



The City of Seattle

Landmarks Preservation Board

700 Third Avenue · 4th floor · Seattle, Washington 98104 · (206) 684-0228

REPORT ON DESIGNATION

LPB 38/05

Name and Address of Property: **Laurelhurst Community Center**
4554 NE 41st Street

Legal Description:

Blocks 1,4,5,8, excepting Lots 28, 29 30 of Block 8, Scottish Heights Addition, together with portions of vacated East 42nd, 43rd and 44th Streets adjoining

At the public meeting held on January 19, 2005, the City of Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Board voted to approve designation of the Laurelhurst Community Center as a Seattle Landmark based upon satisfaction of the following standards 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.*
- F. Because of its prominence of spatial location, contrasts of siting, age, or scale, it is an easily identifiable visual feature of its neighborhood or the city and contributes to the distinctive quality or identity of such neighborhood or city.*

DESCRIPTION

Laurelhurst Playfield is situated on four city blocks bounded by NE 41st Street to the south, 48th Avenue NE to the east, NE 45th Street to the north and the unimproved 45th Avenue NE to the west. Completed in 1935, the brick veneer field house occupies a site along the western side of the circular entrance drive at the southern end of the playfield with access from NE 41st Street. The children's play area is located to the north, and four tennis courts are located to the west near a Seattle City Light substation at the southwest corner. Athletic fields north of the play area cover the majority of the 13.22-acre site that has a steep slope along the western margin. Trees and mature landscaping line the perimeter of the largely open playfield. At the northeast corner of the playfield, a pedestrian overpass provides safe access to the Laurelhurst Elementary School located across busy NE 45th Street. The school's gymnasium is a shared recreational facility between the Seattle Parks Department and the Seattle School District. In addition to the school, two churches, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church and the Seattle Community Church, are located across the street from the playfield in the largely residential neighborhood of well-kept homes and yards.

Set into a hillside at the playfield's highest point, the one-story building has a lower basement level open on the rear west elevation. The building has the irregular plan and massing typical of Tudor Revival architecture. However, its restrained interpretation of the style lacks the fanciful ornamentation and embellishments often found on many buildings of this type. On the side gable main block, the principal east elevation has side gable wings offset at the northeast and southeast corners. The wing at the northeast corner also has a gable front wing extending from the east elevation. The rear west elevation has two full-height side gable wings offset at the northwest and southwest corners. The shorter western and longer eastern roof slopes on these rear wings give them a saltbox form. The wings on the front and rear elevations intersect on the side elevations of the main block clad with wide cedar siding. On the south elevation of the main block, a large brick chimney rises through the middle of the gable end between the wings. Overall, the building measures approximately 84 feet by 48 feet on the longest sides.

On the principal east elevation, pairs of ornate scroll brackets support the shed roof, which extends from the main roof and covers the double door center entrance. Framed by paneled wood shutters, two large multi-paned windows flank this center entrance. Additional single entrance doors are located on the north and south inner corners of the wings adjoining the main block. The wing at the southern end of the elevation has two smaller multi-paned windows with shutters on the east elevation and two on the south elevation at the same upper floor level. The narrow west elevation of this wing has another shuttered window at the main floor level above a wide paneled entrance door at the ground floor level. At the northern end of the east elevation, the gable front wing has one multi-paned window with shutters on the south elevation and one centered on the east elevation. On the north elevation, this wing has another shuttered window adjacent to a single entrance door, while the side gable wing has a large vertical window at the center flanked by smaller windows set high on the wall.

On the rear west elevation, five large multi-paned windows with paneled wood shutters line the upper floor level. At the lower basement level, three small horizontal windows alternate with two wider horizontal windows, all of which contain multi-paned sash above high brick bulkheads. Originally, these openings extended nearly to the ground and contained windows twice as large. The brick bulkheads display evidence of this alteration. The end wings on this elevation have entrance doors at the ground floor level below small shuttered windows at the upper floor level. The north and south side elevations of the wings each have a similar shuttered window centered below the peak at the upper floor level. The northern wing also has a single entrance door at the eastern end of the north elevation at the ground floor level. Although there have been extensive window alterations, the modern replacements are sympathetic to the original design of the building. Well maintained, this architecturally distinctive structure retains very good physical integrity.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Laurelhurst Neighborhood Historical Context

Situated immediately east of the University of Washington campus, the Laurelhurst neighborhood of Seattle occupies a hilly peninsula that partially encloses the eastern end of Lake Washington's Union Bay. Originally, the shallow waters of a larger Union Bay extended beyond NE 45th Street and continued as a marshy wetland to the bay's northern shoreline at about NE 50th Street. The curving route of the present Burke-Gilman Trail roughly outlines this original shoreline. Ravenna Creek drained into the northwest corner of the marsh after flowing downward through a deep ravine. The base of a steep bluff formed much of the bay's western shoreline. Near the southwest corner of the bay, a narrow neck of low-lying land separated Lake Union's Portage Bay from the waters of Lake Washington and provided a connection to the bay's southern shoreline. Although originally platted as Union City, this area became known as the Montlake neighborhood. This topography impeded access to the Laurelhurst peninsula and isolated it from adjoining neighborhoods, delaying significant residential development until the 1920s.

