

Historic Resources Survey

RESOURCE TYPE Property
NRHP STATUS Not Eligible

Michele Clark High School
SURVEY ID 1-38

NAME

Michele Clark High School

OTHER NAME(S)

Austin Middle School; Michele Clark Middle School; Michele Clark Magnet High School

STREET ADDRESS

5101 West Harrison Street

CITY

Chicago

OWNERSHIP

Chicago Public Schools

TAX PARCEL NUMBER

16-16-400-026-0000

YEAR BUILT SOURCE

1972 Michele Clark Academic Preparatory High School, "History of the School."

DESIGNER/BUILDER

Vickrey, Wines Associates, Inc.

STYLE

International Style

PROPERTY TYPE

Education

FOUNDATION

Concrete

WALLS

Brick

ROOF

Built-Up

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES

Michele Clark High School is a 1972 school building that was designed with elements of the International Style. The two-story building is clad in alternating areas of dark polychrome brick and black glass with metal spandrels. The school has a cruciform footprint with two interior courtyards and a flat roof. The appearance, form, and materials are consistent on each elevation. The school is located on the western half of the block bound by West Harrison Street, South Laramie Avenue, South Lavergne Street, and West Flournoy Street.

The symmetrical facade faces north on West Harrison Street and consists of five bays. The central bay is a projecting brick wall that has no openings. The brick is a polychromatic mix of red, grey, and black with "Michele Clark Magnet High School" spelled out in metal letters on the wall. Two recessed hyphens flank the central bay, and are clad in a dark reflective glass with many small panes inset in anodized metal frames. Pedestrian entrances with double metal doors are present on the hyphens; the entrances are sheltered by flat-roof marquees. The end bays project slightly from the hyphens, but are still set back substantially from the brick center bay. The end bays are clad in bands of horizontal glass windows that alternate with metal spandrel panels.

The east and west side elevations are identical. Each elevation has three bays: a central bay with alternating bands of horizontal glass windows and metal spandrel panels and flanking bays of uninterrupted brick walls.

The south rear elevation is very similar in design to the side elevations, with the exception that the ratio of brick to glazed surface is smaller, and the central bay with windows and spandrels is taller and projects above the flanking brick bays.

The building's exterior within the courtyards is clad in the same horizontal glass windows with alternating spandrels. Landscaping within the courtyards consists of deciduous trees and foundation plantings as well as hardscape features.

The flat roof is covered with built-up roofing and contains various ventilators and HVAC equipment.

Michele Clark High School is in an urban setting and is located directly north of Interstate 290 (I-290). The grounds are landscaped with grass panels, deciduous trees, foundation plantings, and raised concrete planters with evergreen shrubs. A parking lot is located southeast of the building and tennis courts are to its east.

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HISTORY/DEVELOPMENT

Austin Community History

Austin is Community Area 25, encompassing the Galewood, the Island, North Austin, South Austin, and portions of the West Humboldt Park neighborhoods.

Located on Chicago's western border, seven miles west of the Loop, Austin was founded in 1865 by developer Henry Austin, who purchased 470 acres for a temperance settlement named Austinville. By 1874, the village had nearly 1,000 residents due to improved suburban railroad service. It continued to grow to over 4,000 residents by the 1890s, becoming the largest settlement in Cicero Township. In 1899, Cicero Township residents voted Austin out of the township and it was annexed to Chicago. Despite annexation, Austin residents attempted to maintain a separate identity through the early twentieth century, building an Austin Town Hall in 1929.

Austin was initially settled by upwardly mobile German and Scandinavian families, followed by Irish and Italian families who built many of the neighborhood's mid-twentieth century Roman Catholic churches. In the 1930s, many Greek immigrants arrived in South Austin. They constructed the Byzantine-style Assumption church on Central Avenue. In the late 1960s, Austin's population shifted, becoming predominantly African American by 1980.

By 1920, Austin had become a dense urban neighborhood known for its excellent public transportation. The neighborhood was serviced by a street railway every half-mile to downtown Chicago as well as the Lake Street "L" rapid transit system. Commercial corridors developed around the transit lines, primarily along Madison Street, Chicago Avenue, and Lake Street. However, by the mid-twentieth century, Austin was a predominantly residential community with major industrial areas to the east, north, and south. Its early twentieth-century, large-frame homes were replaced by dense housing developments, though the nineteenth-century village's residential core of Neoclassical and Queen Anne-style houses remained. In North Austin, housing consisted of brick two-flats, small frame houses, and brick Chicago bungalows while South Austin was characterized by row houses, corner apartment buildings, and numerous brick three-flats and courtyard apartment buildings. South Austin was also home to the Jens Jensen-designed Columbus Park, a prairie park featuring a lagoon, refectory, winding paths, a golf course, a swimming pool, and athletic fields. Constructed in the 1950s, the Congress Expressway (now Eisenhower Expressway) took the park's south nine acres as well as other neighborhood buildings in its pathway.

Modern Era Architecture

Modern-era architecture became popular in the United States in the 1940s after the arrival of exiled European Bauhaus architects such as Marcel Breuer, Walter Gropius, and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. The American manifestation of the movement was less political than the Bauhaus, but still emphasized efficient design and modern materials. Early Modern-designed office towers and public buildings maximized space and windows with minimal facade decoration. The Modern house slowly became popular throughout the mid-twentieth century. While West Coast varieties were constructed before World War II, the movement became more popular after the war. The Modern house was influenced not only by the Bauhaus, but also the Prairie Style architecture of the previous decades. Some Prairie Style elements include low-pitched gables and overhanging eaves. Modern architecture emphasized harmony between the building and surrounding landscape, and utilized natural light. Basic characteristics of Modern-era dwellings include clean horizontal and vertical lines, rectangular forms, low massing, lack of decoration, the use of several modern materials, and the use of glass to take advantage of natural light.

After World War II, Modern architects began exploring different forms such as curved surfaces made possible by new materials. Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum, constructed in 1956, utilized reinforced concrete to create a curved, inward-focused shell. Wright asserted that Modern architecture was not purely motivated by function, but could also portray symbolic or psychological force. Eero Saarinen, a contemporary architect and son of Eliel Saarinen, agreed with Wright and designed Modern-era structures such as the Gateway Arch in St. Louis, Missouri, for a design competition in 1948 and the Trans World Airlines Terminal at Kennedy Airport in New York City in 1962. Saarinen improved his design for the Gateway Arch over the following years and

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construction began in 1961. He utilized a soaring parabolic form to celebrate the early pioneers' journey through the expansive, unknown western territory. When designing the Trans World Airlines Terminal, he utilized curved lines and cantilevered spaces that portray the idea of flight.

The International Style

Michele Clark High School is an example of the International Style of architecture. Emerging in the 1920s and 30s, the name was first applied by Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, curators of the 1932 exhibition "Modern Architecture: International Exhibition." European precedents focused on the social aspects of this new architecture, while American examples focused more on the architectural aesthetics. Character-defining features of the International Style are the absence of architectural ornamentation; box-shaped buildings; expansive window areas; smooth wall surfaces; cantilevered building extensions; and glass and steel as predominant building materials.

German-American architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969) was perhaps the leading International Style architect in the United States. Departing from Germany in 1937, he soon settled in Chicago and began designing the sleek glass-and-steel buildings that would become synonymous with his name. His most notable designs include S.R. Crown Hall (1956) at the Illinois Institute of Technology and Lakeshore Drive Apartments (1949-1951), both in Chicago; and the Seagram Building (1958) in Manhattan.

The International Style of architecture was interpreted and applied to numerous public and private office and school buildings throughout the United States from the 1950s through the 1970s. Michele Clark High School is a late example.

