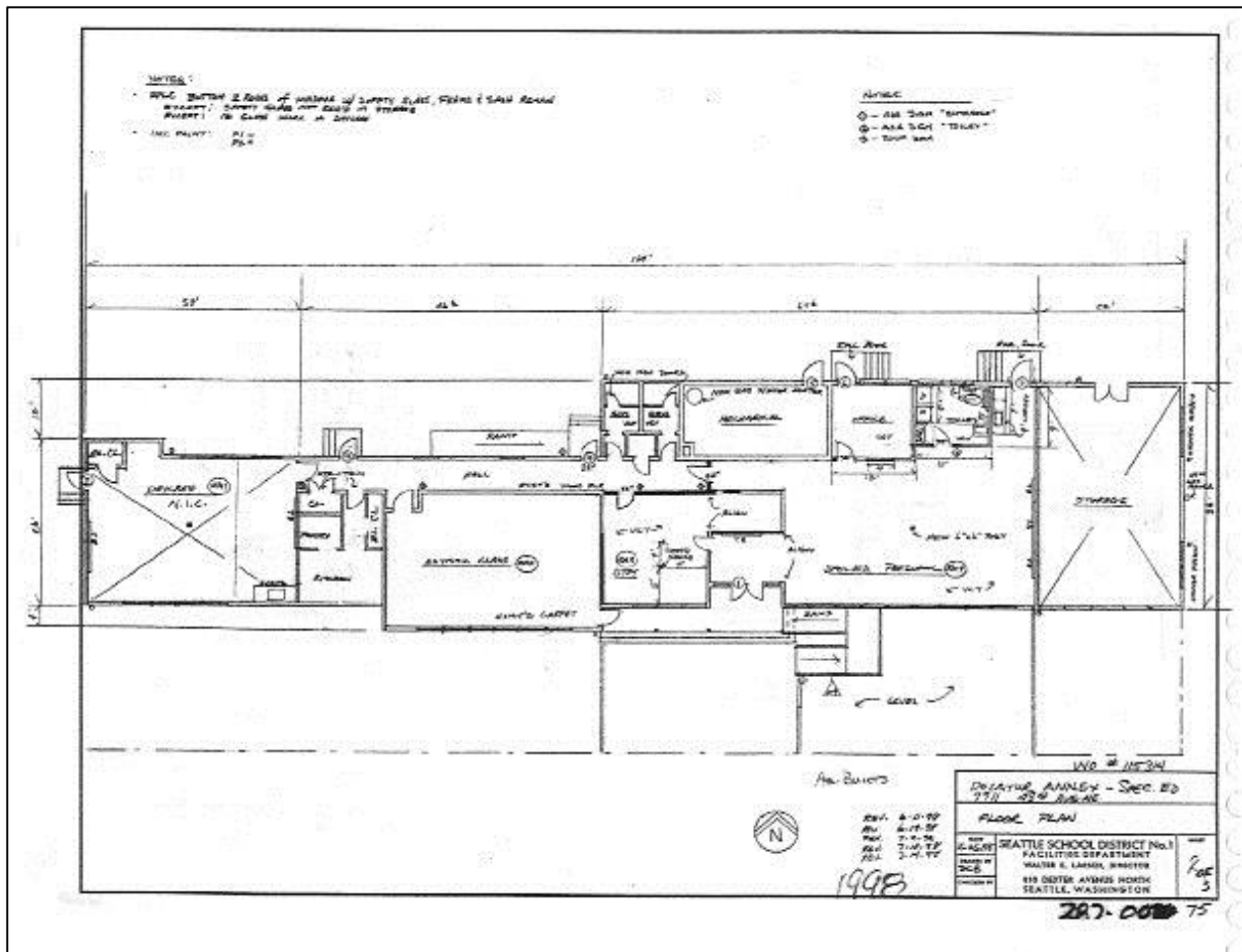


Figure 14. Floor plan of the Decatur Annex as of 1998, including all three sections. Exterior doors, ramps, and windows are indicated, as well as interior hallways, mechanical room, offices, storage, and classrooms. (See Appendix 1).



Figure 15. Google Maps image of the south side of Decatur Annex from the West, looking East along NE 77th Street.



Figure 16. Google Maps image of the north side of Decatur Annex from the East, looking West from 43rd Ave NE, along the open space between the Decatur Annex and Decatur Elementary School to the North (right side of image).



Figure 17. A tilted Google Maps image of Decatur Annex from the East (bottom) to the West (top). This perspective highlights the three sections of the building, provides a view of the roof and its different elevations and extensions, and the concrete-covered chimney, and vent box in the Eastern Section (original Shearwater Community Center). The lighter-colored roofing material on Decatur Annex today replaced the original asphalt roofing in 2009. On the North side of Decatur, there are short roof extensions to provide small porches for two door accesses into the Central and Western Sections, plus an extension over the offset to the north on the Western Section's northern exposure. On the South side of Decatur, there is a slightly shallower slope to the roof that covers the main entrance and porch area of the original Shearwater Community Center.



Figure 18. South street view of the original Shearwater Community Center. Three long concrete steps lead up to the porch and main entrance, under an extended roof supported by two green-painted wooden posts.



Figure 19. The southeast corner of the Eastern Section, which is also the original Shearwater Community Center.



Figure 20. East side of Decatur Annex, East Section. Note peeling paint, including around the windows, and the concrete foundation at the base of the wooden frame structure.



Figure 21. Close up of the northeast pair of windows on the East side of Decatur in Figure 20. The windows have not been replaced by vinyl or aluminum, it is not clear whether these windows date from 1945 or were replacement wood windows in 1961 (see Appendix 1).



Figure 22. Eastern Section, north side, east end, door (L) at ground level; door (R) at finished floor level.



Figure 23. Eastern Section, north side, image overlaps with Figure 22, showing green door at finished floor level, wooden steps to it, two windows, secure boarded crawlspace opening in foundation, and a vent.



Figure 24. East Section, North side, overlaps Figure 23: L to R are two three-sash windows, two four-sash windows mullied together, a green door at finished floor level, wooden steps and deck to the green door.



Figure 25. East Section, N side, overlaps Figure 24. Siding is brick masonry. Note white door at ground level with inset vent and window; ventilation extends from the door to the roof; two aluminum-screened, aluminum sash windows with brick window sills. Box vent, concrete-capped chimney visible on roof.



Figure 26. The Eastern Section, north side, west end, and just around the corner is the Central Section. The window in the brick part of the exterior wall (L) overlaps with Figure 25. Here, brick abuts a short section of cedar lap siding (R) which has two single-hung, two-sash vinyl windows with green wood trim.



Figure 27. The wall on the left side of this image is the extent of the Eastern Section's West side. The Central Section is offset to the south about three feet, with a lower roof that has two elevations.



Figure 28. Central Section, North side, showing higher and lower roof elevations. There is row of short wide windows above the lower roof, and two single-hung, wooden two-sash windows, green trim below it.



Figure 29. Western extent of the Central Section on the North side ends where the lower roof elevation to the right abuts the higher elevation on the left side of image. The lower roof elevation on the north extends west to the end of the Western Section. The door at finished floor level opens into the Western Section. To the door's right is a wooden, single-hung, four-sash window, which is contiguous to adjacent windows to the West (next figure 30).



Figure 30. Central Section, Northern Exposure, West Side, showing the three wooden windows mullied together. At the right in the image is the only eastern exposure of the Western Section, which extends about a foot further north than the Central Section. Note the concrete foundation is shorter at this end.



Figure 31. Western Section, North side, West end. The main structural feature is the short extension of the end of the Western Section's northern wall and roof towards the North by about a foot. The box on the wall to the right of the windows is an air conditioner. The tall wooden unit on the right houses the electrical utility panel.



Figure 32. Western Section, West Side. Asymmetrical roof, unlike the symmetrical East Side. Left side door is at the finished floor level, reached by wooden steps and deck. To the right of the door are three boarded windows, and to left of the door is what appears to be an enclosed area used for electrical utilities.



Figure 33. Southwest corner of the Western Section, showing new replacement vinyl windows. These are the only windows that do not have green-painted wooden frames.



Figure 34. Central Section, close up of a replaced vinyl window on the east side of the Southern Façade of the Central Section. It shows red trim on the outside, which may or may not be significant historically.



Figure 35. Central Section, south side. There are seven contiguous windows on this side (four behind shrubbery). The original windows have been replaced with double hung two-sash vinyl windows, framed and mulled together with green-painted wood.

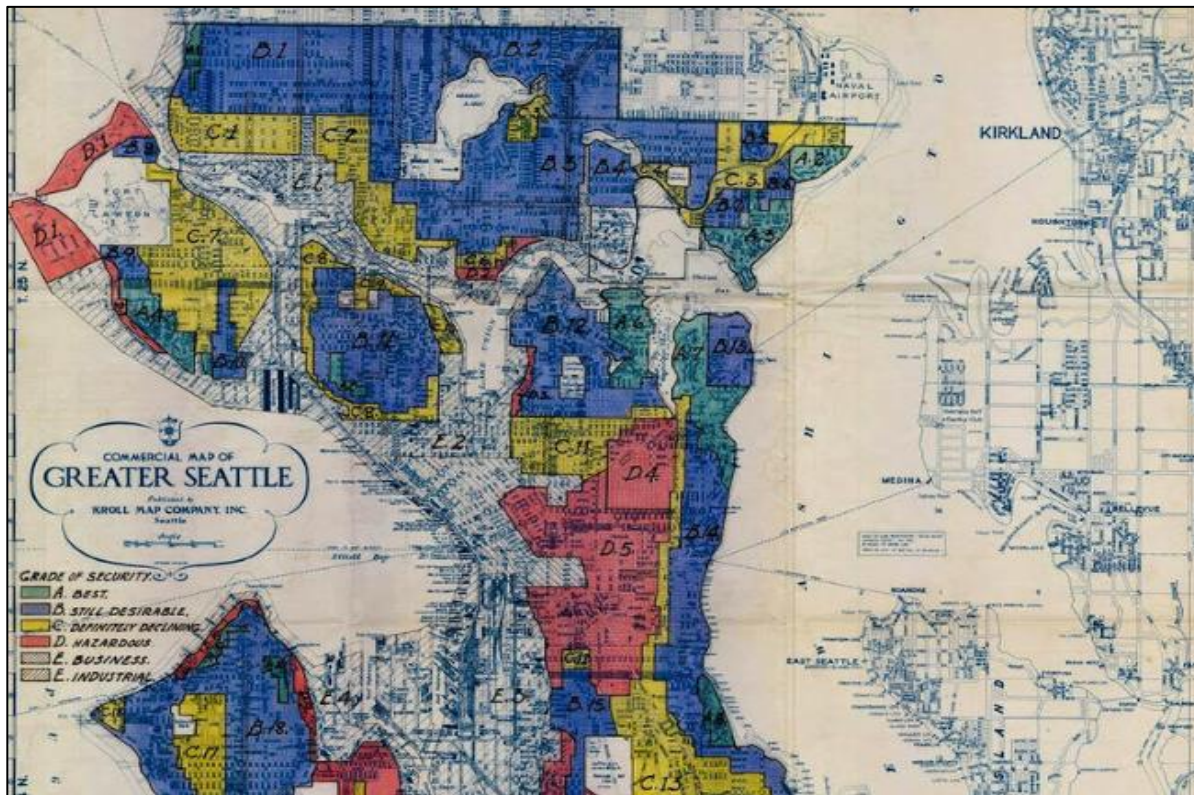
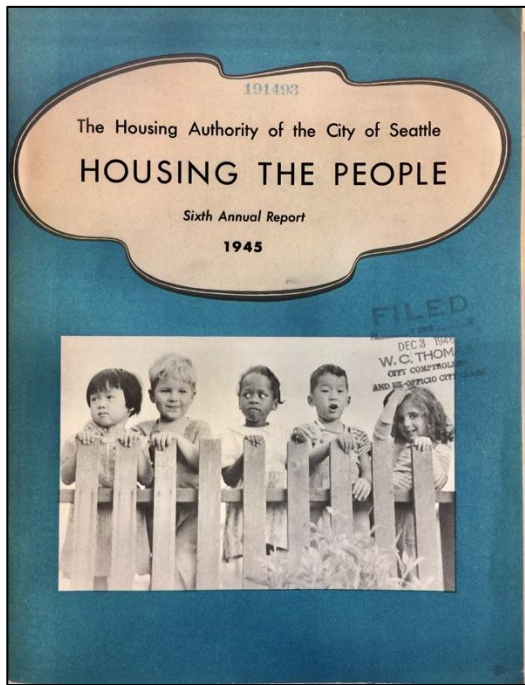


Figure 36. This 1936 map ranks the safety of loan investments by color for banks to use as criteria for providing home loans. The red areas were labeled “Hazardous.” In 1936 Seattle city limits did not extend north of NE 65th Street Source: <http://archive.kuow.org/post/own-house-seattle-it-might-have-racist-past>



Number of families that the Seattle Housing Authority placed Authority of the City of Seattle, 1945.

Figure 37. Cover of the 6th Annual Report of the Housing Authority of the City of Seattle, 1945. Figure 38.

in Navy and City subsidized housing – 11,188 war workers, 852 veterans, 2,548 service men, between 1941 and 1945.

The Authority looks with pride on its war record of families housed:

1941—436 families

1942—3317 families

1943—3468 families

1944—3984 families

1945—4025 families

The breakdown of types indicates that 11,188 war workers, 852 veterans and 2,548 service-men were housed from 1941 to 1945. That's why we feel our pride is justified.

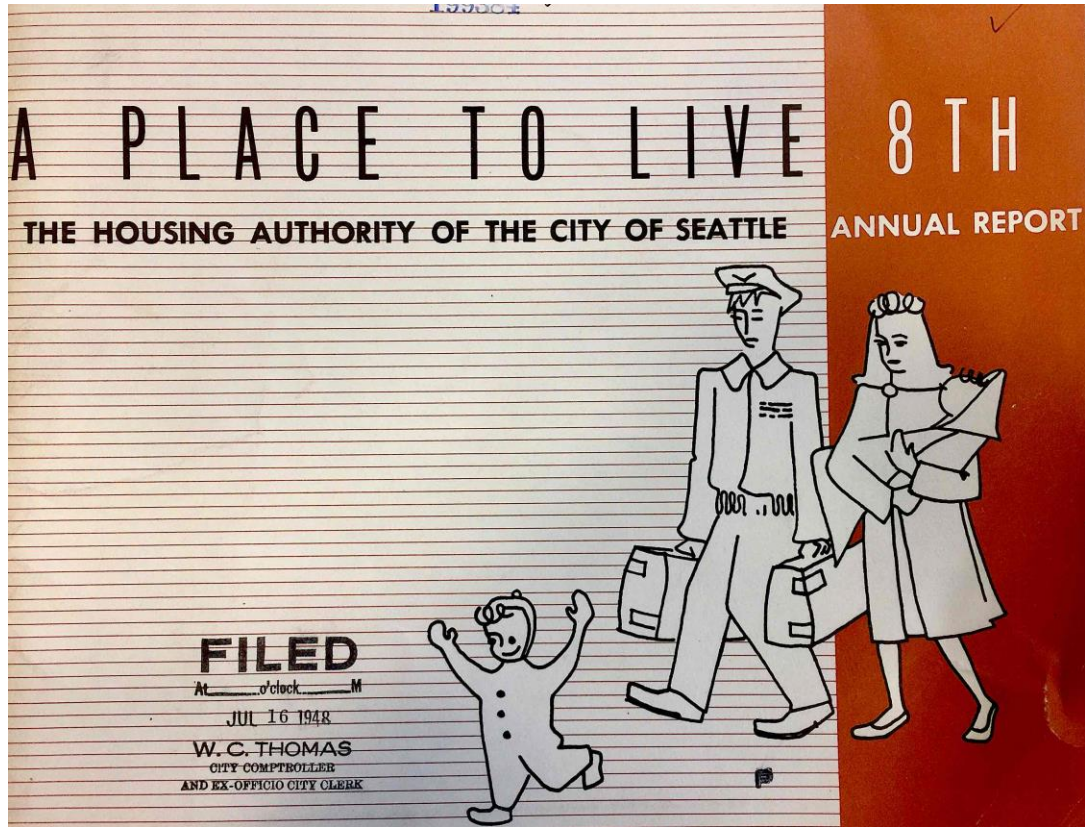


Figure 39. After the war, housing for low-income families in Seattle was still needed. This is the cover to the 1948 SHA Annual report.

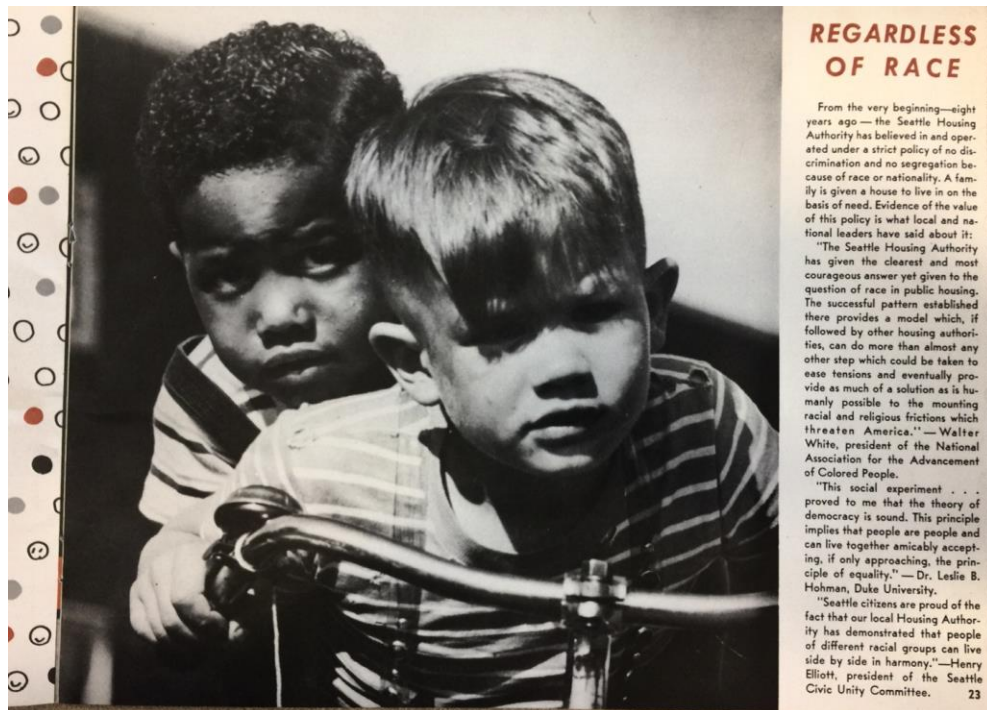


Figure 40. Image from the 1948 Seattle Housing Authority Annual Report.

Appendix 1

The Johnson Report (January 2018).

Decatur Annex "Appendix A" Report.

