

Milwaukee County Department of Welfare

Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

Name of Property

County and State

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Milwaukee County Department of Welfare

Other names/site number: Marcia P. Cogg Health and Human Services Building;
Milwaukee County Department of Social Services; Schuster's
Department Store

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

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

2. Location

Street & number: 1220 W. Vliet Street

City or town: Milwaukee State: WI County: Milwaukee

Not For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐

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 at the following

level(s) of significance: ☐ National ☐ Statewide ☒ Local

Applicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D

Signature of certifying official/Title:	Date
Daina Penkiunas, Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Officer	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	
In my opinion, the property <input type="checkbox"/> meets <input type="checkbox"/> does not meet the National Register criteria.	
Signature of commenting official:	Date
Title:	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ☐ Entered in the National Register
- ☐ Determined eligible for the National Register
- ☐ Determined not eligible for the National Register
- ☐ Removed from the National Register
- ☐ Other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private: ☒

Public – Local ☐

Public – State ☐

Public – Federal ☐

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s) ☒

District ☐

Site ☐

Structure ☐

Object ☐

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the county)

Contributing

Noncontributing

1

1

Buildings

1

Sites

Structures

Objects

1

Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

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COMMERCE/Department Store

Vacant

GOVERNMENT/Government Office

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE NINETEENTH AND EARLY
TWENTIETH CENTURY

REVIVALS/Classical Revival

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick, Stone: Limestone

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Milwaukee County Department of Welfare Building, located at 1220 West Vliet Street, Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin, is a three-story, brick and stone Classical Revival-style building constructed in two phases as a Schuster's Department Store. The first phase was constructed in 1910 at the corner of North 12th Street and West Vliet Street. In 1925, the building was expanded westward to the corner of North 13th Street and West Vliet Street. There have been no other additions to date, though alterations have been made during the period of significance (PoS), including interior finish and layout changes. The first floor of the building contains storefronts and multiple entrances intentionally placed around the building for ease of access off the street. The north end of the lot contains an asphalt-paved parking lot that bounds Cherry

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Street, North 12th Street, and North 13th Street. The surrounding urban context consists of late nineteenth- to late twentieth-century commercial and residential buildings, interspersed between swatches of undeveloped, vacant land. Interstate 43 (I-43) is located directly east of the site, which consists of a complex system of road infrastructure. The Milwaukee County Department of Welfare building retains integrity for its direct association with statewide and federal welfare reform in the 1960s and 1970s, with a period of significance between 1963 and 1986. The building was the location of the largest expansion of social services in Milwaukee's history, and the current configurations and materials reflect this period.

Narrative Description

SETTING & SITE

The Milwaukee County Department of Welfare (MCDW) Building is situated between the Milwaukee neighborhoods of Midtown, Triangle North, Haymarket, and Marquette, in an area historically known as Bronzeville (*Figure 3*). The surrounding urban context consists of a mix between commercial and residential buildings. Dwellings are diverse and consist of a wide variety of architectural styles and types from the late nineteenth to late twentieth centuries, including styles like Gothic Revival, Colonial Revival, and Craftsman and forms such as ranch and shotgun. Commercial buildings surrounding the building are mostly from the former half of the twentieth century and primarily display Revivalist influence. The urban context is clustered, separated by green, undeveloped parcels throughout. Interstate 43 (I-43) directly east of the building has removed a large portion of the historic Bronzeville neighborhood, which was a close-knit mid-twentieth-century African American community in Milwaukee.

The 2.3-acre, L-shaped site itself is partially encompassed by the bounds of the MCDW Building, which fronts West Vliet Street to the south, North 12th Street to the east, and North 13th Street to the west. The rear (north) portion of the site consists of an asphalt parking lot with 120 parking stalls, divided in half by North 12th Lane. A loading dock is located directly behind the building, accessed from North 13th Street. A concrete sidewalk borders the site. There is no vegetation present on the site.

EXTERIOR

The exterior of the MCDW Building today is a result of two major construction phases, including original construction in 1910 and a large, seamless addition in 1925. The three-story exterior is comprised of buff brick with limestone sills and entrance surrounds. Simple limestone ornamentation, including shields and lion head medallions with a Greek key cornice band at the

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entrance surrounds, reflect the Classical Revival style. The roof is flat behind a parapet, and windows throughout consist of fixed replacement four-light and two-light aluminum frame units. A large rooftop mechanical penthouse is located along the north elevation.

1220 W. Vliet Street was occupied throughout the twentieth century and displays a mixture of finishes and historic features from varying periods of the building's lifespan. The exterior of the building reflects the building's history as a Schuster's Department Store, and dates generally to 1910 and 1924, when the building was expanded, unless otherwise noted below. Windows on the exterior date to circa 1986. The interior received multiple renovation campaigns that took place throughout the twentieth century. Most interior finishes and features date to 1986, which was the last building campaign within the PoS. Unless otherwise noted, the interior finishes and features date to this campaign.

SOUTH ELEVATION

The south (primary) elevation faces West Vliet Street (*Photos 1 to 4*) and abuts the southern property line. Sixteen window bays organize this elevation, as well as a one-story storefront system.. At the ground level, the storefronts span the entire elevation, interrupted only by three entrances, one in the fifth bay from the west, one in the central bay and one in the fourth bay from the east. Storefronts are comprised of a limestone kneewall below circa-1986 grouped two-light aluminum frame units divided by metal mullions, with smaller transom lights above that were painted over in the late twentieth century. The storefronts are capped by a stamped metal cornice with circular motifs. The limestone storefront surrounds at the three entrances include piers with relief pilasters, topped with an entablature comprised of two cast lion head medallions that flank a central cartouche. The cornice of the entablature features decorative trim composed of a lower floral pattern, and an upper Greek meander pattern—both crowned by fluted trim with a center shield relief. . The central entrance (*Photo 4*) is a metal framed system and includes a metal canopy, added in circa 1986. The entrance consists of a central double-leaf metal frame glazed door, flanked by single-leaf doors. Sidelights and fixed metal frame transoms border the entrance doors. The metal canopy is composed of chamfered projecting brackets, attached by two metal tubes that span horizontally across the canopy. The brackets are divided by glazing, and the canopy system is supported by wall ties that are mounted to the entrance's entablature. Both eastern and western entrances have been infilled in the late twentieth century with buff brick below a painted plywood soffit. A non-historic metal double leaf slab door sits within the brick at each section. Above, a simple limestone belt course spans the entire south elevation between the ground level and second story. The second and third story of the south elevation contains grouped four-light aluminum frame windows throughout. The grouped bays are divided by brick pilasters, capped by a simple limestone capitals. A dentilated limestone sill decorates

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the bottom of the third-story windows. The south elevation is capped with a brick band that includes a limestone plaque above each pilaster and simple limestone cornice.

