The City of Seattle
Landmarks Preservation Board
Mailing Address: PO Box 94649, Seattle WA 98124-4649
Street Address: 600 4th Avenue, 4th Floor

LPB 94/25

REPORT ON DESIGNATION

Sunset Hill Community Hall
3003 NW 66th Street

Legal Description:

Lots 1, 2, 3, and 4 of Block 54, Jennings' Ballard Addition, as recorded in Volume 6 of Plats, Page 10, in King County, Washington.

At the public meeting held on March 19, 2025 the City of Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Board voted to approve designation of the Sunset Hill Community Hall at 3003 NW 66th Street as a Seattle Landmark based upon satisfaction of the following standard for designation of SMC 25.12.350:

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.

The Features of the Landmark to be Preserved Include:

The site, the exterior of the building, and the interior of the main hall (excluding the support spaces).

DESCRIPTION

Neighborhood Setting

The Sunset Hill Community Hall is located on a .23 acre parcel at the southwest corner of 30th Avenue NW and NW 66th Street in Ballard's Sunset Hill neighborhood. The one-story building with a full basement fronts NW 66th Street, facing north. The surrounding residential neighborhood is comprised predominantly of pre-World War II single family homes interspersed with more recently constructed apartment buildings and townhomes. The modest Sunset Hill neighborhood commercial district is located two blocks to the southwest, centered on the arterials of 32nd Avenue NW and NW 65th Street.

Site

The 10,000 square foot parcel is comprised of lots 1-4 of block 54, Jennings' Ballard Addition, platted in 1890. The long rectangular building was constructed along the western portion of the parcel, with a setback of 20 feet from the sidewalk fronting NW 66th Street. Perimeter landscape plantings extend five and a half feet from the primary (north) elevation of the building, and a paved patio covers the remaining frontage area extending from the lower hall entrance to the sidewalk. A paved walkway with a metal pipe handrail curves around the left (east) side of the primary elevation up a gradual slope to meet a staircase that provides access to the main hall entrance. The north and east boundaries of this corner parcel are unfenced along the street frontage, while the south and west lot boundaries are marked by vertical board fences that screen adjacent residences.

The eastern portion of the parcel consists of a relatively flat 2,800 square foot open space with a substantial lawn area approximately five feet above grade, sloped at the north and east edges to meet the sidewalk. Informal plantings around the building perimeter and south parcel boundary are residential in scale and help the community hall blend into the surrounding neighborhood. A sprawling yew tree anchors the south lawn and well-established copper beech tree provides a focal point in this landscape. A row of four maple trees in the east parking strip provide partial screening from residences to the east. The building is set back 20 feet from the west parcel boundary and 15 feet from the south parcel boundary. A narrow paved driveway extends 40 feet into the western side yard to a low chain link fence, and a paved walkway parallel to the west side of the building provides access to a wooden staircase leading to a secondary door for the main hall. A flagstone walkway connects the driveway to the patio in front of the lower hall main entrance. The remainder of the narrow west and north side yards are characterized by perimeter shrubs, small trees, and grass. A chain link gate and fence between the building's southeast corner and wood boundary fence limit access to the side yards.

Building Exterior

This front gable, wood frame community hall has a rectangular plan, and rests on a concrete foundation. The hall measures 36 feet by 66 feet, with a small storage room extending out eight feet deep by twelve feet wide from the main footprint of the building enclosing the space below the main hall entrance porch. Technically the building is one story with a daylight basement, but it appears to be two full stories at the primary (north) elevation, with a ground floor entrance at grade to the lower hall, and an upstairs entrance to the main hall accessible by exterior stairway. For consistency, this narrative uses the terminology ground floor (lower hall) and upper floor (main hall).

Roofing material is asphalt shingle. The generous eaves with soffits and fascia boards terminate in prominent corner returns at the gable ends. The entire building is clad in large, coursed wood shingles with modest decorative woodwork at the entrances and predominantly original wood windows throughout. Most of these are 'cottage' windows

divided by a thick central mullion and a thin horizontal muntin separating the top third from the bottom two-thirds. The building is painted light yellow with white trim and eaves.

Primary (North) Elevation

The asymmetrical primary elevation facing NW 66th Street includes entrances for both the ground floor (lower hall) and upper floor (main hall). On the right (west) side of the ground floor, four-panel double wood doors, each with four small lights across the top and a simple wood surround, provide barrier-free access. A gabled porch hood with a gracefully curved underside covers the doorway; this hood extends out three feet and is supported by a pair of sturdy but elegant carved wood brackets. On the left (east) side of the ground floor, a pair of four-light cottage windows lights the storage room located underneath the main hall entrance porch.

The upper story of the primary elevation features an enlarged and reversed version of the ground floor elements. The building's main entrance dominates the left upper half of the primary elevation, with a similar pair of four-panel doors with four small lights at the top, surmounted by an undivided transom window and surrounded by plain trim. This doorway is covered by a larger and more prominent Colonial Revival-style gabled portico that extends five feet outward and is supported by substantial carved brackets and engaged pilasters. The taller, broader and deeper gabled portico with corner returns clearly identifies the upper doorway as the building's primary entrance.

An eight foot by 13½ foot porch landing surrounded by a site-welded steel pipe balustrade rests atop the ground floor storage room. This landing is accessed by a stairway comprised of concrete treads set into a structural steel staircase that flares outward toward the bottom, where it meets the paved walkway on the building's east side. The staircase has steel pipe hand railing on both sides. At the top of the staircase where it meets the landing on both sides are decorative metal silhouettes of mountains and a setting sun above the words 'Sunset Hill.' The right side of the upper story presents tripartite cottage windows topped by a wood sign identifying the Sunset Hill Community Hall. A narrow louver vents the attic at the gable peak, and a small gooseneck fixture below it provides exterior lighting for the entrance areas.

Secondary (East) Elevation

The east elevation facing 30th Avenue NW is dominated by horizontal bands of windows on both the ground floor and the main floor, with a substantial brick chimney to the right of center. The chimney is nine feet wide nearly to the height of the eaves, and features common bond with a course of full length headers every twelve rows. The ground floor windows lighting the lower hall consist of three groups of three four-light cottage windows, one group on the right (north) side of the chimney and two groups on the left (south) side of the chimney. This pattern is repeated for the main (upper) hall, with the addition of a transom window atop each four-light cottage window. The center window in each group is an operable paired casement window with original brass latching mechanisms, topped by

an operable transom window that opens outward from the top (an awning window). A secondary door at the south end of this elevation provides an emergency exit from the lower hall. This door is covered by a small gable roofed hood similar to the ground floor entrance of the primary elevation. Above this door is a single one-over-one window.

Tertiary (South and West) Elevations

Tertiary south and west elevations exhibit somewhat simplified patterns of openings, and these elevations are minimally visible from public rights of way. Openings in the rear (south) elevation consist of a pair of single-hung one-over-one windows spaced widely apart upstairs, and another single window plus a group of three one-over-one windows light the rear of the lower hall.

The west elevation nearly mirrors the east with three groups of three cottage windows topped with transoms lighting the main hall; however, an emergency exit door replaces the center window in the rearmost group, accessed by a simple wood stairway that faces south. A single one-over-one window lights the rear portion of the main hall interior, and a louvered vent below, formerly the coal chute door, provides secure air circulation for the ground floor utility areas. Ground floor windows also mirror the east elevation except where the exit stairway blocks the rearmost window group. A remnant secondary brick chimney at the building's southwest corner vented a former furnace system.

Building Interior

Ground Floor (Lower Hall)

Both the ground floor and main floor interiors are dominated by large open social halls flooded by natural light. The main entrance on the ground floor opens into a short hallway with an enclosed office fronted by a twelve-light interior window to the left (east) and a small storage closet and a LULA (Limited Use, Limited Access), ADA-compliant elevator on the right (west). Accessible from inside the office is a small storage room comprised of the eight by twelve foot enclosed space below the porch landing for the upstairs entrance.

The eight foot wide by fourteen foot long entrance hallway opens onto the lower hall. The lower hall, 34 by 34 feet, has a fireplace with a substantial brick mantle in the front left (northeast) corner. In the front right (northwest) corner, an interior staircase wraps around the elevator shaft to provide access to the main hall upstairs. A substantial central beam and two stout posts provide visible support for the large open gathering space upstairs. Enclosed spaces at the rear (south end) of the lower hall include, on the left, a doorway leading to the emergency exit and a secondary interior staircase leading upstairs, a small kitchen with a door and pass-through window in the center, and a hallway leading to restrooms and storage closets on the right. A metal-clad fire door in the rear right corner opens into the furnace room and storage room.