Chicago Schools History

Chicago's earliest schools were modest buildings dating to the early nineteenth century. Schools provided basic education but also served other purposes to students in the community, including monitoring health and physical development, providing vocational training, acclimating immigrants to America, and addressing problems of social and economic inequality. Chicago's first schools were established in the early 1830s, as the small settlement of Chicago began to expand. By 1850, less than a fifth of eligible children were enrolled in public schools. Larger numbers attended private and parochial schools, but thousands did not enroll at all. Public school classes remained large, often conducted in poorly maintained rooms and with inadequate materials.

During the 1850s and 1860s, progressive reformers worked diligently for improved teachers, a longer school year, smaller class sizes, and better facilities. Chicago gradually developed a system of public education similar to those in large cities elsewhere in the country. In 1872, the state legislature established a Board of Education to oversee all aspects of public education in the city. Throughout the end of the nineteenth century, school enrollment skyrocketed, and the system struggled to improve instruction. Administrators supported efforts to encourage teachers to provide a variety of opportunities and approaches, and to support critical and analytical thought in students.

In the early twentieth century, reformers established new experiential curricula, community programs linked to the schools, and teachers' councils and officials recommended ways of improving the welfare of students. Particular attention was given to exercise and children's physical development. As Chicago's immigrant population expanded, the schools were called upon to assist in its assimilation into American life and to teach loyalty and support of American principles and institutions.

In the 1910s, Chicago's public schools entered a period of enrollment stability at about 400,000 students, and an era of corruption and controversy over issues ranging from the curriculum to school finance. This continued through the 1940s. Suburban communities grew steadily after World War I, and their school systems began to gain public favor. In the 1940s, the ongoing crisis over mismanagement of the Chicago Public Schools resulted in an investigation by the National Education Association and regional accreditors threatened sanctions.

In the post-World War II era, the economy thrived and Chicago schools embarked on a building campaign that added significantly to the system's capacity. Enrollments surged, peaking at nearly 600,000 in the 1960s.

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Specialized vocational training, arts education, and new services, such as free summer programs and expanded guidance counseling were offered. Salaries for teachers increased, but budgets were stable and political interference was minimal.

Also at this time, audio-visual technology enabled teachers to introduce new methods of teaching into everyday instruction. Films, visual aids, and scientific experimentation equipment all contributed to changes in education. At the same time, racial inequality in education was becoming more apparent to the greater public. Schools in African-American neighborhoods were overcrowded and in disrepair.

Leadership attempted to develop integration plans that would send black students to predominantly white schools and hostile demonstrations erupted. The failure of initiatives led to threatened federal intervention, resulting in a 1980 consent decree and school desegregation plan. Also at this time, the enrollment of white school children plummeted as white Chicagoans were moving to the suburbs or enrolling their children in private or parochial schools.

Suburban communities grew rapidly in the postwar period, and their school systems were praised for quality educational offerings. School districts in these areas, funded by an expansive local economy and an electorate willing to invest substantially in education, were able to accommodate the rapid suburban growth. Beginning in the early 1960s, the differences between schools in the city and the suburbs became more apparent as newer suburban facilities and better funding resulted in superior schools.

In the 1980s, declining enrollments, escalating costs, and poor performances on standardized tests, contributed to a perception of failure. In the fall of 1987, U.S. Secretary of Education William Bennett declared Chicago's public schools the "worst in the nation." A coalition of community groups, business leaders, and reformers helped to draft a series of proposals to transform the schools. Passed by the state legislature in 1988, the Chicago School Reform Act created a Local School Council for each of the system's schools. Consisting of parents, community members, and educators, these improved public confidence in the system, although problems remained.

The Chicago Public Schools continue to experience profound demographic changes and organizational issues. The suburban districts enjoy substantial advantages, and the region's private schools serve a largely white and affluent clientele, while urban schools are largely black and Hispanic. By 2000, more than three-quarters of Chicago's public school students were from low-income or poor families. Educational opportunities are highly unequal across the region and improving this situation remains a challenge.

Michele Clark High School History

Michele Clark High School originally opened in 1972 as Austin Middle School. The school was built and financed by the Public Building Commission, which leased the building to the school board. The architect of record was Vickrey, Wines Associates, Inc., a Chicago firm headed by Wilmont Vickrey, who established the office in 1969.

The Public Building Commission of Chicago was established on July 25, 1956. Organized under the Public Building Commission Act passed by the Illinois State Legislature in 1955, this act provided that any county or county seat in the state may organize a Public Building Commission, with the power to issue revenue bonds for the construction of government buildings. In 1968, the Chicago Board of Education requested that the Public Building Commission build a number of school projects. Subsequently, it was decided to develop the recreation facilities for many of these schools through a cooperative agreement with the Chicago Park District as a joint School-Park Program. The School-Park Program encompassed 26 projects that served almost 40,000 students in eight new high schools, five high school additions, three new middle schools and ten new elementary schools - all built within a five-year period. Austin Middle School was one of these projects. In 1969, the school board approved plans to purchase a 5.7-acre parcel of land for the school, and in 1970, the Board of Education approved sites for three West Side schools to be built under cooperative agreement with the Public Building Commission. Austin Middle School was to have a 1,500-pupil capacity and include recreational area in cooperation with the Chicago Park District. Architectural meetings started in 1970 with a September 1971 completion scheduled. Later in 1970, Chicago Public Building Commission authorized issuance of revenue bonds to build schools. The school was completed and opened in 1972.

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The school was renamed in 1974 as Michele Clark Middle School to honor a Chicago-based journalist who was killed in a plane crash in December 1972. Clark, an Indiana native, was the first African-American woman to be a CBS television network correspondent. Her most prominent assignment involved covering the 1972 presidential primaries.

The Public Building Commission of Chicago renovated the school in 1992, primarily removing asbestos, and again in 1996. In 2002, the school transitioned into a high school when its first ninth-grade class was added. In 2013, the school became one of five Early College STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) schools, offering specialized classes and opportunities to students. High-profile corporate partners provide mentors, internships, and feedback on curricula so students are well-prepared for higher education and employment. The school now serves grades 6-12 and is known as Michele Clark Academic Preparatory Magnet High School.

Vickrey, Wines Associates, Inc.

The architect of record for Michele Clark High School, built as Austin Middle School, was Vickrey, Wines Associates, Inc. Established in 1969, shortly before the school commission and with Wilmont "Vic" Vickrey as one of the name partners, the firm has gone through several iterations with various names since that time, including Vickrey, Ovresat, Awsumb Associates and VOA, which remains in practice with Vickrey still actively engaged in project work that includes planning, design, and project management, primarily in the entertainment and cultural markets. Vickrey is a fellow of the American Institute of Architects and board member and past president of the Chicago Architecture Foundation.

NRHP STATUS DATE LISTED

Not Eligible

NRHP CRITERIA

A B C D Not Applicable

NRHP CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS

A B C D E F G Not Applicable

NRHP EVALUATION/JUSTIFICATION

Michele Clark High School was evaluated for significance under National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) Criteria A, B, and C using guidelines set forth in the NRHP Bulletin "How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation."

Michele Clark High School is not associated with significant events in history and is not eligible under NRHP Criterion A.

The school is also not associated with persons significant in the past and is not eligible under Criterion B. While the high school was named to honor Michele Clark and her accomplishments, it is not associated with her productive life and she did not attend classes or teach at the school.

Michele Clark High School is significant under Criterion C. It is a good example of the International Style as applied to an educational building. The building successfully employs bands of glass and box-like forms, both hallmarks of the International Style, with Miesian design tenets that are common in the Chicago area. The school retains a high level of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

The property was not evaluated under Criterion D as part of this assessment.