WEST ELEVATION

The west elevation faces North 13th Street (*Photo 5*) and abuts the western property line. Seven bays organize this elevation whose configuration, arrangement, and decorative elements match the south elevation. At the ground level, storefronts span the entire elevation, interrupted only by an entrance at the center bay. Like the south elevation, the storefronts are comprised of a limestone kneewall below glass panels with alternating sized metal mullions and a painted metal band above. The storefront includes a metal transom system with painted panels and is topped with a painted, stamped metal drip edge. The limestone storefront surround at the entrance includes piers with relief pilasters, topped with an entablature comprised of a limestone entablature with a shield and lion head medallions above the pilasters. The entrance has been infilled with brick below a painted plywood soffit. A metal double leaf slab door sits within the brick. A limestone belt course spans the entire west elevation between the ground level and second story. Two-story brick pilasters with simple limestone capitals divide the upper story bays. The west elevation is capped with a brick band that includes a limestone plaque above each pilaster and limestone cornice.

NORTH ELEVATION

The north elevation faces an alley and overlooks a parking lot and another commercial building to the north (*Photos 6 to 8*). The north elevation is the same width as the south elevation but is utilitarian in nature. Circa-1986 cast concrete panels clad the north elevation. Asymmetrically placed HVAC venting pierces the elevation. Historic four-light wood windows with operable awnings decorate the north elevation of the roof penthouse. A loading entrance is located in the western half of the north elevation and includes a raised concrete pad with a metal canopy above. A single leaf metal access door provides interior access from the loading dock. Directly east of the loading entrance is a historic entrance, which has been obscured by a late twentieth-century one-story vestibule. The vestibule is constructed out of painted concrete block, and capped with a composite shed roof that slopes down slightly on its west side. The entrance to the vestibule consists of a centrally located metal commercial door with a center light on the north elevation. Fixed aluminum frame one-light windows decorate the east and west elevations of the vestibule. The vestibule obscures the lower three-quarters of the historic entrance, which consists of an ornately decorated brick and limestone portal, only visible above the vestibule's shed roof. The entrance contains two sets of flanking pilasters that are capped by a simple entablature and decorative cornice. The cornice contains similar themes as the cornices above the larger

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entrances on the south, east, and west elevations, with the addition of egg and dart molding (*Photo 7*). There is no cornice present on this elevation.

EAST ELEVATION

The east elevation faces North 12th Street (*Photo 9*) and abuts the eastern property line. The east elevation mirrors the west with its seven window bays and composition. At the ground level, storefronts span the entire elevation, interrupted only by an entrance at the center bay. Like the south elevation, the storefronts are comprised of a limestone kneewall below glass panels with alternating sized metal mullions and a painted metal band above. The storefront includes a painted metal transom system with painted panels topped with a painted, stamped metal drip edge. The limestone storefront surround at the entrance includes piers with relief pilasters, topped with an entablature comprised of a limestone entablature with a shield and lion head medallions above the pilasters. The entrance has been infilled with buff brick below a painted plywood soffit. A metal double leaf slab door sits within the brick. A limestone belt course spans the entire west elevation between the ground level and second story. Two-story brick pilasters with simple limestone capitals divide the upper story bays. The west elevation is capped with a brick band that includes a limestone plaque above each pilaster and limestone cornice.

ROOF

The building is capped by a flat roof sheathed with a rolled membrane. A limestone parapet borders the perimeter of the roof. The portion of the parapet bordering the north elevation is clad with metal coping, while cornice-capped elevations are covered with standing seam metal. A one-story rooftop penthouse is situated along the north elevation. The rooftop penthouse is clad in cast concrete panels at the north elevation and corrugated metal panels on the remaining elevations. There is a mechanical unit along the south elevation of the rooftop penthouse and includes various vents and roof penetrations throughout.

INTERIOR

The interior of the Milwaukee County Department of Welfare includes public spaces on the first floor, offices on the second and third floors, and storage and mechanical rooms in the basement and penthouse. The interior throughout reflects changes to the building during the period of significance to accommodate the Milwaukee County Department of Welfare. Some historic features remain from the building's time as a department store, such as the circa-1948 escalators, pillar capitals and polished terrazzo floors at the basement level, and plaster walls, wood trim, and storefronts at the attic level. Multiple access stairs are located throughout the building. All

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are enclosed and located along the perimeter walls. Finishes throughout include tile flooring and carpet, painted gypsum board or brick paneling, and ACT. ACT varies between a drop grid system added in circa 1986 and older, glued ACT located in areas such as the first-floor hallways. Lighting throughout the first, second and third floors is located within the ACT grid and consists of egg crate suspended lights, as well as recessed within the gypsum board ceiling treatment as single fixtures.

VERTICAL ACCESS

Vertical access throughout the building is provided by five stairs, a central escalator, and a two-car elevator bank, the latter of which is located in the northwest corner of the building. All utilitarian stairs are enclosed and provide access to all levels. Two stairs are located along the south exterior wall, at the western and eastern entrance lobbies, one stair is located at the west elevation entrance lobby, and the remaining two are located along the north exterior wall, at the loading dock entrance and along the alley. Stair finishes include carpet and painted metal railings. The centrally located circa-1948 escalator provides access from the basement to the third floor. The elevator bank consists of simple metal landing doors surrounded by metal casing.

FIRST FLOOR (See Figure 9)

The first floor functions as office and reception space. Office spaces are located along the west, east, and south perimeter walls, with primary circulation and waiting areas located at the central axes. An east-west corridor connects the east and west entrance lobbies. The primary entrance (*Photo 13*) on the south elevation opens into an entrance lobby with two diagonal corridors that connect to the east-west corridor. Historically, in the 1986 renovation campaign, the area between these two branching diagonal corridors was the information kiosk, which was enclosed outside the period of significance. The waiting areas dictated by curved half walls still remain, and frame open space in the center of the building. The triangular space created between the three corridors includes restrooms and offices. The corners of the corridor walls are curved throughout the first floor. Large columns are located throughout the open lobby space, clad in either tile or painted gypsum board. Historic features include curved half walls that frame waiting areas, the glazed service counters framed in gypsum, and the flush metal doors with sidelights.