Decatur School Annex

“Appendix A” Report
7711 43rd Ave NE
January 2018

Prepared by:
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1212 NE 65th Street
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Decatur Annex

"Appendix" A Report

JANUARY 2018

1. INTRODUCTION

This "Appendix A" report provides information regarding the architectural design and historical significance of the Decatur School Annex in the Wedgwood neighborhood of Seattle, Washington. The Johnson Partnership prepared this report at the request of the Seattle Public School District.

1.1 Background

The City of Seattle's Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI)—formerly the Department of Planning and Development—through a 1995 agreement with the Department of Neighborhoods, requires a review of "potentially eligible landmarks" for commercial projects over 4,000 square feet in area. As any proposed alterations or demolition of the subject building described within this report will require a permit from SDCI, the building owner is providing the following report to the staff of the Seattle Landmarks Preservation Board (LPB) to resolve the property's status.

To be eligible for nomination as a City of Seattle Landmark, a building, object, or structure must be at least 25 years old, have significant character, interest, or value, the integrity or ability to convey its significance, and it must meet one or more of the following six criteria (SMC 25.12.350):

- A. It is the location of or is associated in a significant way with an historic event with a significant effect upon the community, city, state, or nation.
- B. It is associated in a significant way with the life of a person important in the history of the city, state, or nation.
- C. It is associated in a significant way with a significant aspect of the cultural, political, or economic heritage of the community, city, state, or nation.
- D. It embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of an architectural style, period, or method of construction.
- E. It is an outstanding work of a designer or builder.
- F. Because of its prominence of spatial location, contrast of siting, age, or scale, it is an easily identifiable feature of its neighborhood or the city and contributes to the distinctive quality or identity of such neighborhood or city.

1.2 Methodology

Research and development of this report combines information from two sources. BOLA Architecture + Planning completed research and writing in 2013 under contract with the Seattle Public School District #1 on Decatur/Thornton Creek School. All text in italics is excerpted from that report, and has been edited for length and clarity.

Additional original research and writing by Ellen F.C. Mirro, A.I.A. and Audrey N. Reda of The Johnson Partnership, 1212 N.E. 65th Street, Seattle, WA was completed in January of 2018. Research was undertaken at the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections, University of Washington Special Collections Library, the Seattle Times Digital Archives, the Seattle Public Library, and the Puget Sound Regional Archives. The site and buildings were photographed to document the existing conditions in December 2018.

2. PROPERTY DATA

Building Name: Decatur Annex

Address: 7711 43rd Avenue NE, Seattle, WA 98115

Location: Wedgwood neighborhood

Assessor's File Number: 63920022-2030

Legal Description:

Oneida Gardens Addition replat blocks 45 & 46 lots 7 through 10 block 47 lots 7 through 10 block 48 blocks 49 50 51 52 61 62 63 & 64 & vacated portion of 41st Ave NE & 42nd Ave NE adjacent less beginning at nxn centerline E 77th Street with centerline 43rd Avenue NE th north 110 feet th west 30 feet to the point of beginning th north 220 feet th north 88-49-32 w 100 feet th north 150.9 feet th along curve to lft radius 37.5 feet distance of 24.75 feet th south 29-14-17 w 30.66 feet th along curve to rgt radius 62.5 feet distance of 56.67 feet then south 71.2 feet then n 88-49-43 w 150.9 feet then south 223.33 feet then East to the point of beginning less lots 6 thru 10 block 63 [from tax assessor site]

Date of Construction: Unverified build date: 1943-1946
Annex addition: 1961
Remodel: 1966
Remodel: 1998

Original/Intermediate/Present Use: Office/Community building/School/Vacant

Original/Intermediate/Present Owner: Seattle Housing Authority/US Navy/Seattle Public Schools

Original Designer: Unknown

Zoning: SF 5000

Property Size: 292,452 square feet (Parcel 639200-2220, per King County Parcel Viewer)

Building Size: 5,784 square feet

3. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

3.1 Location & Neighborhood Character¹

The dwellings within the immediate area appear to date from the post-war decades up to the present day. Landscaping is mature, and the building styles represent a mix of ranch, Modern and newer Craftsman revival types. Properties within the nearby country club and those on streets located a few short blocks to the east in the View Ridge area tend to be newer and more upscale.

The school property takes up several full blocks between NE 77th and 80th streets and NE 40th and 43rd avenues in northeastern Seattle. Officially cited as being within Wedgwood, this part of the neighborhood also shares some of its history with the View Ridge neighborhood. Early zoning restrictions in Wedgwood resulted in commercial development limited to a low-scale strip along 35th Avenue NE, five blocks to the west of the school. Thus the neighborhood character is suburban, with relatively large and well-landscaped residential lots, and dwellings that date largely from the late 1950s through the 1990s. These houses represent post-World War II development in northeast Seattle.

The school property is located two blocks north of NE 75th Street, which serves as an arterial accessing the Ravenna neighborhood and I-5 to the west, and the View Ridge and Sand Point neighborhoods along Lake Washington to the east. View Ridge, which was platted in 1935 as Hawthorne Hills, extends west from the vicinity of 45th Avenue NE. Parcels within this neighborhood have dramatic territorial views of Lake Washington and the Cascade Mountains due to the steep sloping topography. See figures 1-5.

3.2 Site

The Decatur Annex is located on the southeastern corner of a full-block site housing two separate schools and school programs. The block is bounded by NE 79th Street on the south, NE 80th Street on the north, 43rd Avenue NE on the east and 40th Avenue NE on the west.

Decatur School, constructed in 1961, sits to the north of the subject building and is situated on the eastern side of the parcel fronting 43rd Avenue E. Thornton Creek School, constructed in 2015, sits to the north and west of the subject building. The northwestern corner of the site is open space, with a playground and playfields. Parking for Decatur School is located on the northeastern corner of the site. Parking for Thornton Creek School is located mid-block off of 40th Avenue NE on the western side of the site. The site is level, with grade changes of less than three feet. See figure 6.

3.3 Building Structure & Exterior Features

The subject building is a one-story platform frame gable-roofed building. The plan is an irregular rectangle: 36 feet wide at the widest point and 169 feet long. The main portion of the building was constructed sometime between 1943 and 1945; a 22-foot-long addition to the building was constructed in 1961.² The building has asphalt shingle roofing and painted cedar siding. Windows are generally replacement aluminum or vinyl units with sills located approximately 30 inches from finish floor and head height approximately seven feet from finish floor. There are a few original fixed wood-sash windows described below. Various windows have decorative painted shutters attached to the building on one or both sides. The finish floor is located approximately two feet above grade level with a concrete foundation and crawlspace underneath.

The building can be described in three sections: eastern, central and western.

The easternmost section is approximately 88 feet 10 inches long, 36 feet wide, and has a continuous gable roof running east-west, with a projecting shed roof projecting over a southern porch in the

¹ Excerpted from BOLA Architecture + Planning, research and writing for Decatur/Thornton Creek School in 2013 under contract with the Seattle Public School District #1. Text has been edited for length and clarity.

² Seattle Public Schools drawing #287-0029.

center of the building. The entry doors are located on the southern façade under this porch, in a recessed alcove approximately two feet deep. The porch is supported on three painted wooden 4" x 4" columns. The porch is accessed by a two long steps along the southern side and a ramp with a wooden guardrail connecting at the eastern side. The entry doors are a set of double doors with glass lights, five-light sidelights and a three-light transom. To the west of the entry alcove, under the extended porch roof is located a set of three double hung wood two-light sash windows. To the east of the entry a set of ten non-original double-hung aluminum sash windows are mulled together with approximately 4.5-inch wooden mullions. A set of four double-hung wooden two-light sash windows is located on the eastern end of the southern façade. The eastern façade contains two fixed pane three-light wood sash windows original to the 1961 addition. The northern façade of this portion contains a variety of fenestration and four access doors. A double access door with a three-light transom and grade-level sill is located on the eastern end of the northern façade. Approximately three feet to the west of the double access door are two side-by-side doors with their sills at finish floor level. One wooden two-panel door that appears to be original is apparently secured shut, as it has no porch. The other is a non-original flush door with an approximately four-foot-by-four-foot wooden porch with three steps up on the western side. Approximately four feet to the west of that door are two single-hung wood sash windows with two lights in the lower sash, and sills located at least 36 inches from the finish floor. Another set of two mulled wood sash double-hung windows with two lights in each sash is located less than a foot to the west. Another flush panel door with a wooden entry porch is located less than six inches to the west of the two mulled windows. It is similar to the entry porch on the eastern end, except the steps are located on the eastern side. To the west of that is a section of wall, approximately 23 feet long, made of white painted brick. Within this wall is a single door with its sill at grade level, a wire glass light and a louvered transom extending up to the top plate of the wall. To west of that, wire screens obscure two-double hung windows with brick sills. The western end of the northern façade of this portion transitions back to painted wood lap siding, and contains two aluminum sash double-hung windows with sills located approximately 40 inches from finish floor. The western façade of this portion of the building is a 12-foot-long blank-sided wall returning to meet the northern façade of the central portion of the building, where the eastern and central portions of the building intersect. *See figures 7-18.*

The central portion of the building is approximately 34 feet 2 inches east-west and 28 feet wide north-south and projects four feet to the south of the main southern building wall. The plate height of an elevated roof section the central portion of the building measures approximately 33 feet long by 24 feet wide, and is approximately three feet higher than that of the main portion of the building. This creates a higher offset gable roof, with the main roof continuing above a three-foot-wide hallway on the northern side of the central portion of the building. The southern façade of the central portion contains a set of six mulled non-original vinyl sash double-hung windows. The eastern face of the projecting portion of the building contains a single flush panel door accessed from the front porch of the building. The northern façade of this portion contains a single access door at the eastern end. The access door is sheltered by a four-foot-wide shed extension of the main roof. It is accessed by a set of stairs to the north and ramp with a wooden guardrail along the northern façade to the west. Two double-hung wood sash windows with storm windows are also located on the northern façade of this portion of the building. A clearstory of vinyl sash windows separates the lower main roof from the upper roof on the northern façade. *See figures 19-20.*

The western portion of the building is 48 feet east-west by approximately 24 feet north-south with a two-foot-deep projection on the western end of the northern façade. The southern façade of this portion of the building contains two fixed-pane vinyl sash windows with a center mullion on the eastern end. The western end of the southern façade contains a set of five non-original vinyl sash windows with a one-over-two configuration consisting of a screened slider at the lower portion. The western façade contains a set of three boarded-up windows and a single access door on the northern end. The door has a concrete porch with three steps on the southern side for access. The northern façade of this portion contains a single access door at the eastern end. The access door is sheltered by a four-foot-wide shed extension of the main roof, and is accessed by a concrete porch with concrete

stairs to the west. Three double-hung wood sash windows with two lights at each sash are also located on the northern façade of this portion of the building. *See figures 21-24.*

3.4 Documented Building Alterations

The permits on record include permits for the subject building, the adjacent Decatur School, and the alterations in 1960, 1965, and 1983. The list below has been edited to only those permits directly associated with the subject building.

The one-story subject building was the location of the General Service Administration offices for the former Shearwater housing project developed between 1943 and 1946. The building is irregular in form, and the main entry faced NE 77th Street, as it does today.

The Decatur School was built in 1961, whereupon the subject building came to be called the Decatur Annex. Between 1960 and 1961, during the construction of the Decatur School, a small storage shed at the corner of 43rd Ave NE and NE 77th Street was removed, and a 22-foot-long addition to the annex was built by the eastern end of the school. In 1965 the subject building was altered for use as classrooms. Changes made to the building included but were not limited to new restrooms installed in the old kitchen area, and window removal along the western façade. Also in 1965, on-site parking was added and improved upon.

In 1980 ramps and toilets for disabled accessibility were added to the school building and the Annex building. In 1983 the subject building's use was established as the Children's World Montessori Preschool. Alterations continued in the subject building, including a second means of egress for classroom 109 and a heat detector in the storage room.

In 1998 interior alterations to the annex included the removal of carpeting and other flooring and the addition of two disabled ramps. This remodel also lowered the existing chimney and added a new concrete chimney cap.

In 2009 interior alterations to the subject building included additional insulation to the existing building.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Permit #</i>
1960	Construction of addition to community & service one-story building. Relocate existing maintenance shop building.	BN 3189
1966	Alter. ex. building & occupy as classrooms	BN 26111
1966	Alter. ex. building & occupy as classrooms per revision of permit BN26111	BN 26747
1966	Establish accessory off-street parking areas (7711 -43 rd NE)	BN 27123
1973	Auto controls only	B 34693
1983	Alter annex building of public school and establish use as Montessori preschool per plan.	608097
1998	Interior alterations & install (2) handicap ramps all to annex building of Decatur School per plot plan and subject to field inspection (STFI)	9804857
2009	Interior alteration to existing annex to insulate building per plan (Interior alteration to existing annex building to insulate building and construct canopy addition to existing portable/review and process for 2 AP's under 6208539)	6208539
2009	Construct canopy addition to existing portable per plan. (Interior alterations to existing annex building to insulate building, related to 6208539)	6213180

Visible alterations include the following:

- Removal of pergola along western section, southern façade
- Removal and boarding-up of windows on the western façade
- Replacement and alteration of windows on the southern and northern façades
- The addition of access doors along the northern façade and off the southern front porch to the central portion of the building
- The addition of access ramps and stairs in several locations at the southern and northern façades.

Site alterations include the following:

- 1943-1946 (dates unconfirmed): construction of Shearwater housing and subject building as office by Seattle Housing Authority
- 1960: removal of storage shed at the corner of 43rd Ave NE and NE 77th Street
- 1961: house referenced in permit 380355 (1947) no longer in existence, per Mr. Blauvelt
- Partial removal of three-foot-high white picket fence along NE 77th street.

4. SIGNIFICANCE

4.1 Historic Neighborhood Context: Wedgwood and View Ridge Neighborhoods³

Prior to 19th century European American settlement, Native Americans visited the area now known as the Wedgwood neighborhood for harvesting of native plants and berries. Geological history resulted in the hilly topography, with moist ravines, creeks flowing to Lake Washington, and rich soils. Early homestead claims were made in the 1870s. While the area was logged and was probably used for recreational hunting and tracking in the late 19th century, it remained largely natural.

One of the neighborhood's low-lying areas supported an early four-acre farm tract platted by A. W. Chandler, who drained a bog just north of NE 80th Street and east of 25th Avenue NE for arable land. Chandler's Addition included a truck farm, established by Italian immigrant Ernesto Picardo in 1922, which was later acquired by the city and developed into an extensive three-acre cooperative farm site, which in turn became Seattle's first "P-Patch" in the late 1960s. The public garden expanded in 1973. The 98,000-square-foot property currently contains over 300 individual garden plots along with a 1.5-year waiting list.⁴

The area that surrounds the school property is part of a plateau that eventually rises to an elevation of approximately 400 feet along 45th Avenue NE. (The elevation of the school is around 325'.) Development in the early 20th century remained sparse, with much of the neighborhood having no electrical service until Puget Power and Light provided it in the 1920s. Because of its relative remoteness and limited road systems, this area remained largely undeveloped until the 1940s. The areas west of 40th Avenue NE and south of NE 85th Street, including the school site, were annexed into the City of Seattle in 1942. (Other northeast areas became part of the city between 1941 and 1954 as their electoral precincts voted favorably for annexation. Most of Wedgwood was annexed in 1947.) Most of the residential development around the school occurred in the immediate post-war

³ Excerpted from BOLA Architecture + Planning, research and writing for Decatur/Thornton Creek School in 2013 under contract with the Seattle Public School District #1. Text has been edited for length and clarity.

⁴ David Wilma, "Seattle Neighborhoods: Wedgwood--Thumbnail History," HistoryLink.org essay 3462, July 24 2001, http://www.historylink.org/index.cfm?DisplayPage=output.cfm&file_id=3462 (accessed May 21, 2013). Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, "P-Patch Community Gardens: Picardo Farm," <https://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/ppatch/locations/5.htm> (accessed May 21, 2013).

era after land use regulations were established in 1947. This zoning categorized allowed uses as R-1 and RS 5000, single family residences, and single-family residences on "dense" 5,000-square-foot lots.

Specific parts of Wedgwood are closely associated with early housing developments and the Sand Point Naval Air Station. One of the earliest projects to be promoted was in the Morningside Heights area, on the west side of 35th Avenue NE from NE 90th to 95th streets. In 1943 Cedarvale, a 200-unit emergency housing development by the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA), was built for civilian Navy employees between NE 73rd and 74th streets and 43rd Avenue NE, near the View Ridge. Developer and contractor Albert Balch (1903-1976), who had platted View Ridge in the late 1930s, initiated a single-family project in 1945 with his partner Maury Seitzer in anticipation of Seattle's wartime housing needs. Balch's wife, Edith, is credited for naming the neighborhood after her English pottery.⁵ With support from the National Housing Act and the Federal Housing Authority, they constructed a 500-house subdivision on a 40-acre tract between NE 80th and 85th Streets and 30th to 35th avenues NE. The Colonial Revival and Cape Cod-style "Balch Homes," as they came to be known, reportedly were sold for \$5,000 each. Another post-war project was the 1949 Oneida Gardens (Wedgwood Estates), an apartment complex for navy personnel, at 3716 NE 75th Street.⁶

A housing project was constructed in the far eastern edge of Wedgwood, on a portion of the subject school site in the 1940s. The Shearwater housing complex had 315 dwellings within low-rise townhouses style apartment buildings. Built with Navy funds, Shearwater housing was at first run by the Seattle Housing authority for the exclusive use of Navy personnel. In 1947, the administration of the project was transferred back to the Navy.⁷ The Wedgwood Community Club sought street improvements through Shearwater in 1957, while seeking its removal, "on the grounds that the frame structures are out of character with the surrounding residential area."⁸ The battle between the community and the Navy continued into the early 1970s.

4.2 Building History: Decatur/Thornton Creek School⁹

Before 1961, two single family houses with garages were situated at the northeastern corner of the property, and a small "Maintenance Shop Building" on the eastern side, along with a larger rectangular "Community Building" near the southern side. The Community Building is the only one of the original buildings surviving on the site and is our subject building.

At the start of World War II, Wedgwood was a small community of farms and private residences. Historic maps from 1949 indicate that two residences existed on the eastern side of the subject site along 43rd Ave NE, north of the subject building, and the rest of the site was undeveloped. Although the war ended in 1945, housing was still required for the servicemen and families attached to the Sand Point Naval Air Station. As the Navy was not interested in constructing housing outside of its military bases, other developers created housing for the Navy, as has described in Section 4.1.1 above.

Within the Oneida Gardens replat, adjacent to the Oneida Gardens Development, 315 units were constructed on blocks around 40th Ave NE and NE 77th Street, including the present site of Decatur Elementary School and Thornton Creek School. This development, named Shearwater after the local sea bird, was built by the Seattle Housing Authority as an emergency measure between 1943-46. The buildings were spread over several blocks and were transferred to the Navy in 1947. The subject building was used as the leasing office for Shearwater housing.¹⁰

⁵ Wilma.