Because Michele Clark High School is less than fifty years of age, it must also meet Criteria Consideration G. Criteria Consideration G requires that buildings less than fifty years of age meet the requirement of exceptional importance in order to be eligible for listing in the NRHP, as described in the NRHP publication entitled Guidelines for Evaluating and Nominating Properties that Have Achieved Significance Within the Past Fifty Years. Michele Clark High School is a good example of the International Style of architecture applied to a school

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building, but it is a late interpretation of the style. Research did not indicate that it was influential in Chicago, an omphalos of excellent International Style buildings, or elsewhere. Scholarly documentation on the International Style and Modern-era architecture in the Chicago area exists, as do comparative examples of the International Style in the region, and Michele Clark High School is not an exceptionally important example of architecture. At the time of its construction, many public and private school buildings with similar appearances—box-like forms with bands of windows—were being built. While the building remains a good example of the style, it cannot be classified as an exceptional example when evaluated comparatively as required for assessments for properties that are less than fifty years of age. The building is also not a fragile or short-lived resource. Furthermore, Wilmont Vickery, whose firm was the architect of record, is still practicing and producing new work, so it is not possible to accurately assess the significance of the building within Vickery's canon of work, which is still developing. Therefore, Michele Clark High School is not eligible under Criteria Consideration G at this time as a building that is less than fifty years of age. However, upon reaching fifty years of age, the building may be eligible for the NRHP under the standard criteria when the requirement for exceptional importance under Criteria Consideration G does not need to be met. It should be re-evaluated in the future after reaching fifty years of age.

Therefore, Michele Clark High School is not eligible for listing in the NRHP.

SOURCES

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Photo 1 - Michele Clark High School



Facing southeast to north-facing facade and west side elevation from West Harrison Street

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Photo 2 - Michele Clark High School



Facing east to north-facing facade's central bay from west side elevation

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Photo 3 - Michele Clark High School



Facing southwest to north-facing facade and east side elevation from West Harrison Street

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Michele Clark High School
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Photo 4 - Michele Clark High School



Facing west to east side elevation from tennis courts near West Harrison Street

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Photo 5 - Michele Clark High School



Facing northwest to south rear elevation from West Flournoy Street

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Photo 6 - Michele Clark High School



Facing northwest to south rear elevation's central bay from West Flournoy Street

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Michele Clark High School
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Photo 7 - Michele Clark High School



Facing northeast to south rear elevation from West Flournoy Street

Historic Resources Survey

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Michele Clark High School
SURVEY ID 1-38

Photo 8 - Michele Clark High School



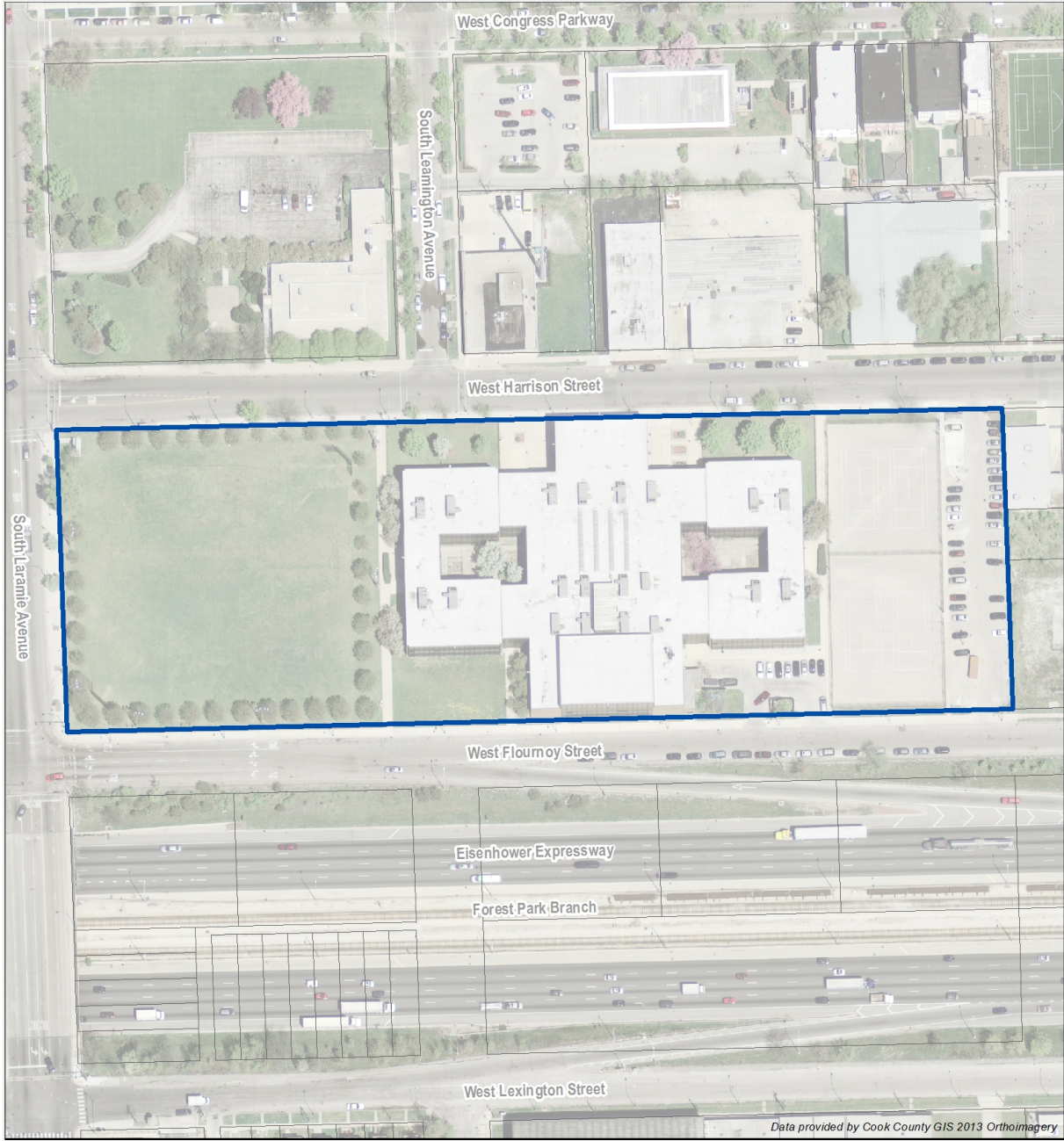
Facing east to west side elevation

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Map - Michele Clark High School



Data provided by Cook County GIS 2013 Orthoimagery

PROPERTY NAME: Michele Clark High School
 ADDRESS: 5101 West Harrison Street
 Chicago, IL


 Property Boundary
 Tax Parcel

0 200 400 Feet

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RESOURCE TYPE District
NRHP STATUS Not Eligible

West Lexington Street District
SURVEY ID 1-39

NAME

West Lexington Street District

OTHER NAME(S)

N/A

CITY

Chicago

APPROXIMATE BOUNDARIES

West Lexington Street, roughly bounded by South Cicero Avenue to the east and South Lavergne Avenue to the west. Includes all buildings located on the south side of the street.

DATES OF DEVELOPMENT

1906-1950

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES

The West Lexington Street District is located on West Lexington Street between South Lavergne and South Cicero Avenues. All buildings are located on the south side of the street; buildings on the north side of the street were demolished or moved to accommodate the construction on Interstate 290 (I-290), which is a dominant presence within the district. Landscaping in the district is minimal. Buildings are setback slightly from the street and are separated by narrow grass panels. A few deciduous street trees are present on the block and a few houses have evergreen shrubbery or foundation plantings.

There are twenty-eight buildings within the area surveyed. These buildings consist of five basic forms: two-flats, Chicago bungalows, Colonial Revival Foursquare derivations, Chicago worker's cottages, and one multi-family apartment building.

The buildings within the district were constructed between 1906 and 1950, with the majority constructed in 1906 and 1946 specifically. Most of the buildings have been substantially altered by the installation of incompatible replacement windows; application of vinyl siding; porch enclosures; and additions. Seven buildings, all two-flats, in the district were moved to their present location from the north side of West Lexington Street when I-290 was constructed.