Office spaces are located to the east and west of the primary entrance, south of the east west corridor and north of the east west corridor (*Photo 11*). Finishes in the offices include carpet, painted gypsum walls, and ACT ceilings.

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Restrooms, a conference room, a freight elevator, and back of house spaces span the north perimeter wall. Another east-west corridor connects these spaces (*Photo 10*). Back of house spaces include storage, janitor, and electrical closets. Finishes in the east-west corridor include painted gypsum board walls, tile flooring, and ACT. Character-defining finishes throughout the first-floor corridors, office spaces, and lobbies include tile flooring, brick walls and columns, and ACT.

SECOND FLOOR (See Figure 10)

The second floor primarily functions as open office space (*Photo 15*). The second floor is primarily accessed through the central escalators which leads to the primary circulation and waiting areas which are located around the escalator bank (*Photo 14*). This area is characterized by waiting areas and service kiosks that feature the same curvilinear design philosophy as the first floor. An east-west corridor is located to the north of the escalator lobby and provides access to the restrooms, freight elevator, and back of house spaces along the north perimeter wall. Finishes in the corridor and escalator lobby include tile flooring, painted gypsum wall board and brick walls, and ACT. Doors throughout consist of flush metal single-leaf doors, sometimes bordered by a single sidelight and surrounded in metal casing.

The surrounding office space that defines the perimeter of the second floor consists of open space framed by gypsum board-covered structural columns surrounded by removable cubicles. Enclosed offices are located on north elevation and along the center lobby walls, framed in gypsum. The open office space is lit by the double-height windows. The ceiling angles upward from the drop ceiling to accommodate the height of the windows, sheathed in painted gypsum. Finishes in the offices include carpet, painted gypsum walls, and ACT.

THIRD FLOOR (See Figure 11)

The third floor is accessed primarily through the same central elevator bank as the second floor. The third floor is more built out than the second floor, with a central public lobby around the escalators bordered by interconnecting hallways and offices. The eastern end of the building contains open office space similar to the majority of the second floor, while the various department offices of the third floor are contained to the west half of the building. Similar design queues are present on the third floor, such as curved hallway corners, ACT ceilings, and gypsum board and brick walls. Historic VCT can be found in some of the hallways. The primary circulation and waiting areas are also located around the escalator (*Photo 16*), and an east-west corridor (*Photo 17*) to the north of the escalator lobby provides access to restrooms, the freight elevator, and back of house spaces. Doors consist mostly of flush single-leaf metal doors with

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optional sidelights, however some corridor doors are double-leaf glazed units. Lighting is provided at the perimeter through the double-height windows and internally through suspended units.

ROOFTOP PENTHOUSE

The rooftop penthouse functions as storage and mechanical space and is accessed via a stair along the north elevation. The penthouse is two stories tall, with the lower floor housing the contemporary HVAC systems as well as storage space, and the upper story consisting of storage space and historic mechanical systems. Finishes are utilitarian in nature, and predominately date to the early twentieth century. The lower floor contains exposed terra cotta block walls, plaster walls with historic wood trim, historic doors and staircases, concrete floors, and exposed ceilings. The upper floor contains finishes such as exposed terra cotta walls, exposed ceiling, and wood plank floors (*Photos 18 & 19*).

BASEMENT AND SUB-BASEMENT (See Figures 12 & 13)

The basement includes office, storage, and mechanical spaces (*Photo 20*). The sub-basement is largely unfinished and includes ductwork and miscellaneous mechanical equipment. Basement access is provided by the stairs along the north and south elevations and the escalator. The sub-basement is accessed via a utilitarian stair in the basement's mechanical room. Finishes in the basement corridors include terrazzo or concrete flooring, painted concrete block walls, and the painted exposed ceiling structure. The ceiling in the escalator lobby and some storage rooms are painted gypsum board. Finishes in the basement offices include carpet, painted gypsum board or concrete block walls, and ACT.

Integrity

The Milwaukee County Department of Welfare retains historic integrity from its period of significance: 1963-1982.

Location and Setting: The Milwaukee County Department of Welfare building remains in its original location. The Milwaukee County Department of Welfare took over the former Schuster's Department Store in 1963. Many of the nearby commercial and residential buildings at this time were low to mid-rise and of varying ages and styles. Today, most buildings on this section of West Vliet Street, including the Milwaukee County Department of Welfare Building, retain their earlier twentieth century features with modern storefronts. The Milwaukee County

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Department of Welfare Building continues to fit within the surrounding neighborhood, maintaining its connection to social welfare in Milwaukee.

Design, Materials, and Workmanship: The Milwaukee County Department of Welfare building remains recognizable as an early twentieth century building with interventions made during the period of significance. The exterior of the building has not been significantly altered after the period of significance and retains most materials, features, design, and scale. It remains an unpainted brick-clad building with limestone elements, though the circa-1986 cast concrete panels on the rear (north) elevation and a steel and glass canopy at the central entrance on the south elevation were installed during the period of significance. Though entrance doors, storefronts, and most windows have been updated with post-PoS replacements or have been infilled with brick, the fenestration pattern remains the same. Though the original 1910 crenelation on top of the building's cornice was removed between 1986 and 1987, the exterior retains a high degree of integrity of design and materials.¹

At the interior, layouts and finishes on all floors generally date to within or after the period of significance. The first-floor lobby and glazed service counters are extant and date to 1986, and date to . Finishes, including tile, painted gypsum board and brick walls, and ACT typical of office use remain throughout.

The Milwaukee County Department of Welfare Building retains nearly all finishes and alterations from the period of significance, representing the county's occupation during the mid-twentieth century to today. Exterior features installed during the county's tenancy, including storefronts and entrances, are extant. Interior elements including tile flooring, brick walls and ACT are also extant. Alterations include replacement windows and reorganization of partition walls within the office spaces.

Feeling and Association: The Milwaukee County Department of Welfare Building retains character defining features in its design, materials, and workmanship that continue to make it recognizable as a former department store turned county welfare building. Therefore, it retains the feeling of a civic building as part of its association with the county welfare department. The building also retains the characteristic features from its period of significance as part of its direct association with the county welfare department and statewide welfare reform in the 1960s and 1970s. The building continues to provide social services for those who need aid.

