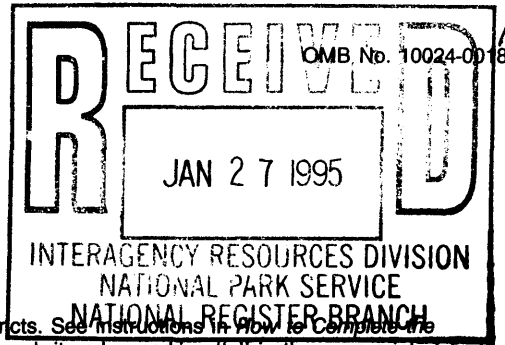


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM/RECREATION CLUB

other names/site number Civic Center; City of Sarasota Exhibition Hall

2. Location

street & number 801 North Tamiami Trail not for publication

city or town Sarasota vicinity

state Florida code FL county Sarasota code 115 zip code 34236

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Suzanne P. Walker / Deputy SHPO 1/23/95
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Florida State Historic Preservation Officer, Division of Historical Resources
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

for
Elson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

Entered in the
National Register 2/24/95
Date of Action

Municipal Auditorium/Recreation Club
Name of Property

Sarasota Co., Fl.
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	1	buildings
1	2	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
2	3	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION/CULTURE/ Auditorium
Outdoor Recreation

RECREATION/CULTURE/ Auditorium
Outdoor Recreation

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT/ Moderne
Art Deco

foundation concrete
walls stucco

roof asphalt

other glass block

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Architecture
- Community Planning and Development
- Entertainment and Recreation

Period of Significance

1937-1945

Significant Dates

1937
1940

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Arch: Thomas Reed Martin and Clarence A. Martin

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

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**MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM/RECREATION
CLUB, SARASOTA COUNTY, FLORIDA**

Section number 7 Page 1

SUMMARY

The City of Sarasota's Municipal Auditorium/Recreation Club, 801 North Tamiami Trail, consists of a barrel vaulted auditorium and an attached two-story, semi-circular recreation club. The building was constructed in 1937; a second floor was added to the recreation club portion in 1940. The building, designed by Sarasota architects Thomas Reed Martin and Clarence A. Martin, features architectural elements and decorative motifs of the Art Deco and Moderne styles.

The foundation consists of a concrete perimeter wall and interior piers with a ventilated crawl space. The walls are constructed of masonry and concrete block and finished on the exterior with smooth stucco; the walls are plastered on the interior. The barrel vaulted roof reportedly was originally sheathed with a thin layer of copper although the architect's specifications called for galvanized corrugated roofing. The existing asphalt shingles were installed around 1976. Three rectangular, louvered roof vents project above the roof ridge.

The nominated property also includes one contributing and two non-contributing lawn bowling courts.

SETTING

The Municipal Auditorium/Recreation Club was constructed as part of an 11-acre recreational complex, originally called the Civic Center or Bayfront Park (see ca. 1940 site plan). The building has been a visual landmark for residents and tourists as they approached Sarasota from the north, along the principle automobile route into town--the Tamiami Trail.

The Civic Center complex has been modified over the years. When it opened in 1939, in addition to the Municipal Auditorium/Recreation Club there were 6 tennis courts, 40 shuffleboard courts, and several lawn bowling courts. A clubhouse at the west end of the shuffleboard courts provided shower and locker accommodations. South of the Auditorium, on land reclaimed from marshes, were two small fresh water lakes. Winding walkways led through the landscaped grounds. According to newspaper accounts, comfortable benches were scattered about the grounds where one could "while away the hours, in rest and

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peaceful meditation." In December 1940, an illuminated cast stone fountain was installed in front of the Municipal Auditorium.

Much of the original site was altered by the widening of the Tamiami Trail in the late 1950s, extensive land fill along the shoreline in the mid-1960s, and the construction of several other civic buildings. When the Tamiami Trail was widened, the fountain was removed and placed in storage where it awaits renovation and relocation.

In the early 1990s many of the recreational facilities were removed to provide space for additional parking (see 1994 Civic Center Master Plan). The original club house, shuffleboard courts, tennis courts, and badminton courts were removed. Of the three remaining lawn bowling courts only the center one is original. A modern shelter, running east-west, is placed between the south and center lawn bowling courts.

The primary access to the Municipal Auditorium/Recreation Club is from the Tamiami Trail. The curved road leading into the complex widens to incorporate a parking area. A street, running east-west, is located just south of the Auditorium and leads from the parking area to the 1960s Performing Arts Hall.

DESCRIPTION

Exterior - Municipal Auditorium/Recreation Club

The Municipal Auditorium faces east (photo 1). This facade is accentuated by a dramatic arched stucco and glass block facade with a central, slightly recessed, entrance. Seven pairs of tall, narrow glass block panels are set between thin projecting pilasters, echoing the curve of the parapet and barrel vaulted roof beyond. Stepped pilasters flank the central bay, which is surmounted by a parapet with a slightly stepped crown. A decorative, geometric, horizontal cast stone frieze, below the glass block panels, highlights this facade (photo 2). The Art Deco frieze consists of a semi-circular sunburst pattern set within the triangular spaces of a continuous sawtooth pattern. The frieze extends across the east facade, the east ends of the north and south facades, and is broken by the extended flat canopy roof over the main (east) entrance.