Sixty years earlier, Euro-Americans settlers had established the first homestead claims on the wooded peninsula, an area which had been used as a seasonal campground by the Duwamish Indians. With claims ranging in size between 35 and 165 acres, John S. Maggs, Henry Nathan, Jr., William H. Surber, John Nicklas, John Hildebrand, and Teresa Feltofer acquired most of the land which now lies at the heart of the Laurelhurst neighborhood. In the 1860s, this area was considered far from the center of town in Pioneer Square and located well outside the Seattle city limits with a northern boundary at Galer and McGraw Streets in 1869. The primary access was by water with only crude trails around the northern shoreline of Union Bay leading south across the narrow neck of land. By the later 1860s, it was possible to travel by wagon road from Pioneer Square to the southern shores of Union Bay following the route of today's East Madison Street and then by boat across the water to the Laurelhurst peninsula. Judge John J. McGilvra had cut the road through the wilderness at his own expense to provide access to the large tract of land he acquired in the mid-1860s in the area now known as Madison Park. Judge McGilvra had moved to Seattle from Olympia after serving three years as United States Attorney for the Washington Territory and shortly thereafter had built a home on his property, which he called "Laurel Shade." This name may have influenced the real estate developers who platted the peninsula in the first decade of the 20th century to call it "Laurelhurst." In the 1880s, Judge McGilvra offered stage service on his road twice a day, providing a primitive transportation system to the early homesteaders.

William H. "Joe" or "Uncle Joe" Surber owned the largest parcel of land on the Laurelhurst peninsula, 165 acres or just over a quarter section. The bulk of the property, 125 acres, lay south of NE 45th Street between 35th and 45th Avenues NE and fronted on the water. The other 40 acres lay north of NE 45th Street between 35th and 40th Avenues NE to the south of NE 50th Street. After his arrival in Seattle in the late 1850s, Surber operated a pile driving business that built many of the city's early wharves and railroad trestles. He also served as Seattle's first Chief of Police in the mid-1860s. Initially, Surber, an avid hunter, lived in town in a house located at 5th Avenue and Main Street. However, he eventually moved to his homestead claim on the shores of Union Bay, his favorite hunting ground. Although he later sold off large tracts of his land, Surber continued to live on his farm until his death in 1923 at the age of 89.

It was in the late 1880s that Joe Surber sold the western third of his property below NE 45th Street to Seattle pioneer Henry L. Yesler and his nephew, J.D. Lowman, officers of the Yesler Wood, Coal and Lumber Company. In September of 1888, the company founded the “Town of Yesler” near the northern shore of Union Bay and subsequently built a sawmill south of town in 1890 in order to take advantage of the tree-lined shores of Lake Washington. Comprising a total of twelve blocks, each with eight lots, Yesler’s town site was located immediately south of the Seattle Lake Shore & Eastern Railway line. Organized in 1885 by Judge Thomas Burke and entrepreneur Daniel J. Gilman, the railroad had reached Union Bay in 1887, immediately improving access to the once remote area. A separate spur line served the mill, which operated for only five years before a spectacular fire destroyed it in 1895. After the fire, the company constructed a shingle mill on the same site, and it remained in operation until the early 1920s when it burned as well.

As Yesler’s company gradually cleared the stands of trees, the once wooded slopes of the Laurelhurst peninsula were converted into orchards and farmland. With the exception of widely scattered farmhouses, the peninsula’s small population was concentrated in the cluster of wood frame homes within the town of Yesler during much of the 1890s and early 1900s. The limited number of residents was the likely reason that the Laurelhurst peninsula remained outside of the city’s limits during a period when the city of Seattle annexed all adjoining neighborhoods to the west and south. The North Seattle Annexation in May of 1891 encompassed the northern ends of Capitol and Queen Anne Hills as well as Magnolia, Fremont, Wallingford, Green Lake, Latona, and Brooklyn, which later became known as the University District. The annexed area included Union Bay and its marshlands west of 35th Avenue NE and south of NE 55th Street and the Montlake and Madison Park neighborhoods. Ravenna, which covered an L-shaped area of land east of 15th Avenue NE and north of NE 55th Street, remained outside the city limits until annexed in 1907.