⁶ Wedgwood Community Club, "Wedgwood in Seattle History," September 12, 2012, <https://wedgwoodinseattlehistory.com>.

⁷ *Seattle Times*, "House Projects' Transfer Asked," May 18, 1947, p. 13.

⁸ *Seattle Times*, "New Street Asked for Wedgwood," August 23, 1957, p. 7.

⁹ Italic text excerpted from BOLA Architecture + Planning, research and writing for Decatur/Thornton Creek School in 2013 under contract with the Seattle Public School District #1. Text has been edited for length and clarity.

¹⁰ *Seattle Times*, "Navy Will Run House Projects," April 1, 1948, p. 13.

An early survey and topography map of the Decatur School shows twenty apartment buildings spread across the site. The apartment buildings were long and rectangular in shape with two or more apartments occupying each. They were without foundations and supported by a wooden platform with steps leading up to each unit.¹¹ Historic maps from 1949 indicate that along two residences existed on the eastern side of the site along 43rd Ave NE, north of the subject building. A portion of the Shearwater site had been reserved for a school building.

The Shearwater housing was occupied mostly by military families with young children. As the population of Wedgwood began to grow, additional schools were needed.¹² After the subject site was used as a leasing office, the community used it for their community association building. The Decatur School was built in 1961, retaining the subject building as an annex to the school. The Navy formally transferred the Shearwater property to the school district in 1962.¹³ *See figures 25-29.*

The original school site, as shown in the "Shearwater Elementary School Plot Plan" of March 31, 1961 by Edward Mahlum, Architect, AIA, was an L-shaped portion of the current parcel. This site, which is smaller than the present one, had setbacks that accommodated three pre-existing apartment buildings remaining from the Navy's Shearwater housing complex on the site. The survey and plot plan also showed the pre-existing "Community Building" (the subject building) on the southern side of the school, with a two-way, paved drive aisle and parking lot for 32 cars placed in the intervening space between the two structures. Two other parking areas along the perimeter streets were identified on the plot plan – four parallel parking spaces (or a bus drop-off zone) on 43rd Avenue NE, near the northern end of the school, and perpendicular spaces for an estimated 15 cars off NE 77th Street near the Community Building. The playground on the smaller western half of the site was paved with asphalt and featured a "Maypole" and softball backstop in the southwestern corner.

Plans for a new school in the Wedgwood/View Ridge area were initiated in March 1959 when the United States Navy announced the release of the 1.85-acre portion of the Shearwater housing project site to Seattle Public Schools. The Navy property, located between NE 75th and 80th streets and 39th and 44th avenues NE, had buildings situated along the western portion of the future school site, but the eastern portion was largely vacant. By early 1960 Edward Mahlum's design for the project was complete. It called for a new, \$511,720, twelve-classroom building, which was referred to as the Shearwater School. Final plans for a \$518,260 construction project were approved by the School Board in April of that year. Funding for the school came in part from a state allocation of approximately \$74,650.¹⁴

The school's construction bid appears to have been awarded in components, with a contract of \$360,067 going to a general contractor, the Century Construction Company; \$88,214 to Hart Plumbing & Heating; and \$31,905 to electrical contractor John A. Carlson. These bids totaled \$480,186.¹⁵ In late 1960 the school was officially named for Stephen Decatur, a notable Naval officer who had lived in the early 19th century. (Decatur reportedly coined the phrase, "My country, right or wrong."). The school opened in September 1961 under the leadership of principal Wilbert Nuetzmann. He was succeeded by Principal Gerald Newton in 1967.

In 1965 the School Board announced a series of school closures along with changes to shift 60 to 80 students from Wedgwood Elementary School, at 2720 NE 85th Street, to Decatur School. By this date, enrollment at Decatur had dropped with the closure of all of the Navy's Shearwater housing project.¹⁶ The remaining 7.86-acre Navy site was transferred to the Seattle Public Schools in late

¹¹ Edward Mahlum, "Shearwater Elementary School, Seattle Public School District #1," reference survey map, A2 file #287-0002, Decatur School Drawings, Seattle Public School archives.

¹² Wedgwood in Seattle History, "Shearwater part one: Navy housing in Wedgwood in the 1940's," <https://wedgwoodinseattlehistory.com/2012/09/17/shearwater-part-one-navy-housing-in-wedgwood-in-the-1940s/> (accessed January 17, 2018).

¹³ Seattle Public School Memorandum from H. J. Sommer, Jr., Director of Facilities, to Connie Slides, Member Seattle School Board, April, 18 1988

¹⁴ *Seattle Times*, various articles, March 26, 1959 to April 21, 1960.

¹⁵ *Seattle Times*, "\$480,186 in Contracts Let for Shearwater School," June 30, 1960, p. 51.

¹⁶ *Seattle Times*, "Pupils to be Bussed: School Closed; Boundaries Shift," August 26, 1965. p. 59.

1965. The federal government required that Decatur School's enrollment rise to 420 by February 1968. Enrollment, estimated at 300 in 1965, rose to only 360 by the beginning of 1967.

The district, anticipating an increase to 750 students, made plans to transport special education pupils to Decatur. In late 1965 the residential buildings that made up the former housing project were cleared for a new playground. Only the original wood-frame and brick masonry boiler and service building at the southeastern corner of the site remained. This structure was remodeled to provide offices, storage rooms, and an adult education classroom, which was occupied originally by Seattle Community College. Later these spaces were converted for use as an art classroom, tutoring spaces, and a daycare facility for students before and after school hours.

Three classrooms in the annex and three in the main school building remained unoccupied in May 1966, prompting the School District's plan to transfer additional students to Decatur. At that time the School Board envisioned the total enrollment at Decatur School at 420 students. (Nearby View Ridge Elementary School had two empty classrooms, in part due to a teacher shortage at that time.)

In November 1966 the School Board accepted bids for a five-classroom addition to be constructed along the southern side of the original school building. Also designed by Edward Mahlum, the addition followed the same architectural vocabulary as his design for the original school with a low-pitch gable roof form, horizontal bands of windows, exposed glue-laminated arches, and brick masonry veneer. Portable classroom buildings were added later to serve the growing student body.

In 1967 boundaries were established for the neighborhood schools in northeast Seattle, expanding the area for Decatur to NE 92nd and NE 75th streets on the north and south respectively, and 35th and 45th avenues NE on the west and east. With adequate regular student enrollment, the district made plans to remove the adult and special education programs from the school.

Decatur's popularity as a neighborhood school grew in the 1970s with support from the surrounding community. In 1972 the Decatur PTA, several garden clubs, members of the Stadium Kiwanis Club, and other volunteers created a playground with new play equipment, salvaged electrical cable spools and a climbing fence, a partially buried log maze made up with salvaged City Light power poles, and an inoperative salvaged boat provided by the Seattle Harbor Patrol.¹⁷

For a six-year period in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Seattle Schools operated a special half-day program for gifted children, with \$160,000 in funding from a state grant. In 1973, Decatur operated a full-time "alternative school" program, known as an enrichment center, for two classes of gifted fifth and sixth grade students from the city's northeast area, with transportation to the school provided by parents. Multi-disciplinary teaching by two specific teachers included scientific puzzles and games. Guidelines issued by a district task force in early 1974 identified an estimated 2,602 gifted elementary pupils in the district, and an additional 13,010 who were categorized as "talented and/or creative."¹⁸ The issue of their education appeared somewhat contentious, and tied into discussions about proposed school closures that year, with some calling for individualized instruction and special programs, such as Decatur provided, while others favored integration of all students in classes with other children. Around this time the advocacy group Friends of Decatur School was formed, which presented its case in August 1974, calling for the School Board to maintain the school and its playground.

Decatur School housed one of Seattle's alternative public schools, called "Alternative Education School #2" (AE#2), under the district's Options Program in 1990. The prior year had seen dwindling enrollment in University Heights School, which was established in 1971 and was one of the two alternative elementary schools in Seattle. The University Heights Options Program students were transferred to Decatur, while Decatur students who were not in the program were transferred to University Heights.

¹⁷ Don Duncan, "Many hands make a 'superplayground,'" *Seattle Times*, March 13, 1972, p. 9.

¹⁸ Constantine Angelos, "General plan lacking for handling gifted pupils," *Seattle Times*, March 24, 1974, p. 24.

In 2007 the AE#2 program housed at Decatur School was re-named Thornton Creek after the local watershed. New signage was added in the spring of 2008 to incorporate the new name. nevertheless, the original name persisted, and the school was known variously as Decatur School, AE#2, Decatur at Thornton Creek and Thornton Creek Elementary School.

In 2013 plans were made to build an additional neighborhood school on the same block as Decatur School. The additional school, called Thornton Creek, was constructed on what had been a portion of the Decatur school site, but was technically a separate parcel. Mahlum was the architect for the new Thornton Creek School. Thornton Creek School was completed in 2016, on the same parcel as the Decatur Annex building. Today there are two schools on the site: the Decatur School operating as an "option school" in the 1961/1967 building on the eastern portion of the site, and the Thornton Creek School operating in the 2016 building on the southwestern corner of the site. As of the 2017-2018 school year neither school uses the subject building.

4.3 Architectural Context: Postwar Public Housing¹⁹

Public housing programs in the United States began in 1933, when Ohio passed legislation enabling municipalities to clear slums and manage housing. By 1938, 30 states had passed similar legislation, and 50 municipalities had established housing authorities.²⁰ The formation of the Seattle Housing Authority was initiated in 1937 by the efforts of local attorney Jesse Epstein, and formalized in 1939. By 1944, the Seattle Housing Authority had transformed from an agency providing housing to the poor during the Great Depression to one serving mostly veterans, military families and defense workers.²¹

European Modernist architects and Garden City designs influenced the designs for much of the newly created public housing.²² The Garden City movement was an urban design movement beginning in 1898, which proposed self-contained communities surrounded by greenbelts. International style developments used this idea to plan communities with blocks of housing arranged on mowed grass sites. In the United States early public housing was also organized on super-blocks with perimeter apartment blocks and garden apartment buildings, particularly with parallel rows of two- to four-story apartment buildings. This can be seen in such developments as Techwood Homes in Atlanta, with two- and three-story brick buildings arranged on spacious lawns. American designers added amenities such as courtyards and laundries.²³ Early public housing efforts emphasized the clearance of "slums" just as much as the construction of new housing. Some of the earliest public housing developed by the Public Works Administration was solidly built with quality construction materials and methods. Housing projects in Seattle, however, tended to use platform framing and budget materials and construction methods.

The first development of the Seattle Housing Authority, Yesler Terrace, reflects the European Modernist design ethos, but with American materials such as platform framing and wooden siding. Yesler Terrace and other Seattle Housing Authority projects such as Holly Park (now NewHolly) in Rainier Valley had flat or low-sloped roofs with corner windows, reflecting the influence of Modernist design ideas. The Shearwater housing project, unlike projects at Yesler Terrace and Holly Park, had sloped roofs instead of Modernist flat roofs. Shearwater was similar to another Seattle housing project in West Seattle called High Point, although High Point also has a one-story block of housing along with two-story apartment buildings. The Shearwater project inherited very few design features from the Modernist movement aside from the site plan and building layout, featuring rows of parallel two-story buildings. Shearwater's other materials and construction methods were typical

¹⁹ A National Register Nomination for "Public Housing in the United States, MPS," prepared in 2004 contains an excellent extended context statement for Public Housing in the United States.

<https://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/guidance/Public%20Housing%20in%20the%20United%20States%20MPS.pdf>

²⁰ National Register Nomination "Public Housing," 2004, p. 36-37

²¹ Seattle Housing Authority, "The Seattle Housing Authority 75th Anniversary: In-Depth History," <http://seattlehousing75.org/depth-history/> (accessed January 23, 2018).

²² Alexander von Hoffman, "High Ambitions: The Past and Future of American Low-Income Housing Policy," *Housing Policy Debate*, Volume 7, Issue 3, Fannie Mae Foundation. 1996. p. 426.

²³ von Hoffman, p. 427.

vernacular tradition with lap siding and double-hung windows placed for functionality. The Community Center shared the design features of the former Shearwater housing project with more of a vernacular than high style design, with pitched roofs and wooden single hung windows, although it was only one story tall.

4.4 Architect

The architect for the Decatur Annex building is unknown.

4.5 Builder

The builder for the Decatur Annex building is unknown.

Prepared by:
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Katherine V. Jaeger
Audrey N. Reda
The Johnson Partnership
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Seattle, WA 98115
www.tjp.us

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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<https://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/guidance/Public%20Housing%20in%20the%20United%20States%20MPS.pdf>.
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<https://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/ppatch/locations/5.htm> (accessed May 21, 2013).
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<http://seattlehousing75.org/depth-history/> (accessed January 23, 2018).
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- . "House Projects' Transfer Asked." May 18, 1947, p. 13.
- . "Navy Will Run House Projects." April 1, 1948, p. 13.
- . "New Street Asked for Wedgwood." August 23, 1957, p. 7.
- . "Pupils to be Bussed: School Closed; Boundaries Shift." August 26, 1965, p. 59.
- von Hoffman, Alexander. "High Ambitions: The Past and Future of American Low-Income Housing Policy." *Housing Policy Debate*, Volume 7, Issue 3. Fannie Mae Foundation, 1996, p. 426.
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<https://wedgwoodinseattlehistory.com/2012/09/17/shearwater-part-one-navy-housing-in-wedgwood-in-the-1940s/> (accessed January 17, 2018).
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APPENDIX 1

FIGURES

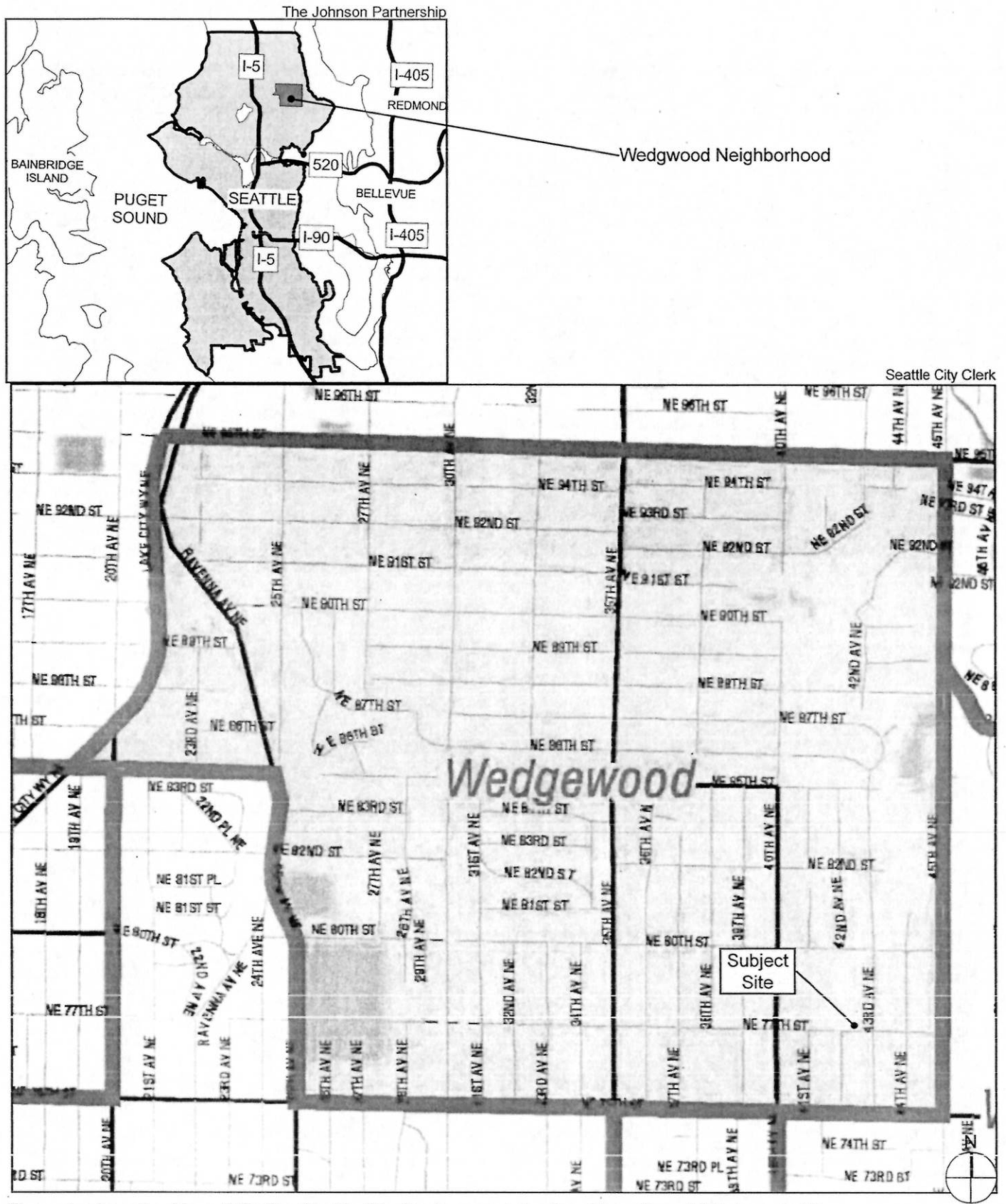


Figure 1 • Location Maps (NB: The Seattle City Clerk map retains the old spelling of “Wedgewood.”)