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The concrete canopy roof, marking the entrance, is slightly curved at the edges and displays the building's name "Municipal Auditorium" in large block letters. The four entrance doors are flanked by slightly projecting ticket rooms, featuring curved walls edges and a small central circular window. A metal casement window flanked by glass block sidelight panels is located on each side of these ticket room projections.

The north and south elevations are accentuated by equally spaced concrete buttresses. Several are visible along the south wall and two are incorporated into a projecting room at the east end of the south elevation (photo 3). Most of the buttresses along the north elevation are obscured by several concrete block room additions (photo 4). Six of the bays created by the buttresses originally contained either a combination of three windows or a door flanked by single windows. The original wood, double hung, 6/6 windows have been removed and filled in with stucco on masonry. The exterior doors leading into the auditorium, three each on the north and south elevations, have been replaced with wood solid core flush doors. Concrete steps or ramps lead to these doors.

The two-story Recreation Club at the west end of the auditorium is semi-circular in plan, has a flat roof, and an independent entrance (photo 5). The second floor was added in 1940. This portion of the building features Streamlined Moderne stylistic elements including continuous bands of doors and/or windows on each floor. The second floor is slightly set back from the first floor, providing what was once a usable balcony around the second floor. Although two access doors remain in place, the balcony is no longer used and the original horizontal pipe railings have been removed. Pipe railings remain along the first floor semi-circular terrace which curves around the facade. The fifteen pairs of French doors which originally pierced the first floor have been replaced with fixed glass panels set in aluminum frames. A pair of solid wood doors, approached by a flight of steps, serves as the primary entrance on the east elevation. Wood doors are also located at the east end of the north and south elevations of this portion of the building. The original steel casement windows of the second floor, placed in groups of two and three, have been replaced with metal awning units. The Municipal Auditorium and the Recreation Club are not joined internally (one small service door was recently closed for fire code regulations).

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Interior - Municipal Auditorium/Recreation Club

The entrance doors on the main (east) facade provide access to a small lobby with a vaulted plaster ceiling running north-south. This lobby leads into the main hallway, also oriented north-south, with its own vaulted plaster ceiling (photo 6). The main entrance was originally flanked by ticket rooms, which were later removed to enlarge the lobby. The north-south hallway is flanked by lounges, restrooms, storage rooms, a mechanical room, and small offices. Single wood and glass exit doors are located at the north and south ends of this hallway. The floors in the lobby, hallway and lounge areas are finished with poured-in-place polished concrete, scored on a two-foot grid.

Two pairs of doors leads from the lobby into the auditorium, directly opposite the east entrance doors. The large vaulted auditorium space features natural finish maple wood flooring and exposed wood roof trusses resting on concrete buttresses (photo 7). Acoustical ceiling tiles have been applied between the trusses.

The raised stage at the west end of the auditorium features a Moderne style proscenium arch (photo 8). The rectangular opening is framed by a series of plaster bands, curved and stepped at the top corners. A dressing room flanks each side of the stage.

A balcony, flanked by small storage rooms, is located at the east end of the auditorium. It is accessed on the north and south by stairs leading up from the main hallway. This balcony and two storage rooms below it were created in 1971, replacing the auditorium's original bleachers. The balcony has a metal railing with a circular pattern balustrade. The floor of the balcony is oak.

The Recreation Club consists of a large club room on the first floor (photo 9) and a lounge on the second floor, both semi-circular in plan. These rooms retain their original configuration. The first floor ceiling has been changed to a suspended acoustical tile and fluorescent light ceiling system with duct space above. A natural finished wood flooring remains intact on the first floor; carpet is used on the second floor.

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Both rooms are finished with painted, beveled tongue and groove panelling. Original stone fireplaces highlight the east wall on both floors. Stairs, flanking the first floor fireplace, leads to the second floor. Bathrooms and storage rooms flank the stairs.

Lawn Bowling Court

Only the center lawn bowling court (photo 10) was constructed prior to 1940. The south court is located where a walkway originally led from the curved access road to the shuffleboard courts and club house. The north court replaces a putting green.

ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS

A mechanical room and cooling tower area for an HVAC system were constructed near the west end of the north elevation in 1953. At the same time, exposed HVAC ducts were added to the auditorium. Toilet spaces were modified into their present configurations in 1962, when the lounge areas were separated from the restrooms and converted to mechanical and maintenance rooms.

The most significant alteration to the Municipal Auditorium occurred in 1971. The original glass block and stucco facade was concealed behind bronze anodized aluminum paneling, a cantilevered concrete entrance canopy was added, and the lobby was enlarged. A cast stone frieze directly above the main entrance doors, depicting birds and flowers in the Art Deco style, was removed. This remodeling, carried out by the Sarasota architectural and engineering firm of West and Conyers, was intended to modernized the facade, improve the lobby area, and to cover the deteriorating, leaking glass block wall. On the interior the proscenium arch was redesigned and the bleachers in the auditorium were removed and replaced with a balcony and storage rooms. The north and south auditorium windows were removed and the openings filled with masonry with a stucco finish. A concrete block locker room addition was added in 1971, near the east end of the north elevation.