In addition to railway service, cable car and streetcar lines that terminated nearby provided regular transportation to downtown Seattle by the early 1890s. In the late 1880s, Judge McGilvra obtained financial backing to replace the stage service on his road with the Madison Street Cable Railway. Built to spur residential development within Madison Park, the cable railway also provided Laurelhurst residents with the most direct connection to downtown once they crossed the waters of Union Bay. In the early 1900s, this crossing became easier and faster with the introduction of scheduled ferry service via the *Laurelhurst Launch* operated by the Herzog brothers. In 1892, David Denny’s Rainier Power and Railway Company completed the northern terminus of its Third Street & Suburban Railway from downtown Seattle to Ravenna Park. Begun in 1891, the streetcar line extended from downtown Seattle out to Lake Union and then along Eastlake and across to Latona and Brooklyn before it terminated near Ravenna Park’s original entrance at present-day 20th Avenue NE along the southern lip of the ravine. Residents of Laurelhurst traversed the distance to the streetcar terminus on the rough wagon tracks constructed along section and quarter section lines.

Shortly after the founding of the town of Yesler, William B. and Annie P. Clowe of Walla Walla County platted their “Scottish Heights Addition to the City of Seattle” in the summer of 1889. This plat occupied the northwestern forty acres of the original 94-acre homestead that Henry Nathan, Jr. claimed in the 1860s. Ten large blocks, each divided into thirty lots, comprised the plat now located between NE 40th and NE 45th Streets and 45th and 51st Avenues NE and bisected by 48th Avenue NE. Unlike other outlying areas where five-acre parcels were platted to serve as garden farms, this addition’s small lots anticipated denser residential development that would not commence for more than thirty years. The lack of development proved to be fortuitous in the later 1920s when the northern four blocks in the western half of the addition were acquired and eventually developed into

the Laurelhurst Playfield. The demand for a neighborhood park arose from the increased pace of residential development in other parts of Laurelhurst during the intervening years.

Prior to this development, the southern 54 acres of Henry Nathan, Jr.'s homestead served as the grounds of the Seattle Golf Club for eight years between 1900 and 1908. By 1900, David Ferguson had acquired this acreage overlooking Lake Washington and farmed it despite the hilly topography and the presence of a deep ravine following the route of what is now 51st Avenue NE. In 1900, Ferguson rented his land to the golf club founded by some fifty prominent Seattle men who agreed to pay him \$100.00 per month for ten years with an option to purchase. In the next couple of years, the club developed six of the projected nine holes on the grounds and used Ferguson's farmhouse as their clubhouse. Members traveled to the course via a private launch from Madison Park after disembarking at the end of the Madison Street cable car line. Early in 1907, the Seaboard Security Company offered to sell the club up to 350 acres of land located four miles north of Ballard overlooking Puget Sound. At the same time, it offered to purchase the club's Lake Washington property for three times the option price. Club members bought 155 of the 350 acres available for their golf course and acquired the remaining acres for individual home sites, which they developed into The Highlands, an exclusive gated residential community. Although the Seaboard Realty Company platted their new property as "Laurelhurst Heights" in September of 1907, the golf club continued to lease their original location until their new course opened the following year.

The previous year in November of 1906, the Seaboard Realty Company had joined with the McLaughlin Realty Company to plat "Laurelhurst, An Addition to the City of Seattle." This subdivision comprised the eastern third of Joe Surber's property below NE 45th Street and 35 acres on the southern tip of the peninsula originally homesteaded by John S. Maggs in the 1860s. After passing through a series of owners, Ellen Leanora Little of Oskaloosa, Iowa purchased the 35 acres in 1896 and lived in a house built by her uncles the following year until her marriage to Rees W. Price in 1902. The plat map for the addition lists both Joe Surber and Ellen Price as mortgagees. In January of 1907, the McLaughlin Realty Company joined with John and Bridget Hildebrand to plat their 39-acre homestead located north of the golf course grounds as "The Palisades, An Addition to the City of Seattle." The Hildebrands had farmed their property overlooking Lake Washington since the early 1880s.

With this flurry of speculative real estate activity, the entire Laurelhurst peninsula south of NE 45th Street and east of 42nd Avenue NE was divided into residential blocks and lots. However, despite the developers' efforts to promote their subdivisions, the area's remote location and inconvenient access delayed substantial residential construction until well after annexation finally occurred in 1910. Access by water became more difficult in 1916 when the opening of the Montlake Cut lowered Lake Washington by almost nine feet. This left the docks, which had been the main transportation route to the city, high and dry. In addition, the lowering of the lake drained the marshland to the north of NE 45th Street, allowing the development of fertile nursery gardens. To the south, the water receded, creating new marshes and reducing the size of Union Bay. Owned by the University of Washington, this area became a sanitary landfill used by the city of Seattle until the 1960s before being converted to its current use as athletic fields.