Two rows of pendant fixtures suspended from the eight and a half foot drop ceiling light the room. The floor is covered in linoleum. Interior walls are painted butter yellow with white trim and white wainscoting.

Main Floor (Upper Hall)

The building's expansive main hall, 46 by 34 feet, features 13 foot ceilings that meet the gable roof's slope four feet above the bands of windows on the east and west elevations. A large brick fireplace near the northeast corner is directly above the ground floor fireplace, and both are served by the same exterior brick chimney. The elevator and interior staircase take up a small portion of the northwest corner, otherwise the room is entirely open, with pendant lights, ceiling fans, theatrical lights and a disco ball suspended from the ceiling. Wall sconces between banks of windows shine upward, emphasizing the ceiling height.

A varnished white oak floor enhances the lightness of the room. Interiors are painted butter yellow with white trim and a white ceiling. A 16 foot wide by 14 foot deep stage at the far (south) end of the main hall is flanked by a pair of enclosed low stairs. At the rear of the stage are a screened-off service kitchen and restrooms. An approximately two foot by four foot hatch in the kitchen ceiling provides access to the attic.

Changes over Time

The building is largely intact and retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. Rehabilitation projects in 1944 and 1999 resulted in some changes to the roof form and main hall entrance.

An attic fire in 1944 caused extensive damage to the building's roof. Originally the long narrow front-gable building had a decorative side gable dormer facing 30th Avenue NW, but when the roof was reconstructed after the fire, this dormer was not rebuilt.

A major rehabilitation project in 1999 supported by a grant from the Seattle Neighborhood Matching Fund program included exterior alterations to the main (upper) hall entrance. The original steep front staircase that descended from the main hall entrance toward NW 66th Street was replaced with a more gently sloped side staircase connecting the curved walkway in the raised east side yard to a new porch landing (built atop a small storage room, which has fenestration facing the street). Brick pillars that had previously supported the upper porch hood were replaced with compatible wood brackets, while the hood itself remained unaltered. This project also included installation of an interior elevator to allow universal access to the main hall, improvements to the main hall stage area, and ADA compliant restrooms in the lower hall.

SIGNIFICANCE

Ballard and Sunset Hill Community Context

Native American Presence and Early Settlement Era

The Sunset Hill Community Hall and surrounding neighborhood is located in the traditional territory of the šilšula'bc ("Shilshole-absh"), a band of Duwamish Indians whose primary winter village was located on the north side of Salmon Bay near the present location of the Ballard Locks. The Lushootseed word šilšul means "threading or inserting something," referring to the narrow estuary used as a canoe route between salt water of Puget Sound and fresh water of Lake Union and Lake Washington. This place name was Anglicized as Shilshole and applied to the marina area approximately one mile west.

Native people maintained a significant presence on Salmon Bay into the twentieth century, when initial construction of the Locks around 1912 forced the removal of 20-30 people living along the north shore. Native elders Hwehlchtid (called Salmon Bay Charlie by the settlers) and his wife Chilohleet'sa (Madeline) remained in their home on the south side of the Bay until around 1915. Even after most Native people had been displaced to the Port Madison, Muckleshoot, or other nearby reservations, one historian recorded their ongoing seasonal visits:

> Ballard always saw a gathering on the brow of this hill [west of the Salmon Bay railroad bridge], where camp was made each fall. Clams steamed between gunny sacks sent an aroma many old-timers still remember. Also the racks with strings of fish and clams drying or being smoked was interesting to see.

Fishermen from the Muckleshoot and Suquamish Tribes continue to exercise treaty fishing rights today in the Salmon Bay estuary, Lake Washinton Ship Canal, and surrounding areas.

In the 1850s, land claims north of Salmon Bay by Ira Utter and other European Americans marked the beginning of non-native settlement in the area now known as Ballard. Land clearing by individual settlers gave way to large scale logging and real estate speculation in the 1880s, as investors platted, cleared and sold hundreds of acres for development. Lumber mills, boat building and other industries were established along the Salmon Bay shoreline, and a substantial commercial district was constructed just inland along Ballard Avenue (now the Ballard Avenue Landmark District). Land speculators and local boosters advocated for transportation connections to nearby Seattle, resulting in the construction of the first bridge crossing the east side of Salmon Bay by 1889, and railroad and streetcar connections to Seattle the following year.

City of Ballard Incorporation and Annexation to Seattle

The City of Ballard incorporated in 1890 with boundaries defined by 8th Avenue NW (then called Division Street) to the east, Salmon Bay and the Puget Sound shoreline to the south and west, and NW 65th Street (then called Ship Street) to the north. Most of this land area was platted by 1890, and Ballard's municipal boundary expanded north to 85th Street (then called Boundary Street) the following year, though settlement and development remained concentrated near Salmon Bay for another two decades. More than a dozen sawmills lined the shores of Salmon Bay, producing cedar shingles in such vast quantities that by the end of the 1890s Ballard proclaimed itself "the Shingle Capital of the World."

In the early 1900s, Ballard grew steadily "up the gradually sloping hills to the north from Salmon Bay as far as Schooner Street (NW 75th Street)," an area that was still "dense forest with only paths and rough trails through the woods, except for the streets laid out below Ship Street (NW 65th Street)," while active logging continued farther north.

Expansion of streetcar or trolley lines beyond Ballard's commercial district played a key role in residential development, with lines running north along 20th and 24th Avenues, and west to Ballard Beach (later the location of a ferry landing) by 1906. The following year, Harry W. Treat, a White developer purchased and platted a large piece of property north of NW 75th Street which he named Loyal Heights in honor of his daughter. To attract potential buyers, Treat set aside beachfront land as a private park he named "Golden Gardens" and built his own streetcar line extending from downtown Ballard to the intersection of 32nd Avenue NW and NW 85th Street, where a stairway led down the steep hillside to the park.

Ballard voters approved annexation by the City of Seattle in 1906 (implemented in 1907), in part to secure an adequate water supply and improvements to infrastructure. Ballard's northern border at 85th Street (formerly Boundary Street) became Seattle's northern city limits. The Seattle Tidelands Plat of 1895 had previously given the City of Seattle control over the saltwater shoreline at Ballard's western boundary. Ballard adopted Seattle's street naming conventions, resulting in numbered avenues running north-south and numbered streets running east-west, although some remnant named streets persisted. Also as part of the annexation process, the Seattle School District assumed responsibility for building and operating public schools in Ballard.

Following annexation, two large-scale government funded infrastructure projects on Salmon Bay provided important anchors for economic development in Ballard. In 1911, construction crews broke ground on the long-planned Ship Canal and Government Locks to facilitate boat travel between Puget Sound, Lake Union and Lake Washington. The official opening of the completed federal project was celebrated in 1917. During and after construction, as shoreline configuration and water levels stabilized, maritime industries including shipyards and support services expanded along the waterfront, replacing some of the earlier sawmills. Just across the Ballard Bridge on the south side of Salmon Bay, the Port of Seattle completed constructed of Fishermen's Terminal in 1914 as a home port and

freshwater moorage facility for the Seattle-based North Pacific fishing fleet, again anchoring a wide range of maritime industrial facilities in the vicinity. These two projects and associated industries provided stable blue-collar employment that supported long-term residential growth and development in Ballard.

The City of Seattle acquired Golden Gardens from Treat's estate in 1922, establishing a major public park along Ballard's western saltwater shoreline. In the following years, a privately owned ferry dock constructed at Ballard Beach (near the west end of today's 61st Street) provided service to Suquamish and Port Ludlow. As the south end of Ballard Avenue became more industrial, commercial activity shifted northward to Market Street, and what had previously been a side street to Ballard Avenue became the main thoroughfare, assisted by the fact that both ends of Market Street were being extended to Phinney Ridge and the University District on the east side, and to the new ferry terminal and Golden Gardens Park on the west. Growth accelerated in the 1920s, and business and construction boomed:

> The boys were home from the Great War, getting married, having families, needing houses. Families that had moved to Ballard to work in the shipyards and mills during the war were also growing. The home construction business kept all the building trades active during the 1920s, and by 1925 the Ballard district was breaking all previous records of construction.

Although technically part of Seattle, Ballard maintained its own identity as a separate community, and its residential areas anchored by neighborhood schools were distinctly defined by topography and transit routes. In addition to the "downtown" commercial district centered on Ballard Avenue and Market Street, Ballard consisted of five discrete sub-neighborhoods: West Woodland and Adams flanked the commercial district's east and west sides between the Ship Canal and NW 65th Street; north of these, Whittier Heights on the east and Loyal Heights on the west extended north to NW 85th Street. The entire western edge of Ballard south of NW 85th Street became known as Sunset Hill, named for its expansive views west across Puget Sound.