The restoration of the Municipal Auditorium to its original appearance began in 1992, in a series of phased projects using

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local, state, and federal funds. Phase I, completed in 1992, included the restoration of the auditorium space. The proscenium arch, vaulted hallway and lobby ceiling, and wall finishes were restored.

Phase II, completed in 1993, focused on the restoration of the east facade. The cantilevered canopy, glazed lobby, and bronze anodized aluminum panels were removed. Missing portions of the east facade were reconstructed to match the original. The original glass block, found in place behind the aluminum panels, were in poor condition with water intrusion and fracturing. They were replaced entirely by new block units to match the original as closely as possible, both having narrow vertical ribs on each exposed face.

NON-CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

A clubhouse, constructed ca. 1960, is located between the non-contributing south lawn bowling court and the contributing central court (photo 10). The flat-roofed, rectangular, masonry structure contains an office and restrooms. Porches along the north and south elevations enable spectators to view the matches, sheltered from the sun.

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SUMMARY

Sarasota's Municipal Auditorium/Recreation Club, at 801 North Tamiami Trail, was built in 1937 as a Progress Works Administration project. It was the first project in the development of a bay front civic center that included facilities for shuffleboard, tennis, and lawn bowling. The Municipal Auditorium/Recreation Club is significant under Criterion A as a reflection of the role of government in Sarasota during the Depression years. Civic leaders raised private funds to qualify for additional federal funding of the project. Under Criterion A the facility also has significant for its importance in Sarasota's recreational history. During World War II the complex accommodated social activities for military personnel stationed nearby. The Municipal Auditorium/Recreation Club is also significant under Criterion C as an architecturally distinguished, Art Deco/Moderne Public Works Administration design by Sarasota architects Thomas Reed Martin and Clarence A. Martin. Modified during the 1970s, the Municipal Auditorium's original interior and facade were restored in 1992 and 1993. The original function has remained constant.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

In 1885 the town of Sarasota was platted in a grid-pattern of streets and avenues by a British-owned corporation called Florida Mortgage and Investment Company Limited. The town was incorporated in 1902. The completion of a railroad line the following year marked a significant turning point for Sarasota, for it expanded the city's commercial base and brought new residents and tourists. A 1911 bond issue financed the city's first water works and sewer system. The population of the city was an estimated 1,276 in 1912. By 1913, Sarasota had two banks, telephone service, and electricity. In the 1920s, as the Florida Land Boom reached a feverish pitch, the entire Sarasota area underwent tremendous growth and a number of new subdivisions were platted.

The Boom ended in 1926 with a devastating halt in statewide real estate sales, preceding the 1929 Stock Market Crash and the nationwide Great Depression. By late 1933, 26% of Floridians were receiving public assistance. Like other Florida

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municipalities, Sarasota's tax base had dwindled and all city operations were hindered. The city sought federal assistance under provisions of the Federal Emergency Relief Act (FERA) enacted by Congress in 1933. Sarasota also endeavored to take advantage of other relief programs enacted by the Roosevelt administration, including the Public Works Administration (PWA) and the Works Projects Administration (WPA). The function of the PWA was to construct public buildings and structures. The role of the WPA was to employ the country's unemployed millions. States were required to financially contribute to PWA projects. During the initial four years of the program, Florida was able to complete 26 institutional buildings. This funding was insured by a 1935 legislative act which made \$1 million dollars available for "skilled labor and materials for public works."

In a small brochure, PWA Administrator Harold Ickes summarized his administration's accomplishments on the occasion of the fourth anniversary of the program in June, 1937. As part of the "largest construction program in history," he cited the completion of new schools, libraries, hospitals, bridges, waterworks, power plants and many other types of public facilities. The PWA accounted for four-fifths of all construction nationwide and kept thousands off relief rolls. Ickes called the PWA the "first Federal slum clearance and low-rent housing program in America." He noted that since 1933, 70% of the schools, 62% of the hospitals, and 52% of the waterworks had been PWA construction projects. Ickes' report concluded, "The Public Works Administration [record] shows that President Roosevelt has brought us out of the depression. I am convinced that the country not only realizes this now but that appreciation of what PWA has done will grow with the years."

Local communities bore the major share (usually 66%) of the cost of a PWA project. The PWA lent the balance on public works projects indebtedness at 4 percent, furnishing a market for municipal bonds. As Ickes noted in his four-year summary, the "widespread popularity" of PWA projects depended upon local taxpayers.

In addition to institutional building projects, the PWA encompassed diverse projects across Florida. The projects included road paving, wharf construction, construction of schools, military barracks, a library, airport control towers,

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and drainage canals. By December of 1936, the statewide monthly newsletter reported the graduation of several dozen students from the Household Training Project, who were to be gainfully employed "in private homes as cooks or maids." A hurricane bulletin was in production at the University of Florida; homemaking conferences for women were held at Camp Roosevelt in Ocala; and a project for an airport at Venice was completed by July of 1936.