Overland access to Laurelhurst had improved somewhat in 1909, the year a new streetcar line opened to serve the southeast entrance of the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition, which occupied the lower half of the University of Washington campus for four and a half months. The line ran along

the eastern flank of Capitol Hill and through the Montlake neighborhood before terminating at the campus, still a considerable journey to Laurelhurst. In 1914, four years after annexation, the city completed a wooden trestle bridge across Union Bay's marshland roughly following the route of present day NE 45th Street. Designed to accommodate automobiles, the bridge was narrow and rather treacherous but proved to be a convenient shortcut. Before public transportation reached the Laurelhurst peninsula in the early 1920s, residents operated their own private transit service to the University District via the trestle bridge, first using an elongated Ford and then a larger bus. Eventually, the city filled under the trestle bridge to create a road, greatly enhancing access to the Laurelhurst neighborhood. The construction of the NE 45th Street viaduct in the late 1930s provided the neighborhood's first direct connection to the University District.

Laurelhurst Community Club

Many of these early transportation improvements were the result of the efforts of the Laurelhurst Community Club, a neighborhood organization that continues to the present day. Formed in the fall of 1920, the Laurelhurst Improvement Club, as it was originally called until 1926, included the residents of some seventy homes located in the area south of NE 45th Street and east of 42nd Avenue NE. With a stated purpose of improving, beautifying, and bettering the Laurelhurst neighborhood, the Laurelhurst Improvement Club's first actions focused on transportation issues. The club upgraded the neighborhood's private transit service by purchasing a bus that had been used by the Frederick and Nelson store for transporting their customers. The club designated members to oversee operations of the service, including the hiring of drivers. Within a few years, the club convinced the city to provide public transportation to the neighborhood. The Laurelhurst Improvement Club also advocated for improvements to the wooden trestle bridge and the development of the permanent road across the wetlands. The completion of the Montlake Bridge in 1925 improved access so substantially that the club was able to turn their efforts to other neighborhood concerns.

In the later 1920s, one of the club's primary concerns was the construction of a permanent building for the Laurelhurst Elementary School. Since its founding, the Laurelhurst Community Club had been a strong supporter and advocate for the neighborhood school. The club held its meetings there, raised money to pay for repairs and improvements, and fought against attempts by the School Board to close the school and transfer its pupils to nearby Bryant Elementary. By 1927, over one hundred students occupied four wood frame portable buildings located on a block bounded by NE 45th and NE 47th Streets and 46th and 47th Avenues NE. The Seattle School District had purchased this site ten years earlier and had built the first two-room portable in 1919, replacing two earlier school buildings located elsewhere in the neighborhood. After heavy campaigning by the community, the School District agreed to construct a new brick building, which was formally dedicated in the fall of 1928. The Laurelhurst Community Club supported the new facility by financing library books and playground equipment.

Laurelhurst Playfield

In addition to advocating for a new school building, the Laurelhurst Community Club was instrumental in the acquisition and development of a public park for the neighborhood. Although Laurelhurst had been annexed by the city in 1910, it remained largely undeveloped for more than a decade. As the number of residents increased and the amount of vacant land decreased over the next

fifteen years, it became apparent that a public park would be a desirable and needed amenity. Since 1903, the city had followed a plan prepared by the Olmsted Brothers landscape firm of Brookline, Massachusetts that directed development of a comprehensive park and boulevard system and improvements to existing parks. Supplemented by an additional report in 1908 to include the large areas annexed by the city the previous year, this plan also advocated for the creation of playgrounds located near schools so teachers could direct the children's activities. The idea of public recreation facilities in parks had only become popular late in the 19th and early in the 20th centuries, and the Olmsted Brothers were at the forefront of the movement. However, the Olmsted Brothers recommendations did not include those areas located outside the city limits, such as the Laurelhurst peninsula. As a result, no parks were developed in Laurelhurst for many years as the Seattle Parks Department focused on implementing the Olmsted plan elsewhere in the city.

In May of 1925, the Playground Committee of the Laurelhurst Improvement Club petitioned the Board of Park Commissioners to acquire blocks 1, 4, 5, and 8 of the Scottish Heights Addition as a playfield site. Bordered by NE 41st and NE 45th Streets and 45th and 48th Avenues NE, the undeveloped site was located immediately south of the Laurelhurst Elementary School property and occupied the highest point in the district. The site's rugged topography, which dropped off steeply to the west, may have been the reason that the three streets separating the four blocks had been vacated by 1920. The committee's petition letter to the Board indicated that the city had already identified it as a proposed playfield site, most likely due to its proximity to the elementary school. In the letter, the Playground Committee noted that the location had the "unanimous approval" of the rapidly growing district and was "topographically well fitted for a playfield." In closing, the committee urged the Board to "proceed at once" to acquire the property.