Sunset Hall Neighborhood

Sunset Hill encompasses an area stretching from the Locks, northward along 32nd Avenue NW, east on NW 65th Street, then north on 28th Avenue NW to NW 85th Street and west to Puget Sound. It includes the western shoreline of Ballard, from Golden Gardens Park, south through Shilshole and the mouth of the Ship Canal as far as the Locks. A small Sunset Hill neighborhood commercial district centered at 32nd Avenue NW and NW 65th Street offered groceries, sundries and other goods and services. Streetcar routes reinforced Sunset Hill's identity and boundaries as a neighborhood, with Treat's former Loyal Heights line (#28) following portions of the eastern edge, and the long-established Ballard Beach line (#30) paralleling the Ship Canal then heading north to a terminus near the neighborhood commercial district.

Although most of the Sunset Hill neighborhood was platted in the 1890s, development remained somewhat sparse until after World War I, when many large homes were built on the bluff above Shilshole Bay. Inland residential development became denser, and "blocks that had been only partially developed began to fill in with homes in a variety of styles, such as Tudor, Colonial Revival and Mediterranean." Builders also produced smaller less expensive homes in vernacular forms of these styles. In 1922, telephone exchange prefixes for the whole Ballard area were changed to "SUnset" (SU representing 78- as the first portion of local numbers), and some suggested that Ballard should change its name to the Sunset District, though nothing came of it.

In addition to the Ballard Avenue Landmark District, six other designated City of Seattle Landmarks commemorate aspects of Sunset Hill and nearby Ballard neighborhood history. Three are residences recognized for their architectural significance:

- The Drake House, 6414 22nd Avenue NW (built 1900, designated 1982)
- The Norvell House, 3306 NW 71st Street (built 1907, designated 1978)
- The Rosen House, 9017 Loyal Avenue NW (built 1933, designated 2001)

Three are public buildings significant for their architectural value, visual prominence, and role in neighborhood identity:

- Webster Elementary School, 3014 NW 67th Street (built 1908, designated 2015)
- Loyal Heights Elementary School, 2501 NW 80th Street (built 1931, designated 2015)
- Golden Gardens Bath House located in the Park (built 1929, designated 2003)

Community Club Movement in Seattle

The history and significance of the Sunset Hill Community Hall can be understood primarily in the context of the Community Club Movement in Seattle in the twentieth century. Community clubs and other neighborhood improvement organizations first appeared near the end of the nineteenth century in most large American cities, an outgrowth of Progressive Era social activism that sought to give the public more direct control over government.

Seattle's first Community Improvement Club was organized in 1901 by the residents of Renton Hill (as Capitol Hill south of Madison Street was then known), under the name Renton Hill Improvement Club. Within a few months it had nearly 100 members. In 1903, nearly all members contributed funds to build a clubhouse at 18th Avenue near Madison Street, on a site donated by Renton family heirs. Five other community clubs were organized in central Seattle neighborhoods in 1901. The number of clubs increased slowly but steadily through the first three decades of the twentieth century, as some of the first clubs died out, and more new clubs were formed.

University of Washington sociology graduate student Irene Somerville Durham wrote a remarkably well-researched master's thesis in 1929 documenting the rise of community clubs in Seattle. Durham analyzed the political and social dimensions of community club activities in order to understand their role in communities, and she examined the influence

of factors such as Seattle's geography, population growth, and electoral system on neighborhood identity. The resulting study is an insightful examination of the proliferation of community clubs in early twentieth century Seattle, and the role of these clubs in the city's social and political life.

Durham defined a community club as "a group of people living within a certain localized area who are organized to further the interests of their own particular neighborhood. Ordinarily there is a secondary social motive and a purpose to aid the general development of the city." Clearly distinguishing between clubs and their meeting places, Durham studied 60 out of 108 clubs (variously known as community clubs, improvement clubs or neighborhood clubs) then in existence in Seattle and its adjacent suburbs. Durham's thesis included detailed profiles of all 18 community clubhouses in the greater Seattle area at the time, including the recently completed Sunset Hill Improvement Club. Clubs that did not own a community hall met in public buildings such as schools, field houses and public halls. A small number met in members' residences or churches.

Few community clubs formed in downtown neighborhoods where residents primarily lived in apartment buildings, or in older houses vulnerable to redevelopment on the fringes of the business district. Durham found that 93 out of 108 community clubs were located in middle class and working-class residential neighborhoods, mostly at the city's expanding north and south edges. Observing that "the community club is an institution of the property owner and not the renter," Durham found that community club members were mostly homeowners with children, consequently "their aim is to make their districts and the entire city a better place in which to live and rear a family." Clubs generally identified geographic boundaries as a basis for membership; a few limited voting membership to property owners though most simply required residency and some were open to anyone interested in the district. The exclusionary role of status mechanisms such as property ownership and other formal or informal processes in which existing members approved the addition of new members led more contemporary researchers to note that "early neighborhood organizations were, like many other institutions of the day, almost exclusively the domain of White residents." In addition to general membership open to both men and women, many clubs also had a Ladies Auxiliary comprised of women who independently organized social events and fund raising campaigns for their clubs.

Seattle's city limits in 1929 were 85th Street on most of the north side and Roxbury Avenue on most of the south side. While many of the community clubs in Durham's study were located in neighborhoods within the city limits, a significant portion were in developing neighborhoods just outside the city limits in unincorporated King County, and many of those communities hoped to one day be annexed by the city. Even in the early twentieth century, urban researchers proclaimed that neighborhood consciousness was unusually pronounced in Seattle. Durham observed that Seattle's geography played an important role in defining neighborhood identity, and contributed to the proliferation of community clubs. She wrote:

> The city has numerous natural boundaries consisting of hills, valleys and waterways, which divide it into distinct areas, and tend to limit traffic from one portion of the city to another to a few arterial highways. … These natural barriers which divide the city into distinct and separated neighborhoods and districts, have tended toward the development of strong local self-consciousness and furnish one reason for the remarkable development of the community club movement in Seattle.

Early twentieth century Seattle was home to a wide range of organizations that residents could join, including fraternal lodges like the Masons and Eagles, ethnic lodges like the Sons and Daughters of Norway, and societies like the Rainier Club and Women's University Club, most of which were primarily social in nature and had selective membership thresholds. What set community clubs apart was their combination of limited geographic focus, generally open membership and participation policies, and dual emphasis on social activities to encourage interactions among neighbors and political engagement to secure tangible improvements for their neighborhood.

Collective advocacy for neighborhood improvement has always been the primary purpose of community clubs. An apocryphal story about the origins of community clubs in Seattle features a resourceful printer's chance discovery that the name Community Club was "an open sesame to political favors." Durham related the legendary story:

> Years ago two men lived some blocks from the end of a street car line in the North End. There were no sidewalks leading to their houses, and at night in rainy weather they invariably stumbled into a large puddle of water in the path. They asked and implored the city officials and city fathers, as the councilmen are often called, to give them a street light at the place, but the request was repeatedly denied until the printer conceived the bold idea of getting out some letterheads with a community club name, calling himself the president and his neighbor the secretary. On behalf of this mythical organization, the two demanded a street light in front of their houses. Within a week…the light was in the desired spot. The printer thought the secret too good to keep, and the community club movement had its beginning.

These voluntary organizations filled a need, starting from the recognition that individuals may feel they have little power, but in association with others who have similar interest, their strength is multiplied exponentially. According to Durham, "Psychologically, an organized group has much more weight with the governing bodies than the combined individual strength of its members. There is a mystery about the word 'club' which connotes power and suggests forces held in reserve."

The improvements sought by clubs reflected the development conditions of their communities, where municipal services lagged behind residential construction in growing neighborhoods. Clubs advocated for street grading and paving, street lighting, sidewalks,

the extension of streetcar lines, watermains and sewers, parks, playgrounds, schools, libraries, fire stations, safety signals, street trees, and a variety of other improvements. Community clubs formed in response to perceived needs for local improvements, and they were also sustained by those needs, which often required many years of advocacy in order to secure funding commitments and see projects through to completion.

Social activity comprised an equally important aspect of community club activity, particularly for organizations that built or acquired their own clubhouses. Clubs sponsored a wide range of entertainments, both for enjoyment and to raise funds to support club activities. Durham noted that "practically every issue of the daily newspapers contains notices of the activities of the Improvement Clubs. The *Seattle Daily Times* has a special reporter assigned to Community Clubs, and the other papers regularly cover club activities." These activities included dances, card parties, pageants, flower shows, street carnivals, parades, amateur theatricals, educational lectures, and other forms of recreation that promoted neighborliness and helped integrate newcomers into established social networks.