Sarasota's Municipal Auditorium fell within a broad range of non-federal PWA-funded projects. Such projects, awarded to cities, counties and states, included city and town halls, courthouses, fire and police stations, jails, armories, social and recreational buildings, archives, farm buildings and markets, parks and swimming pools. A total of 1,628 such projects across the country were to be completed by March of 1939. The Municipal Auditorium was one of 707 auditorium/gymnasium projects. Throughout the State of Florida, 232 non-Federal PWA projects had been undertaken, 149 were completed and 83 were under construction by 1939, at a total cost of \$32 million dollars.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

Sarasota actively sought the assistance of various government programs during the Depression. In the spring of 1935 Mayor E. A. Smith travelled to Washington D.C. as a representative of the City and the Chamber of Commerce to lobby for support of Sarasota's projects. He reported to a special City Council meeting on his return that he had been assured that the project to extend water mains in the southern part of the city would be approved, but that details for other projects needed to be completed before presentation to Federal authorities. Those projects included a water main in the north part of the city, a Municipal Auditorium, and recreational facilities.

In 1936 Sarasota acquired 40 acres adjacent to the new Tamiami Trail/Broadway Avenue and restricted the property to park, playground, and recreational use. In July of 1937, Sarasota Mayor E. A. Smith announced his plan to construct, with the assistance of the PWA, "one of the finest recreation centers in the south" on this property. Mayor Smith estimated the cost at \$100,000.

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However, just as the Municipal Auditorium project was about to get underway in Sarasota, the PWA was beginning to curtail its activities. Administrator Ickes estimated that it would require approximately two years to finish "a billion dollars worth of projects." A Roosevelt plan before Congress proposed to reorganize the executive branch of the Federal Government and to create a permanent Department of Public Works with cabinet status, "to which the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works may turn over its tasks and its trusteeship." Desperate to continue the program, the Director of the Florida Construction Program for state institutions wrote Florida's Congressional representatives. Congressman J. Hardin Peterson, who described himself as "a member of the PWA bloc in the House," along with U.S. Senators Claude Pepper and Charles O. Andrews were among those who responded to Floridians' urging that the program be continued. The Congressional delegates pledged to support the Hayden amendment to the relief bill providing for the extension of PWA funds.

Sarasota was suffering from the economic hard times. In January of 1937, the City Council authorized one of a series of refunding bonds to readjust the City's indebtedness, explaining that the outstanding indebtedness and future interest accruals would "impose upon the City too great a burden for it to meet." Even finding the necessary funds to finance PWA projects was becoming a difficult task. PWA projects underway in Sarasota by early 1937 included a \$250,000 sanitary sewer project for Sarasota Heights subdivision. Bonds financed 55% of the project and a 45% federal government grant provided the balance. A Sarasota Waterworks project had been contracted, but insufficient available PWA funds had prevented the work.

Because the city lacked sufficient funds to ensure acceptance of the Auditorium project, in March of 1937 a group of prominent Sarasota businessmen met at the home of Karl Bickel and agreed to loan the city \$10,000. Bickel was formerly President of United Press and Chairman of the Board of Scripps Howard Radio Company. Present at the meeting were Sarasota's most prominent civic leaders and representatives of her major institutions. The stellar individuals at the meeting included Benton W. Powell, publisher of the Sarasota Tribune and President of the Palmer

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National Bank; Samuel W. Gumpertz, senior vice president and general manager of Ringling Bros and Barnum & Bailey Circus; J. J. Williams Jr., City Attorney; Ralph Caples, a railroad and advertising executive; George Thacker, President of the Chamber of Commerce; building contractor Frank Logan, who was serving as a fiscal Agent of the City in connection with bond refunding; and George D. Lindsay, founder, owner, and editor of the Sarasota Herald.

At the City Council's regular meeting of April 5, Benton W. Powell appeared to represent the group and explain their interest in the Auditorium project. Their \$10,000 loan together with the government portion of about twenty-five thousand dollars, would at least make a substantial start on the project. Powell suggested an interest rate of five per cent per annum that could be paid from revenue to be derived from the tennis courts, auditorium, or other activities. The Council approved acceptance of the loan and extended a vote of thanks and appreciation to the group who had shown such interest in this proposal.

In addition to the community leaders, two city government officials were instrumental in the success of the Municipal Auditorium project: Mayor E. A. Smith and Dr. John R. Scully, Commissioner of Public Works, Milk Inspector, and Meat Inspector. Mayor Smith was a retired businessman and a member of the Board of Directors of the Chamber of Commerce. In 1931, in the midst of the Depression, Smith was elected mayor of a city \$6 million dollars in debt. He was re-elected in 1933 and 1935, but did not seek re-election in the Fall of 1937. However, he subsequently sought and won re-election in 1939, 1941 and 1943. During his twelve years in office many vitally needed public improvements were made without any increase in taxes or levying new bond issues. Mayor Smith credited himself with leading the movement to acquire the land for the Municipal Auditorium/Recreational Club.

Dr. John R. Scully, a veterinarian, had been Health Officer for Sarasota and Manatee counties for a decade. He served twice as Commissioner of Public Works, from 1929 through 1934 and again from 1937 through 1939. During his tenure, Sarasota obtained vitally needed public improvements at a time when the city's credit was exhausted. Scully managed to obtain the materials needed to carry on numerous projects financed in part by

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governmental agencies, including the reconstruction of the Ringling Causeway and Bridge; the construction of a new bridge over Hudson Bayou; construction of seawalls around City Hall; and the paving of many streets. Scully also supervised the construction of the Municipal Auditorium and the Lido Beach Casino.