However, it was another year before the city actually passed the necessary ordinance to condemn the 13.22 acres of land for the playfield and provide for payment. Approved in April of 1926, Ordinance No. 50826 stipulated that the city would pay no more than \$15,000 of the acquisition cost. The Laurelhurst neighborhood would pay the remainder of the cost through a special assessment levied within a Local Improvement District (L.I.D.) approved by a majority of its residents. The Laurelhurst Community Club led a successful campaign for approval of the L.I.D. with the result that the land was purchased in 1927 once condemnation proceedings were completed. After the city paid its \$15,000 share from the General Fund, the remaining \$25,354.08 of the total cost of \$40,354.08 came from the community's assessment. The same year, the Madrona neighborhood also organized a Local Improvement District to acquire land for a playfield near the Madrona Elementary School. These acquisitions set a precedent for using this funding mechanism to purchase park property that would be followed by other neighborhoods. The Parks Department purchases of the Laurelhurst and Madrona playfield sites also followed the policy originally developed by the Olmsted Brothers landscape firm to locate new playgrounds near existing schools.

Laurelhurst Playfield Field House and Depression-era Relief Agencies

Once the land had been acquired, the Laurelhurst Community Club turned its efforts towards the site's improvement, including construction of a field house. During this period, the Seattle Parks Department followed a standard development program for newly acquired playfields that staged active construction over a five to ten year period. The first step was to complete the clearing, grading, surfacing and fencing of the site. At this point, general play areas could be laid out and used immediately by neighborhood children. Next, water and drainage systems were installed prior

to planting and landscaping. The last and the most costly phase included the construction of shelter houses, the laying out of athletic fields, the building of courts and wading pools, and the installation of play equipment. At times, a temporary wood frame structure was built to satisfy an immediate need before a permanent masonry shelter house could be built to replace it.

The 1928 Seattle Parks Department budget included \$2,000 for the clearing and grading of the new Laurelhurst Playfield. Apparently, the Laurelhurst Community Club found this amount unsatisfactory, for in May of 1928, some of its members appeared before the Park Board to request that not less than \$10,000 be placed in the 1929 budget for improvements to the playground. Initially, their efforts were unsuccessful although the initial site work was completed in 1929, enabling the development of some game fields. Portions of the water and drainage system were also installed that year. In 1930, additions were made to this system, and four clay tennis courts were constructed. The following year, Park Engineer Eugene R. Hoffman prepared a report entitled *A Ten Year Program for the Seattle Park Department* that inventoried facilities and provided cost estimates of the needs of each park and playground in Seattle. Based upon a projected population for the Seattle metropolitan area in 1940, the program of development aimed at making better use of existing properties, adding to those properties that needed more space, and acquiring new properties in those areas of the city that were experiencing growth. The 1931 report noted that the rapid growth of the Laurelhurst district demanded rapid development of the playfield into the “standard district type” with facilities for children to play as well as for adults. The report recommended that a shelter house be erected first followed by beautification and development of the play areas and estimated that costs for the improvements would total \$29,450.

This 1931 report became the basis for the projects included in the Seattle Park Bonds 1932 Construction Fund, which budgeted \$6,000 for a shelter house at the Laurelhurst Playfield out of its \$370,000 total. Shortly after the \$6,000 had been appropriated, the Laurelhurst Community Club presented the Park Board with a petition signed by 403 residents of the neighborhood requesting a building large enough to accommodate the playfield as well as to provide “suitable quarters” for all the organizations that would hold meetings there. These organizations included the Laurelhurst Community Club itself, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Camp Fire Girls, the local Parent-Teacher Association, the Fruit & Flower Mission, and the Music & Art Foundation among others. The petition noted that no other facilities with assembly rooms of sufficient size were located in the district and reminded the Park Board that neighborhood residents had “contributed liberally” in the acquisition of the playfield.