¹ "Historic Aerials: Viewer," Nationwide Environmental Title Research, accessed August 7, 2024, <https://www.historicaerials.com/viewer>.

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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.)

- ☐ 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL HISTORY

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is checked.)

N/A

Period of Significance

1963-1986

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Dates

1963

1986

Architect/Builder

Brust & Philipp (1910)

Brust & Brust (Interior, 1963)

Pujara Wirth Torke, Inc. (Interior, 1986)

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Milwaukee County Department of Welfare Building at 1220 West Vliet Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is locally significant under Criterion A in the areas of SOCIAL HISTORY and POLITICS/GOVERNMENT for its direct association with the growth of important public welfare programs in Milwaukee County, which had a significant impact on how the government provided services to individuals and families in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. This building housed a vital governmental economic aid office that served many Milwaukee County citizens during a period of significant welfare expansion under the federal government's "war on poverty." Locally, Milwaukee experienced a gradual decline in industrial manufacturing that led to greater unemployment while the city experienced the continued resettlement of people from the rural South associated with the Great Migration. Many of these new residents were African Americans who settled in the nearby neighborhood of Bronzeville, a neighborhood already in economic decline due to the construction of Interstate 43 and discriminatory housing practices in the city. Due to a growing need for financial assistance and the cramped conditions of the former

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Welfare Department facilities at the county courthouse, Milwaukee County sought a new facility to house the department. In 1963, the former Schuster's Department Store at 1220 West Vliet Street became a prime location to create a dedicated welfare center where employees would have more space, and citizens could more easily apply for aid due to its centralized location in the county and dedicated interior layout. The Milwaukee County Department of Welfare occupied this building from 1963 until 2025.

The expansion of welfare programs during the 1960s caused controversy and conflict in the 1970s that gradually became politicized at both the state and national levels. The politics of welfare in Wisconsin eventually led to new regulations issued in 1982 that altered how welfare was administered in Milwaukee County and marked a departure from the programs of the 1960s and 1970s. In 1986, the building was renovated in order to streamline the functionality of the building, indicating the department's continued use and community reliance throughout the 1980s. The emphasis on "welfare reform" in the 1980s and early 1990s eventually led to Governor Tommy Thompson's 1996 Wisconsin Works (W-2) system, which provided state aid to working individuals and families. Despite these later controversies, the Milwaukee County Department of Welfare Building—known colloquially as "Vliet" by routine visitors—played an important role in providing essential social services to Milwaukee County citizens and families during the 1960s, 70s, and 80s and exists today as a symbol of a significant era of Milwaukee's social history.

Period of Significance and Justification

Although the building at 1220 West Vliet Street dates to 1910 and 1925, when it served as Schuster's Department Store, the period of significance for the Milwaukee County Department of Welfare Building begins in 1963. This marks the year the Milwaukee County Welfare Department moved into the building, thus beginning its association with the social and governmental history of the county. The period of significance ends in 1986, when the interior of the building was renovated, reflecting the last major change to the building as federal and state regulations greatly reduced the efficiency and effectiveness of the department's ability to administer aid thereafter. It was during this period between 1963 and 1986 that the building was the location of the largest expansion of social services in Milwaukee's history, aimed especially towards addressing poverty in the African American community. The needs of the poor were addressed, and the politics of welfare services were played out within this building during the period of significance.

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Criteria Consideration (if applicable)

Because the period of significance extends to 1986, Criteria Consideration G applies to the Milwaukee County Department of Welfare, as the significance of the property extends to within the past fifty years. The Milwaukee County Department of Welfare was a consistent service that provided social services to the citizens of Milwaukee throughout the mid and late twentieth century. The building continued to serve the citizens of Milwaukee throughout the 1970s and 1980s, despite the difficulties of navigating state and federal welfare policy during a period of welfare entrenchment practices. The significance of this service extends past the fifty-year historic property mark, necessitating the application of Criteria Consideration G, since the Milwaukee County Department of Welfare Center continued to act as a significant social service until 1986.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

CRITERION A: SOCIAL HISTORY & POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

The building is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of SOCIAL HISTORY as the most significant location of social service activities in Milwaukee during the period when the federal government's "War on Poverty" the city's declining manufacturing sector, and the continued migration of impoverished individuals and families to Milwaukee prompted a significant growth of welfare and social services in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s. This building housed a vital governmental economic aid office for the poor citizens of the county during a volatile and important period of social change in Milwaukee. The former Schuster's 12th Street store became the home of the Milwaukee County Department of Welfare in 1963 and operated in that capacity until 2025. Although constructed and used for a different function, the building is locally significant for its association with Milwaukee County's administration of welfare to its citizens from 1963 to 1986.

THE MILWAUKEE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF WELFARE

In January 1962, Milwaukee County created a committee to look into the possible acquisition and remodel of the former Schuster's 12th Street store to use as a dedicated county welfare office.² Public welfare programs in the United States were becoming more of a necessity after

² "County Board Argues Move, Curb On Legislation," *The Milwaukee Journal*, January 17, 1962, 12.

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World War II, where many families lost men to war, leaving an abundance of single mothers struggling to provide for their children. Poverty was rampant after the Great Depression, and relief services were becoming more popular as a way to provide stable services to those who could reliably support themselves.³ President John F. Kennedy's administration observed this shift in the economy and made welfare a major component of its policy. One of the most notable services provided by federal welfare programs was the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program, or AFDC. The AFDC was established by Wilbur Cohen—an aide to President John F. Kennedy's on the Social Security task force—Wilbur Cohen. Cohen created the AFDC in 1961 to combat the rising poverty rates among families with unemployed parents. Though originally a cash-based program, it was quickly changed to be more services-oriented, in which states would be reimbursed by the federal government up to 75 percent if they chose to adopt the policy.⁴ In 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson established the Office of Economic Opportunity which oversaw the administration of the Economic Opportunity Act, or EOA. The EOA was part of Johnson's "War on Poverty" campaign, which greatly expanded the welfare services provided at both the state and federal levels, including the Food Stamp Act, Medicare and Medicaid, and the School Breakfast Program.⁵ As policies expanded, so did federal overreach. In order to control and adequately ensure the efficiency of policy implementation, the federal government in the 1960s and 1970s bankrolled state and county government programs while attempting to centralize the administration at the federal level, which led to states having little control of their own programs and policy implementation.⁶