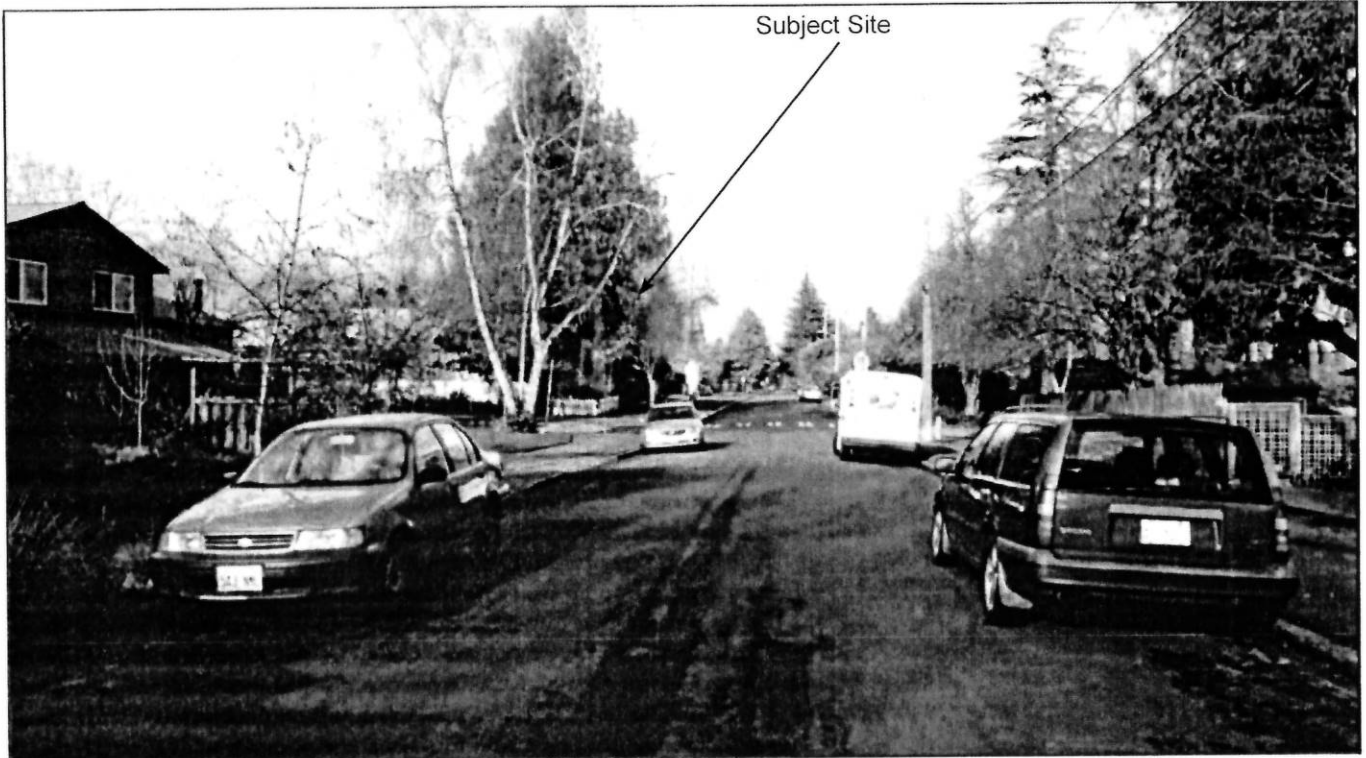


Figure 2 • View A - Viewing north on 43rd Avenue NE



Figure 3 • View B - Viewing west on NE 77th Street

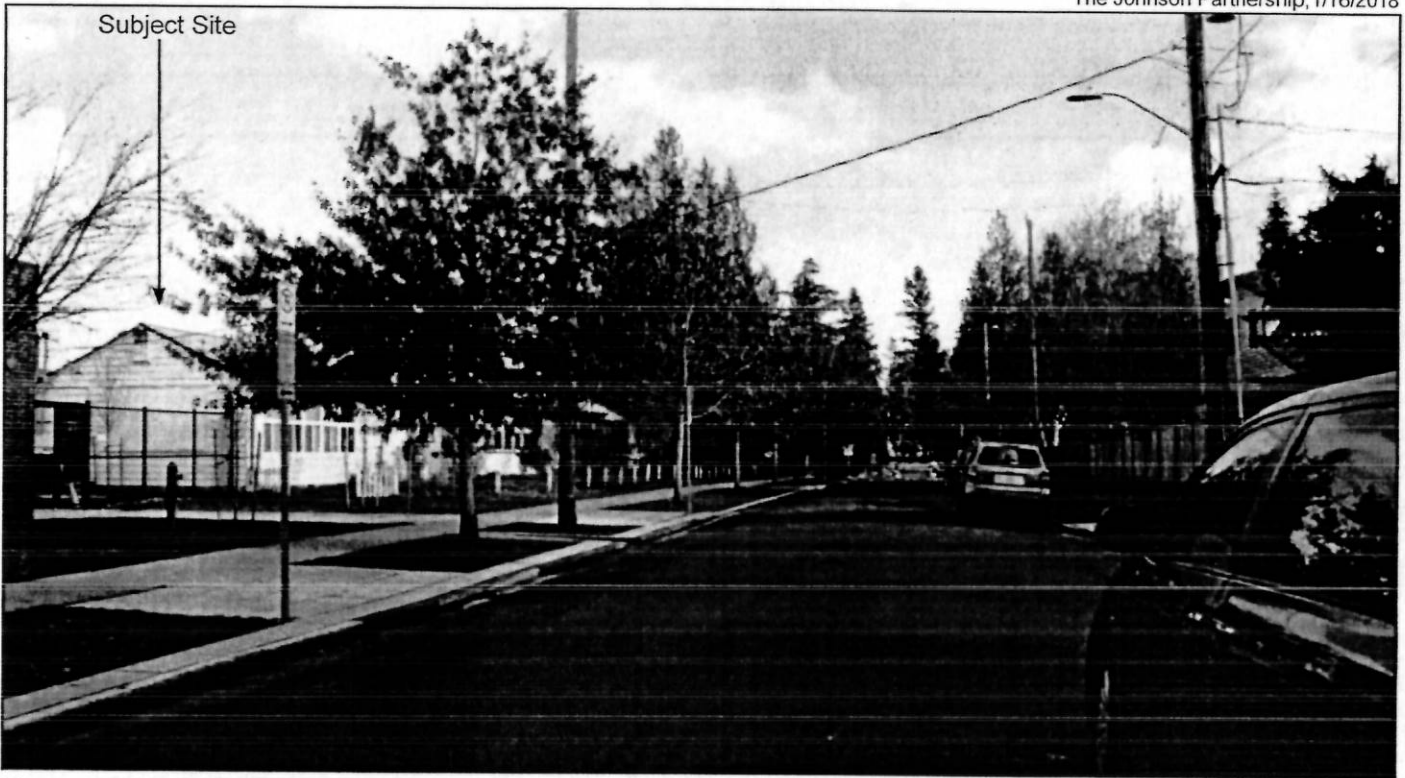


Figure 4 • View C - Viewing east on NE 77th Street

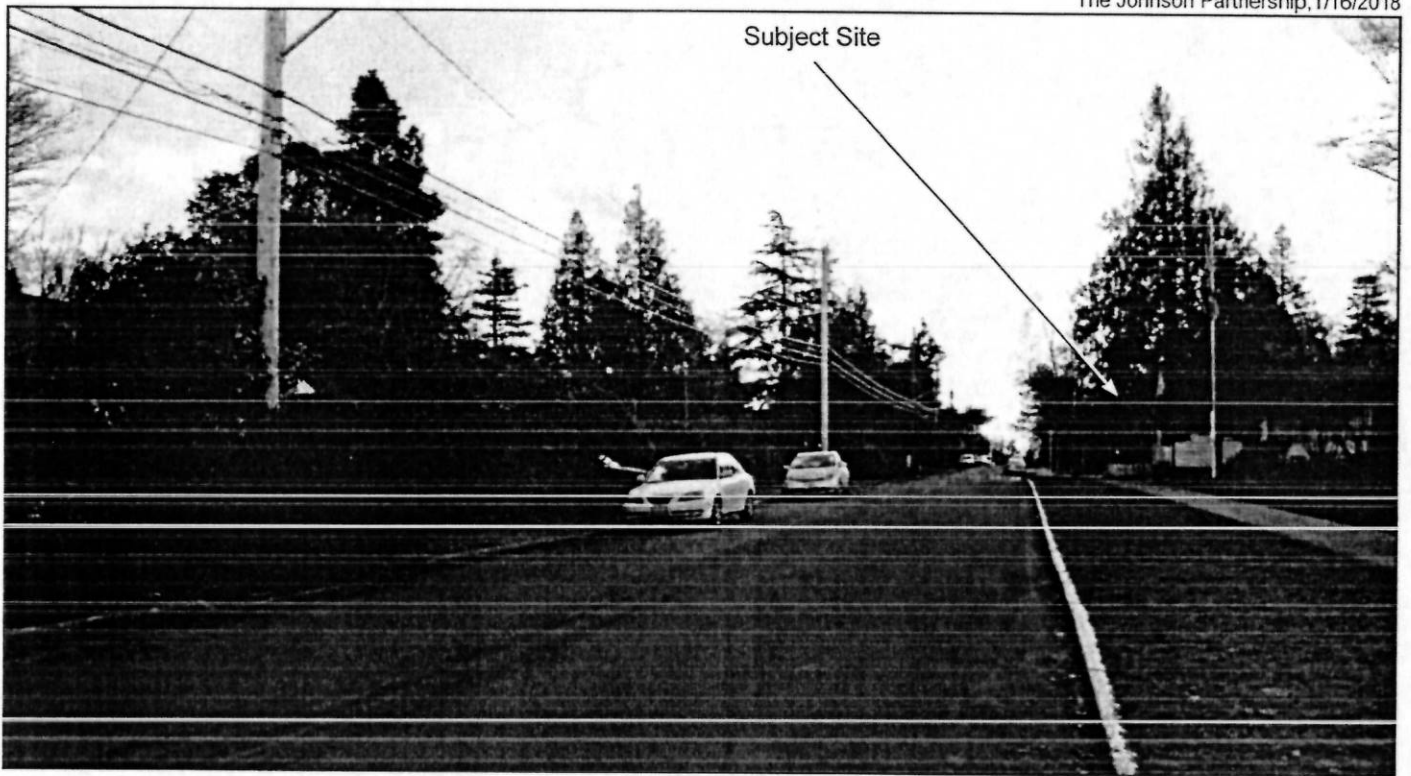


Figure 5 • View D - Viewing south on 43rd Ave NE

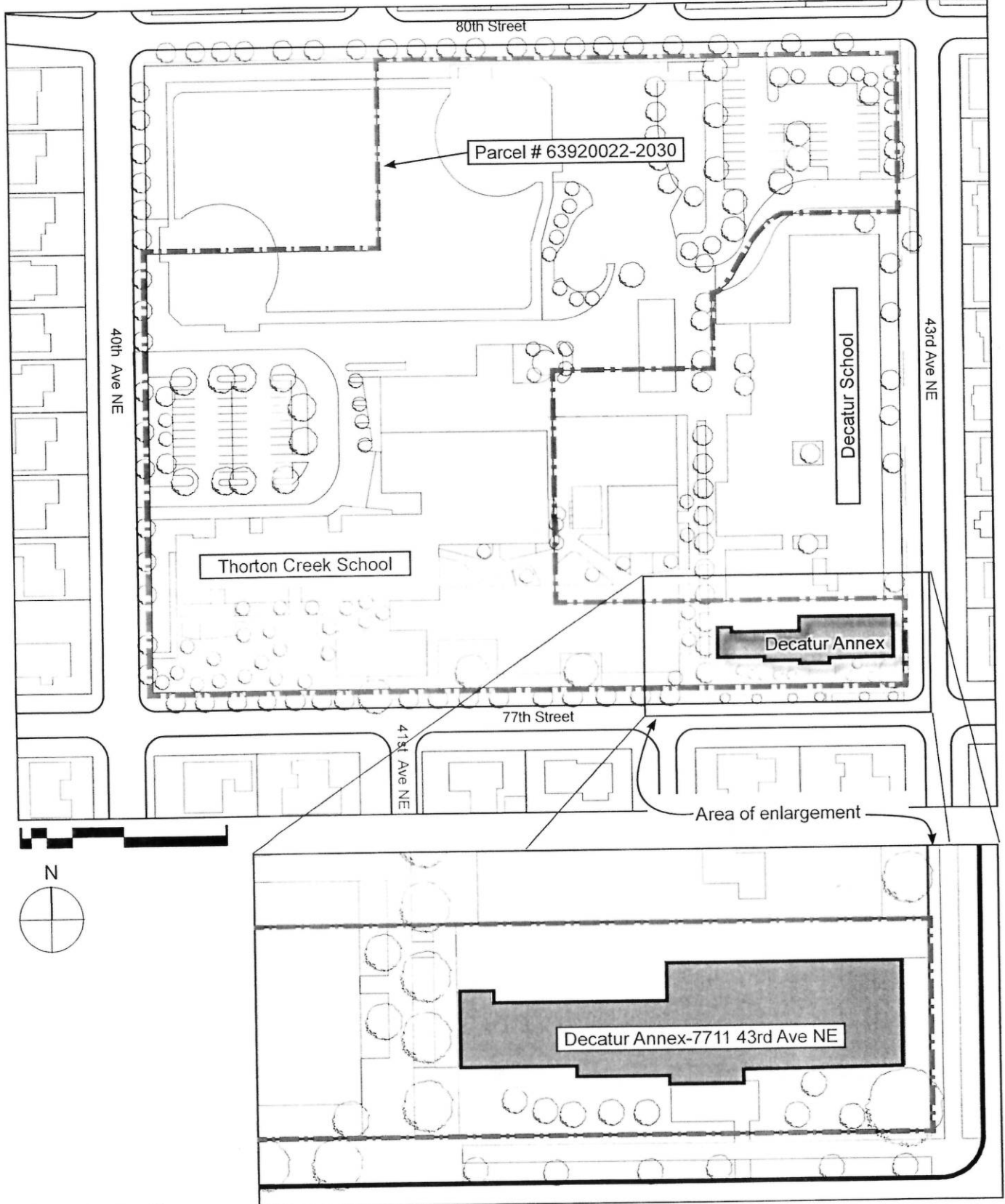


Figure 6 • Site Plan

Decatur School Annex
"Appendix A" Report

January 2018



Figure 7 • Decatur School Annex, southeastern corner

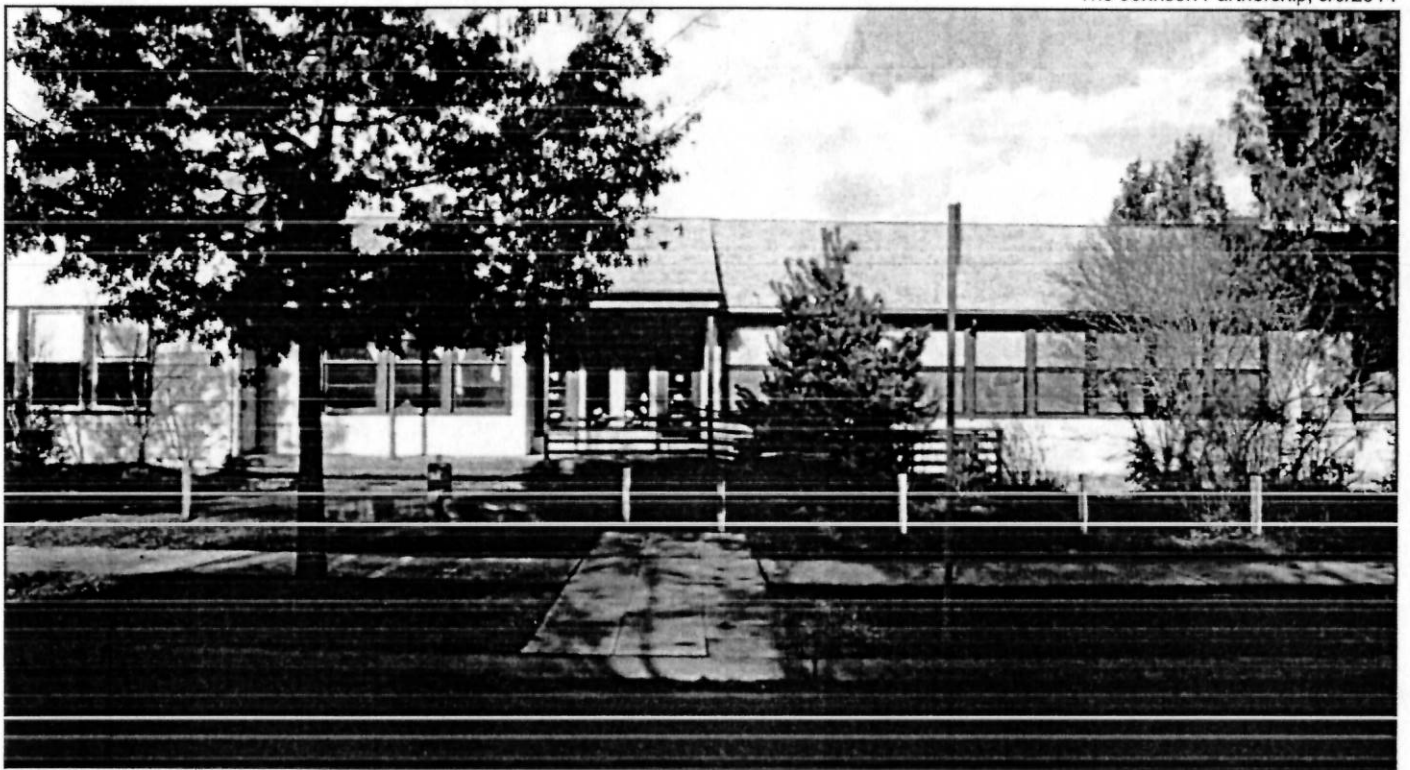


Figure 8 • Decatur School Annex, entry door and porch, southern façade