Apparently, the club deemed the proposed shelter house, the standard for most playfields at the time, as inadequate for the community’s needs in the absence of other public facilities and desired the construction of a field house. At that time, there were six of these larger structures spread widely throughout the city at Hiawatha, Ballard, Collins, South Park and Rainier Playfields and Green Lake Park. These recreational facilities functioned as community centers, and most included combination gymnasiums and auditoriums with stages, clubrooms, quiet game rooms, showers, locker rooms and lockers, toilets, rest rooms, refreshment kitchens, drinking fountains, offices, and store rooms. It appears that the Laurelhurst Community Club was successful in its efforts to persuade the Park Board to build a larger structure than planned. In a Bond Construction Fund report dated July 1, 1932, it was noted that \$584.08 had been spent on “Park and Labor Supplies” out of the \$6,000 allowance for the Laurelhurst Playfield and that plans were completed for a \$14,000 shelter house. Unfortunately, the report also indicated that the project was held up due to a lack of funds.

By this time, the city was reeling from the effects of the nationwide economic Depression that had begun several years earlier. City government experienced significant financial difficulties and halted nearly all its capital improvement projects, including park improvements previously funded by the 1932 bond issue. It was not until the fall of 1933 that the first federal relief agency, the Civil Works Administration (CWA), began to provide the city with assistance. Created on November 9, 1933, the CWA was intended to be a short term program designed to carry the nation over a critical winter while other programs of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) were being planned and developed. With the federal government paying most of the wages, the CWA aimed to put four million unemployed to work during the winter of 1933-34 on public works projects sponsored primarily by local state governments, which furnished the materials. Governor Clarence D. Martin and Director Charles F. Ernst headed the CWA program in Washington State. In King County, 3,500 were immediately put to work under the CWA during the Fall of 1933. By January, 17,173 were employed in a variety of public works projects, including road, bridge and airport construction and flood repairs on the Cedar River.

In December of 1933, the Board of Park Commissioners met to decide the Seattle Parks Department projects that would use labor furnished by the CWA and materials purchased with appropriations from the 1932 Bond Construction Fund. Green Lake Park received the largest expenditure, \$24,000, to pay for a water system, a tool house, and plantings. The Park Board also approved new shelter houses at the Laurelhurst and Montlake Playfields, the only recreational structures funded at this time, with \$8,340 earmarked for Laurelhurst and \$6,700 for Montlake. Although it was the middle of winter, work on both shelter houses began immediately in January of 1934, and construction proceeded simultaneously over the next three months. By early March, the brick veneered exteriors of both buildings were largely complete as evidenced in historic photographs. However, construction was halted at the end of March when CWA operations came to a close. In a letter dated March 27, 1934, Chief Engineer Arrigo M. Young of the CWA's King County Division informed W.C. Hall, Junior Park Engineer, of the planned shutdown on March 29. Young also noted that the Parks Department would need to reapply in the future for assistance on completing the unfinished projects.

After the CWA program ended in the spring of 1934, these projects were eventually continued and completed under the auspices of the Washington Emergency Relief Administration (WERA), a relief agency operated by the Washington State government from 1933-37. In addition to creating work for the unemployed, WERA also provided other public welfare assistance, including aid to the aged, the homeless, and the impoverished. In August of 1934, W.C. Hall wrote a letter to WERA District Engineer A.M. Young on behalf of the Park Board, detailing the Parks Department list of projects to be completed in order of their importance. The "Laurelhurst Fieldhouse" was at the top of the list and the "Montlake Fieldhouse" was second. As the letter notes, some time over the course of 1934, the buildings began to be identified as field houses, replacing the earlier designation as shelter houses. This change reflected the fact that the new structures provided more spacious recreational facilities than the smaller shelter houses although they were not as large as the earlier field houses.

Although the Park Board Annual Report for 1934 stated that the two new field houses were nearly completed at the end of 1934, the Laurelhurst Field House was not dedicated until the spring of 1935, and the Montlake Field House was not dedicated until the fall of that year. By the time they were completed, both projects were substantially over budget, possibly indicating that the finished

structures were larger and more elaborate than originally planned. Although both buildings were designed with Tudor Revival stylistic features, the Laurelhurst Field House displays a more modern and restrained interpretation of the style that lacks the half-timber embellishments found on the more traditional Montlake Field House. The use of the Tudor Revival style for Seattle park buildings was very popular in the 1920s and 1930s, mirroring its dominance in the residential architecture of the time. The eight shelter houses built in playfields throughout the city during the later 1920s and early 1930s display a simplified Tudor Revival style in their design. Construction of these shelter houses followed a policy to build only structures that would be pleasing in design and permanent in nature. Several comfort stations constructed during the same period employed a more finely detailed version of the style, reflecting their location in prominent parks in fashionable residential neighborhoods. In addition, the Tudor Revival style lent itself well to the use of brick veneer in the buildings' masonry exteriors.