After accepting the loan from the civic leaders, the City Council authorized \$200 for Scully to obtain tentative plans and specifications on at least part of the community park project in order to get work started at the earliest possible date. Scully was instructed to submit tentative plans or sketches to the Council and Planning Board.

The Sarasota City Council Minutes of April 19, 1937, show that architects Clarence A. and Frank Martin were involved in the design of the Municipal Auditorium and adjacent park. By May 24, 1937, the City Council had passed a resolution outlining the financial commitments of the city for the Auditorium project. The city would apply for WPA funding only on the Auditorium; would furnish the necessary skilled labor not available from the local relief rolls; would buy all necessary materials not furnished by the WPA; and would assume the full responsibility of completing the project if WPA funds were not available for that purpose.

Groundbreaking preceded the production of plans. Mayor E. A. Smith announced that the "first spadeful of earth" would be turned on July 13th, 1937. The day before, Commissioner of Public Works Scully had announced that the WPA "had finally approved" the project. The groundbreaking ceremony, headed by Mayor Smith, was attended by a contingent of local dignitaries and civic officials. The Sarasota Kiwanis Club voted to attend "in a body," and challenged other groups to follow suit. The Sarasota Tourist club, represented by Dr. Charles C. Montague, announced its plans to use the Auditorium to produce a "bigger and better tourist crop." The Winter Haven Symphony Orchestra, "one of the state's finest musical units," was announced as a possible tenant of the new building.

In his speech at the groundbreaking, Mayor Smith noted that Sarasota had outgrown its meeting places and praised the Auditorium as a structure "sufficient for all needs for years to

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come." He predicted the building would be as beautiful in twenty-five years as when completed. He also praised the sevemteen men who three months earlier had guaranteed the Sponsors' Contribution, naming them individually. Mayor Smith acknowledged that completion of the ambitious civic center project might occupy several years.

Thirteen days after the groundbreaking, Engineer Freeman H. Horton and architect Thomas Reed Martin provided schematic designs for boathouses, walkways, pools and gardens. Building plans dated August 7, 1937 were by Thomas Reed Martin and Clarence A. Martin. The Sarasota Herald said the auditorium would be built under the direction of engineers and senior WPA supervisors, J. C. Bravo and E. H. Knight.

The Auditorium opened on February 23, 1938, eight months after the groundbreaking and at the height of the 1937-1938 tourist season. A reported 3,000 attended the first event, the Sara de Soto Pageant Ball, dancing to Glen Gray's Casa Loma Orchestra. Strategically-placed decorations disguised the fact that the ornamental plaster on the stage was unfinished. The surrounding grounds also remained incomplete.

City Recreational Director, Charles L. Herring, noted that while many Florida resort areas lacked "good, wholesome recreation," Sarasota's complex would offer a variety of recreational outlets. Name bands would be brought to Sarasota during the season to play for dances at the Auditorium. There would also be flower shows, symphony concerts, and exhibitions. Facilities for shuffleboard, tennis, lawn bowling, badminton, and horseshoe pitching would be provided, and golfing enthusiasts would have a putting green. A softball diamond was also contemplated. Lawn bowling was an especially popular activity among Sarasota's citizens and winter visitors. The Sarasota Lawn Bowling Club was organized in 1927.

The grounds of the complex were planted with hundreds of palm trees. Dozens of guava trees, palmettos, Spanish bayonet and the state royal palm, which for years had grown unmolested on the property, were closely guarded and maintained as part of the grounds beautification.

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LATER HISTORY

A second floor was added to the Recreation Club portion of the Municipal Auditorium building and dedicated in January 1940. This was a gift from Mr. and Mrs. John Tuttle Chidsey. Chidsey was the retired president of the board of the Veeder-Root Company of Hartford. He and his wife, Ida Cook Chidsey, retired from Bristol, Connecticut to become seasonal residents of Sarasota in 1932. Chidsey was a member of the Kiwanis Club and First Presbyterian Church, and served for several years as president of the "Tourist or Recreation Club." In 1941, he was named Sarasota's Outstanding Citizen.

A reported 1,000 attended the official opening of the Recreation Club expansion, presided over by newly-reelected Mayor E. A. Smith. Activities included a shuffleboard tournament, tennis and archery exhibits, and a grand ball.

The recreation club was designed with an encircling terrace to take advantage of the vista to the west, overlooking Sarasota Bay. The second floor addition contained a lounge area with bamboo-type furniture, a recreation room, and a men's card room. The card room featured a sliding partition to make two rooms if necessary. There was also an office for the Board of Directors.

During wartime, the Municipal Auditorium was featured in postcards as the "Army and Navy Club," and was used as a meeting place for enlisted men and local girls who danced to the tunes of a "massive jukebox," and were cooled by "big floor fans."

In the 1960s, the Municipal Auditorium was renamed the Civic Center Exhibition Hall. Its functions were modified with the construction of a Performing Arts Hall on newly-dredged and filled shoreline to the west.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Art Deco/Art Moderne Style

The Municipal Auditorium/Recreation Club incorporates elements of both the Art Deco and the 1930s Streamlined Moderne styles. Art Deco, inspired by the 1925 Paris Exposition des

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Artes Decoratif, was a means of expressing architectural modernity in the late 1920s. Characteristics of the style included: smooth wall surfaces, usually of stucco; towers or other vertical projections extending above the roof line; symmetrical facades; and a unique form of ornamentation consisting of zigzags, chevrons, sunbursts, spirals, and/or stylized motifs of plants and animals.