Wisconsin has a rich history in welfare, as one of the first states in the union to develop independent welfare policies in the late 1800s and early 1900s, under notable public figures like Congressman Robert La Follette.⁷ As early as 1913, Wisconsin implemented the Aid to Dependent Children program, which supported parents who were struggling to support their children. Women were often the subject of welfare debate, as typical gender roles made it more likely that welfare initiatives would be taken to keep single mothers from having to find work. It was seen that the focus on maternal responsibility was a dutiful cause for safeguarding welfare

³ Rebecca G. Barrett, "From Welfare to Work: The Precursors, Politics, and Policies of Wisconsin and Federal Work-Based Welfare Reform" (PhD diss., The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, 2012), 25.
https://etd.ohiolink.edu/acprod/odb_etd/ws/send_file/send?accession=osu1337001655&disposition=inline.

⁴ Rebecca G. Barrett, "From Welfare to Work: The Precursors, Politics, and Policies of Wisconsin and Federal Work-Based Welfare Reform," 33.

⁵ "Historical Development," Social Security Administration, accessed September 25, 2024, 5-6.
<https://www.ssa.gov/history/pdf/histdev.pdf>.

⁶ Barrett, "From Welfare to Work...", 34.

⁷ Barrett, "From Welfare to Work...", 94-96.

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initiatives.⁸ In 1932, Wisconsin became the second state to provide unemployment relief, directly behind New York, which was under the oversight of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "New Deal" policies.⁹ During the 1950s and 1960s, social welfare developments increased 45 percent annually in constant per capita dollars as the federal government began to fund state policy ventures and the implementation of government programs.¹⁰ In 1965, the federal government devoted 33 percent of its budget to social welfare expenditures in the states. By 1975, social welfare budget had been increased to 55 percent of the federal government funding, marking an exponential growth.¹¹ Federal overreach and expenditure was highlighted by the fact that at the state and county level in proportion to total spending social welfare expenditures only increased from 55 percent to 65 percent between 1965 and 1975.¹² The federal government's increasing role between 1965 and 1975 indicates that welfare policy was a pivotal national concern at this time, and that it was the most significant period of social welfare within the United States before regressive policy would severely impact the efficacy and role the state and federal government had in welfare programs.

The demographic makeup of the neighborhood where the new welfare building would be located was probably a factor in selecting the old Schuster's Department Store for welfare offices. It was a neighborhood that saw the greatest need for welfare programs because of its changing demographics. The US census records for 1960 indicate that out of the 3,455 residents within the enumeration district that included 1220 West Vliet Street, over two thousand were unemployed. They also indicate that 1,631 residents were White, while 1,772 residents were African American, demonstrating a shift from previous predominately white demographics.¹³ The area historically had a majority of Jewish occupants, which is primarily why Schuster's chose to establish their 12th Street store at this location. However, throughout the early twentieth century, the demographic started to shift from a Jewish population to an African American population.¹⁴ The reason for this shift was due to the development of Bronzeville (between State Street, North Avenue, Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, North 12th Street), a historically African American

⁸ Barrett, "From Welfare to Work...", 23.

⁹ Barrett, "From Welfare to Work...", 96-98.

¹⁰ Alfred M. Skolnik, Sophie R. Dales, and the US Social Security Administration, "Social Welfare Expenditures, 1950-75" (Social Security Administration, January 1976), 4.

¹¹ Skolnik, et al., "Social Welfare Expenditures, 1950-75," 4.

¹² Skolnik, et al., "Social Welfare Expenditures, 1950-75," 13.

¹³ 1960 United States Federal Census, United States Census Bureau, accessed on Census.gov, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1960/population-and-housing-phc-1/41953654v6ch4.pdf>.

¹⁴ "Area D5 Redlining Description," Mapping Inequality, accessed October 7, 2024, <https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/>.

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business corridor that had grown tremendously after World War II (*see Figure 3*). The Sixth Ward of Milwaukee in the early twentieth century became the largest concentration of African Americans in the city, possibly due to it being the oldest part of the city, and less desirable than other developing locations.¹⁵ Milwaukee's "Great Migration" occurred later than most major cities, with an influx of African Americans moving to Milwaukee after the second World War. As noted in William Albert Vick's thesis *From Walnut Street to No Street: Milwaukee's Afro-American Businesses, 1945-1967*:

These "late great migrants" came to Milwaukee to take advantage of economic opportunities, but regardless of the number of jobs available, they found themselves concentrated in the oldest part of the city, slowly extending the borders of the early African American community west and north into areas formerly populated by German and Russian Jews.¹⁶

The influx of African American migrants paired with what the city considered a "blighted" location, however, made Bronzeville a prime location for redlining and other unethical development practices. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, urban renewal and federal highway projects took place in the Bronzeville area. In 1959, construction began on a freeway which would eventually cut directly through Bronzeville. In 1963, the clearing blocks of housing owned primarily by African American residents began.¹⁷ In addition, public housing projects displaced African Americans from the area to provide housing for other demographics. Lapham Park, located 0.63 miles northeast from 12th Street and Vliet Street, was built in 1964 for predominantly White families and the elderly. This public housing development consisted of an eight-story building and twenty-three low-rise buildings between North 6th Street, West Brown Street, West Vine Street, and West Reservoir Avenue.¹⁸ These projects fractured Bronzeville, and along with the widening of the African American commercial corridor on Walnut Street, led to poorer conditions for residents and hurt local businesses.¹⁹

¹⁵ William Albert Vick, "From Walnut Street to No Street: Milwaukee's Afro-American Businesses, 1945-1967" (master's thesis, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 1993), 11.

¹⁶ Vick, "From Walnut Street to No Street...", 11.

¹⁷ "Historic Aerials: Viewer," Nationwide Environmental Title Research, accessed August 7, 2024, <https://www.historicaerials.com/viewer>.

¹⁸ Phyllis Santacroce, "Public Housing," *Encyclopedia of Milwaukee* (blog), accessed May 13, 2025, <https://emke.uwm.edu/entry/public-housing/>.

¹⁹ Jacob Rindfleisch, "Halyard Park," *Encyclopedia of Milwaukee*, accessed October 7, 2024, <https://emke.uwm.edu/entry/halyard-park/>.