The Laurelhurst Community Club assisted the Park Board in arranging the dedication ceremony, which took place at the new \$27,000 field house on April 26, 1935 at 8:00pm. Dr. Walter G. Hiltner represented the club and presided over the evening's program. Honored guests included Mrs. Charles L. Smith, the mayor's wife, Harry M. Westfall, Park Board president, and David Levine, president of the City Council, as well as other civic leaders and representatives of various North End community clubs. After a musical program opened the ceremony, local Boy Scouts, Camp Fire Girls and Girl Scouts followed with a flag salute before Dr. Hiltner introduced Mr. Westfall and Mr. Levine as speakers. At the close of the ceremony, an open house allowed area residents to view the facilities of their new recreation center located on a circular drive at the southern end of the playfield. Built into a hillside, the upper level contained a spacious social room equipped with a large fireplace, an instructor's office, a kitchen and a storage room, while the lower level housed separate locker rooms, showers, and restroom facilities for men and women. Designated as a "B" type field house, the only major feature that it lacked was a gymnasium.

An article published in the April 26, 1935 issue of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* identified Lloyd J. Lovegren as the project's architect. Lovegren's initials, L.J.L., also appear on the original building plans. Lovegren must have produced the plans prior to the CWA's involvement in the project, as his name is not on a list of CWA workers within the Parks Department. This most likely occurred in the late summer or fall of 1933 as attested by a letter dated in July of that year from Allen Erickson, the Park Board's Chief Clerk, to Frederick V. Lockman of the architectural firm of Hancock & Lockman. In the letter, Erickson informed Lockman that the Engineering Department would be completing the plans for the new shelter house at the Laurelhurst Playfield. Upon investigation, the Park Board had determined that employing a private architect for the project would conflict with civil service regulations. Erickson closed the letter by conveying the Park Board's appreciation for Lockman's cooperation and assistance in the matter. From the letter, it appears that Lockman was initially chosen as the architect for the project but later rejected in favor of the city's own Engineering Department. The same day the letter was sent, the Park Board authorized the department to proceed with the work.

Lloyd J. Lovegren enjoyed a varied career that included work as the architectural designer of the 1939-40 Lacey V. Murrow Bridge that carried Interstate 90 over Lake Washington. Lovegren also designed the concrete entrances to the Mount Baker Tunnel embellished by James FitzGerald's low-relief sculptures. In the 1950s, Lloyd Lovegren designed tiki-themed Trader Vic's Restaurants in Denver, Chicago and Havana, Cuba. Lovegren also served as president of AIA Seattle in 1955. In

the late 1960s and early 1970s, his firm, Lloyd Lovegren & Associates, designed the first phase of Washington State University's Animal Sciences Building, now known as Clark Hall.

Five years after the completion of the field house in 1935, the Laurelhurst Community Club funded further improvements to the playfield in the early 1940s. In 1940, the club contributed \$750 towards the installation of swings and the hard surfacing of two of the four clay tennis courts. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) provided the laborers for the project. Created in May of 1935, the WPA consolidated and superseded several earlier programs, including the FERA. The Seattle Parks Department relied heavily on WPA labor to implement the recommendations of their 1931 report in the later 1930s and early 1940s. In contrast to this small WPA project at Laurelhurst Playfield, one of the largest was the development of the West Seattle Recreation Area, which included the West Seattle Golf Course, the West Seattle Stadium, and Camp Long. This massive undertaking comprised approximately one-third of the \$1.1 million allotted. The same year, the club also paid a portion of the cost for higher fencing around the tennis courts. The club contributed \$250 in 1942 for a third hard surface court and another \$250 in 1943 for a fourth. However, by this time, the United States was at war, and the Army was using the playfield as a military encampment to protect north Seattle from aerial attack.

World War II

After the United States declared war on Japan in December of 1941, Seattle was considered a target for enemy attack because of its location on the West Coast near major military bases and because of its important defense industries, such as the Boeing Airplane Company and Todd Shipyards. Different branches of the United States military used many Seattle parks, especially those situated on high ground, as locations for temporary wartime facilities, including barracks, recreation buildings, and artillery installations. Sentries guarded park properties enclosed by high fences and barbed wire. Athletic fields and lawn areas were dug up for gun emplacements and bunkers. Troops used the showers and toilets of field houses, coordinating schedules with residents. The Laurelhurst Playfield served as one of these sites during the Second World War.

In the Spring of 1942, the United States Army took over the highest point of cleared land in the Laurelhurst district and stationed twenty young men at an anti-aircraft gun installation set on a high sandbagged platform. Four huge listening devices ringed the platform that was maintained on a twenty-four hour basis. Initially, the Army installed tent housing in the park but later erected a more permanent wood frame barrack. Neighborhood residents entertained military men at dances in the field house, took them into their homes for holiday meals, and provided them with the occasional food treat. After the war, the federal government provided financial compensation to the Parks Department for damage or excessive wear to park lands or improvements during the war years. At Laurelhurst, the Army paid \$1,950 to the Parks Department to fill holes and tracks and restore the athletic fields and to remove temporary buildings. However, the Army's barrack building was retained for many years after the war for use as a neighborhood preschool.