New industrial and technological developments in the early 1930s led to the evolution of the Streamlined Moderne style which also featured smooth wall surfaces that were frequently curved and usually stuccoed. In contrast to the verticality of the Art Deco style, the Streamlined Moderne style emphasized the horizontality of the building through the use of bands of contrasting finish materials and bands of windows. Glass block and steel railings for stairs and balconies were frequently utilized. This style reflected the current interest in the streamlined designs in vogue for ships, airplanes and automobiles. It also incorporated some elements of the emerging International Style which evolved from the philosophy developed at the Bauhaus design school. The Bauhaus, founded in Germany in 1919 by Walter Gropius, was concerned with simplicity and the tenet that "form follows function."

Architects and Engineers

Thomas Reed Martin was 71 when he and Clarence A. Martin designed the Municipal Auditorium/Recreation Club. A Wisconsin native, he had worked in Chicago as a draftsman and woodworking company manager. While with that firm he also studied architecture and construction. He was retained in 1911 by the famed Chicagoan, Mrs. Potter Palmer, to remodel her newly-acquired winter estate on Sarasota Bay. Martin thereafter made Sarasota his residence. By his own estimate, he designed more than 500 houses in the Sarasota area over a forty-year period.

Clarence A. Martin was approaching his 75th birthday as the Municipal Auditorium plans were drawn. Martin was a five-year resident of Sarasota and a member of the Chamber of Commerce. A Ohio native, he studied at Cornell University and received a doctorate degree from Colgate University in 1918. Martin had joined the Cornell faculty in 1895 as a professor of

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architecture. From 1908-1919 he served as Dean of the College of Architecture. Martin was a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects and was a founder and former secretary-treasurer of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture.

The principal engineer of the Municipal Auditorium project was Freeman H. Horton, the son of Manatee-Sarasota pioneers. He had graduated from Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1918. Horton was a structural engineer for many public works including the Union Terminal in Cincinnati, Ohio; the Bayshore Drive and seawall in Tampa; and the Mayport Naval Base near Jacksonville, Florida. He served in the State Road Department from 1917 to 1921. He also designed locks and bridges for the Cross-Florida Barge Canal, until construction was halted in 1935. Horton began working for the city of Sarasota in March of 1937, where his expertise and skills were essential in getting projects approved by the PWA. Plans dated September 21, 1937, identify J. C. Hartness as the designer of the wooden trusses used in the Auditorium. Biographical information on Hartness has not been located.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Municipal Auditorium/Recreation Club and lawn bowling courts are within the fractional NE 1/4 of the NE 1/4 of Section 24, Township 36 South, Range 17, East, Sarasota County, Florida. More particularly described as follows: Commencing at the NE corner of Section 24, go south 0 degrees, 25 minutes East 744.49 feet along the easterly line of said Section 24; thence go West 105.65 feet for a "Point of Beginning;" continue thence West for 213.96 feet; thence go North 06 degrees, 51 minutes, 39 seconds West 125.74 feet; thence on an arc to the left go 52.36 feet through a central angle of 20 degrees at a radial distance of 150 feet to a point of reverse curvature; thence on an arc to the right go 50.36 feet through a central angle of 14 degrees, 25 minutes, 40 seconds at a radial distance of 200 feet; thence go East 260.90 feet; thence go South 222 feet to the "Point of Beginning."

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The nominated property encompasses approximately two of the original eleven-acre Civic Center. It includes the entire parcel historically associated with the Municipal Auditorium/Recreation Club and the lawn bowling courts.