The buildings will be described collectively by type.

Chicago Worker's Cottages

A disparate collection of Chicago worker's cottages are located within the district at 4855, 4901, 4903, 4907, 4909, 4911, 4915, 4917, and 4919 Lexington Avenue. They were built between 1906 and 1907 and are the most substantially altered in the district. The cottages all have front-facing gable or gambrel forms and are one-and-one-half-story in height. The roof pitches and heights vary slightly from building to building. Exterior materials include some original brick, but most have been covered in vinyl siding, which has obscured original architectural detail. Most have asymmetrical facades with side hall entrances, but some have been reconfigured to have central entrances above raised basements. These entrances are all reached by small flights of stairs.

Several have first-story additions on the facades; these may be enclosed porches that were added then later enclosed. These alterations are particularly obtrusive as they obscure the buildings and also alter the consistent setback of buildings on the street. Other buildings have first and second-story porches or decks, as well as second-story additions on their side elevations. Replacement windows are prevalent throughout and are one-over-one vinyl configurations.

Two-Flats

Two-flat apartment buildings are located at 4927, 4931, 4935, 4937, 4939, 4943, and 4945 Lexington Street. The buildings were all built in 1930 but were moved in 1954 in preparation for the construction of I-290. They are

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nearly identical in form, and all are executed in brick, although the brick color varies from building to building. The two-flats have an asymmetrical facade with a recessed side entrance that is reached by a small flight of stairs above the raised basement. Windows at the basement level are all filled in with glass block, brick, or concrete block. The entrances all have limestone surrounds and are topped with cartouches. Other limestone trim is featured in keystones, decorative blocks, sills, and beltcourses. Decorative brickwork is located above the second-story windows on the recessed portion of the facade. The three-bay projecting portions of the facade contain larger bay windows flanked by smaller windows. All of the buildings have replacement windows throughout. The flat roofs feature parapet walls with pediment forms topped with limestone coping.

Chicago Bungalows

The houses at 4815, 4819, 4823, 4825, and 4831 are Chicago bungalows or derivations of the type, which was a modest early twentieth-century house form. There is some slightly conflicting information on the construction dates, but it appears as if these buildings were all built in 1946. Although all of these houses have been substantially altered, their common house form remains discernible. They are one-and-one-half-story, cross-gable buildings with asymmetrical facades. All are clad in brick, although the shade and consistency of color varies from building to building and some of the facades have been covered in new brick. The houses all have raised basements, and first-story entrances are reached by a small flight of stairs; all doors have been replaced. Gable-on-gable entrance bays project slightly and bay windows are located next to the entrance bays. Contrasting areas of limestone and formstone have been applied for decorative detail. Common areas for this ornamentation include around doors, below bay windows, and as lintels above windows in the front gables. All of the windows on each of the buildings have been replaced, primarily with incompatible one-over-one vinyl replacement configurations or single-pane fixed configurations in the bay windows. Second-story additions obscure the original form of some houses. Most of the buildings retain their tall brick chimneys. Roofs are covered with asphalt shingles.

American Foursquare Derivations

The West Lexington Street District contains altered and largely unornamented houses that are derivative of American Foursquare designs and show a slight Colonial Revival influence. They are located at 4833, 4837, 4841, 4843, 4847, and 4851 Lexington Street and they were built between 1946 and 1950. The buildings are all clad in brick, although the colors vary from building to buildings. The brick is laid in a running bond pattern; the only decorative brickwork consists of a soldier course above the first-story windows. Brick on secondary elevations is of a lesser quality. The houses are two stories with asymmetrical facades topped by pyramidal roofs. Box-like in form, these buildings have square footprints and minimal architectural ornamentation. They have raised basements and their side entrances are reached by small flights of stairs. The entrance bays are articulated with projecting gable-front vestibules. Decorative alterations proliferate around entrances and are the only distinguishing ornament. Contrasting stone and formstone are the most common elements. Doors have been replaced or are obscured by metal security doors. First story windows are hung in triplicate and have concrete sills. Two evenly placed windows are on the second story. The majority of windows on these buildings have been replaced with one-over-one vinyl configurations although a few original windows are present on a few buildings. Shutters are missing on many buildings, leaving outlines indicating their original locations. Asphalt shingles cover the roofs.

Apartment Building

A single multi-family apartment building, constructed in 1933, is located in the district at 733 South Lavergne Street. It is a two-story brick building with a raised basement and an asymmetrical facade. The bricks are laid in a running bond pattern with a single soldier course extending across the facade as a decorative element; soldier courses are also located above some of the windows. A small area is also laid in a basketweave pattern above one set of windows on the second story. The original entrance has been reconfigured and infilled and contains a replacement door. Basement windows have been infilled and windows, which are hung singly and in triplicate, have all been replaced with incompatible one-over-one vinyl configurations. The southernmost bay is devoid of openings. Contrasting limestone decorative elements provide limited ornamentation in the form of moulded sills and hoods on select windows as well as inset geometric blocks and shields. The flat roof has a parapet with battlements topped with limestone coping.

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HISTORY/DEVELOPMENT

Austin Community History

Austin is Community Area 25, encompassing the Galewood, the Island, North Austin, South Austin, and portions of the West Humboldt Park neighborhoods.

Located on Chicago's western border, seven miles west of the Loop, Austin was founded in 1865 by developer Henry Austin, who purchased 470 acres for a temperance settlement named Austinville. By 1874, the village had nearly 1,000 residents due to improved suburban railroad service. It continued to grow to over 4,000 residents by the 1890s, becoming the largest settlement in Cicero Township. In 1899, Cicero Township residents voted Austin out of the township and it was annexed to Chicago. Despite annexation, Austin residents attempted to maintain a separate identity through the early twentieth century, building an Austin Town Hall in 1929.

Austin was initially settled by upwardly mobile German and Scandinavian families, followed by Irish and Italian families who built many of the neighborhood's mid-twentieth century Roman Catholic churches. In the 1930s, many Greek immigrants arrived in South Austin. They constructed the Byzantine-style Assumption church on Central Avenue. In the late 1960s, Austin's population shifted, becoming predominantly African American by 1980.

By 1920, Austin had become a dense urban neighborhood known for its excellent public transportation. The neighborhood was serviced by a street railway every half-mile to downtown Chicago as well as the Lake Street "L" rapid transit system. Commercial corridors developed around the transit lines, primarily along Madison Street, Chicago Avenue, and Lake Street. However, by the mid-twentieth century, Austin was a predominantly residential community with major industrial areas to the east, north, and south. Its early twentieth-century, large-frame homes were replaced by dense housing developments, though the nineteenth-century village's residential core of Neoclassical and Queen Anne-style houses remained. In North Austin, housing consisted of brick two-flats, small frame houses, and brick Chicago bungalows while South Austin was characterized by row houses, corner apartment buildings, and numerous brick three-flats and courtyard apartment buildings. South Austin was also home to the Jens Jensen-designed Columbus Park, a prairie park featuring a lagoon, refectory, winding paths, a golf course, a swimming pool, and athletic fields. Constructed in the 1950s, the Congress Expressway (now Eisenhower Expressway) took the park's south nine acres as well as other neighborhood buildings in its pathway.

I-290 Eisenhower Expressway

Daniel Burnham and Edward H. Bennett's 1909 Plan of Chicago proposed a west side boulevard along the line of Congress Street. The new boulevard would connect the existing two-block-long Congress Street from State Street to a cultural center of new buildings in Grant Park, a new civic center at Congress and Halsted Streets, and to western parks and suburbs beyond the Chicago city limits. In the late 1920s, the U.S. Post Office chose a site for Chicago's new main post office that would block any future development of the proposed Congress Parkway. Objections from Bennett and the Chicago Plan Commission led to a compromise that left a passageway through the building, which was completed in 1933, and preserved the right-of-way for a future road. A new subway system was also designed to accommodate a future expressway. During this period, plans for Chicago area superhighways continued to advance and a West Side route remained a high priority.