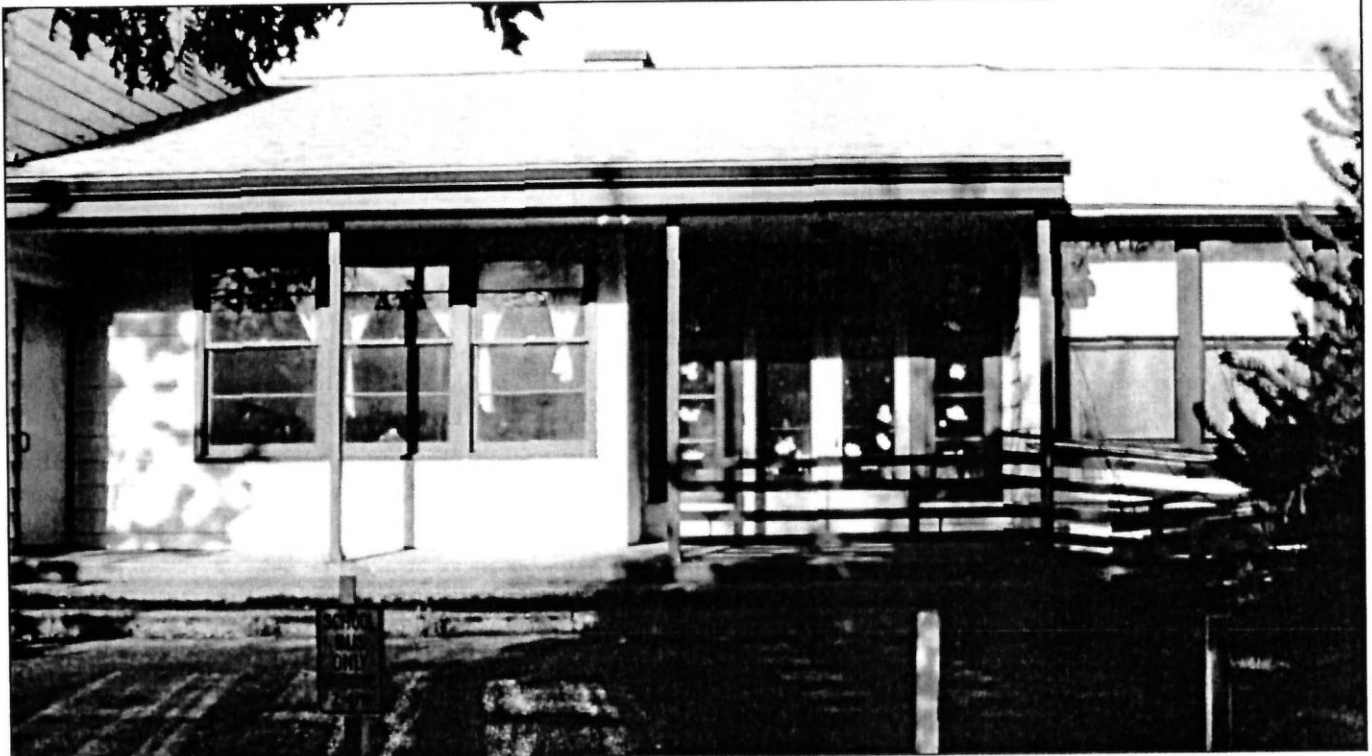


Figure 9 • Decatur School Annex, porch detail, southern façade

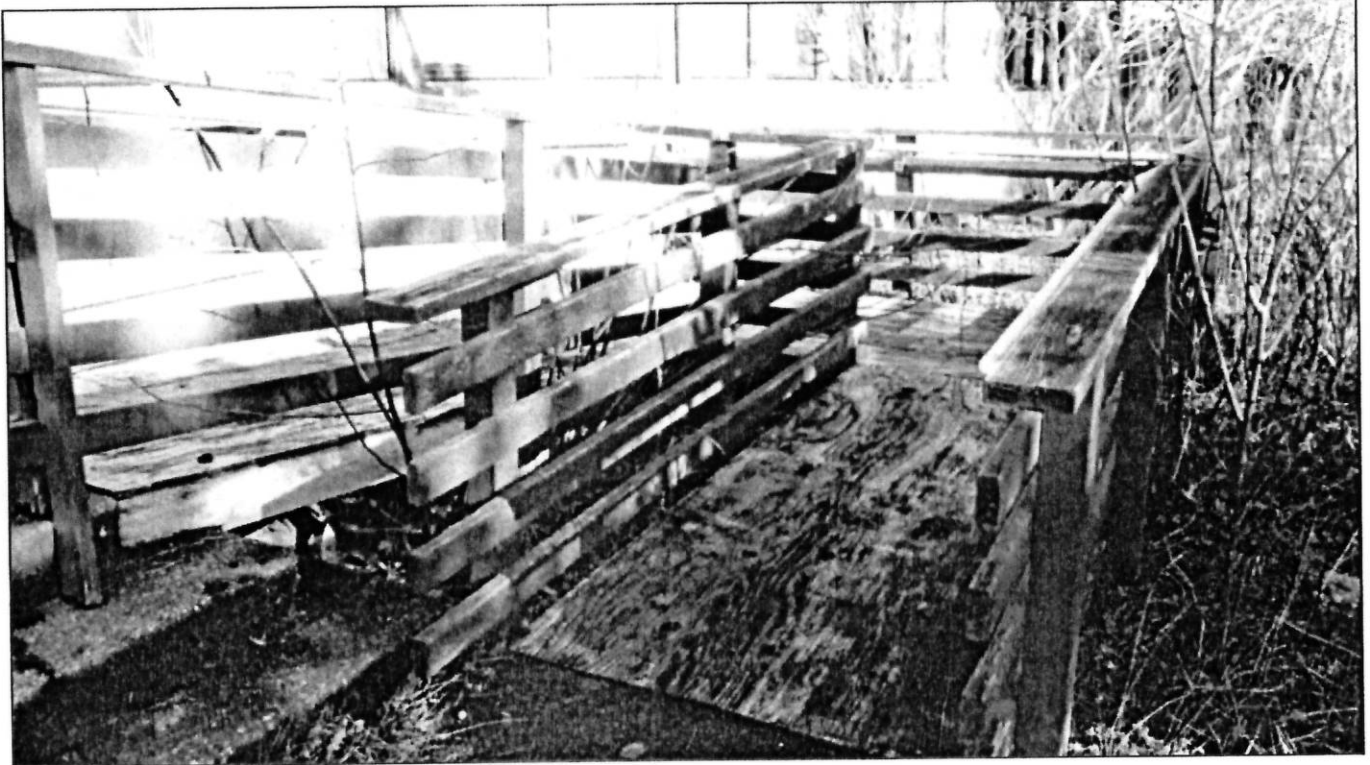


Figure 10 • Decatur School Annex, accessibility ramp, eastern side, southern façade

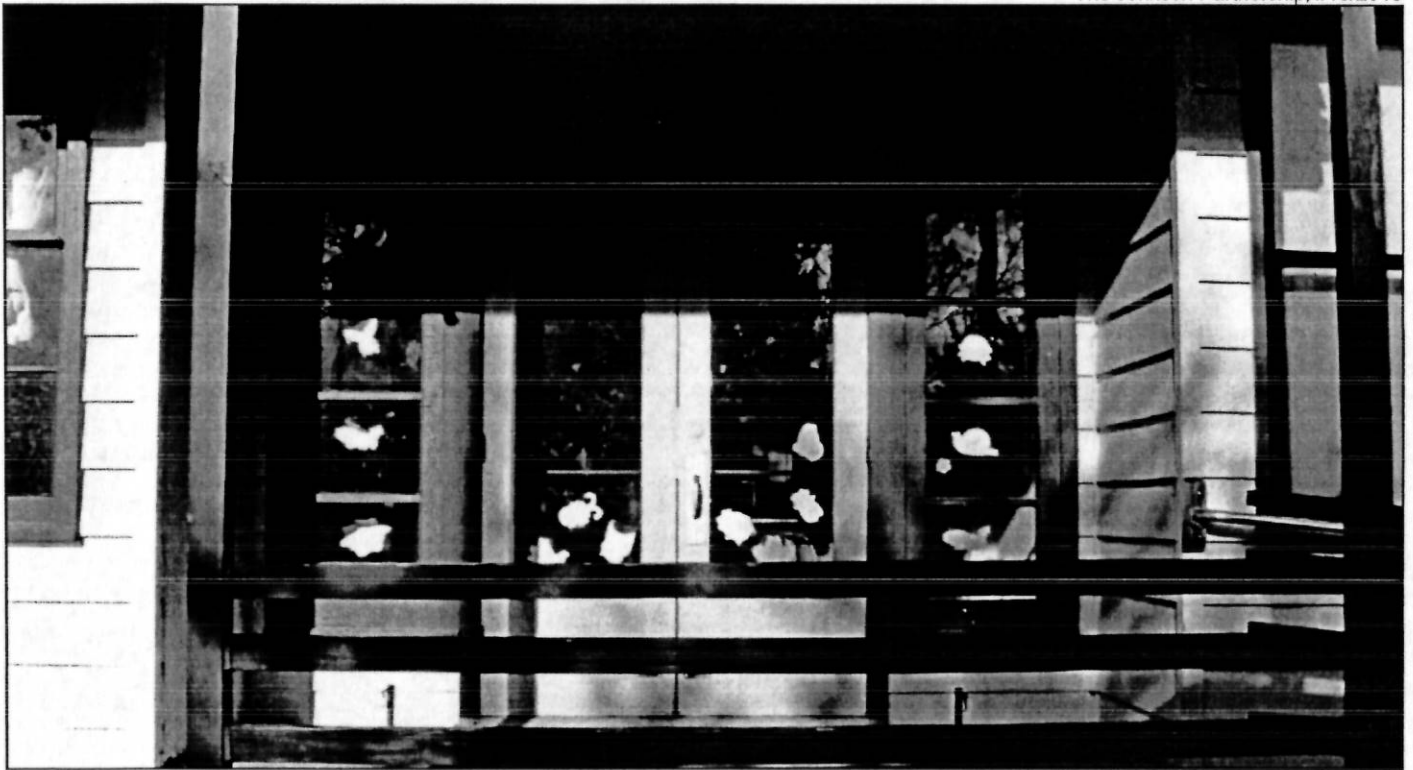


Figure 11 • Decatur School Annex, entry door detail, southern façade

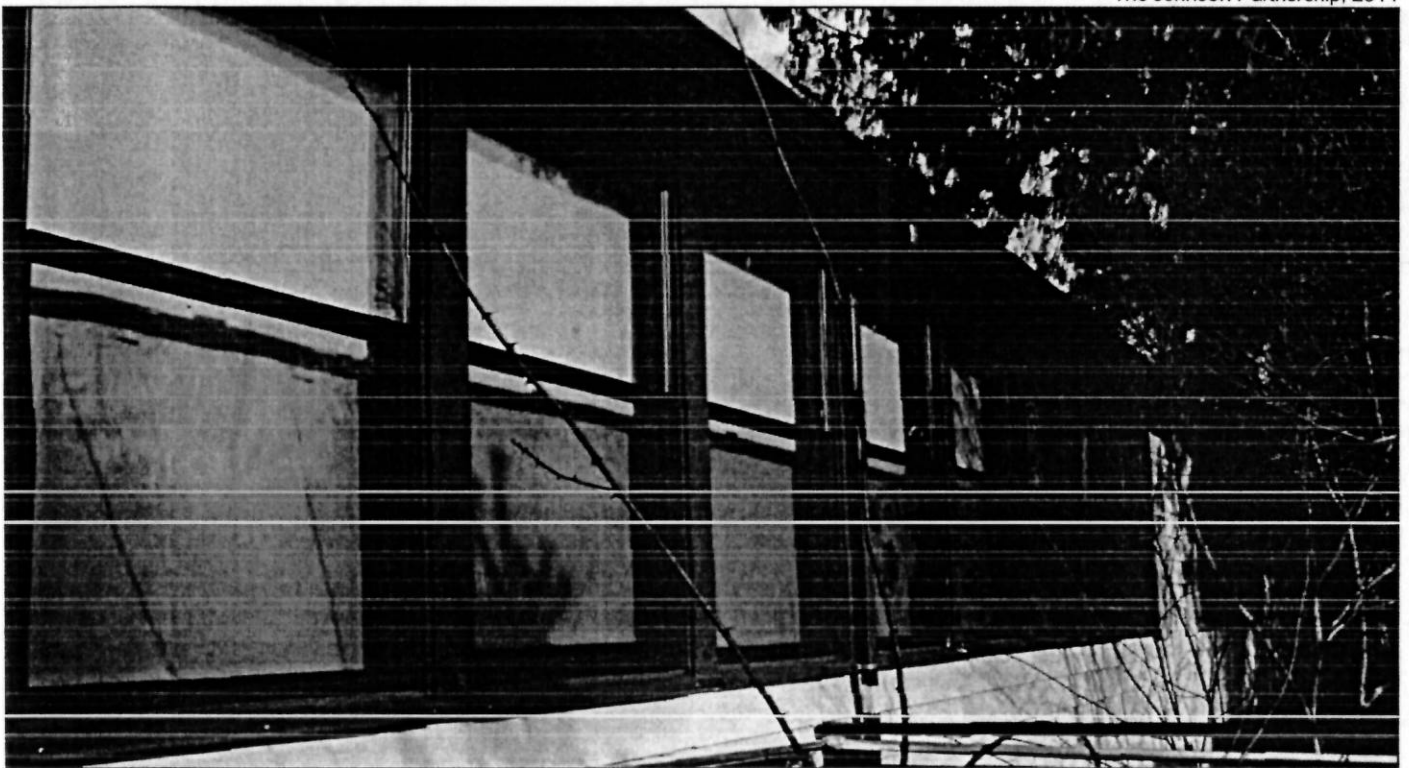


Figure 12 • Decatur School Annex, eastern section, southern façade

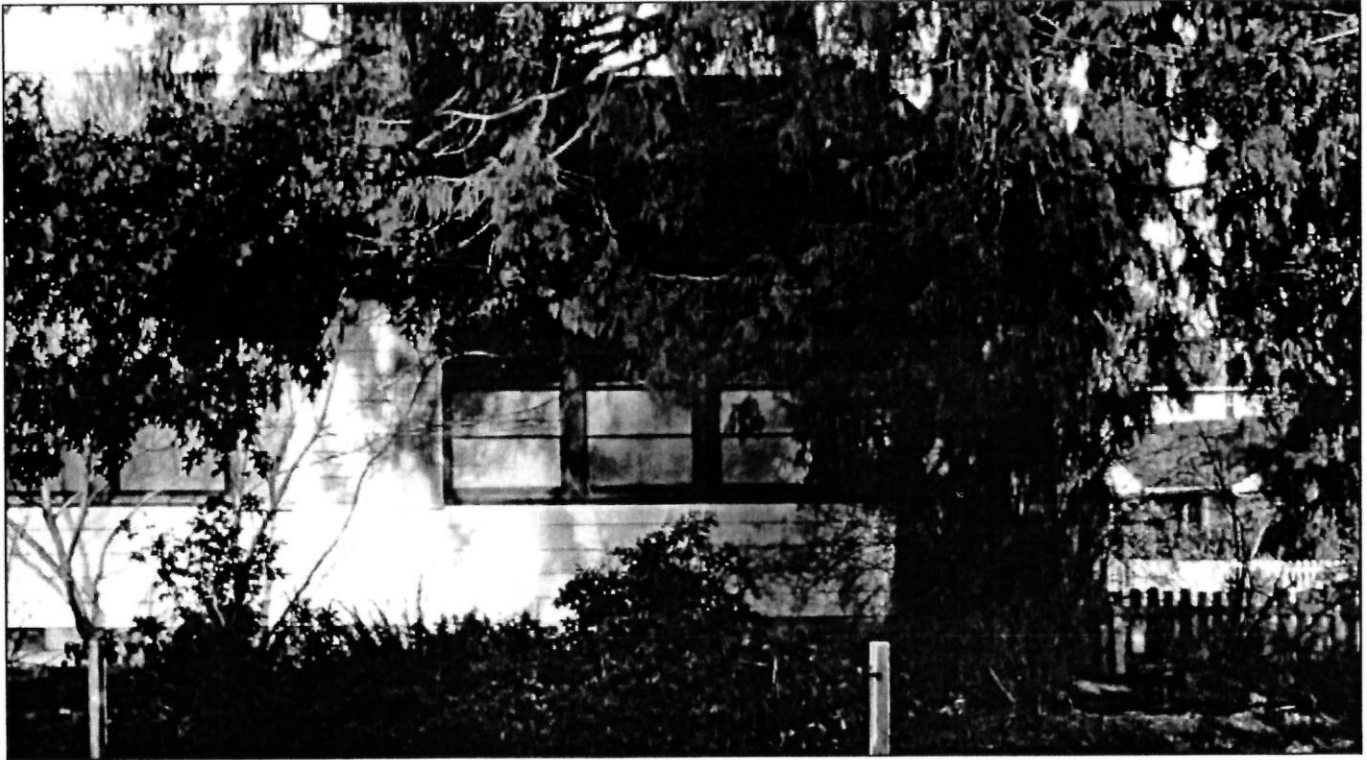


Figure 13 • Decatur School Annex, window detail, eastern section, southern façade