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There was also a significant downturn in industrial opportunities in Milwaukee during this period for a variety of reasons, ranging from corporate consolidation to a desire for higher profits without strict regulations, leading many major businesses to leave the region, and sometimes even the country. For example, Schlitz Brewery, which was a major brewery in the area, moved their services to Texas in the 1950s.²⁰ Between 1960 and 1973, the city of Milwaukee alone lost 42,000 manufacturing jobs, and the displacement of wages between new service jobs and manufacturing jobs led to inner-city blight and poverty among residents.²¹ This meant that African Americans who had specifically moved to the city to find these manufacturing jobs to support their families were now at a severe disadvantage as they struggled to make ends meet.

Historically, welfare policy was discriminatory towards African Americans, which usually forced Black single mothers to work instead of collecting pensions since they were considered more “able-bodied” than white women.²² However, with the election of President Kennedy in 1960 and the mounting African American Civil Rights Movement, the federal government was more willing to focus its welfare efforts on poverty-stricken African Americans as a sign of good faith. This was expanded by Lyndon B. Johnson and his “War on Poverty” which funded studies on African American poverty and held conferences addressing concerns that African Americans had with the current welfare system and its failure to address African American needs.²³

In July 1962, Milwaukee County purchased the former Schuster’s Department Store on Vliet Street for \$600,000 from the G & S Corporation. The purchase included the department store and its related parking lots. The County expected to spend \$350,000 on renovations to make the building work for the Welfare Department, but it did not initially have the necessary purchasing funds and instead relied on the 1963 budget to cover the purchase at 2.5 percent interest.²⁴ The County’s motivation for purchasing the former department store was in part due to the cramped conditions that the current Welfare Department suffered inside the County Courthouse. Since the Great Depression, county employees had worked in the crowded offices on the sixth floor of the courthouse, even sitting two-to-a-desk while they worked.²⁵ The former Schuster’s store was a perfect solution for the County, who otherwise would have needed to build a new facility. By

²⁰ Anthony Orum, “Economy,” *Encyclopedia of Milwaukee*, accessed September 25, 2024, <https://emke.uwm.edu/entry/economy/>.

²¹ Orum, “Economy.”

²² Barrett, “From Welfare to Work...,” 23.

²³ Barrett, “From Welfare to Work...,” 38-41.

²⁴ “County Takes Over Schuster’s Building,” *The Milwaukee Journal*, April 30, 1962, 1.

²⁵ “County Unit Acts To Ease Crowding,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 12, 1962, 13.

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purchasing the former Schuster's building, the County had all the necessary amenities and flexibility to renovate within budget.²⁶

While it cannot be definitively proven that another reason the County moved its Welfare Office was to the Schuster's building to better serve this struggling community that was suffering through the effects of urban renewal, the correlations are evident, and the move was more than beneficial. The choice to locate the new offices in proximity Bronzeville over any other location in the city seems a conscious one, especially since the county seemed to be specifically targeting the area for urban renewal projects. Since the federal government funded a majority of state welfare expenditures at the time, it comes as no surprise that the county would target a predominately African American area of the city. The convenience of the location directly off the I-94 Alternate also made it an easy location to create a county-wide service facility that could reach all areas of the greater Milwaukee County.

While the new location was much needed, the subject building also had more room than the Welfare Department needed at the time. There were talks of housing prisoners from the Huber Facility in the neighboring Waukesha County on the third floor of the building, but local protests prevented its implementation. The county decided that the third floor would act as future workspace as the Welfare Department grew.²⁷ In 1963, the Milwaukee County Welfare Department moved their offices and services to the former Schuster's Department Store. The building, however, did not initially suit the workers' needs, even after renovation. Workers complained about the lack of ventilation, oppressive heat within the converted first and second floor cubicle spaces, and the noise from how open the spaces were.²⁸ The renovations included partitioning the first, second, and floors into offices for the various functions of the department, and the addition of first floor service counters.²⁹ The renovations were completed by Brust & Brust—the successor of Brust & Phillip—who were likely chosen since the firm had designed the building initially.

Due to the influx of welfare recipients, the 1220 West Vliet Street office became a symbol of economic reprieve as well as a symbol of strife. While the department offered aid to many, they also denied services to those who they believed did not qualify, leading to arguments and conflicts within and around the department. As early as 1968, sit-ins were performed within the

²⁶ "It's A Bargain," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 7, 1962, 10.

²⁷ "12th St. 'Jail' Protested," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 5, 1962, 21; "County Unit Acts To Ease Crowding.," 13.

²⁸ "Workers Protest 'Sweat Shop,'" *The Milwaukee Journal*, June 30, 1964, 31.

²⁹ "Workers Protest 'Sweat Shop,'" 31.

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department building and demands were being nailed to the doors in response to the lack of cash assistance and discriminatory eligibility requirements for residents of the city.³⁰ In one instance, around forty protesters blocked the entrances of the building until their demand of an extra ten dollars per month per family member, for non-essential expenses, were met.³¹

By the early 1970s, issues between welfare recipients and the department had increased as the economic prospects of Milwaukee continued to decline. In 1970, five hundred protesters gathered outside the department building due to their lack of clothing funds for families which mothers to buy inadequate used clothing for their children. The county board refused to allot more funding, leading to over 500 protesters shoplifting at the Boston Store, a department store in downtown Milwaukee.³² A featured article in the *Milwaukee Sentinel* from 1971 details the daily operations of the Welfare Department and the challenges they faced with recipients. The article mentions how the department building had become overcrowded since its initial opening at the 1220 West Vliet Street headquarters in 1963, as the number of applicants had increased steadily due to "...unfavorable economic conditions" in the county.³³ The article paints a picture of a bleak situation of loud, crowded hallways full of short-tempered applicants awaiting aid. Firearms, bomb threats, and civil disturbances were a daily occurrence according to the article, illustrating the strained relationship the department had with the citizens of Milwaukee. Despite this shaky-at-best relationship, the county office was a local necessity and daily location for many citizens of the city. For those receiving aid, the building stood as the symbol of economic stability despite its executive shortcomings and stringent regulations.