Following an extensive study of alternatives, the city's 1940 Comprehensive Superhighway Plan included a West Side route along the Congress Street alignment and was the city's first priority in establishing a comprehensive superhighway system. In 1940, Chicago City Council allotted \$2.2 million for right-of-way, construction, and engineering. In 1942, they authorized the acquisition of the first nine parcels of right-of-way for the West Side superhighway. The state and county took several more years to make a financial commitment to the expressway construction, but agreed in 1945 to each pay a third of the estimated \$45 million cost.

City, county, and state funding agreements and World War II delayed construction, but work on Congress was expected to begin quickly once the war was over. However, skyrocketing costs, limited funding, extensive utility relocation, poor subsurface conditions, and the need for agreements with three railroads, the Village of Oak

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NRHP STATUS Not Eligible

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Park, and a cemetery in the proposed pathway all added time and cost to the project schedule. Railroad tracks, the elevated Garfield Park "L" line, and numerous buildings in the proposed expressway's path were demolished, moved, or altered, displacing thousands of residents, bisecting neighborhoods, and adding to the overall construction costs. A comparative analysis of the 1950 and 1951 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps with the current 2016 Cook County Assessor tax parcels and 2013 aerial photography was completed to determine the number of buildings that were demolished within the current project limits for the communities of Chicago, Oak Park, Forest Park, Maywood, Broadview, and Bellwood. Building types included single-family homes, flats or larger apartment buildings, garages, small one-story structures, commercial buildings, and factory buildings. In total, within the current I-290 Eisenhower Expressway project limits, there were at least 2,174 or more buildings demolished for the expressway's construction in the 1950s. At least 1,768 buildings or more were demolished in Chicago; additional research indicates 250 buildings within the Chicago Loop were also demolished and in some cases, buildings were moved instead of demolished. In Oak Park, approximately 115 buildings were demolished, while approximately 124 buildings were demolished in Forest Park. Maywood experienced approximately 122 building demolitions and Broadview and Bellwood had 38 and 7 building demolitions, respectively. In Forest Park, this also involved moving 3,762 graves from three cemeteries and an agreement with the Baltimore and Ohio Chicago Terminal Railroad to relocate their tracks for the new roadway. Railroad relocation work was completed in stages, involving first a temporary run-around track, and later, a permanent track to not disrupt rail movement. The Garfield Park "L" line was to be replaced as a ground-level line within the expressway median; during construction, portions were temporarily rerouted and the original elevated line was demolished.

The Congress Expressway's 14.5 miles opened in seven sections between 1955 and 1960. Opening in sections was a political necessity to show the public that the expressway plans were in progress. As usable sections opened, various temporary access and exist arrangements were made to accommodate the abrupt termination of the expressway. The expressway's first 2.5-mile segment between 1st Avenue in Maywood and Mannheim Road in Hillside opened to traffic in December 1955. Later that same month, an additional four miles opened between Ashland and Laramie Avenues in Chicago. The CTA's new Congress Line, which replaced the Garfield Park "L," opened in 1958. In 1960, the expressway's final segment opened between DesPlaines and 1st Avenues and the entirety of the expressway from the Tri-state Tollway in Hillside east to downtown Chicago was opened to traffic.

The expressway was originally called the Congress Expressway because its eastern end was located at Congress Parkway and was marked as part of I-90. It was later renamed Eisenhower for former President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1964 and renumbered as I-290 in 1978. The expressway was the first in the United States to incorporate a rapid transit line and an expressway within the same corridor. In 1971, the Eisenhower Extension was completed from Elmhurst to Schaumburg, extending I-290 further westward.

Chicago Worker's Cottages

In the years following the Chicago Fire of 1871, the worker's cottage became the dominant vernacular form of urban housing in working-class Chicago neighborhoods through the early twentieth century. The worker's cottage proliferated during the 1880s, due to the real estate boom associated with the industrial expansion of the city's outlying areas. Marketed as inexpensive by local real estate syndicates, the working-class population was able to claim homeownership. Although large developers built rows of identical simple cottages in neighborhoods, the majority of neighborhoods contained a variety of modified houses.

The modest worker's cottage was one story or one-and-a-half stories, rectangular, and generally unornamented. Earlier versions were commonly clad in wood while later versions were of brick. Many were built on a raised basement and had a front-facing gable roof and an attached full-width porch at the facade. If ornamentation was present, it was restricted to the window surrounds and beneath the roofline. Inside, the earlier, simpler cottages contained four to six rooms, with the bedrooms located on one side of the house and the parlor, dining room, and kitchen on the other side. Later one-and-a-half-story examples also had a formal front hall and staircase.

The West Lexington Street District's worker's cottages are typical examples whose original form has been altered in some cases due to second story additions and porch enclosures or additions. Materials and window replacements further alter their original appearance and design intent.

Historic Resources Survey

RESOURCE TYPE District
NRHP STATUS Not Eligible

West Lexington Street District
SURVEY ID 1-39

Chicago Bungalows

With its origins rooted in the Arts and Crafts movement of the early twentieth century, the Chicago bungalow is a ubiquitous house type throughout Chicago and the surrounding suburban areas. Constructed between 1910 and 1940, it was an affordable and stylish home for residents moving out of the city's older downtown neighborhoods. Many were built from house plan catalogs, modified to fit the physical limitations of narrow city lot sizes and the builder's preferences. More than 80,000 bungalows were constructed throughout the city, representing nearly one-third of the single-family housing stock.

The one-and-a-half-story Chicago bungalow was constructed exclusively of brick on a concrete foundation and topped by a low-pitched hipped roof with wide overhangs and a central dormer at the front and back of the house. Its long rectangular form was well-suited to the city's long and narrow lot sizes. All had a full basement. The bungalow's facade was typically distinguished by an off-center or side entrance under a small covered porch and a row of double-hung windows that often had upper sashes of decorative colored and cut glass patterns. Many bungalows had a living room that projected out from the facade into the front yard as a square or angled bay lined with windows. The facade was typically clad in face brick while the secondary elevations were of common brick. The bricks were laid in decorative patterns to add character and depth to the house in addition to decorative and structural limestone details. Limestone insets and bands were incorporated at the basement level, the roofline, and above and below the windows. Bungalows located on corner lots were often larger, incorporating more elaborate ornamentation on its facade and side elevation, than those built side by side. The limestone bands, rows of windows, low-pitched roof, and rectangular form contributed to an overall horizontal appearance, conveying its Arts and Crafts movement and Prairie Style antecedents. The house form was further distinguished by the liberal use of windows of various sizes and shapes to provide light, air, and a feeling of openness and connectivity to the outside, which reflected an Arts and Crafts movement philosophy emphasizing a park-like streetscape with mature trees, landscaped lawns, and foundation plantings. Most Chicago bungalows also had a similarly designed garage located at the back of the lot, accessed by the public service alley.

The West Lexington Street District's bungalows are later examples of the typical Chicago bungalow. Although they somewhat incorporate the form and features of the Chicago bungalow, they do not exemplify the form.