Figure 14 • Decatur School Annex, eastern façade



Figure 15 • Decatur School Annex, door detail, eastern end, northern façade

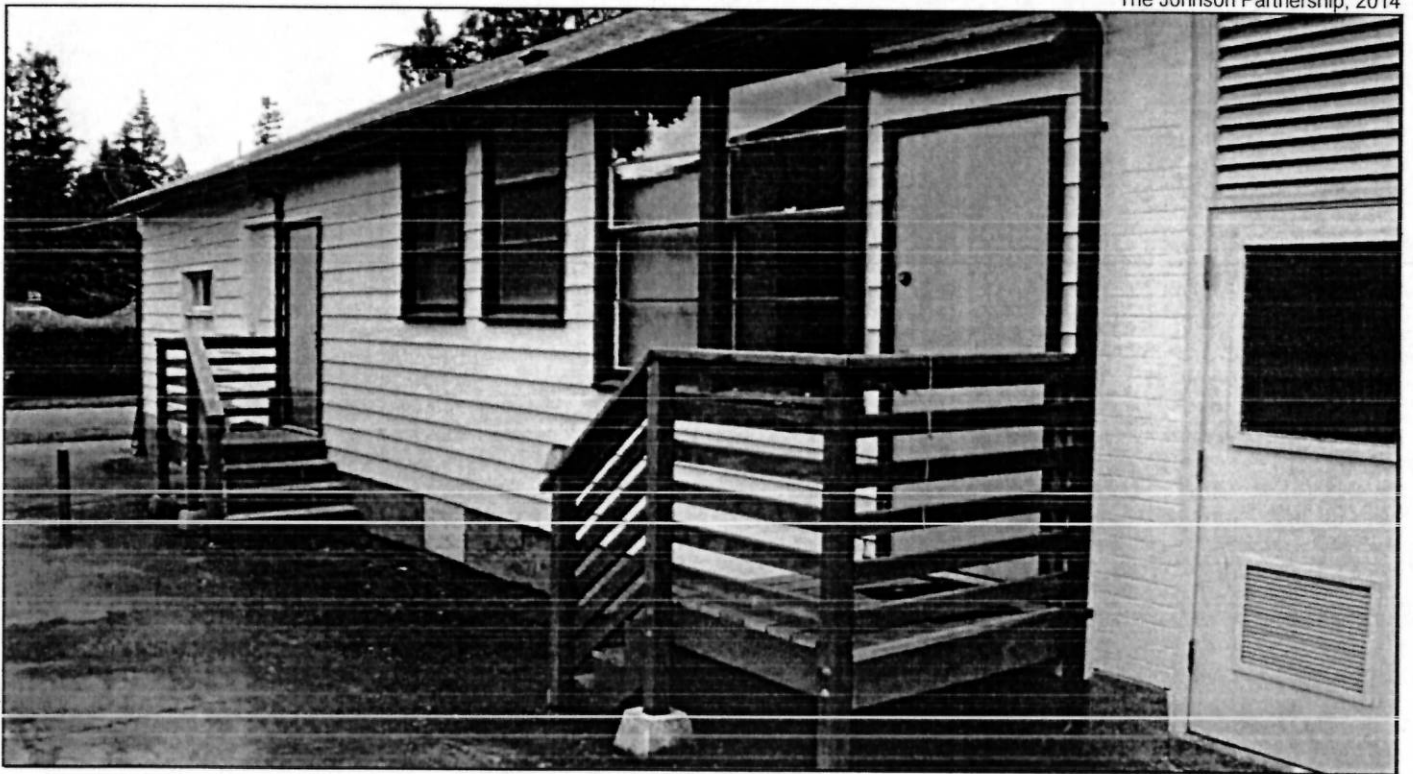


Figure 16 • Decatur School Annex, eastern section, northern façade

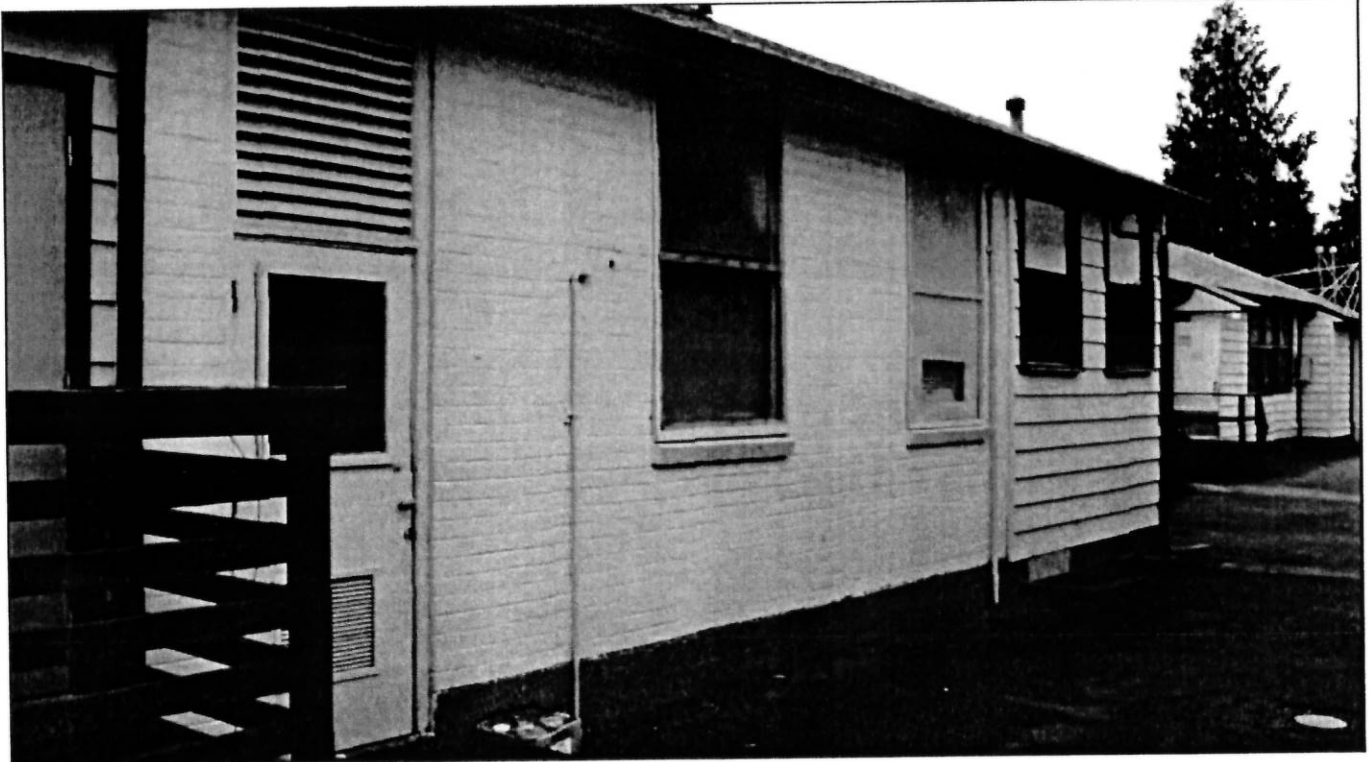


Figure 17 • Decatur School Annex, painted brick wall detail, eastern section, northern façade

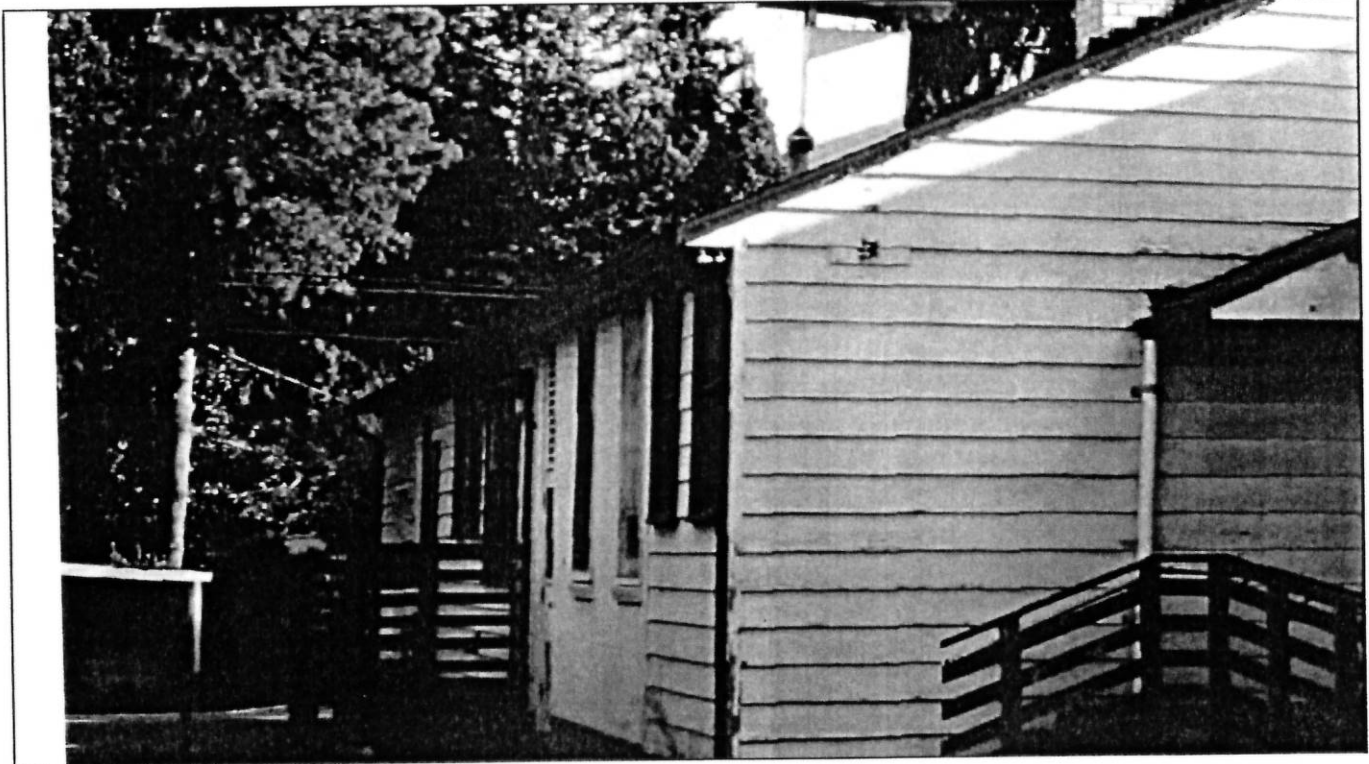


Figure 18 • Decatur School Annex, detail western side, eastern section, northern façade

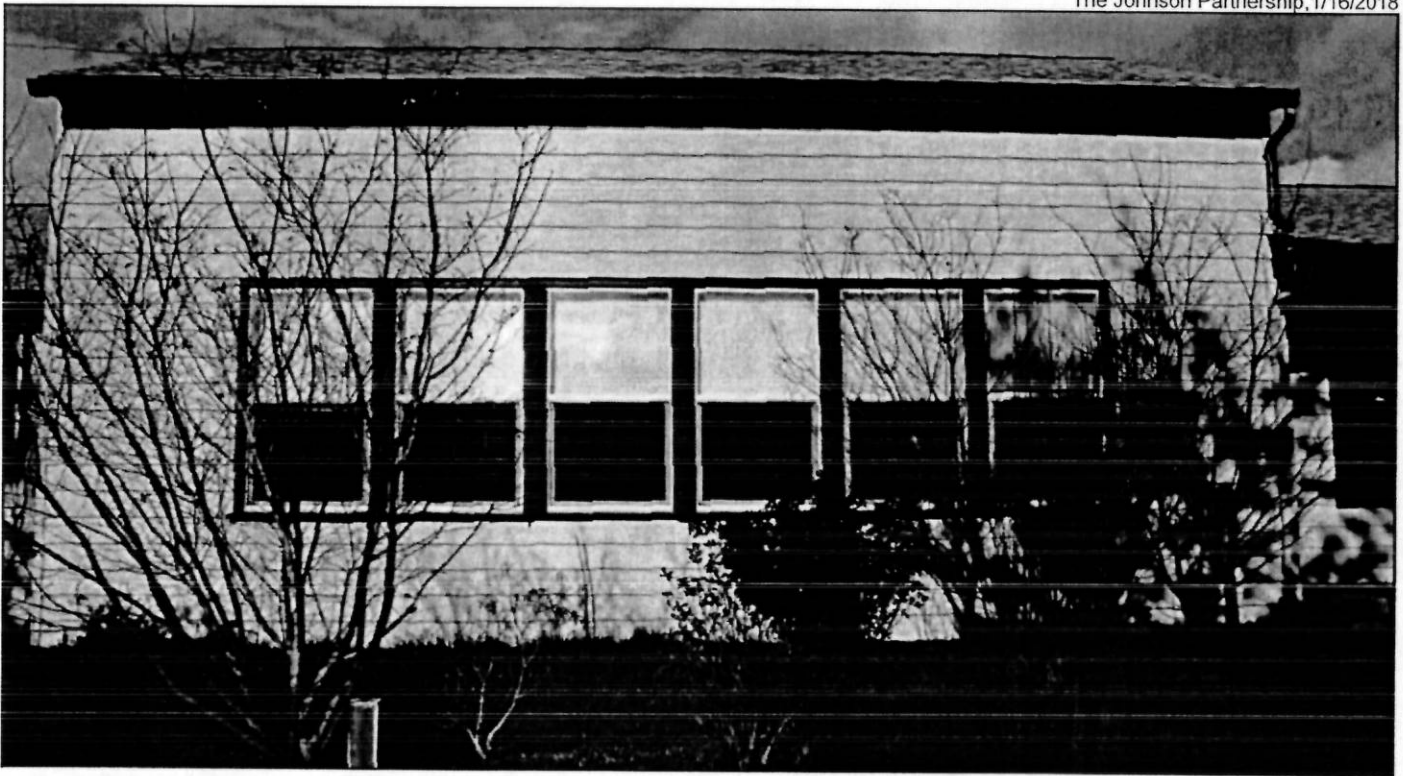


Figure 19 • Decatur School Annex, central section, southern façade

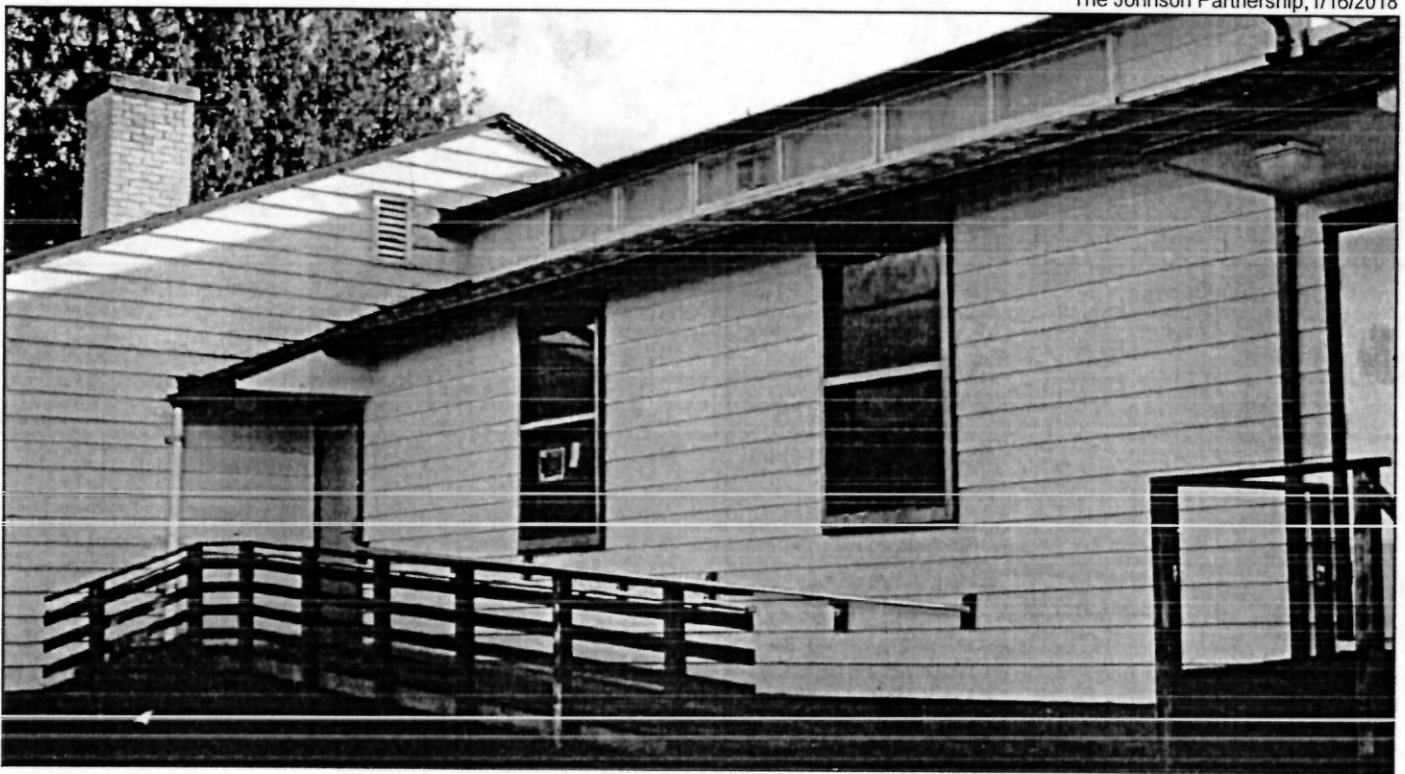


Figure 20 • Decatur School Annex, access door, eastern side detail, central section, northern façade

