

KISSENA PARK
COMMUNITY CENTER

by
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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Bachelor in Architecture
at the
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Author's Signature: _____

Certified By _____
Head, Department of Architecture

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Cambridge, Massachusetts
January 10, 1948

Prof. L. B. Anderson
Head, Department of Architecture
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Dear Professor Anderson:

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor in Architecture, I submit this thesis entitled Kissena Park Community Center.

Respectfully submitted,

Seymour Jarmul

MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
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12 January 1948

Mr. Seymour Jarmul
163 Walnut Street
Brookline, Massachusetts

Dear Mr. Jarmul:

The Department of Architecture is glad to approve your thesis
subject: KISSENA PARK COMMUNITY CENTER.

Sincerely yours,

Lawrence B. Anderson
Professor of Architecture

LBA:DCG

BACKGROUND

BACKGROUND

Officially, the area that surrounds Kissena Park is part of New York City.

Actually, it is over seven miles from Times Square, and more than an hour's bus-subway ride away.

The people who live there are accustomed to thinking of themselves more as members of a neighborhood than as citizens of a metropolis, and though they vote in New York's municipal elections, they refer to their home by the name the area bore when it was still an independent village: home is Flushing; Flushing, Long Island, New York.

In point of fact there is little of the old village left. Its history, from the time Peter Stuyvesant's dutchmen settled it up through the turn of the present century had been that of a typical farm community. But when immigrant pressures strained Manhattan's seams, and Henry Ford's assembly line provided the means of escape, New York's island population spilled over. It spread south to Staten Island, north to the Bronx, west to Jersey, and eastward over Long Island. Flushing was engulfed with the rest.

No town planners steered this exodus, nor did any architects plan on a scale geared to the population's surge. Like Topsy, the area just grewed,

Small time constructors cut the land on a checker-board grid, threw up a block or two of jerry-built colonials on 40 x 100 lots, sold out fast and moved a few blocks away to repeat the sequence. Sewer scandals, highway frauds and subway kickbacks were commonplaces of the twenties and thirties, as politicians grafted with contractors to exploit the area.

The photograph frontispiece of this report shows the overwhelming characteristic of the result; a repetition, block upon block, of the same kind of house on the same kind of lot.

The building frenzy produced a good many homes and enough stores to supply them. It was, after all, quite profitable to construct these units. But with no over-all plan to control him, the small scale contractor cared little about such esoterics as community development. He built his few homes, extracted his profit, and got the hell out.

But the people who bought these homes and stayed to live, are the ones who today bear the burden of the unplanned boom. In the two mile area surrounding Kissena Park, there is not a single movie, a library, or a high school. Just homes and stores and hopes for improvement.

In the midst of this unplanned sprawl, the green fairways and woodland of Kissena Park seem discordantly out of key. The site was bought up by New York City's Department of Parks many years ago, and was developed into a golf course. A small clubhouse was built for use by city folk who motored to the outskirts to use the course. But when the boom of the twenties was concluded, the park was on the outskirts no longer. Today, it is surrounded by modern, jerry-built Flushing.

The project which is the subject of this report proposes to ameliorate the area's planning deficiencies by providing a community social and recreational center.

It proposes that this center be placed on the site of municipally owned Kissena Park because the park's beauty, centrality, and availability make it the logical hub for the social life of the community.

THE PROBLEM

THE PROBLEM

What does a community center consist of ?

A beer hall, bowling alley and brothel ? ; or a school, symphony and sewing circle ?

Indeed, can there be any standard at all ?

A community center gets built because the elements it supplies were previously missing from the community. In a sense therefore, the center is a catch-all. It can be a great cure for what ails the community, but like every remedy, it must be prescribed individually for each patient.

Some of the elements provided by this project, such as the library and swimming pool, have been tentatively suggested for other sites in the neighborhood. Others, like the nursery and meeting rooms are not under consideration at all. The golf course already exists.

This project proposes that as many elements as may prove economically feasible be brought together in one center, so that each may serve as inspiration to the other. A survey of the area has been made so that facilities already provided, such as an auditorium and gymnasium in a nearby grade school, will not be duplicated here.

The following are the elements finally selected:

A swimming pool

Of approximately 6000 sq. ft., with bathhouse and necessary services. A diving pool will be used to supplement the bathing pool, which will be of the flat-bottom type, so as to be used for basketball in spring and fall, and ice skating in the winter.

A golf course

The present use of the 18 hole golf course is to continue. Consideration shall be given to possible use by skiers in the winter.

A library

To hold 12 000 volumes, with room for expansion to 16 000. The library will be a branch of New York's library system, and will borrow from and return books to a central branch in nearby Jamaica. Both adult and children's sections will be required.

A nursery

To serve as check-room for tots while their mothers use other parts of the community center, and to serve as general community nursery (but not health center). A playground for children of nursery age is desirable.

A coffee shop

To seat about 30 persons. Used primarily by golfers, skiers, and people who come to the swimming pool.

Clubrooms

Four or five clubrooms, for use by women's clubs, Boy Scouts, small dances, etc., etc. Great flexibility is desired.

Arts and crafts room

For handicraft work. A connecting outdoor work space would be useful.

Miscellaneous

Lounges, administrative offices, parking for 70 to 100 cars, storage and services - - - all as may prove necessary or desirable.

DESIGN CRITERIA

DESIGN CRITERIA

FLEXIBILITY

- A. There is no stringent connection between a library and a coffee shop or between a nursery and a golf course. One element may well be needed for use when the other is locked off. The building must be so designed, therefore, that as many elements as possible may be operated independently of each other.
- B. Some elements, such as the library, may in the future be moved to their own buildings as the community expands. The space left vacant should be capable of re-use, and the structural system should permit rearrangement of interior partitions.
- C. The problem of noise interference by various activity groups should be carefully considered.

CHARACTER

- A. Materials: The structure falls under the jurisdiction of New York City's Department of Housing and Buildings. The building code of the city will therefore control. Class I construction is mandatory.

Durable, hard wearing finishes are indicated.

B. Style: The surrounding community is styled colonial and olde englyshe. A building in the international mode would stand out prominently, for better or worse, against this background. The citizens would like something they call woodsy, homey and suburban. The Department of Parks habitually employs pitched roofs, cut stone, and massed planting in its park structures.

C. Spirit: No Monumentality.

Friendliness and warmth.

Structure should 'fit' the site, the park, the community.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

A. Site: Contours are as indicated on appended plot plan.

Soil is good loam with no visible rock outcroppings.

Traffic will approach from North Hempstead Turnpike.

B. Orientation: The major view is to the northwest, stretching six miles to the New York skyline. Secondary views over the golf course lie to the north and northeast. The south consists of jerry-built homes.

Prevailing summer winds are from the northwest, winter winds generally from the north.

SOLUTION

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SOLUTION

What precedes has been the background of the problem.

One designer's solution is contained in the presentation drawings which complement this report.

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KISSENA PARK AREA
1" = 500' ± 0"



CITY OF NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS

TOPOGRAPHICAL DIVISION
TOPOGRAPHICAL SURVEY

OF PORTION OF

K I S S E N A P A R K

BOROUGH OF QUEENS

JUNE 4, 1935



1" = 50'-0"

328000
E 50500