Flats

In the Chicago area, "flats" refers to a specific apartment building type characterized by stacked identical single-family units on two or three floors. Primarily constructed between 1900 and 1920, flats first appeared in Chicago in the late nineteenth century to meet the housing demands of a growing working-class, immigrant population who worked in nearby industries. The two- and three-flat buildings provided denser housing on narrow Chicago city lots and extra rental income to owners, who occupied the first floor and rented the other unit(s). On the west side of Chicago, dozens of two-flats were built on spec by architects, many of whom were Bohemian, in the heavily Eastern European neighborhoods of North Lawndale, South Lawndale, and Pilsen in the late nineteenth century. Two-flats became even more popular in the early twentieth century as immigrant populations moved further west and those who immigrated to Chicago as children in the late nineteenth century now had the means to purchase flat buildings instead of renting like their parents. Referred to as the workhorse of Chicago housing, they were also a means of upward social mobility as a bridge between apartment living and single-family homeownership. By the 1920s, many flats were occupied by second generation Czech, German, and Polish immigrants.

The two-flat was a two-story, flat-roof building with an identical apartment unit on each floor; the three-flat added one floor and one apartment unit. The buildings were usually designed with a raised basement and steps leading to a small first-story porch. Clad in brick or greystone, the facade tended to have a bay window or projecting bay on one side while the other side had a front door leading to a public stair hall, which ran along one side of the building to provide access to each unit. Flats varied in ornamentation from modest, utilitarian facades to more decorative facades with applied ornamentation in the Queen Anne, Craftsman, Prairie, or revival styles.

A four- or six- flat was a mirrored version of the two or three flat, centered on a common stair hall. They were typically similar in appearance and materials to the two- or three-flats. The six-flat had an enclosed public stair hall on the building's street side and an open but covered service stair on the building's rear. When repeated

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RESOURCE TYPE District
NRHP STATUS Not Eligible

West Lexington Street District
SURVEY ID 1-39

along three sides of a courtyard, the six-flat became a module for the courtyard building type.

The West Lexington Street District’s two-flats are typical examples of the period and do not indicate architectural or historic significance. Additionally, they were moved to this location due to the construction of the Eisenhower Expressway in 1954. Consequently, they sit on non-historic foundations and have replacement windows throughout.

American Foursquare

Popular throughout the United States from approximately 1890 to 1930, the American Foursquare eschewed the ornate styles popular in the Victorian era and avoided the mass produced building components that were also prevalent on architecture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Foursquares were generally plain and show the influence of both the Prairie School and Craftsman styles, although they generally lack ornamentation and sophistication seen in those designs. Foursquares were popular farmhouses in rural areas, but also served as typical houses in the streetcar suburbs of large cities. Foursquares were generally a square, box-like design with four rooms on each floor and a hipped or pyramidal roof. Unlike the buildings in the West Lexington Street District, true Foursquares usually have a central dormer and a full-width front porch. The Lexington Street examples, built from 1946-1950, show the influence of the Foursquare but are not good examples of the style, which reached its peak approximately ten years before these were built. Their austere design and brick construction also demonstrates Colonial Revival design influence at a time when this style that was inspired by earlier design precedents was proliferating in the American suburbs during the post-World War II era.

West Lexington Street District History

The Lexington Street area evolved slowly over time, resulting in a disparate and fragmented appearance that is emphasized by the subsequent alterations to the buildings. No architects for any of the buildings were identified during research.

Neighborhood residents worked primarily in blue-collar and service industry jobs. A review of 1920 census records revealed that occupations included shipping clerk, switchboard operator, billing clerk, locomotive engineer, cashier, bookkeeper, chauffeur, elevator operator, stenographer, postal clerk, candy dipper, and porter. Residents who were born in the United States were primarily from Illinois, while foreign-born residents were from England, Sweden, Germany, or Ireland.

In 1954, seven two-flat buildings within the district were moved from north side of the 4900 block of Lexington Street to the south side of the street to make room to accommodate the construction of the Congress Expressway, now I-290. The buildings were moved on rubber-tired dollies lashed to the underside of steel and timber supports and turned in the middle of the street to slide onto their new foundations. I-290 has substantially altered the neighborhood which directly faces the interstate.

NRHP STATUS **DATE LISTED**

Not Eligible

NRHP CRITERIA

A B C D Not Applicable

NRHP CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS

A B C D E F G Not Applicable

NRHP EVALUATION/JUSTIFICATION

The West Lexington Street District was evaluated for significance under NRHP Criteria A, B, and C using guidelines set forth in the NRHP Bulletin “How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation.”

The West Lexington Street District is associated with the continued development of the Austin neighborhood in the 1930s and 1940s as Chicago continued to expand. However, the construction of I-290 to the north and the demolition of buildings on the north side of the street diminish the district’s ability to convey this association.

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Research did not indicate any significant associations with events in the past, and therefore, the West Lexington Street District is not eligible under Criterion A.

The West Lexington Street District is not associated with persons significant in the past and is not eligible under Criterion B.

The West Lexington Street District retains modest vernacular interpretations of the Chicago worker's cottage, Foursquare derivations, bungalows, and two-flat forms as well as a multi-family apartment building. The majority of these buildings are typical examples of their type and are not architecturally significant. The buildings retain their overall forms and in some instances ornamentation, but extensive window and wall material replacements, along with additions, diminish the integrity of design, workmanship, and materials. The construction of I-290 resulted in demolition of original buildings in the district, and seven buildings within the district were moved, diminishing the integrity of location, setting, feeling and association. Therefore, the West Lexington Street District is not eligible under Criterion C.

The district was not evaluated under Criterion D as part of this assessment.

Therefore, the West Lexington Street District is not eligible for the NRHP.

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West Lexington Street District
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Photo 1 - West Lexington Street District



Facing southwest to 4815, 4819, and 4823 West Lexington Street (left to right)

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West Lexington Street District
SURVEY ID 1-39

Photo 2 - West Lexington Street District



Streetscape view facing southwest to 4823 West Lexington Street to 733 South Lavergne Avenue (left to right)

Historic Resources Survey

RESOURCE TYPE District
NRHP STATUS Not Eligible

West Lexington Street District
SURVEY ID 1-39

Photo 3 - West Lexington Street District



Facing southwest to 4831, 4833, 4837, 4841, 4843, 4847, and 4851 West Lexington Street (left to right)

Historic Resources Survey

RESOURCE TYPE District
NRHP STATUS Not Eligible

West Lexington Street District
SURVEY ID 1-39

Photo 4 - West Lexington Street District



Facing southeast to 4837, 4841, and 4843 West Lexington Street (left to right)

Historic Resources Survey

RESOURCE TYPE District
NRHP STATUS Not Eligible

West Lexington Street District
SURVEY ID 1-39

Photo 5 - West Lexington Street District



Facing southeast to 4901, 4855, 4851, 4847, and 4843 West Lexington Street (right to left)

Historic Resources Survey

RESOURCE TYPE District
NRHP STATUS Not Eligible

West Lexington Street District
SURVEY ID 1-39

Photo 6 - West Lexington Street District



Facing south to 4903 West Lexington Street

Historic Resources Survey

RESOURCE TYPE District
NRHP STATUS Not Eligible

West Lexington Street District
SURVEY ID 1-39

Photo 7 - West Lexington Street District



Facing south to 4907 West Lexington Street

Historic Resources Survey

RESOURCE TYPE District
NRHP STATUS Not Eligible

West Lexington Street District
SURVEY ID 1-39

Photo 8 - West Lexington Street District



Facing south to 4909 West Lexington Street

Historic Resources Survey

RESOURCE TYPE District
NRHP STATUS Not Eligible

West Lexington Street District
SURVEY ID 1-39

Photo 9 - West Lexington Street District



Facing south to 4911 West Lexington Street

Historic Resources Survey

RESOURCE TYPE District
NRHP STATUS Not Eligible

West Lexington Street District
SURVEY ID 1-39

Photo 10 - West Lexington Street District



Facing south to 4915 West Lexington Street

Historic Resources Survey

RESOURCE TYPE District
NRHP STATUS Not Eligible

West Lexington Street District
SURVEY ID 1-39

Photo 11 - West Lexington Street District



Facing southwest to 4917, 4919, 4927, 4931, 4935, 4937, 4939, 4943, and 4945 West Lexington Street and 733 South Lavergne Avenue (left to right)