Many community clubs offered educational and service opportunities such as clean-up events to promote the general beautification of the city, and philanthropic projects. Clubs supported young people through sponsorship of "junior clubs" and troops of Boy Scouts and Camp Fire Girls, and by hosting special dances and other forms of entertainment. The community clubhouse was regarded as "an ideal place for the young people to have a good time and wholesome amusement."

Although community clubs were generally committed to a progressive agenda, a few clubs in the older and well-settled neighborhoods closer to downtown engaged in efforts to exclude residents of color from their neighborhoods through tactics like restrictive covenants and zoning ordinances limiting the uses of property. Durham noted that such defensive issues generally did not arouse the enthusiasm of the members to the same degree as progressive campaigns for needed improvements.

Clubhouses

Approximately 15% of the community clubs in Seattle in 1929 (18 out of 108) owned their own club houses. Durham profiled each of these clubhouses and identified several common patterns of development. Land was donated to some clubs for the purpose of building a clubhouse, while others raised money to purchase property. Construction of clubhouses was most often paid for through sale of subscriptions or shares, forms of no-interest loans that were repaid over several years through club fund raising activities such as rummage sales, bazaars, benefit dinners and dances.

While most clubhouses were purpose-built simple vernacular meeting halls, a few were repurposed homes, including at least one that was moved to a new location. Some clubhouses were built the same year a community club was organized, but most were built some years later, when the group had established a strong membership base and successful track record of activism. Typical features included a large open meeting area, kitchen,

restrooms, and a stage, while larger clubhouses also included committee meeting rooms and offices. Importantly, Durham noted that "nearly every Club owning a home is planning to improve it or build an addition.

Political Organizations

Social activities may have been the most visible and well-documented aspects of club activities, but Durham's assessment of the major role of clubs in their communities was clear:

> In the sense that one of the primary objects of all the Community Clubs is to endeavor to secure public improvements and municipal legislation beneficial to their respective districts, and to oppose those things they regard as detrimental to them, all Community Clubs may be said to be political organizations.

As political organizations, community clubs served as intermediate institutions, bridging the gap between individual residents and local government. Dealing with issues that impacted their local communities represented the way in which most Seattle residents became involved in the political process.

Analysis of Seattle's political history helps explain why the Community Club Movement took hold when it did and had such a lasting impact on the city. In the 1850s when the first plats in the city were filed, Seattle had only one ward or political division for administrative and voting purposes. As the city grew in population the number of wards increased, and officials agreed that nine wards would be the limit until a population of 240,000 was reached. This occurred around 1909, shortly after the "Greater Seattle" movement successfully advocated for the annexation of independent municipalities and unincorporated areas including Ballard, Columbia, Ravenna, Southeast Seattle, South Park, and West Seattle. Voters ended Seattle's ward system in 1911 by amending the city charter to elect non-partisan city councilmembers to "at large" or city-wide positions.

Prior to 1911, only a handful of community clubs existed, in part because the ward system guaranteed representation for all parts of the city. The end of the ward system "undermined the geographic foundation of municipal politics and reduced the ability of residents to act – individually or via their councilmen – on behalf of particular districts." At the same time, the shift to a non-partisan system of municipal elections weakened the role of political party organizations. This political void was filled by community clubs, which greatly increased in number in the 1910s and 1920s. Had citizens been able to exert local influence through their ward councilmen, one of the most powerful incentives for community club organization would have been removed.

During election seasons, community clubs sponsored forums where candidates for city council and other offices routinely appeared. Given the logistical challenges of canvassing door to door for city-wide races, candidates regarded community clubs as their best option

to connect with groups of voters and hear about their priorities. One observer of Seattle politics in the 1920s wrote:

> The part played by the neighborhood groups in municipal elections is quite different from that effected by the down-town organizations. The local organization meets concrete problems the year round and it does not forget on election day the services granted or refused by the public officials seeking reelection.

With their focus on improving their residential neighborhoods, community clubs regarded themselves as a counterweight to the influence of the Chamber of Commerce and other downtown interests in the areas of city budgeting and policy priorities. Politicians understood that the significance of community clubs in the life of the city was, in aggregate, far beyond the appreciation of the average citizen: "Few indeed are the local improvements which are not brought about directly or indirectly by the influence of local organizations. Scarcely a day passes without a council committee, the head of some administrative department, or supervisory board, being waited upon by a delegation from some one of these various organizations requesting improvements for its own particular locality.

Community club leaders were effective organizers with an understanding of how city government worked. One club president stated that "when an issue important to their district comes up, he appoints block captains whose duty it is to urge all of the residents to go to the Council and be present at the hearing." After Seattle approved its first zoning ordinance in 1923, the clubs paid particular attention to the City Planning Commission, an appointed body whose members approved plans for major civic projects such as arterial highways, bridges and grade separations, and amendments to the zoning ordinance. They also maintained contact with the Council committees assigned to these subjects, their plan of action being "to begin with the smaller units, then when the matter comes before the Council for vote, to have a large delegation present." Following favorable action by elected officials, club members maintained contact with city engineers, and street and bridge officials, only rarely needing to contact the mayor's office when city department heads were less than accommodating.

Individual clubs cooperated informally, and also banded together to establish federations with the goal of advancing common interests. As early as 1902, the Federated Improvement Clubs of Seattle sought representation on the city's Parks Board. In the 1910s and 1920s, district federations including the Associated Improvement Clubs of the North End, the Federated Northeast Clubs, the Central Federation, and the Associated Improvement Clubs of the South End effectively represented regional interests, with territorial dividing lines at the Lake Washington Ship Canal and Yesler Way. These federations were especially effective in supporting major regional projects like new bridges or transit projects, urging the city council to place issues on the ballot for referendum and campaigning on behalf of such measures.

Role of Clubhouses and Cycles of Club Activity

Given the voluntary nature of community clubs, the intensity of their activities rose and fell according to the level of member engagement and the accomplishment of goals for neighborhood improvement. Seattle's first community club, the Renton Hill Improvement Club, disincorporated and sold their clubhouse in 1918. Similarly, members of the Phinney Ridge Community Club regarded the improvements in their district as having been largely completed by the early 1920s. The Club continued to function with alternating periods of activity, dormancy, and reorganization, until 1928 when it disbanded entirely.

Both researchers and club leaders identified two things as essential for sustaining community organizations over the long term. Durham noted that "the great preponderance of opinion among leaders in the Community Club movement is that social activities are essential if interest in the Club is to be maintained after the immediate objectives which led to its organization are obtained." Also important is the role of the clubhouse in sustaining the participation of members:

> An issue is the life of an active club and as long as some struggle is on, the interest of the members does not lag. When the improvements in the district have been installed, the club is apt to lapse into inactivity, only occasionally to be revived when an emergency arises. However, if a club house has been acquired, the club remains an active exponent of neighborhood sentiment and its home becomes the social center for the locality.

The clubhouse represents not only a common meeting ground providing a focal point for community life and events but also "a shared investment with shared responsibility to maintain and manage." It is this confluence of activity – ongoing advocacy for neighborhood improvements, social engagement, and stewardship of clubhouses – that kept club members meeting regularly and recruiting new members. However, the variable that best explains the longevity of community organizations, according to a researcher in the 1980s, was the ownership of a clubhouse.

Fifty years after Durham's study, UW researchers again surveyed Seattle community clubs and found that social activities had decreased somewhat, stating that the organizations at that time were less likely to sponsor parties, potlucks, dances, and other social events that offered opportunities for participation outside the formal framework of a meeting than in 1929. Political engagement remained the central focus of community organizations, but by 1979 the focus was broader than infrastructure improvements, and took in a wide range of neighborhood problems and issues related to land use and public services.

After 1929, no new clubhouses were built by community clubs in Seattle. During the Great Depression, clubs advocated for the construction of field houses in city parks, supported by federal relief programs like the Civil Works Administration and the Works Progress Administration as well as municipal bonds. Examples of such facilities include the Montlake and Laurelhurst Community Centers, both completed in 1935, and both designated as City

of Seattle landmarks in 2005. In the post World War II era, the city constructed public multipurpose community centers supported by local bond initiatives such as Forward Thrust, and senior centers supported by federal programs like Community Development Block Grants. These public facilities provided a variety of social, recreation, and support services, as well as meeting space for community groups, formalizing as public services the range of programs that had previously been provided on an ad hoc and voluntary basis by community clubs.