In 1973, *Milwaukee Sentinel* investigative journalist Stuart Wilk, went undercover to expose the inner workings of the County Welfare Department at 1220 West Vliet Street. In conjunction with investigative journalist Gene Cunningham, Wilk published a series of stories in the *Milwaukee Sentinel* starting in the February 26th issue, highlighting the mismanagement and illegal practices being conducted within the department. In the three months Wilk was undercover, he was easily able to apply for welfare despite using a false identity and place of residence. Wilk showcased how easy it was to apply and scam the Welfare Department and uncovered that the department had cost the county \$28 million in waste due to internal fraud and mismanagement.³⁴ Issues

³⁰ "Deputies Oust Welfare Demonstrators," *The Milwaukee Journal*, December 6, 1968, 37; "Welfare Recipients Demand Rights," *The Milwaukee Star*, May 15, 1968, 13.

³¹ "Reliefers to Plead for More Aid," *The Milwaukee Journal*, August 18, 1968, 29.

³² "Anger of Mothers Boileth Over Twice," *Soul City Times*, January 31, 1970, 3.

³³ "Welfare Center Buzzes but There's No Milk or Honey," *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, January 1, 1971, 62.

³⁴ Stuart Wilk and Gene Cunningham, "Cheating, Errors, Fraud Found: Welfare Wast Bared," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, February 26, 1973, 1.

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highlighted in the article ranged from welfare checks being sent to local taverns, employees taking extended breaks which included hour-long poker games and personal trips during work hours, duplicate payments sent to the same applicant, lost paperwork, food stamps and bus tickets being sold for drinking money, and general administrative ineptitude.³⁵

This and other criticisms of the welfare department in the 1970s resulted in increasing politicization of welfare practices in Milwaukee. A day after the *Sentinel* exposé, Republican state Senator Roger Murphy called for a statewide investigation into the county welfare departments to see if this level of mismanagement was occurring elsewhere in the state.³⁶ By March, Republican leadership had created three welfare reform measures to present to Democratic Governor Patrick Lucey.³⁷

William E. Nagel, supervisor and chairman of the Milwaukee County Welfare and Human Resources Committee, condemned the practices of the department, and not only blamed the offices at 1220 West Vliet but also the county for not keeping a closer eye on the department's issues. It was also uncovered that more than half of the annual Milwaukee County budget went to the operation of the Welfare Department, illustrating the implications of using taxpayer money for an inefficient program.³⁸ In March of 1973, the *Sentinel* published another article that deepened the blow to the County Welfare Department and Welfare and Human Resources Committee. The article revealed that Nagel had gone undercover in 1969, also to find faults within the department at Vliet Street location, so that he could create a list of reforms to bring before the board. Despite Nagel's recommendations, the board never acted on his suggestions.³⁹ However after the publishing of the February 1973 *Sentinel* article, Nagel brought his plan before the board again, emboldened by the catalyst of the article. The changes outlined in the article included requiring specific identification from applicants, tougher verification, a new computerized system with training, a new in-office telephone system, part-time employment opportunities, better general training, and a permanent welfare committee.⁴⁰ These changes were intended to be introduced earlier, but bureaucratic inefficiencies had delayed the reform request for two years.

³⁵ Wilk and Cunningham, "Cheating, Errors, Fraud Found: Welfare Wast Bared.," 1, 8.

³⁶ "State Senator Urges Welfare Investigation," *The La Crosse Tribune*, February 27, 1973, 4.

³⁷ Dean Showers, "Welfare Reform for State Asked," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 3, 1973, 1.

³⁸ Showers, "Welfare Reform for State Asked," 8.

³⁹ Marta Bender, "Nagel Sleuthing in 1969 Led to Reform Plan, No Action," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 2, 1973, 14.

⁴⁰ Bender, "Nagel Sleuthing in 1969 Led to Reform Plan, No Action.," 14.

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In addition to statewide welfare reform measures provided by a committee of Republican senators, Governor Patrick Lucey recommended that the welfare services be transferred from the county to the state so that they could better administer welfare and better oversee welfare management. Lucey also agreed on the need for welfare reform, specifically referring to the *Sentinel* articles as an impetus for statewide reform being necessary.⁴¹ The senators and Nagel disagreed on state control of welfare and pushed for their reform bills to be implemented throughout the 1973 legislative sessions.⁴² A compromise was met in October, where Lucey appointed a special five-person committee to look into welfare reform throughout the state to bring before the legislature in 1974, to see if a state-controlled welfare system was viable, and what other reforms measures needed to be taken.⁴³ In January 1974, Republican state Senator James C. Devitt met with local officials on introducing a bill in the state legislature that would allow the Legislative Audit Bureau to “perform both fiscal and management audits of welfare departments in counties with more than 100,000 population at least once every three years.”⁴⁴ Devitt met with Nagel to discuss some options for legislation that would benefit the Welfare Department in Milwaukee County, dealing specifically with fraud and mismanagement. In February, a comprehensive package was introduced to the state senate in four bills by Senator James Devitt, Democrat Senator Wayne Whittow, and Republican Senator Roger Murphy who comprised the welfare investigation subcommittee, in coordination with William Nagel.⁴⁵ In December 1974, an article published in the *Milwaukee Sentinel* explained that Nagel’s county-level reforms that were enacted in 1973 had saved the county \$2.6 million in welfare costs, a stark contrast to the year prior. Nagel mentions in the article that the *Sentinel* investigation greatly aided in the execution of the reform and was optimistic for the department. Nagel voiced opposition to the decision for the state to assume delivery of social services contrary to the current county role.⁴⁶

The 1980s marked a period of welfare entrenchment and regressive policy due to a federal and state-level shift in economic policy initiatives and ethics. In the late 1970s, President Jimmy Carter had attempted to legislate several welfare initiatives that would have greatly expanded government assistance for those in need, as the number of welfare recipients nationally were

⁴¹ “Welfare Reform Spurred by Lucey,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 30, 1973, 1.

⁴² Dean Showers, “GOP Sets Aim on Lucey Bills,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 28, 1973, 1.

⁴³ “Lucey Appoints 5 to Aid Welfare Study,” *The Milwaukee Journal*, October 11, 1973, 14; Eileen Hammer, “Welfare Takeover Issues Touchy,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, October 15, 1973, 5.

⁴⁴ “Welfare Audit Policy Pushed,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 11, 1974, 5.

⁴⁵ Dean Showers, “Senate Gets Stern Aid Reform Bills,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, February 1, 1974, 1.