Historic Resources Survey

RESOURCE TYPE District
NRHP STATUS Not Eligible

West Lexington Street District
SURVEY ID 1-39

Photo 12 - West Lexington Street District



Facing southeast to 733 South Laverne Avenue and 4945, 4943, 4939, 4937, and 4935 West Lexington Street from South Laverne Avenue (right to left)

Historic Resources Survey

RESOURCE TYPE District
NRHP STATUS Not Eligible

West Lexington Street District
SURVEY ID 1-39

Photo 13 - West Lexington Street District



Facing east to west-facing facade of 733 South Lavergne Avenue

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RESOURCE TYPE District
NRHP STATUS Not Eligible

West Lexington Street District
SURVEY ID 1-39

Photo 14 - West Lexington Street District



May 21, 1954 historic photograph of two-flat buildings being moved from the north side of West Lexington Street in the 4900 block to the south side of that street (Central Electric Railfans' Association Archives)

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 NRHP STATUS Not Eligible

West Lexington Street District
 SURVEY ID 1-39

Map - West Lexington Street District



Historic Resources Survey

RESOURCE TYPE Property
NRHP STATUS Not Eligible

Flexible Steel Lacing Company
SURVEY ID 1-40

NAME

Flexible Steel Lacing Company

OTHER NAME(S)

N/A

STREET ADDRESS

4607 West Lexington Street

CITY

Chicago

OWNERSHIP

Jakacki Bag & Barrel

TAX PARCEL NUMBER

16-15-309-011-0000, 16-15-309-023-0000

YEAR BUILT SOURCE

1920 The Economist, "Plant to Cost \$160,000."

DESIGNER/BUILDER

Unknown

STYLE

No Discernible Style

PROPERTY TYPE

Industry

FOUNDATION

Concrete

WALLS

Brick

ROOF

Built-Up

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES

The Flexible Steel Lacing Company, located at 4607 West Lexington Street, occupies the block bound by West Lexington Street on the north, West Polk Street on the south, South Kilpatrick Avenue on the west, and the Belt Line Railroad on the east. The complex consists of an altered office building that faces West Lexington Street, which is the most prominent building on the site; the heating plant directly to its east; the pump house and 50,000-gallon tank to the south of the heating plant; the factory that is directly west and south of the office; and three separate warehouse buildings. The buildings were constructed between 1920 and ca. 1970.

The office is an altered two-story, red brick building with a front-gable parapet roof. It is the most prominent building on the property. Facing West Lexington Street to the north, the central portion of the building is symmetrical although other attached buildings result in an overall asymmetry of the complex. The central portion of the building consists of two bays that are essentially mirror images of each other and these bays are in turn flanked by two additional bays on each side. At the first floor, large openings are filled with industrial metal-frame windows surrounded by replacement glass block and two pedestrian entrances with metal and glass double doors topped by large glass panes that form a transom. Second story windows are all one-over-one replacement windows with anodized metal frames.

All of the bays are divided by stylized brick pilasters that project slightly from the building plane and that are topped with concrete slabs that allude to capitals. Concrete spandrel panels, smaller concrete tiles placed singly and in geometric formations, and a few occurrences of brick laid in a basketweave pattern provide decorative elements to the industrial building. A parapet wall with concrete coping tops the facade.

To the west of this main portion of the building is a series of single-story extensions. The same design elements, such as red brick, decorative concrete panels, and concrete-topped pilasters are continued on these areas. Fenestration includes both original metal-frame, multi-pane windows and glass-block infill.

To the east, two bays that are also two stories in height are attached to the main office building. The first stories contain metal-frame, multi-pane windows, while the second story openings have been filled with brick. This portion of the building has a flat roof.

The 1920 factory is located south of the office building. Brick curtain walls form the exterior, and original sawtooth skylights with wired glass form its roof and admit light into the factory.

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NRHP STATUS Not Eligible

Flexible Steel Lacing Company
SURVEY ID 1-40

Attached and further to the east of the office is the power plant, a single-story, two-bay brick building with a box-like form and a parapet wall at the roofline of one bay. The building, including the facade facing West Lexington Street, is largely devoid of openings and ornamentation as viewed from the right-of-way. It sits atop a concrete foundation and the walls are topped with concrete coping. A large canted chimney stack rises from the building.

Three warehouse buildings are present on the site. The 1920 warehouse is oriented on a north-south axis and faces Polk Street. The symmetrical building sits atop a concrete foundation and is clad in red brick. The building, which faces to the south, consists of a central block that is taller than its two flanking bays. The central block contains a large open central bay that accommodates equipment and vehicles. Above this bay is a multi-pane, metal-frame industrial window. Two pairs of slightly projecting pilasters flank the openings, and two recessed blind panels are found between the paired pilasters. The pilasters are topped with slanted concrete forms that allude to stylized capitals. The second story of the building consists of clerestory windows that are behind the front-gable parapet wall. The parapet is topped by concrete trim. On each side of the central portion of the building is a bay, also clad in brick, which is devoid of openings. They are slightly lower in height and contain recessed, infilled panels.

A more recently constructed warehouse building with a box-like form is directly west of the 1920 warehouse. It is clad in brick, has a flat roof, and is devoid of openings. It was built sometime between 1962 and 1972. A third warehouse building is located within the complex, away from surrounding streets. It is a single-story, flat-roof brick building with a south-facing pedestrian doorway. It is devoid of other openings and ornamentation. It was built sometime between 1951 and 1962.

The manufacturing complex is located directly south of Interstate 290 (I-290) and west of the Belt Line Railroad. The parcel that the complex occupies has a large asphalt parking lot used for trailers for shipping product. Although the area is industrial in character, deciduous street trees are located to the east and south of the property, and are also scattered throughout the parcel.

HISTORY/DEVELOPMENT

Austin

Austin is Community Area 25, encompassing the Galewood, the Island, North Austin, South Austin, and portions of the West Humboldt Park neighborhoods.

Located on Chicago's western border, seven miles west of the Loop, Austin was founded in 1865 by developer Henry Austin, who purchased 470 acres for a temperance settlement named Austinville. By 1874, the village had nearly 1,000 residents due to improved suburban railroad service. It continued to grow to over 4,000 residents by the 1890s, becoming the largest settlement in Cicero Township. In 1899, Cicero Township residents voted Austin out of the township and it was annexed to Chicago. Despite annexation, Austin residents attempted to maintain a separate identity through the early twentieth century, building an Austin Town Hall in 1929.

Austin was initially settled by upwardly mobile German and Scandinavian families, followed by Irish and Italian families who built many of the neighborhood's mid-twentieth century Roman Catholic churches. In the 1930s, many Greek immigrants arrived in South Austin. They constructed the Byzantine-style Assumption church on Central Avenue. In the late 1960s, Austin's population shifted, becoming predominantly African American by 1980.

By 1920, Austin had become a dense urban neighborhood known for its excellent public transportation. The neighborhood was serviced by a street railway every half-mile to downtown Chicago as well as the Lake Street "L" rapid transit system. Commercial corridors developed around the transit lines, primarily along Madison Street, Chicago Avenue, and Lake Street. However, by the mid-twentieth century, Austin was a predominantly residential community with major industrial areas to the east, north, and south. Its early twentieth-century, large-frame homes were replaced by dense housing developments, though the nineteenth-century village's residential core of Neoclassical and Queen Anne-style houses remained. In North Austin, housing consisted of brick two-flats, small frame houses, and brick Chicago bungalows while South Austin was characterized by row houses, corner apartment buildings, and numerous brick three-flats and courtyard apartment buildings. South Austin was

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RESOURCE TYPE Property
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Flexible Steel Lacing Company
SURVEY ID 1-40

also home to the Jens Jensen-designed Columbus Park, a prairie park featuring a lagoon, refectory, winding paths, a golf course, a swimming pool, and athletic fields. Constructed in the 1950s, the Congress Expressway (now Eisenhower Expressway) took the park's south nine acres as well as other neighborhood buildings in its pathway.