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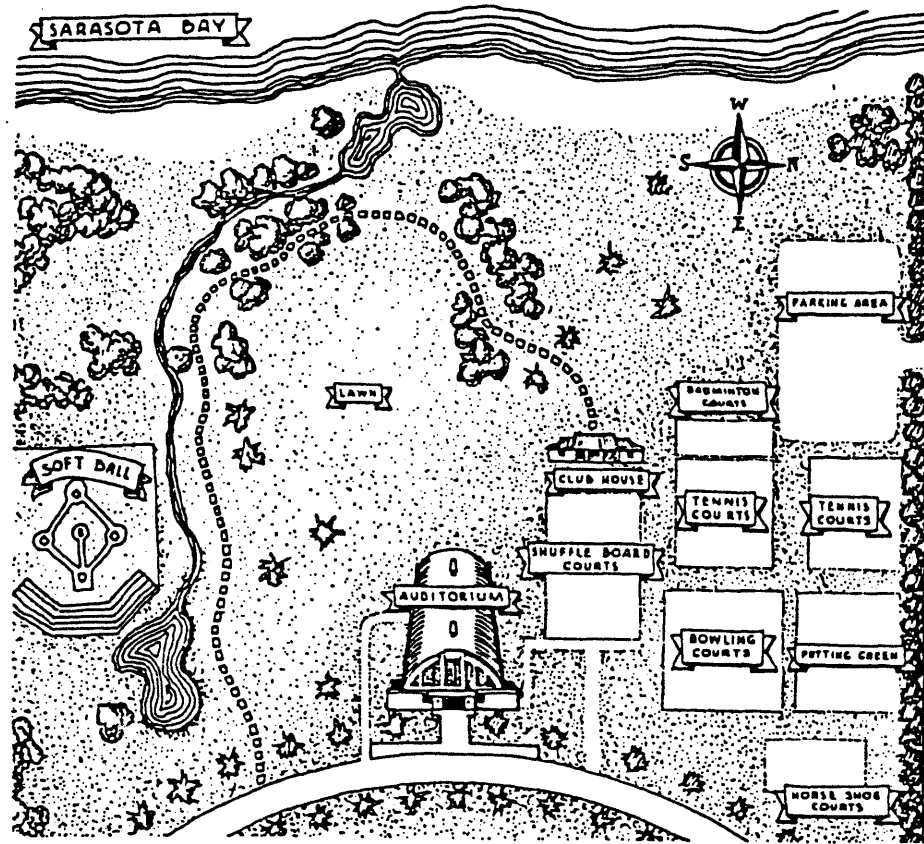
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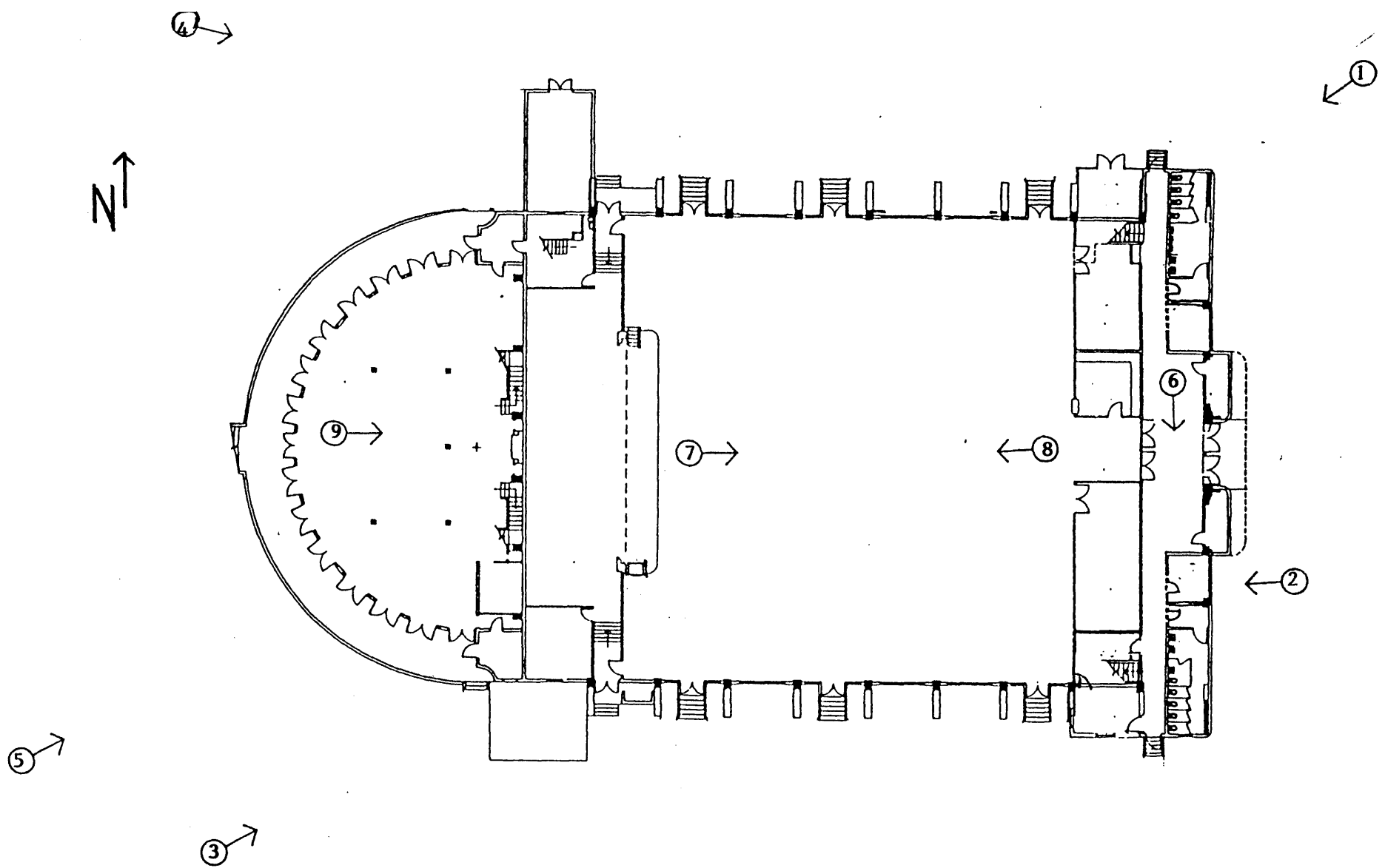
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1. Municipal Auditorium/Recreation Club, 801 North Tamiami Trail, Sarasota
 2. Sarasota County, Florida
 3. Rebecca Spain Schwarz
 4. May 1994
 5. Rebecca Spain Schwarz, 2727 13th Street N., St. Petersburg, Florida, 33704
 6. Main (east) facade, view looking southwest
 7. Photo 1 of 10