The onus of community advocacy also shifted away from grassroots groups and toward public agencies in the 1970s, guided by what has been described as a 'community action philosophy' in government:

> With federal "Model Cities" funds, the City of Seattle in 1972 began to employ community organizers who helped neighborhoods identify their needs and press the City for help. Also influential within government was a national movement to decentralize, leading Seattle to establish "little city halls" (ancestors of today's Neighborhood Service Centers, then called Community Service Centers) in 1972.

The expectation that local governments would proactively seek input from community groups was heightened by federal government initiatives like the Community Development Block Grant program that both required and supported citizen participation. Since the 1970s, community participation in government expanded further with the evolution of grassroots organizations and establishment of neighborhood councils. By the 1980s and 1990s, concerns about growth caused relationships between community organizations and city government to become more contentious. Community clubs that remain active in the 21st century harken back to earlier eras in their integration of social activities and political engagement, and their efforts to preserve and celebrate community identity.

As of 2024, in addition to the Sunset Hills Community Hall, four other clubhouses Durham documented in 1929 remain intact and are still in use as community clubs. They are, in order of date of construction:

- Mount Baker Park Improvement Club Clubhouse (2811 Mount Rainier Drive South), built 1914 and designated as a City of Seattle Landmark in 2018.
- Lakewood Seward Park Community Club (4916 South Angeline Street), built in 1920.
- Haller Lake Improvement Club (12579 Densmore Ave North), built in 1922.
- Rainier Beach Club House (6038 South Pilgrim Street), built 1923.

In addition, the Beacon Hill Garden House (built in 1886, listed in the National Register in 1976 as the Turner-Koepf House and designated as a City of Seattle Landmark in 2019), was previously known as the Beacon Hill Club House; it is now owned by Historic Seattle. The Highland Park Improvement Club (1116 Southwest Holden Street) was built in 1922, was damaged by fire in 2021, and will be rebuilt in a contemporary design. Queen Anne Club House (1530 Queen Anne Avenue North), built in 1928 and listed in the National Register of

Historic Places in 1983, remains in use as a commercial building. Three other extant former clubhouses have been converted to other uses.

Sunset Hill Community Hall

Sunset Hill Improvement Club Formation

Residents of Ballard first banded together to form community clubs following Seattle's annexation of Ballard in 1907. Having had its own municipal government for seventeen years, Ballard became a ward (council district) in Seattle's growing metropolis and had to compete with other recently annexed towns and neighborhoods for city funding. Early club formation aligned with voting precincts as well as neighborhood groups:

> In an effort to overcome delays by Seattle, Ballard neighborhood improvement clubs were formed as pressure groups… The Sixth Precinct Improvement Club of Ballard worked closely with the neighborhood improvement clubs of the Thirteenth Ward, as Ballard was designated, believing that together some pressure can be brought upon the city officials, streetcar company, and others whereby Ballard will get at least a part of what was promised when annexed.

As Ballard's residential development expanded northward and neighborhoods became more densely populated, more clubs were established. The Sunset Hill Improvement Club was founded on August 30, 1922, when, according to the club's first president H.D. Coale, "ten men, desirous of securing the installation of a short line water pipe, met at the writer's residence, and after a discussion of the immediate subject, drifted into the formation of an organization for mutual benefit." The original members were: A.M. Illman, A.G. Johnson, E.H. Onstad, A. Roberts, O.A. Svenslid, L.O. Van Riper, H.G. Jacobsen, D.H. Ingwersen, W.H. Peterson, and H.D. Coale. The club formally organized September 19, 1922 and elected the following officers: H.D. Coale, president; Mrs. Eva Godfrey, vice president; L.O. Van Riper, secretary/treasurer. Soon 164 families joined the organization, almost 20% of the population of Sunset Hill, defined as 30th Avenue NW to the east, NW 85th Street to the north (then the city boundary), Puget Sound to the west and Salmon Bay to the south. Members initially met in homes, then at Webster School. Demographic information regarding club founders and early members was not recorded, but likely mirrored the neighborhood's overall predominantly White population, and surnames of founders reflect Ballard's predominantly Nordic American heritage.

From the start, the club advocated for public improvements as well as enhancements to private properties. Describing the object of the Sunset Hill Improvement Club, President Coale wrote:

> Those who have looked about them on Sunset Hill can realize that our section of Seattle, while blessed with a most wonderful view of Sound and mountains … is not as attractive as a residential section or to the casual

> visitor as it should be. This is due to the fact that it lacks those improvements that all first class residential sections should have – improvements that in part may be secured by individual effort but most largely by combination. In order, therefore, to obtain attractive and convenient surroundings, the Sunset Hill Improvement Club was organized and both individual effort and community effort will be put forth to obtain the desired ends. Under the heading of organized community effort may be considered installation of water mains, sewers, sidewalks, street paving, street car service, and the care and improvement of parking strips. Under the heading of individual effort may be mentioned the care of lawns, the planting of shrubbery and flowers, the removal of fences, the painting of houses, and in general a tendency to clean up and look bright, new and attractive.

Coale proclaimed, "the community flower is the red geranium, which is presumed to be displayed in the yard of every member of the club." Coale also emphasized social improvement, citing "the welfare of our young people" as an important aspect of the club's mission, as well as "improvement in ourselves, by association with neighbors and acquaintances, and by meeting and hearing men and women who have obtained prominence in various walks of life." Items discussed at early meetings included grading, graveling and installation of water mains on specific streets, the lack of heat in street cars, and proposed improvements to Golden Gardens Park which was acquired by the city in 1922. The final meeting of 1922 included presentations by two city council members about the city's electrical generation project on the Skagit River, intended to furnish electricity for Seattle City Light customers at a low enough rate to make it cheaper than coal for home heating. Early on, the club also championed construction of Holman Road to provide direct access to State Route 99, which opened in 1926.

Construction of Clubhouse

After meeting for two years at Webster School, club leaders began to publicize plans to construct a clubhouse, explaining that club membership had "grown to such proportions that we feel the need of a home of our own – a Community House which will provide a suitable auditorium for our meetings, and space where we may entertain ourselves and our friends." As the first step in the realization of this plan, the club purchased four lots totaling 10,000 square feet at the southwest corner of NW 66th Street and 30th Avenue NW for $800 in 1924.

Just over half the purchase price was paid up front, $100 from funds accumulated in the club treasury from membership fees and $350 paid by the Ladies Auxiliary from funds accumulated in their treasury from their various activities. The Ladies Auxiliary boasted around forty members, and their goal was to further the interests of the main club. The ladies had "not only taken charge of the social affairs of the club, but have held a most successful bazaar and dinner, luncheons and parties, and in this way have been able to make a very substantial payment on the lot recently purchased by the club." This

investment was the first of many projects in which the club's women members played a key role in fund raising. The ladies also won prizes for club exhibits at citywide dahlia shows and rose shows.

A special issue of the *Ballard Tribune* published in June 1924 as the *Sunset Hill News*, filled with advertisements from local businesses, helped secure funds to complete the payment for the lot. Club secretary John A. Fay explained, "We have undertaken this method of raising funds, rather than asking for contributions, as we believe that the advertisers who have made this paper possible will secure full value for their investment. …Business kept at home will build up our community, and this in turn will make possible better streets and other improvements." Many of the advertisers in this special edition newspaper were construction suppliers who later provided materials and services for the construction of the clubhouse. While the club raised funds for construction, they also held dances and other events to support a baseball team that played against other Seattle neighborhood teams and also against teams from outlying districts.

Publicity encouraging people to join the club stated that membership was open to all residents of the district, and proclaimed "as a member of the Sunset Hill Improvement Club you are a part of an organization that is getting results, and you would find great pleasure in doing your part." Meetings afforded opportunities for people to hear from "the advanced thinkers and speakers of our city," including "the mayor…heads of most of the departments, city councilmen, and various other prominent city and county officials and citizens."

The club sponsored frequent social events like dances and performances that welcomed members as well as the broader community. Although Ballard had historically been served by a large number of saloons, the enforcement of Prohibition statewide in 1916, four years before it was imposed at the national level, closed many of those public gathering places and boosted the popularity of alternative forms of entertainment like public dances. Club meetings and social functions also helped to integrate the community's immigrant population which comprised nearly half of Ballard residents in the early decades of the twentieth century.

In 1925, the Sunset Hill Improvement Club Building Committee released a one-page letter addressed "To Whom It May Interest" describing plans for construction of a community club. By this time, the "very sightly" property was fully paid for, a full basement had been dug and paid for, and the club had "about two thousand dollars in the building fund, and about one thousand dollars more subscribed." Longtime Ballard resident Tom Malone noted that local school children raised money to support construction of the community hall, and his mother Marie Andrews (b. 1915) was proud to have won a prize for her contribution.