Manufacturing and Industrial Architecture

Warehouses and storage buildings in the United States predate the Industrial Revolution. Growing towns and cities first needed places for grain storage. In 1789, when the Tariff Act was passed and custom houses were established, warehouses became necessary to store imported goods that were subject to tariffs that provided the primary source of income for the federal government's functions. As the Industrial Revolution changed the nation and manufacturing of goods of all sizes became commonplace, workshop and storage space needs grew exponentially. Early manufacturing buildings were first made of wood, which often created fire hazards, depending on the type of work that occurred in the building. Like the Flexible Steel Lacing Company complex, many industrial buildings were designed by unknown architects and builders. This complex was not on the forefront of innovative design or construction in Chicago but instead incorporated trends that were somewhat outmoded by 1920, its year of construction.

Unlike the builders of the Flexible Steel Lacing Company complex, Detroit architect Albert Kahn developed a new concept of construction where reinforced concrete walls, roofs, and supports replaced wood in factory buildings. There were two benefits from Kahn's approach: improved fire safety, which was especially notable after the devastating 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in Manhattan, and also allowed for larger open interior expanses, which facilitated many types of manufacturing processes. Kahn first implementation of these ideas was at the Packard Motor Car Company's factory, designed in 1903. He later developed Henry Ford's 1909 plant in Highland Park, Michigan. Kahn's industrial buildings often had a distinct Modernist aesthetic that incorporated the European design tenets displayed in the International Style of architecture rather than perpetuating classical design motifs that were found on earlier examples of factory and warehouse buildings in the early twentieth century. Kahn also designed residential and office buildings in other popular styles of the era, such as Art Deco and British-inspired Arts and Crafts. By 1920, the year the Flexible Steel Lacing Company complex was built, many American architects were imitating both the construction methods and design aesthetic that Kahn established for industrial buildings. However, the Flexible Steel Lacing Company complex was designed according to more traditional stylistic standards.

Site and Company History

The first buildings to be constructed on the property were built in 1920 and included the brick office that faces West Lexington Street; the heating plant directly to its east; the pump house and 50,000-gallon tank to the south of the heating plant; the factory that is directly west and south of the office; and the warehouse at the southern end of the property. An additional warehouse was added sometime between 1951 and 1962 and another warehouse was added between 1962 and 1972.

Founded by George E. Purple, Albert B. Beach, and Phillip S. Rinaldo in 1907 in a small workshop in Chicago and using a patented fastener design, the Flexible Steel Lacing Company sought to manufacture a metal-hinged joint lacing to replace rawhide lace, which was the most common method of joining transmission belts at the time.

In an effort to expand operations, the company purchased vacant land approximately 80,000 square feet in size from the Chicago Fire Brick Company in 1920. This land was adjacent and west of the Belt Line Railroad between Lexington and Polk Streets, with a private switch track leading into the property. The Flexible Steel Lacing Company planned to build a one-story building containing about 40,000 square feet for the manufacture of their steel belt lacing. It also manufactured patent lamp guards known as the Flexco LOK lamp guard for electrical lamps. The new plant would employ more than one hundred men. The planned construction was estimated to cost \$160,000, although later information indicates that the actual figure was \$175,000. No architect or builder was named in trade journals. The company moved to the new headquarters from a facility at 522 South Clinton (no longer extant), growing to serve mining, industrial, and agricultural markets on six continents with its steel lacing, which was also known as Alligator Belt Lacing. In addition to transmissions, the company's

Historic Resources Survey

RESOURCE TYPE Property
NRHP STATUS Not Eligible

Flexible Steel Lacing Company
SURVEY ID 1-40

mechanical belt fastening systems came to be used in conveyor belts, belt cleaners and plows, pulley lagging, belt cleats, transfer-point systems, and belt maintenance and installation tools.

Flexco no longer occupies the property, but the company does remain in business in nearby Downers Grove, Illinois. After Flexco moved from the property and relocated to Downers Grove, Illinois, in 1971, various manufacturing and light industrial enterprises have occupied the buildings. Jakacki Bag & Barrel, Inc., a leading reconditioner of fiber, steel, and plastic drums, currently occupies the property.

NRHP STATUS DATE LISTED

Not Eligible

NRHP CRITERIA

A B C D Not Applicable

NRHP CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS

A B C D E F G Not Applicable

NRHP EVALUATION/JUSTIFICATION

The Flexible Steel Lacing Company was evaluated for significance under National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) Criteria A, B, and C using guidelines set forth in the NRHP Bulletin "How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation."

The Flexible Steel Lacing Company is not associated with significant events in history and is not eligible under Criterion A.

The complex is also not associated with persons significant in the past and is not eligible under Criterion B.

The Flexible Steel Lacing Company is not eligible under Criterion C. The complex consists of buildings built over a fifty-year period and are typical and altered examples of light industrial and manufacturing offices and warehouses. The buildings on the parcel were not particularly innovative and did not embody innovative structural or architectural approaches that were being used in industrial architecture in 1920 at the time of the initial construction. The complex does not have notable architectural design merit and retains only a moderate level of integrity.

The property was not evaluated under Criterion D as part of this assessment.

Therefore, the Flexible Steel Lacing Company is not eligible for listing in the NRHP.

SOURCES

Flexco. "About Flexco." Accessed on April 20, 2016. <http://www.flexco.com/about-us.html>.

"Plant to Cost \$160,000." The Economist. January 31, 1920. https://books.google.com/books?id=jE4_AQAAMAAJ&pg=PA8#v=onepage&q&f=false.

The Iron Age. April 22, 1920. <https://books.google.com/books?id=ByJKAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA653#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

Sanborn Map Company. Chicago, Cook County, Illinois 1917 and 1950. New York: Sanborn Map Company.

Historic Resources Survey

RESOURCE TYPE Property
NRHP STATUS Not Eligible

Flexible Steel Lacing Company
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Photo 1 - Flexible Steel Lacing Company



Facing southeast to north-facing facade and west side elevation from West Lexington Street

Historic Resources Survey

RESOURCE TYPE Property
NRHP STATUS Not Eligible

Flexible Steel Lacing Company
SURVEY ID 1-40

Photo 2 - Flexible Steel Lacing Company



Facing southwest to north-facing facade and east side elevation from West Lexington Street

Historic Resources Survey

RESOURCE TYPE Property
NRHP STATUS Not Eligible

Flexible Steel Lacing Company
SURVEY ID 1-40

Photo 3 - Flexible Steel Lacing Company



Facing northwest to south rear elevation from West Polk Street

Historic Resources Survey

RESOURCE TYPE Property
NRHP STATUS Not Eligible

Flexible Steel Lacing Company
SURVEY ID 1-40

Photo 4 - Flexible Steel Lacing Company



Facing northeast to south rear elevation additions from West Polk Street

Historic Resources Survey

RESOURCE TYPE Property
 NRHP STATUS Not Eligible

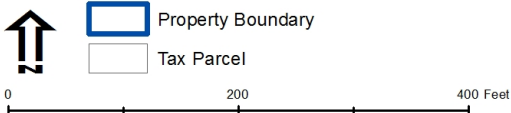
Flexible Steel Lacing Company
 SURVEY ID 1-40

Map - Flexible Steel Lacing Company



Data provided by Cook County GIS 2013 Orthomogery

PROPERTY NAME: Flexible Steel Lacing Company
 ADDRESS: 4607 West Lexington Street
 Chicago, IL



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