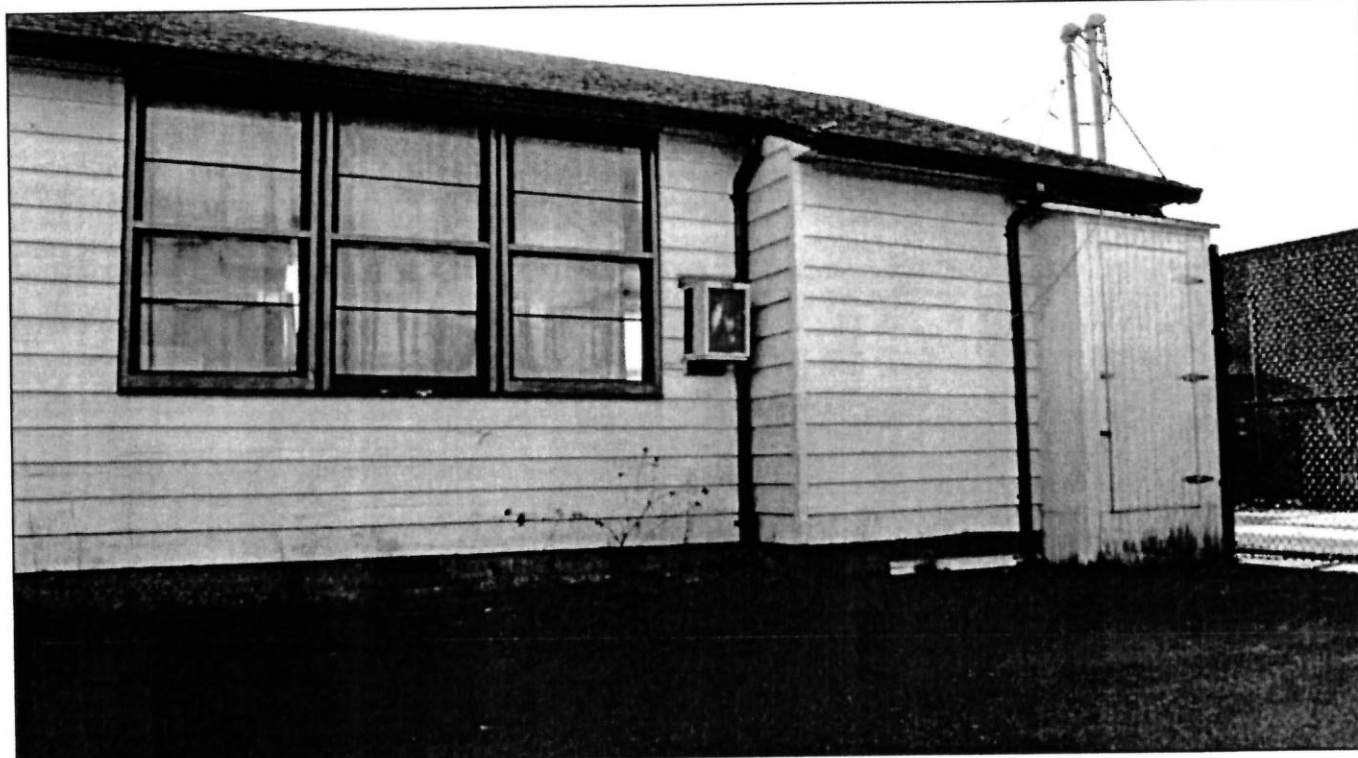


Figure 21 • Decatur School Annex, detail of western section, northern façade

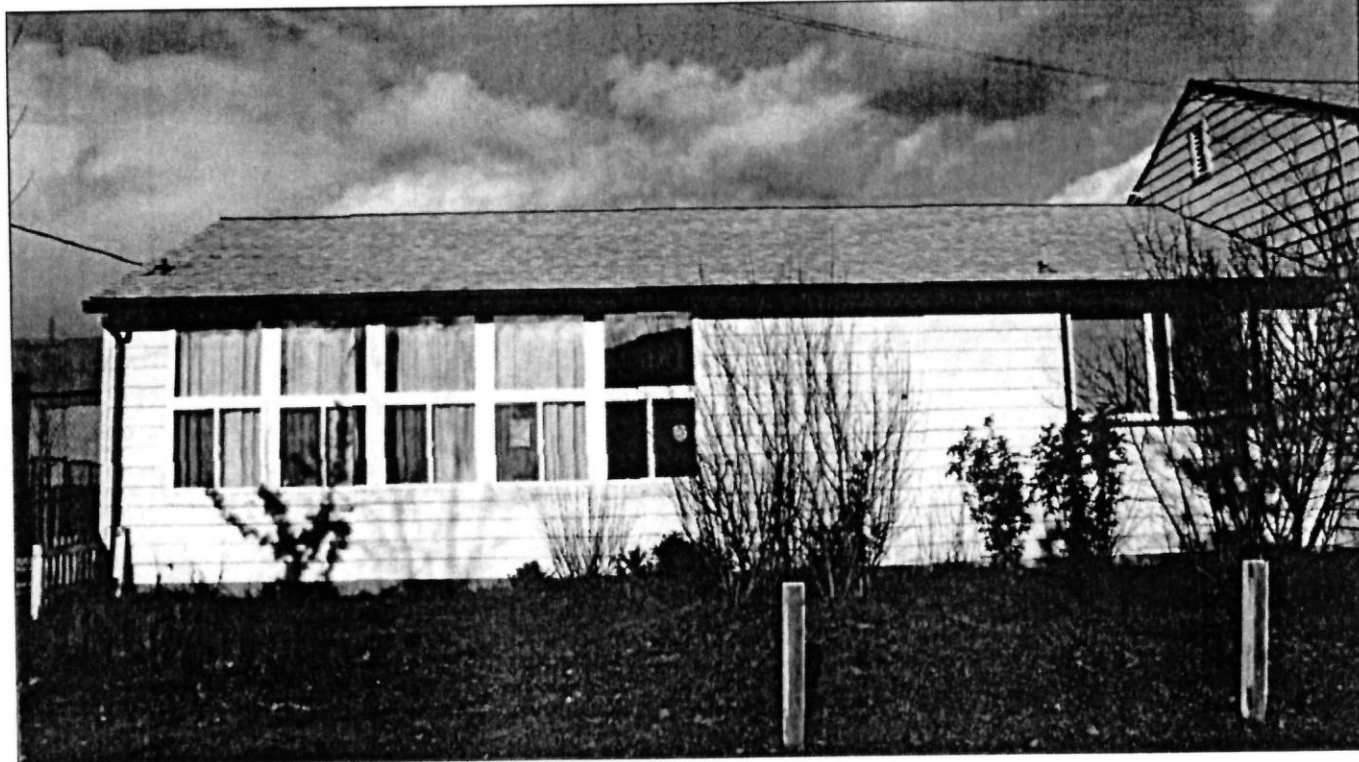


Figure 22 • Decatur School Annex, detail of western section, southern façade

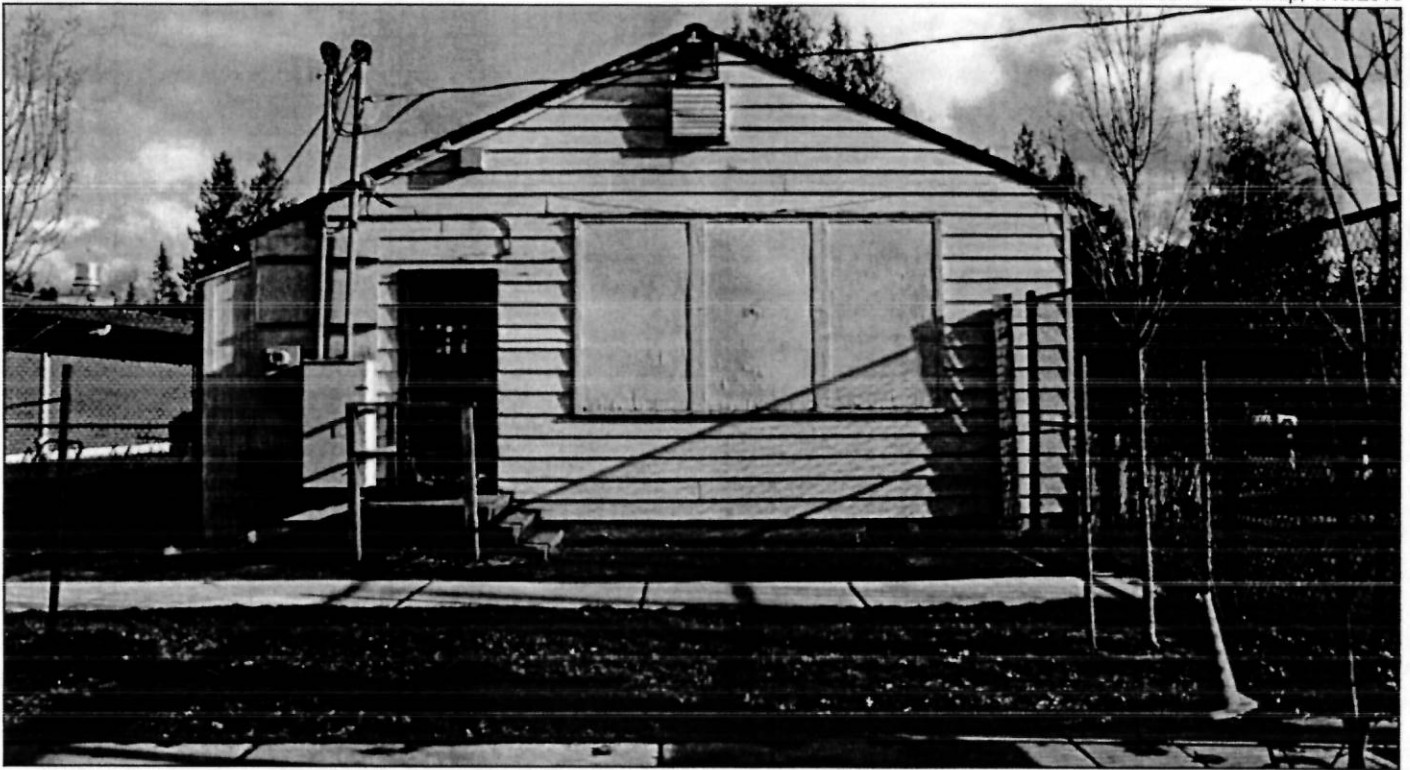


Figure 23 • Decatur School Annex, western section, western façade

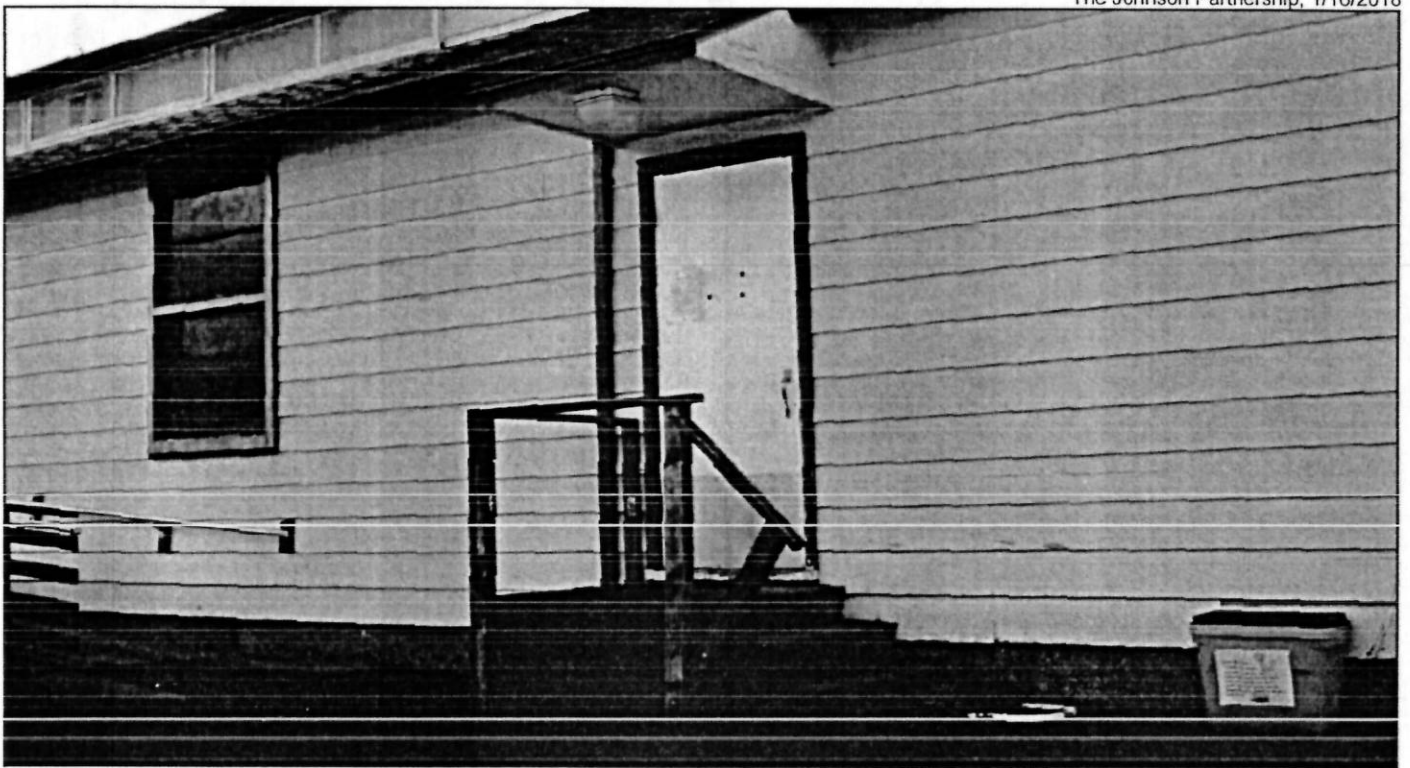


Figure 24 • Decatur School Annex, single access door eastern end, western section, northern façade