An unsigned concept sketch of the proposed building showed a more complex design than what was ultimately constructed. The sketch presented a long rectangular front-gable building with an elaborate cross gable, several gable dormers, and a recessed entry porch

topped by a covered balcony, with decorative flower boxes lining the balcony and many of the windows. The proposed building's interior featured an auditorium on the main floor seating 400 people, with a stage and balcony, and a commodious kitchen and dining room in the basement.

Social uses of the building were emphasized, including "meetings of the club, concerts, lectures, private social parties, and especially for meetings of various kinds that will interest the young people." To raise the remaining funds needed for construction, the proposed financing plan was "to ask the people to subscribe to bonds, the value of which will be $25.00 each. These bonds will not bear interest, and will be redeemed as soon as funds can be procured through the activities of the club." Community members were also invited to donate materials or labor. Club records indicate that the bond sale was successful; however, club leaders later decided the estimated construction cost of $9,000 was too high, and the building was redesigned to be less elaborate though ultimately not much less expensive.

Following two years of fund raising, and a lengthy design process, the Plans Committee comprised of three women and three men accepted architect Charles Bennett Thompson's plans. The estimated cost of construction was $8,939.20. The club received Permit #273210 from the Seattle Department of Buildings on December 27, 1927 to build a Community Clubhouse with a capacity of 250 persons.

Construction began in early 1928. Invoices and receipts for labor and materials held in the Sunset Hill Community Hall archives reveal a remarkable level of detail regarding the construction process. Most materials suppliers were located in Ballard, and some remain in business in 2024. Suppliers included:

Bolcom-Canal Lumber Company
Bowie Electric Company
California Stucco Company
G & L Electric Company
Inlaid Floor Company
Klingborg Sash & Door Company
Lake Union Brick and Fireproofing Company
Maxwell Electric Fixture Company
Merrill & Ring Lumber Company
Merrill's Paint and Wall Paper Store
National Sheet Metal Works
Peterson Hardware & Plumbing Company
Piestrup Plumbing & Heating Company
Salmon Bay Sand & Gravel Company
Seattle Lighting Company
Service Lumber Company

On the building permit, the line for contractor noted "day work," meaning that laborers were hired and paid as individuals rather than as employees of a construction company. Hand-written receipts identify many of those workers by name, including E.W. Shaffer who sent a note in late 1927 stating "I hereby make application for Foreman on your building." Shaffer, along with F.W. Bullock and C.W. Beckwith, proposed to provide the carpenters' labor on the building for $644, with $120 added later for extra work. Louie Engelhart completed $38 worth of concrete work including the porch slab and walkways. O.O. Wick furnished, laid, scraped and waxed the wood floor in the main hall for $499. J.C. Johnson painted the finished building for $97.60. The racial identities of these workers was not recorded, though they are likely to have been White, given the neighborhood's general population. The Ladies Auxiliary planned for and raised funds for the furnishings.

An inspector's report in August 1928 indicated that the basement was finished and in use, the auditorium was not yet plastered, and the project had been idle for some time, perhaps indicating that additional fundraising as well as some type of mortgage had to be undertaken to complete the project. By March 1929, the auditorium was finished but the stage was not yet plastered. Newspaper reports touted progress on the nearly completed construction project, stating, "with the completion of the beautiful community house with its commodious auditorium, its beautiful dining room, with a large open fireplace on each floor, the club will be in a better position to accomplish its aims and ambitions." One of the first major events at the completed hall was a dinner and dance hosted by the Sunset Hill Improvement Club for officers, delegates and members of the Affiliated Clubs of the North End in May 1929.

The onset of the Great Depression curtailed some of the club's advocacy strategies related to public investment, but members embraced more modest projects like planting trees in parking strips throughout the Sunset Hill district. The club continued to advocate for neighborhood projects like improvements to Sunset Hill Park, reconstruction of the Ballard Bridge, and construction of a new access road to Golden Gardens Park from the south to supplement the steep staircases and winding drive down from the bluff at the park's north end. Club members also redoubled their efforts to boost the local business community during the economic downtown. In both 1935 and 1936, the Sunset Hill Improvement Club "took over" the *Ballard Tribune's* last issue of the year, announcing their planned activities in the year to come, and admonishing readers to "Buy in Ballard and Build Your District." The 1935 special issue proclaimed:

> Ballard is perhaps the best organized in the city in the way of community clubs, and it is recognized that Seattle is one of the best so covered in the entire United States. These clubs make for a better district; for more community spirit and for local buying.

The club kept up a regular schedule of events including bingo, dances, potlucks, bazaars, hat contests, recitals, films, and driving lessons, but struggled financially as fewer members paid annual dues. In 1937, the club secretary wrote a letter to a long-time member encouraging

the recipient to purchase a life membership rather than simply paying her annual dues. The letter said:

> You know the Sunset Hill district and the Mt. Baker district are the only people who saved their Club Houses…during the depression. All others, I understand, lost their Club Homes including Queen Anne and West Seattle. We, however, got quite far behind on taxes and assessments, although we improved our building during that period.

Club members amended the constitution to expand boundaries for membership east to 24th Avenue NW, and raised the cost of renting the hall for private events from $12 to $13 in an effort to stabilize finances.

Sunset Hill Community Club 1940-1998

The 1940s brought administrative changes for the club and clubhouse, as the Sunset Hill Improvement Club was dissolved and replaced by the Sunset Hill Community Club, which filed Articles of Incorporated as an educational and social corporation with the State of Washington on May 30, 1940. The newly constituted club retained many of the improvement-oriented purposes of its predecessor and also expanded the emphasis on community building, with stated goals including "…to foster, develop and maintain a spirit of friendliness and cooperation; to achieve the furtherance and upbuilding of [the Sunset Hill] district and its environs; and to preserve and perpetuate its history and traditions…"The Community Club's new governing documents also expressed more explicitly activist intentions, including "to institute and stimulate investigations and reports on matters of public interest pertaining to said district," in addition to long-standing purposes of working together to secure concerted action in economic and civic betterment, and enjoying opportunities for socializing and recreation. Ownership of the clubhouse was transferred through a quit claim deed from the old organization to the new one. Shortly afterward, in 1944, the club achieved federal tax-exempt status as a 501(c)(4) social welfare organization.

The club carried on its varied activities through World War II. In December 1944, the club leased the building to the Y.M.C.A. for part time ongoing use "to serve 3,500 boys in Northwest Seattle and King County…a move to expand Y.M.C.A. facilities to fill a wartime need," following a survey of recreational opportunities in the area. The Y.M.C.A. altered the stage area in the main hall, partitioning it into two meeting rooms, a change later reversed. The club continued to hold dances and other events including bazaars, film showings and bingo games.

The clubhouse suffered a serious fire in October 1945 that damaged the roof and main hall. According to newspaper reports, neighbor George Waddell alerted the fire department and then entered the building to rescue a man who was walking around in the main hall. The man, who had apparently become confused in the smoke, was uncooperative and struggled with Waddell as they exited the building, causing both to fall down the stairs. Waddell sustained injuries, and the other man was never identified. The fire department inspector

determined the blaze was started by furnace sparks igniting litter in the rain gutters, which then burned under the shingles and into the attic, causing $7,000 in damage to a building then valued at $14,000. Board President B.T. Webber noted that the mortgage on the 18-year-old building had been reduced to $500, and the club had looked forward to being debt free. The club hired architect Jesse M. Warren and general contractor Nelse Mortensen Co. to work on the repairs. The roof was reconstructed without its formerly prominent gable dormer.

In 1947, the club celebrated its 25th anniversary with at least 200 people attending a potluck dinner and evening of entertainment. The *Ballard Tribune* summarized the club's ups and downs:

> There was the fight to raise money for the clubhouse… There was the story of gathering on Sunday to pour cement and dig the foundations. There was the more recent memory of a fire that burned away the roof of the clubhouse; and there were the, now funny but then dead serious, constant battles to raise money for back taxes, assessments and mortgage payments. Now the clubhouse is all paid for, it is tax exempt, and through an advantageous joint agreement with the Northwest branch of the Y.M.C.A., financial stability has been attained. All in 25 years.