Items 1-5 are the same for the remaining photographs

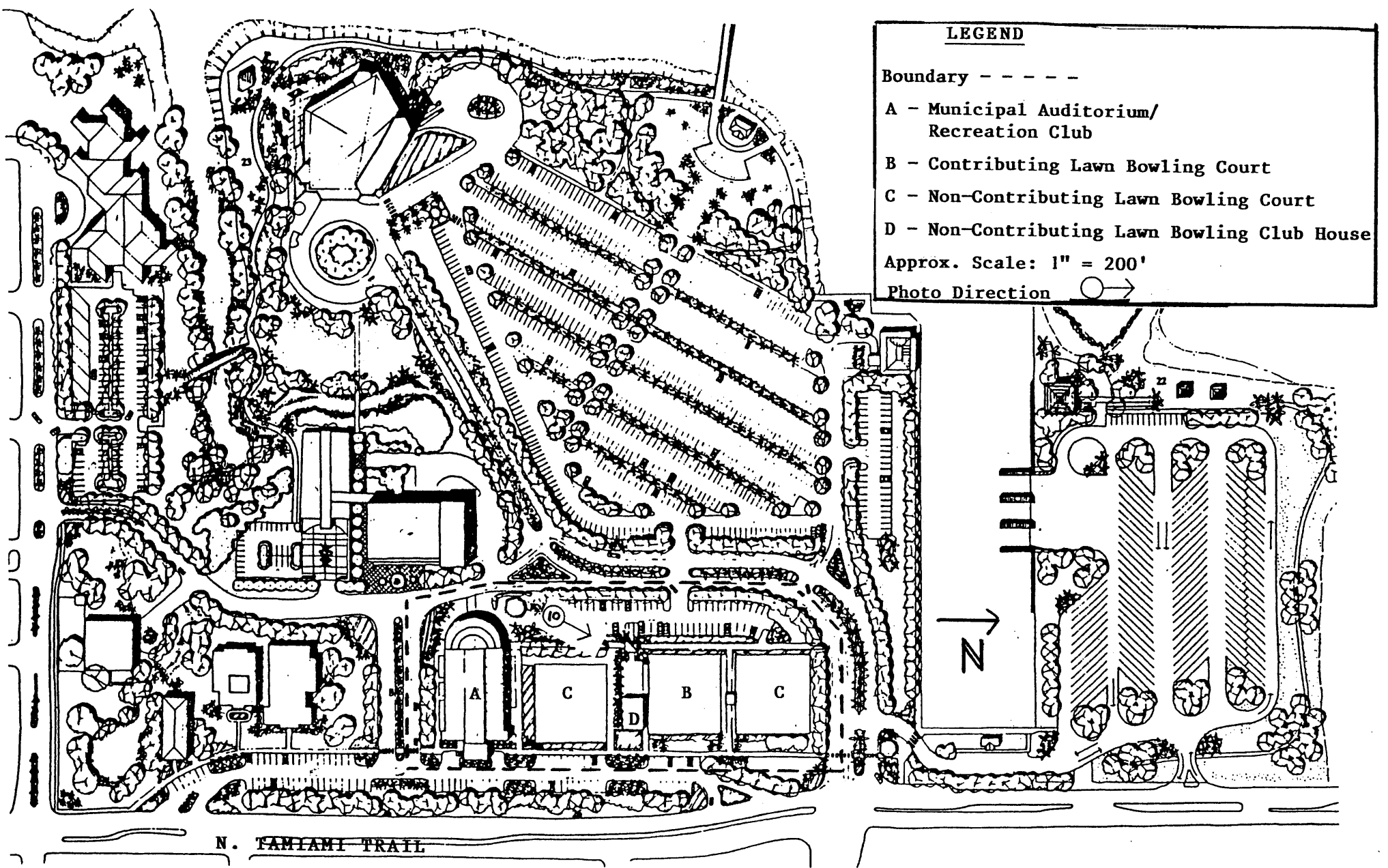
6. Detail of frieze, east facade, south of entrance canopy; view looking west
7. Photo 2 of 10
6. South elevation, view looking northeast
7. Photo 3 of 10
6. North elevation, view looking southeast
7. Photo 4 of 10
6. West elevation, view looking northeast
7. Photo 5 of 10
6. Detail, Auditorium interior, looking south along entrance corridor
7. Photo 6 of 10
6. Detail, Auditorium interior; looking east toward entrance
7. Photo 7 of 10
6. Detail, Auditorium interior; looking west, from balcony, toward stage
7. Photo 8 of 10
6. Detail, Recreation Club interior, first floor; view looking east
7. Photo 9 of 10
6. Lawn bowling courts, view looking northeast; south court in foreground
7. Photo 10 of 10



MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM/RECREATION CLUB
 SARASOTA, FLORIDA
 ca. 1940 Site Plan



MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM/RECREATION CLUB
 SARASOTA, FLORIDA
 Floor Plan
 Photo Direction ○ →
 Approx. Scale: 1" = 32'



MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM/RECREATION CLUB
SARASOTA, FLORIDA

1994 Civic Center Master Plan