Laurelhurst Gymnasium

After the war's end, the Laurelhurst Community Club once again turned its efforts towards improvements to their field house. Although pleased to have the recreational facility, area residents still desired amenities found at the larger field houses, especially a gymnasium. Funding for such a

project soon became available. In 1946, the State provided \$1,000,000 for developments in Seattle parks and playgrounds, including \$15,000 earmarked for the Laurelhurst Playfield. Two years later, Seattle voters approved a \$2,500,000 Park Bond, the first in almost two decades, which designated an additional \$60,000 for the playfield. By the fall of 1948, just over \$6,000 from the State Grant Funds had been appropriated for the construction of new tennis courts, but no action had been taken on plans for a gymnasium addition estimated to cost between \$100,000 and \$120,000. At this point, the Laurelhurst Community Club reminded the Parks Department that it had promised to develop preliminary plans. Club members had already committed themselves to supporting a L.I.D. to help finance construction upon approval of such plans.

In early November of 1948, Parks Superintendent Paul V. Brown sent a memo to the Park Board recommending that the balance of the state money be used for architectural services to design the gymnasium addition to the Laurelhurst field house. Superintendent Brown also recommended that the Board employ Seattle architect Theo Damm for this project. Damm had already completed similar plans for a gymnasium addition to the Hiawatha Field House. The Park Board retained the services of Theo Damm, who submitted preliminary sketches at the end of March 1949. In his transmittal letter, Damm noted that the addition, estimated to cost \$128,288, would be tied into the existing building at both floor levels, allowing complete circulation. A matching brick exterior would give the two buildings a unified architectural appearance. An April 1949 rendering shows the field house with the gymnasium addition constructed off the north elevation but set back somewhat so as not to overpower the original structure. The addition would feature a floor measuring 100 feet by 60 feet and a 24-foot ceiling and would also contain showers and locker rooms for girls and boys, making it suitable for all types of indoor activities.

The Laurelhurst Community Club approved of the plans and supported a L.I.D. to help finance it but felt that the neighborhood should not be required to pay half the cost or more. The club gathered 1,300 signatures from area residents and petitioned the city in July of 1949 to increase the amount appropriated from \$70,000 to \$100,000. This would leave a balance of some \$30,000 to \$40,000 for the residents to raise through a L.I.D. The club also requested that the city make the area included in the L.I.D. as large as possible so that the cost would be spread out over more property owners. In the petition, the club reminded the city that the people of the area had already contributed over \$25,000 towards the purchase of the playfield twenty years earlier as well as additional funds towards its improvement.

In response, the Parks Department pointed out that the community had previously committed itself to meeting all costs above the \$70,000 appropriated from state and local funds. If the community was not willing to assess itself for the full amount required, the Parks Department recommended that the \$70,000 be spent on enlarging the small gymnasium/auditorium addition planned for the Laurelhurst Elementary School. This would meet the needs of both the students and the local community. Although the Laurelhurst community persisted in its efforts to secure an additional appropriation for the field house addition, the city ultimately decided to fund a joint-use facility at the school located across from the playfield. The Laurelhurst project inaugurated a formal joint development program between the Parks Department and the Seattle School District that resulted in the construction of recreation centers, playfields, and indoor swimming pools and continues to this day.

Since the completion of the gymnasium addition in 1950, improvements at the Laurelhurst Playfield have been restricted primarily to the athletic fields, tennis courts and play area. In the mid-1980s, interior modifications to the field house reconfigured the basement by removing the showers and locker rooms and creating a pottery facility. However, this resulted in few alterations to the exterior of the building with the exception of window replacements. With its distinctive Tudor Revival detailing, this building remains significant for its design and for its associations with the CWA and the WERA and the development of Laurelhurst Playfield. It also represents the tireless efforts of the Laurelhurst Community Club to improve the Laurelhurst neighborhood.

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The features of the Landmark to be preserved, include:

- the exterior of the building, and
- the site within 10 feet of the exterior walls of the building

Issued: January 31, 2005

Karen Gordon
City Historic Preservation Officer

cc: Ken Bounds, DOPAR
David Goldberg, DOPAR
Kathleen Conner, DOPAR
Virginia Wilcox, LPB
Yvonne Sanchez, DON
Cathy Wickwire
Diane Sugimura, DPD
Cheryl Mosteller, DPD
Ken Mar, DPD