With renewed energy, club members dove into civic activism in the post-World War II era. They petitioned for road improvements and a bus line to serve Golden Gardens, noting that it was "extremely difficult for mothers with small children to go up and down the hill between the present bus stop and the beach," and asking, "other districts have buses to their bathing beaches so why shouldn't Ballard?" The club petitioned for a new post office in Ballard, held discussions on ballot initiatives and bond issues, hosted monthly dances, and encouraged neighbors to get reacquainted and get involved. The club supported a proposal to construct a breakwater and establish a public marina at Shilshole that was finally completed in 1962. The club also backed an effort to re-establish ferry service between Ballard and Suquamish that was ultimately unsuccessful.

Inspired by the debut of Seafair in 1950, the club sponsored a Girls' Drill Team to carry the banner of the community club in parades throughout the city. The Ladies Auxiliary hosted turkey dinners and card parties to raise money for the team's white and gold cowgirl uniforms. The club supported construction of a new Ballard General Hospital, and began taking stands against zoning changes that would impact residential neighborhoods. It is unclear when the clubhouse began serving as a polling location, but it served that function at least as early as 1950, until 2009 when King County switched to all-mail voting.

Growing up in the Sunset Hill neighborhood in the 1950s, Tom Malone recalled spending time at the community hall playing pool and ping pong with friends, during the time period when the Y.M.C.A. staffed the building as a drop-in recreation center. Tom noted that kids were allowed to play in the lower hall, while the main hall was generally reserved for adult

gatherings and events. A letter from club president Louie Jacobson sent to neighborhood residents in 1958 conveyed the political climate of the era in an effort to recruit new members, without explicitly acknowledging that the popularity of staying home and watching television was having an impact on participation in club activities. Jacobsen wrote, "The privilege of meeting in a group to discuss matters of civic importance is taken for granted in the United States, but is an impossibility in most of the European countries. We should appreciate that privilege and use it as a right of free people." He also highlighted the club's open membership policy, stating:

> This Club is not restricted to any particular lodge, church affiliation, or other group. It is open to all who are interested in civic and local affairs and improvements, and all are invited to take part in the discussions and freely express opinions with a view toward the improvement of our community. It is a friendly group, and after the business meeting is over, refreshments are always served and the "coffee hour" is enjoyed by all.

By the beginning of the 1960s, relations became strained between the club and the Y.M.C.A. over how to cover the cost of needed facility repairs. Apparently, some years previously, the club had deeded at least a partial interest in the property to the Y.M.C.A. when the Y "paid an accumulation of taxes rather than permit the building to be sold by foreclosure." The Y was unable to secure public funding to complete repairs on the building without clear title to the property, and the issue was resolved by the Y reconveying full ownership of the property to the club, while continuing to lease the building on a part time basis.

Board members explored another possible public use of the clubhouse in the early 1970s, when discussions with a city council member led to a proposal for the city parks department to acquire the building for use as a drop-in center for seniors. Instead, the Ballard NW Senior Center was established in 1973 at the south end of the Sunset Hill neighborhood, in a 1950 building purchased with funds from the federal Model Cities Program.

The club marked 50 years of service to the community with a celebratory dinner in June 1973, where Mayor Wes Uhlman was the guest speaker. Although more than 100 people attended the anniversary dinner, the club's membership had fallen from a peak of around 500 families in the post-World War II era, to just 26 families, and the club considered disbanding and selling the clubhouse. According to club historian Perry Vogt, "the club president in 1974, Vinton Tongen, decided that the club would have to take new directions if it was to survive." The club continued to advocate for local issues like improvements to Golden Gardens Park, calls for better transit service, and opposition to the closure of Webster School. However, Vogt said that under Tongen's leadership, "the club became issue-oriented and got involved in policy making regarding zoning and city ordinances."

Vogt served as the club's Land Use and Housing Committee chairman from 1974 to 1983, and she worked to "watchdog proposals made by various city departments and report them back to the membership for discussion and action." Accomplishments from that era

included defeat of a four-story apartment building proposed for Shilshole in 1977, and in 1982, construction of the Towers, a development that would have blocked views. Buildings on Seaview Avenue were restricted to 30-foot heights, and Vogt noted that membership increased as the club stepped into its new activist role. By the time the club celebrated its 60th anniversary in 1982, membership had increased to more than 200 families.

The 1980s and 1990s brought the club into partnership or collaboration with a variety of city programs and community organizations including the Ballard District Council, Friends of the Burke-Gilman Trail, Block Watch, Adopt-A-Street, and open space programs. The club hosted an Old House lecture series on economical restoration of Ballard's historic homes with the Ballard Historical Society, as well as candidate forums, family New Years Eve parties, and joint programs with Groundswell NW, a neighborhood-based group focused on creating public open space and parks, while continuing to communicate with public officials on issues such as transit and development.

In the late 1980s, the City of Seattle constructed the Ballard Community Center nearby at 6020 28th Avenue NW, which, like the Sunset Hill Community Club, offered meeting space for local groups and a location for community events. At that time, Club leaders increased community outreach, saying "we (the board) need your help if we are to maintain the usefulness and relevance of our neighborhood organization.

Sunset Hill Community Association 1998-2024

The end of the twentieth century brought another transition for the organization, with the adoption of the name Sunset Hill Community Association, in an effort to convey the organization's welcoming and inclusive identity. Notably, census data indicates that the demographics of the Sunset Hill neighborhood (Tract 32) remained overwhelmingly White throughout the 20th century, while the greater Ballard neighborhood became slightly more ethnically and racially diverse. In the dozen census tracts that make up greater Ballard, communities of color have grown from approximately 1% in 1940 to an average of 25% in 2020, primary due to increases in the number of Latino and Asian Americans residents.

In 1998, association leaders began planning for a major capital improvement project to the community hall, asking for input from members about how the clubhouse should look in the future, prioritizing universal access and exploring issues related to building systems, use of space, and potential enhancements of the hall as a performance venue.

Ballard-based architect R.G. "Skip" Satterwhite developed project plans, and noted that a "series of good decisions" by board members over time have preserved the architectural character of the building. With the leadership of board president Kevin Carrabine, the association secured a Seattle Neighborhood Matching Fund grant to support construction of new front and rear entries, modifications to the downstairs restrooms and meeting hall to provide wheelchair accessibility, lighting and heating repairs, interior and exterior painting, and installation of an ADA compliant elevator. The renovated administrative office in the northeast corner of the lower hall was named in honor of Eli Lysness, three-time club

president, long-serving board member, clubhouse caretaker, and club member for more than forty years. City funding was matched by community businesses and individual members donating cash and volunteer time. The grant application noted:

> The building was constructed in an era when community meeting space was developed by the neighborhood, not a city department… Sunset Hill has been fortunate in being one of the few neighborhoods that has been able to retain building ownership through active member involvement and capable management.

Members and friends celebrated completion of the rehabilitation project in October 1999 at an open house, and again in December 1999 at a New Year's Eve party to mark the new millennium. Community events in the early 21st century included wine tastings, movie nights, dance parties, city council candidates Q & A sessions, forums on local issues like land development and oil trains, puppet shows, summer art camps, fitness classes, drivers education, concerts and potlucks, as well as private rentals.

Even with a wide range of activity, a decline in community involvement in the 2010s prompted the board to reconsider the role of the association. In 2012, board president Lois Spiegel reported, "Our revenue is decreasing, our expenses are increasing, and we don't have enough actively involved members. This direction is not sustainable, and we need to look ahead to the role of the association going forward." Spiegel observed that the clubhouse used to be the social hub of the community, but had increasingly become a rental space to cover the association's costs of owning and maintaining the building. Approaching the 90th anniversary of the organization's founding, Spiegel declared:

> We are searching for the plan for the next 90 years… It's about reinventing and taking a different approach. What can we shed, what can we add, and what can we change to become something of lasting benefit to the community?

The board sought input from members and the broader community in a 2012 open public meeting to help determine the future of the Sunset Hill Community Association and its clubhouse, asking, "Should SHCA change our model of operation, make hard decisions regarding the future of the facility, and perhaps close or sell the clubhouse?" Community members resoundingly supported keeping the clubhouse, and new volunteers stepped forward to help with programming, outreach, and building stewardship.

The Phinney Neighborhood Association provided administrative and management support for a limited period of time, and expanding regular rentals to instructors who offered yoga and dance classes to the community helped bring in new members. The COVID-19 pandemic curtailed public use of the building from 2020 through 2022, but the organization rallied to re-establish in-person community events like open mic evenings and art fairs, and to expand rental uses.