Figure 25 • Decatur School, 1961

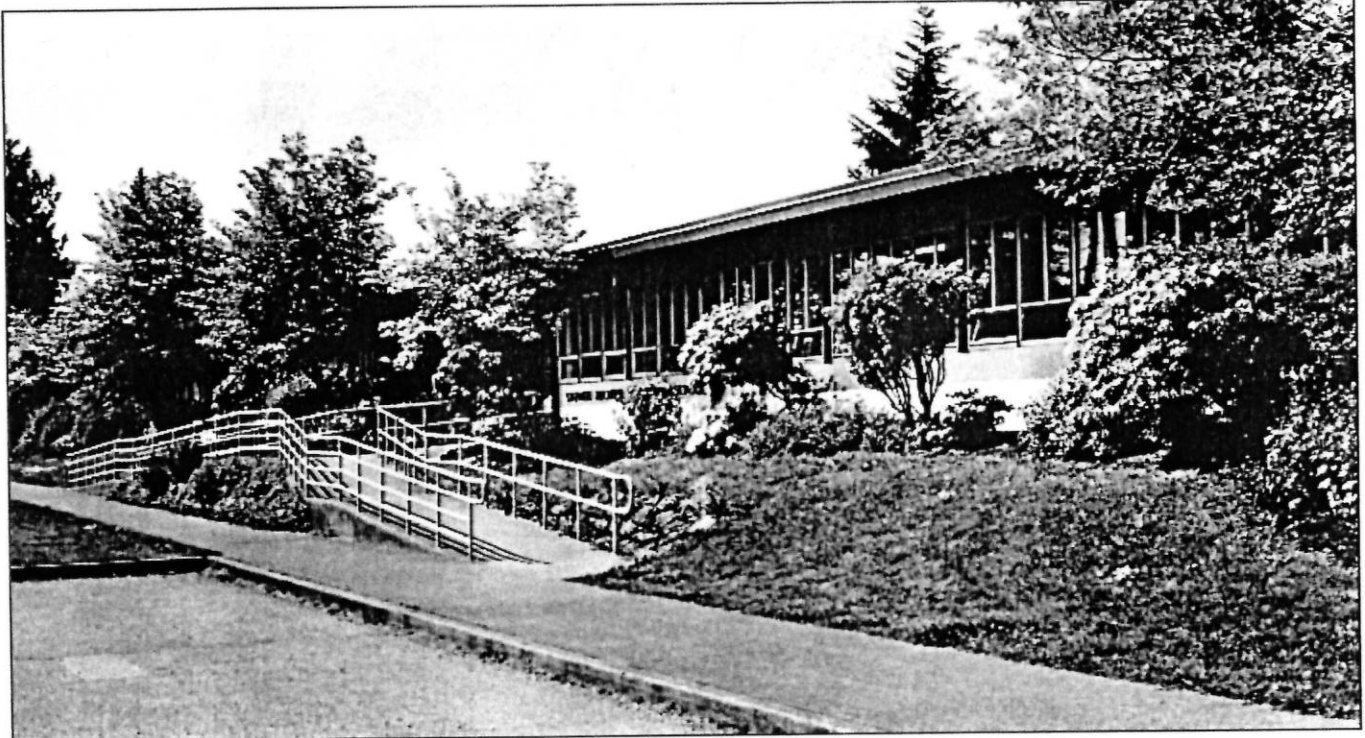


Figure 26 • Decatur School, 1961

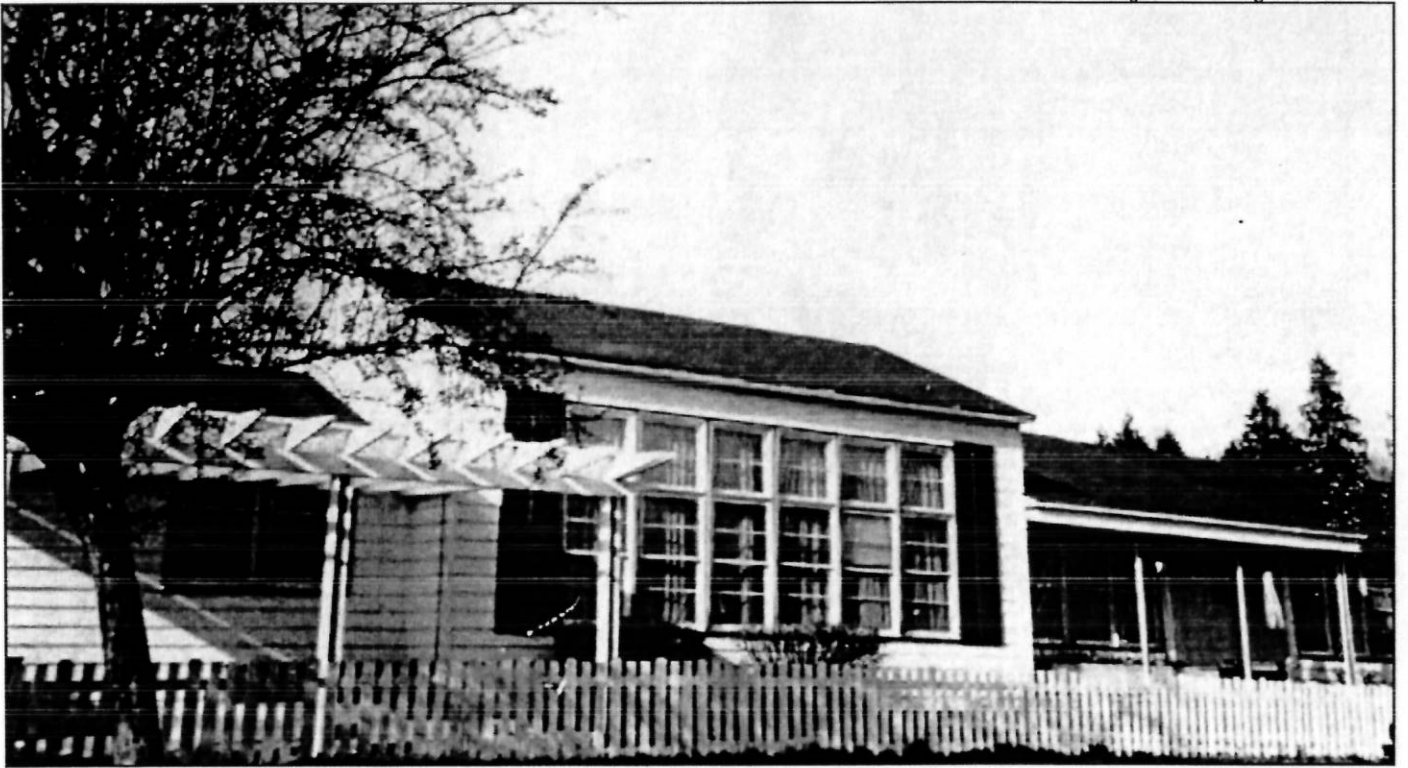


Figure 27 • Decatur School Annex, 1972, accessory classroom, southern façade

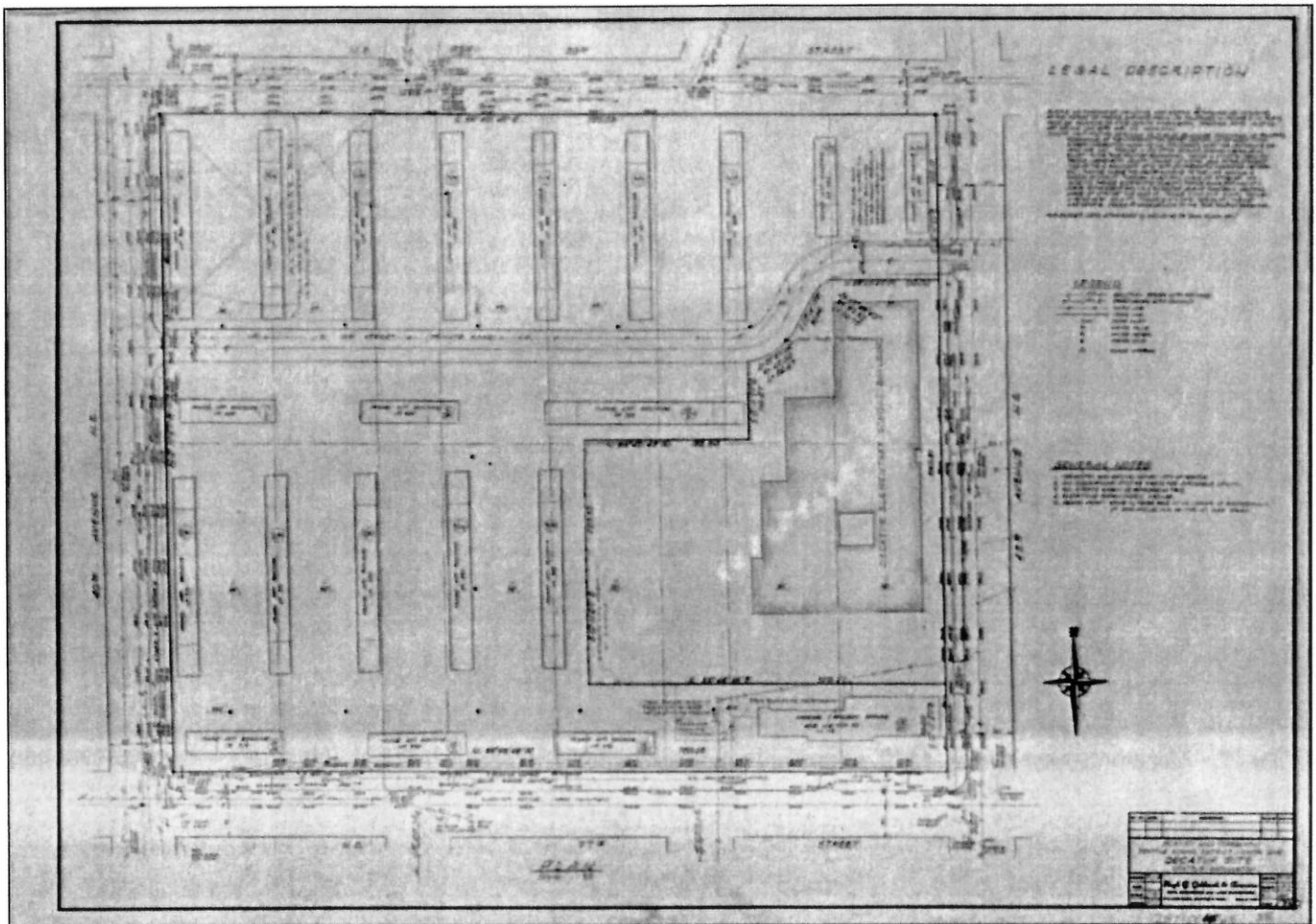


Figure 28 • Shearwater Housing Project, 1961

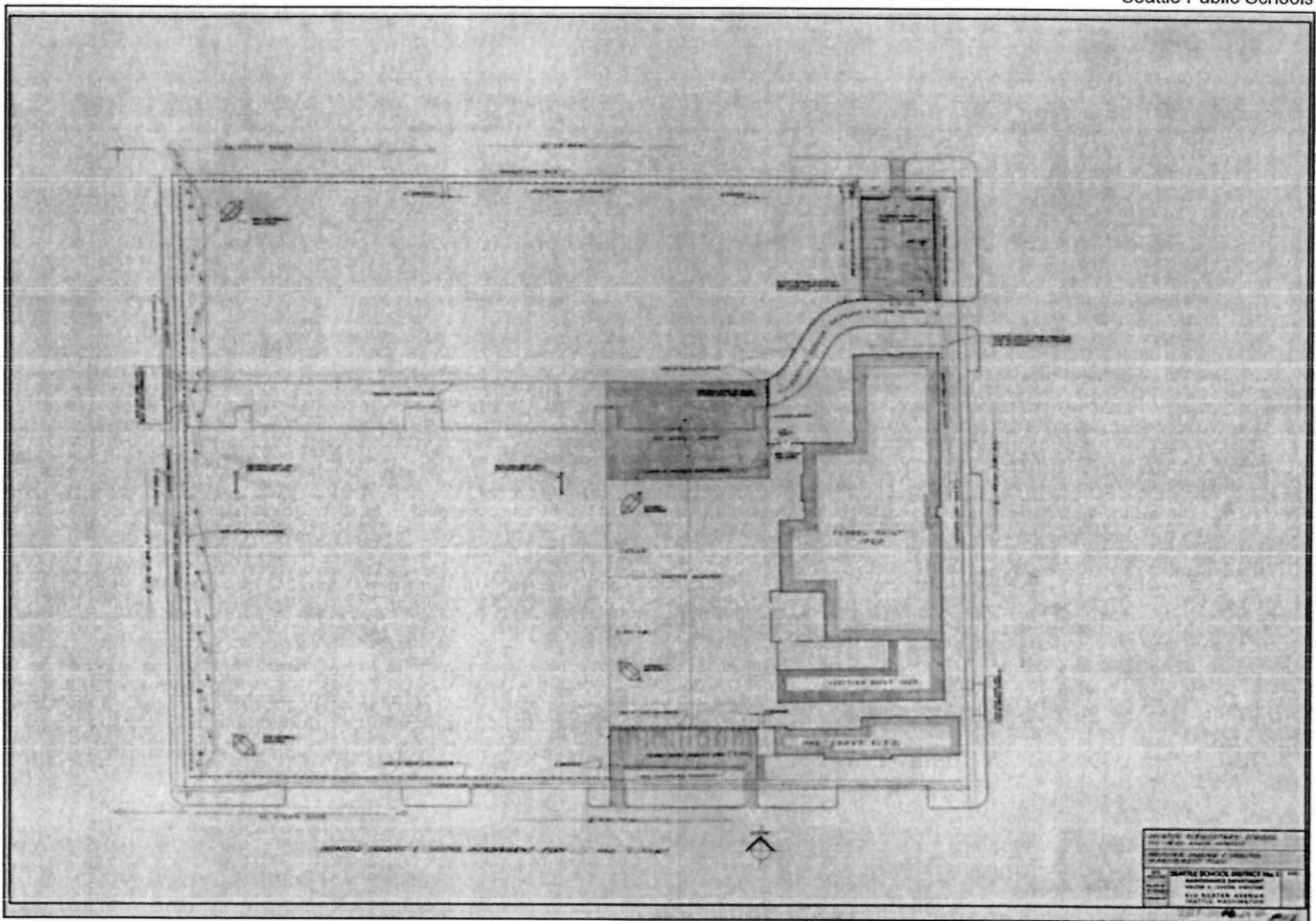


Figure 29 • Decatur Elementary School, 1966

APPENDIX 2

KING COUNTY TAX ASSESSOR INFORMATION

JAC

2430

FOLIO 3829
PERMIT NO.
DATE

FOR REFERENCE ONLY
ADDITION Overly Gardens
Section 3 Twp 25 Range 4 E.W.M. Block 21 Lot or 774 G. 1st
Tax Lot _____ Tract _____
Address 771-43-43 NE N.E.
STEPHEN NEGATUR GRADE SCHOOL

Fee Owner Seattle School Dist #1 Architect _____ Contractor _____
Zoning _____ Condition of Exterior _____ Interior _____ Foundation _____ Floor Plan: Good _____ Accept. _____ Poor _____

USE
No. Stories
No. Stores
No. Rooms
Basement
No. Offices
No. Apartments
1 rm. 2 rm. 3 rm.
4 rm. 5 rm. 6 rm.

ROOF CONSTRUCTION
 Frame-Joist
Mill-Deck
Rein. Conc. GLB
Steel Fr. Metal Deck
Trusses Spon
 Wood Steel

FLOOR FINISHES UNK
 Tile Lino Form.
Fir Maple
Oak 2x6TG
Lino 3x6TG
Cement Lgtwt. Conc.
Terrazzo
Asphalt Tile Vinyl Tile

PLUMBING UNK
Bath Floor
Bath Walls
Tub Recess
Drain Bds.
Vanities
No. Fixtures
Toilets Urinals
Tubs Leg. or Pem.
Basins Dr. Fins.
Sinks
Washers Dryers
Showers (tub) (stall)
H.W. Tanks Ldy. Trays
D. Washers Disposals
Sprinkler Sys.

TYPE OF CONSTRUCTION
 Frame
Metal-PreFab
Ordinary Masonry
Mill Construction
Class A Rein. Conc.
Stru. Steel and Conc.
Struct. Steel, Frame or

QUALITY-TYPE
Good Med. Cheap

FOUNDATION
Mud Sill Post Pier
 Conc. Brick
Load Hgt. Piling

BASEMENT
Full Port.
Sub-Basement
Size
Garage No. Cars
Floors
Plastered Pl. Bd.
No. Apartments
Service Rooms



HEATING
Elec. Oil Gas
H.W. St. H.A.
B.Bd. Suspended
FHA Pipeless
A. Cond. Wall Unit
Comb. Unit Custom
Refrig. Convect
Heat Pump Fireplace

YEAR ASSESSED VALUE

MISC. TANKS, Etc.
HOISTS: Elec. Hydr.
2nd Floor 4x17
1st Floor 7x11

ELEVATORS
Pass. Fight
Auto. Elec.
Man. Hydr.
Doors-Auto Man.
Escalators
Steps Speed

DOCKS AND PIERS
Hvy. Med. Lgt
Untrd. Pile Tmbr.
Conc. Piles & Bms
Trd. Pile Tmbr.
Paved
Dolphins
Deck

WIRING
Knob & Tube
Flex. Cable
Conduit
Pwr. Wiring
Range Wiring
Outlets

EXTERIOR WALL CONST.
Single Double
 Stud Walls
24x8 Brick Pil.
Conc. Pil.
Rein. Conc. Skeleton
Str. Stl.-Frame
Pre-Fab Metal
Tilt-Up
-Filler Wall
Curtain Wall

INTERIOR WALLS & CEILING
Stud Wood Metal
Plaster Dry Wall
Acc. Tile Calatax
Ceiled Plywood
Solid Block
Sound Proofed Lamin.
Finished Unfinished
Painted Varnished

INSULATION
Ester. Partitions
Roof Floor

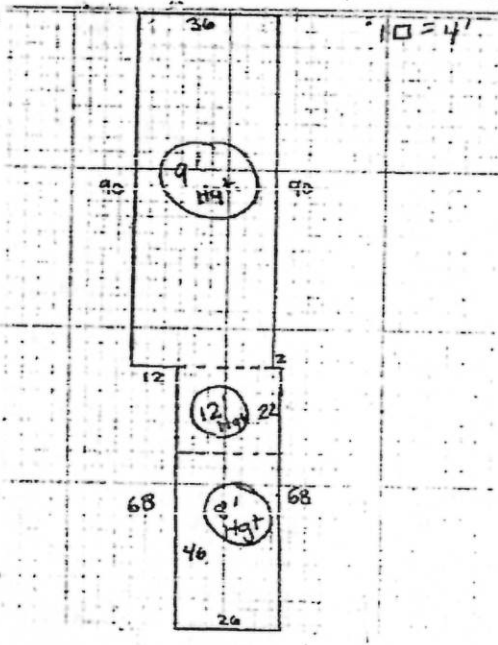
EXTERIOR FACING
1002 Siding
Stucco Shakes
Marblecrete
Brick Veneer
Conc. Conc. Blk.

FLOOR CONSTRUCTION
Joist x x O.C.
Mill Cor Deck
R. Elev.
Stops GLB.

INTERIOR TRIM
Str Birch
Moh. Oak
Metal
Wood Metal Doors
Wood Metal Sash
Stained Varnish
Painted Unfin.

ROOF COVERING
Blt.-Up Tar. & Gr.
 Comp. Metal

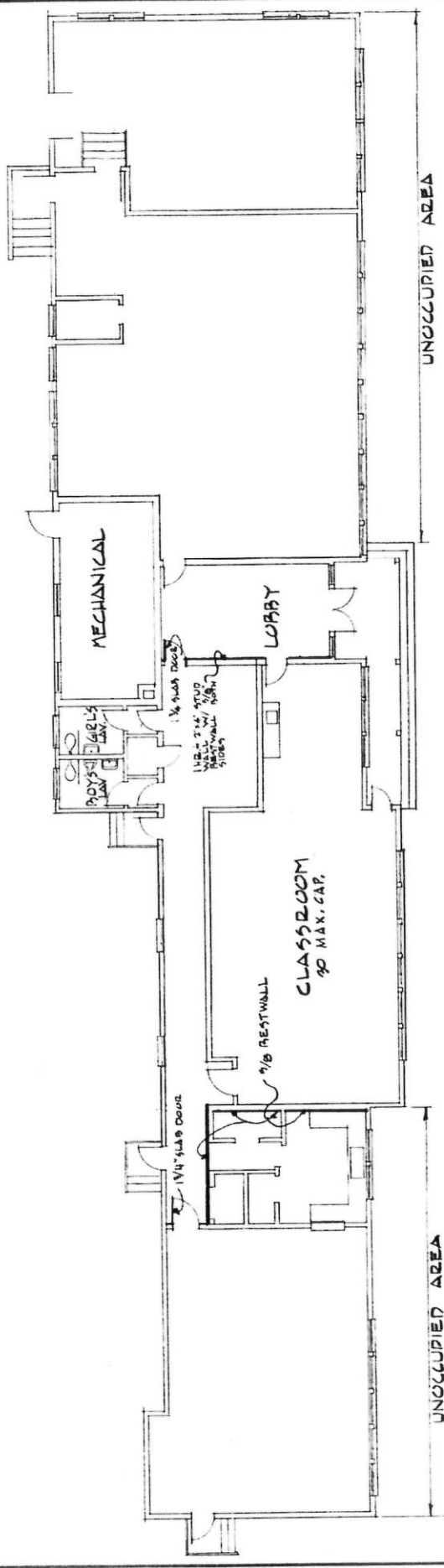
C. Hgt. GROUND FLOOR AREA
58 TOTAL FLOOR AREA





GOLF COURSE

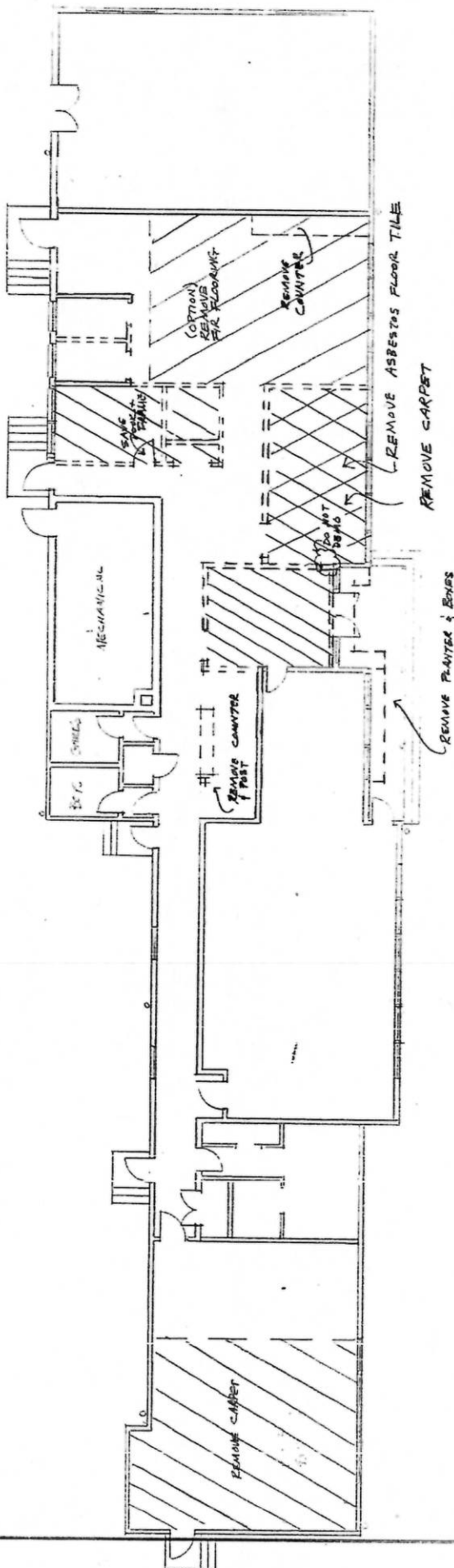
Shearwater



FLOOR PLAN SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"

DECATUR ELEMENTARY ANNEX	
FLOOR PLAN	
DATE 11/1/66	PROJECT SEATTLE SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 1 MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS
DRAWN BY L. LARSEN	DESIGNED BY WALTER E. LARSEN, DIRECTOR
CHECKED BY	810 DEXTER AVENUE NORTH SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

287-00 50



NOTES
 1. SAVE DOORS + FRAMES

NO #115314

AS-BUILTS

REV 6.11.98
 REV 7.7.98

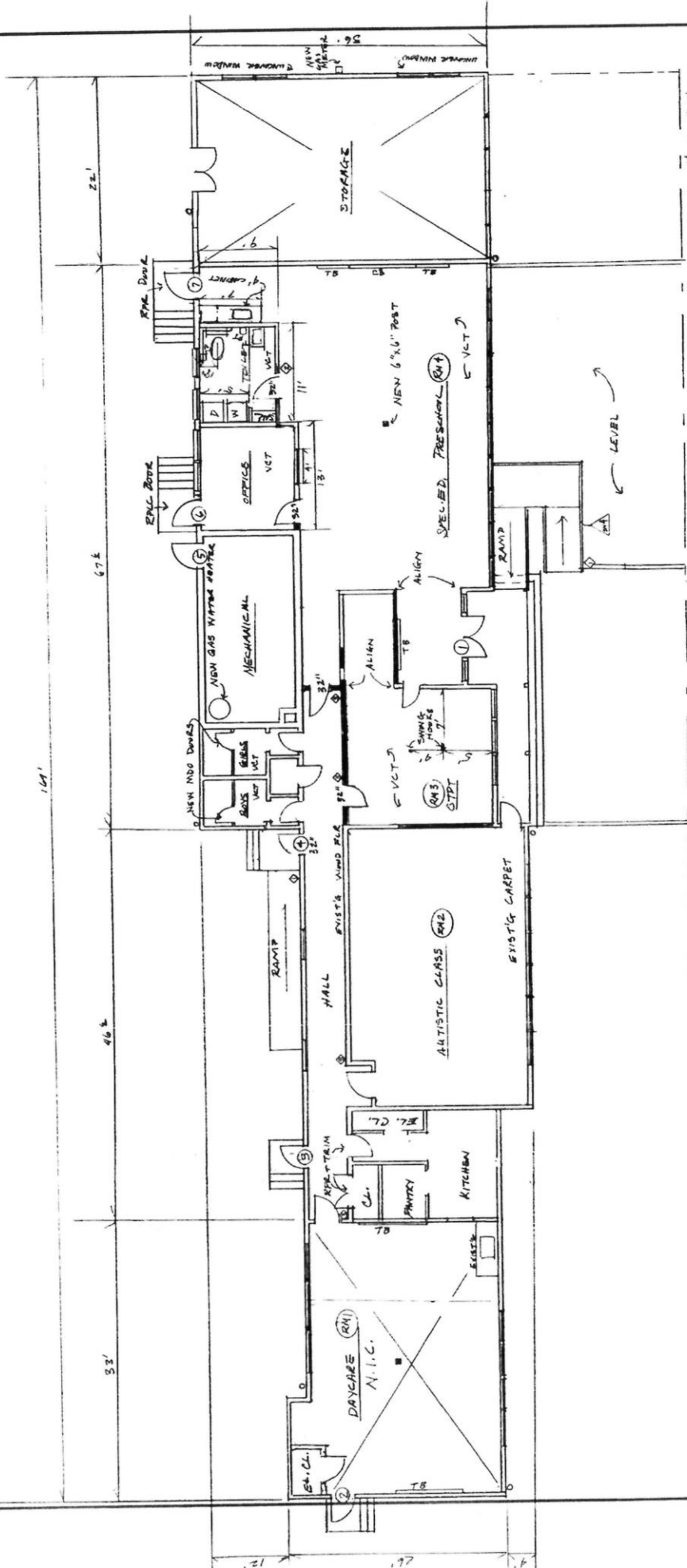
DEMOLITION PLAN

SEATTLE SCHOOL DISTRICT
 PROJECT NO. 115314
 DATE 6.11.98
 DRAWN BY [illegible]
 CHECKED BY [illegible]

1 of 5
 287.00 74

- NOTES:
- ① - ADA SIGN "ENTRANCE"
 - ② - ADA SIGN "TOILET"
 - ③ - ROOM SIGN

- NOTES:
- RELOC BOTTOM 2 ROWS OF WINDOWS W/ SAFETY GLASS, FRAME & SASH REMAIN EXCEPT, SAFETY GLASS NOT REQ'D IN STORAGE
 - INT. PAINT: P/E P/E



DECATUR ANNEX - SPEC. ED 7711 43RD AVENUE	
FLOOR PLAN	
DATE S.R.S.G.B.	SHEET 20F 3
SEATTLE SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 1 FACILITIES DEPARTMENT WALTER E. LARSEN, DIRECTOR	
DRAWN BY S.C.B.	
CHECKED BY S.C.B.	
810 DEXTER AVENUE NORTH SEATTLE, WASHINGTON	

- REV. 6-11-88
REV. 6-19-88
REV. 7-2-88
REV. 7-16-88
REV. 7-14-88



AB-BUILTS

W/D # 115324

287-00175