In 2024, board members applied for and received reclassification as a 501(c)(3) charitable organization, updating the mission statement and by-laws to reflect a greater emphasis on stewardship of the historic clubhouse, along with community-building activities, cultural events, and educational programs, all intended to foster a sense of belonging, well-being and inclusion. Announcing the new nonprofit organization created in the transition to 501(c)(3) status, board president John Munroe and vice president Myron Sizer wrote, "Over the many years we have had many names, first as the Sunset Hill Improvement Club, then as the Sunset Hill Community Club, then as the Sunset Hill Community Association. It is once again time to change our name to suit the new legal requirements of our new nonprofit organization to "Sunset Hill Community Hall."

On July 1, 2024, the building and financial assets were transferred by quit claim deed to the newly established Sunset Hill Community Hall nonprofit corporation. The deed included a covenant to protect the building's status as a historic community asset, declaring, "The property described herein shall always be maintained and utilized as a nonprofit community hall." The building continues to serve as a beloved community gathering place.

Architect Charles Bennett (C.B.) Thompson

Charles Bennett (or C.B.) Thompson (1873-1956) designed a clubhouse for the Sunset Hill Improvement Club in late 1927. Mr. Thompson was a White architect who had been working in Seattle for nearly three decades with his father Charles Lawton Thompson (1842-1927). The elder Thompson's death in 1927 ended their prolific partnership, and the Sunset Hill clubhouse was one of C.B. Thompson's first designs under his individual name, rather than as a partner of the firm Thompson & Thompson.

C.B.'s father Charles L. Thompson hailed from Massachusetts, fought in the Civil War, and moved to Rhode Island and later to Kansas where he learned the skills of stonemasonry and building design in the 1870s and 1880s. In Kansas, Charles L. Thompson married Lillia Ester Lines, the daughter of a carpenter and builder; son Charles Bennett or C.B. Thompson was born in 1874 and daughter Lillian Esther Thompson was born in 1876. The family moved to Utah in 1890 where Charles L. established an architectural firm with partner Simon J. Weigel. Between 1890 and 1893, when the country entered into a depression, the firm designed over thirty buildings in Utah. C.B. Thompson worked as a draughtsman in his father's firm starting in 1890 at the age of 16.

With economic conditions limiting opportunities for architectural work, Charles L. Thompson journeyed to Alaska in 1898 during the Klondike Gold Rush, traveling through Seattle, and relocated to Seattle the following year where he was joined by his family. Father and son established the architectural partnership of Thompson & Thompson in Seattle in 1899. Son C.B. Thompson married Adrianna Abbott in 1901 in Seattle, and by 1907 they had three children. Initially living on Capitol Hill, both Thompsons and their families moved to the Sunset Hill neighborhood of Ballard around 1909, where they resided in homes they designed on view lots across the street from each other; father Charles L.

Thompson and his wife Lillia at 7200 34th Avenue NW (demolished) and son C.B. Thompson and his wife Adrianna at 3321 NW 72nd Street (extant).

One of the early residences designed by Thompson & Thompson, the Neoclassical 1904 James Galbraith House on Capitol Hill, was designated as a Seattle landmark in 2005. The landmark nomination application for the Galbraith House stated that little information was available about Thompson & Thompson at that time; however, recent research by architect and scholar Marvin Anderson has identified more than 160 buildings in Seattle designed by the father-son team between 1899 and 1927. Of these, approximately 40% were commercial blocks and mixed-use buildings, 35% were residences, 20% were apartments, and 5% were places of worship. Overall, approximately 90% of these design commission represented new construction and 10% were alterations or additions to existing buildings.

The firm's work is represented in the monograph *Seattle of Today Architecturally*, co-published by several of the featured firms around 1905. A promotional booklet published by Thompson & Thompson around 1911 featured a selection of the "palatial homes, handsome churches and prominent business blocks" designed by the firm. Working from offices located in the Dexter Horton Building, and later the Mutual Life Building in Pioneer Square, the firm averaged nearly a dozen commissions per year in their first decade, with a high of 18 building designs completed in 1910.

Thompson & Thompson designed buildings throughout Seattle, but their extant work is especially well represented as contributing buildings in the city's designated historic districts. Some of the earliest examples of their work are part of the Pioneer Square Historic District including the Sartori/Moses Block (1900), Whitney/Metropolitan Block (1901), and the Gottstein/City Loan Building (1903). The Chinatown International District includes at least eight of their buildings, notably the Nippon Kan Building/Astor Hotel (1909), Hotel Milwaukee (1910), and the East and West Kong Yick Buildings (1910). According to historian Marie Rose Wong, Thompson & Thompson gained respect in Asian American communities for their work on behalf of Chinese American and Japanese American entrepreneurs and corporations in designing several significant examples of single room occupancy residential hotel buildings with street-level commercial storefronts that represented the dominant typology for new construction in both Chinatown and Nihonmachi at the time. The East and West Kong Yick buildings served as important anchors for the relocation and reconstruction of Seattle's Chinatown following completion of the Jackson Street regrade in 1909.

The Columbia City Historic District includes at least three extant buildings by Thompson & Thompson: the Toby Block (1906), Rector's (1911), and the Columbia Café (1914). Their Silver Okum Building (1909) is included in the Pike Place Market Historic District.

In addition to the Galbraith House, the ornate Classic Box Singerman Residence/Gaslight Inn (1907) on Capitol Hill was individually designated a City of Seattle landmark. The Mission Revival style Booth Building (1906), also on Capitol Hill, was nominated as a Seattle landmark but narrowly missed designation. Another notable work by the firm is the

Monmouth (later Clairemont) Apartment complex in the Central District (1909). The firm's stylistic versatility is notable in the buildings listed above – from the rusticated stonework of the Sartori/Moses block characteristic of the Romanesque Revival style, to brick and wood commercial vernacular blocks in neighborhood commercial districts, to elegant mansions and eclectic style apartments, the firm produced a tremendous output of what might be called "character buildings," blending into their urban surroundings and reflecting popular architectural styles and forms of their eras.

The firm's output decreased by the late 1910s, with fewer and generally more modest commissions including stores, parking garages, apartment buildings, and residences in the 1920s. Following father Charles L. Thompson's death in 1927, son C.B. Thompson designed just a handful of additional buildings, including the Sunset Hill Community Hall, three retail stores in north Seattle neighborhoods, and an apartment building on Lower Queen Anne. As the Great Depression suppressed the construction trade, C.B. Thompson shifted his occupation to manufacturing mining machinery. After retiring sometime after 1940, C.B. Thompson and his wife moved to Everett, where he died in 1956.

Although Thompson & Thompson were never regarded as "cutting edge" designers, their work was "solid, well-built, and admired by…contemporaries," and they made a substantial contribution to Seattle's early twentieth century built environment. The Sunset Hill Community Hall represents a late career solo work by C.B. Thompson who designed a community building to serve the neighborhood he had called home for twenty years.

Architectural Style: Eclectic Colonial Revival

The vernacular form and simplified detailing of the Sunset Hill Community Hall reflect the architectural eclecticism of the late 1920s, exhibiting both Colonial Revival and Craftsman stylistic elements. Most noticeable on the primary elevation, simplified Colonial Revival elements include the building's prominent cornices with boxed eaves, and the porticos with curved undersides covering both the lower hall and main hall entrances. These key details imbue the building with a sense of tradition and formality, and a feeling of comfortable familiarity, given the established popularity of the Colonial Revival style for public buildings and places of worship, as well as homes. Other typical features of the style such as clapboard siding, symmetrical facades, and central entrances, are not reflected in the building, while elements such as the shingle cladding and window configurations suggest Craftsman influences. These eclectic design details drawing on popular historical references suggested continuity with the past, and bestowed a restrained architectural character for an economically constructed building.

The original 1925 concept design proposed for the Sunset Hill Community Hall more strongly emphasized Craftsman style elements, such as exposed rafter tails, built-in window boxes, and a recessed entrance porch topped by a recessed balcony. It is unknown whether this concept design was developed by C.B. Thompson or another architect, but by the time

Thompson prepared detailed construction drawings in 1927, the Colonial Revival elements emerged as the predominant stylistic details.

Earlier works by Thompson & Thompson from the beginning of the 1900s through the 1920s drew on eclectic combinations of various revival styles, but C.B. Thompson's design for the Sunset Hill Community Hall in some ways represents the end of an era in Pacific Northwest design. Shortly after the building's completion in 1929, the onset of the Great Depression curtailed new construction for an extended period of time. What building there was, supported by federal government programs or in limited economic sectors, leaned toward more austere styles like Stripped (or Minimal) Classicism and emerging styles like Streamline Moderne. After World War II, historical styles were generally disregarded in favor of modernist forms and materials that eschewed historical references. Thus the Sunset Hill Community Hall exemplifies the end of a decades-long period of urban expansion characterized by eclectic revival style architecture in Seattle neighborhoods.

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