⁴⁶ Eileen Hammer, “Welfare Reforms Save \$2 Million,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, December 21, 1974, 5.

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showing no signs of slowing down.⁴⁷ However, the growing resentment towards welfare programs from taxpayers due to fraud, mismanagement, and high deficit had begun to swing the pendulum towards major reform and budget cuts. This resentment was only fueled by articles published at the local level in the *Milwaukee Sentinel* about “Welfare Debbie,” a welfare recipient who lived luxuriously through the benefits of welfare and had no incentive to find a job and stop receiving the benefits.⁴⁸ It was also a common fallacy that the influx of African Americans from rural areas to the city were adding to the climbing number of welfare recipients, adding to racist sentiment attributed to those who benefitted from welfare.⁴⁹ The largest initiatives in welfare reform, however, were spearheaded by the election of President Ronald Reagan in 1980. Reagan’s administration focused heavily on federal spending and sought to negate the federal oversight of social programs, turning them back over to states who could not afford to fund them personally. Initiatives included making welfare recipients work without pay for twenty hours per week, cutting Aid to Families with Dependent Funding (AFDC) to those over the 150 percent threshold of the “state need standard”, and subtracting work-related expenses before totaling benefits of (AFDC).⁵⁰ Locally, William O’Donnell, Milwaukee County Executive Board Member, took over the county’s general assistance program in 1978 to create the Work Assistance Program, which similar to Reagan’s program three years later, tried to force welfare recipients to be employed in order to receive benefits. However, the program was regarded as a failure and cost an exuberant amount in federal aid which could not be reciprocated by the state.⁵¹

In 1981 it was projected that the federal welfare programs would see around \$9.3 million cut from funding in the 1983 fiscal year, putting pressure on the states to make up the difference.⁵² This increased pressure on the state led to massive deficits in welfare services in Wisconsin. On top of the looming deficit that somehow had to be addressed, changes in Wisconsin’s policy created shortfalls that put unneeded pressure on the now-named Milwaukee County Social Services Department at 1220 West Vliet Street. Tension between O’Donnell and Social Services Department Head Arthur Silverman resulted in a communication breakdown between the

⁴⁷ Robert A. Moffitt, “The Deserving Poor, the Family, and the U.S. Welfare System,” *Demography* 52, no. 3 (June 2015): 729-749, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13524-015-0395-0>.

⁴⁸ Gary C. Rummmler, “This Welfare Mother Has No Complaints,” *The Milwaukee Journal*, November 6, 1981, 1; “Frustrated Taxpayers Dole Out Reactions, Demand Reform of Welfare System,” *The Milwaukee Journal*, November 12, 1981, 22.

⁴⁹ Barrett, “From Welfare to Work...,” 75.

⁵⁰ “Work Incentive Hurt More Than Expected,” *The Milwaukee Journal*, March 31, 1981, 4.

⁵¹ “Trouble Looms for Social Services Department,” *The Milwaukee Journal*, February 26, 1981, 22.

⁵² “Cuts Outlined In Welfare,” *The Milwaukee Journal*, November 9, 1981, 7.

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department and the county, leading to Silverman's resignation during a period of crisis for the department building—which was now understaffed and overworked.⁵³ In 1982, the Milwaukee County Welfare Board, which advocated for the department's budget and services, was abolished by the state as a way to streamline the bureaucratic oversight by the official county board.⁵⁴ This resulted in a restructuring of the county welfare bureaucracy so that the initial policy decisions could be reviewed and implemented by the Social Services and Health Committee and so that there was less confusion over who was responsible for the department's budgeting and function.⁵⁵

The combined blows of budget cuts, department understaffing, bureaucratic mismanagement, restructuring, and public dissent greatly affected the Milwaukee County Social Services Department's ability to function, and greatly reduced its effectiveness for supplying aid to Milwaukeeans in the 1980s and 1990s. A 1986 article in the *Milwaukee Journal* highlights the disparity between the rising poverty rates in Milwaukee and the ineffectiveness of and program cuts to social services. The article mentions that since 1979, the number of families receiving food stamps rose 121 percent, and welfare rolls had risen 40 percent, and that the tight regulations imposed at the federal level were hindering the amount of aid that the Milwaukee County Department of Welfare could provide.⁵⁶

Despite the heavy federal regulation, the county managed to drum up \$3.2 million in 1986 for the complete renovation of the department building's interior, likely in an effort to maximize its efficiency as funding and resources continued to dwindle into the late 1980s due to the federal entrenchment.⁵⁷ The interior renovations were undertaken by Pujara Wirth Torke Inc., an engineering and architecture firm based out of Wauwatosa, Wisconsin. The entirety of the interior was remodeled, removing all of the previous alterations done by Brust & Brust in 1963 in favor of a more comprehensive and streamlined design. The public-facing services of the building were relegated to the first floor, which was designed with a central circulation hub, accessed from the entrances on the east, west, and south elevations of the building. Around the central hub and accommodating the three main corridors were the various programs and services, which included the Food Stamp program, Low Income Energy Assistance program, the AFDC application and registration area along with the check distribution area, and an appeals and

⁵³ "Trouble Looms for Social Services Department," 7.

⁵⁴ "Senate OKs Bill to End County Welfare Board," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 24, 1982, 5.

⁵⁵ "Welfare Board's Days Numbered?," *The Milwaukee Journal*, March 28, 1982, 28.

⁵⁶ Nina Bernstein. "Rising Tide of Poverty Tests County." *The Milwaukee Journal*, February 13, 1986, 1.

⁵⁷ "Paramedics for South Suburbs Urged," *The Milwaukee Journal*, July 29, 1986, 13.

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review office. Each area offered a dedicated waiting area where Milwaukeeans would queue to receive aid. The escalators located in the center of the building, installed during the building's time as the Schuster's Department Store, were the main circulation path through the building.

The upper two stories functioned mostly as the administrative and department offices and were not accessed by the public, except for the lobby of the second floor at the top of the escalators, which housed the EAD and GAD services. The perimeter of the building was partitioned for supervisor offices, bathrooms, and utility rooms, the main floor space was open for an adaptive office environment. The third floor was renovated at a later time, but the later renovations indicate that they were done by the same firm due to aesthetic similarities in the design. This renovation campaign served as a final effort to streamline and improve the efficiency of the now Milwaukee County Social Services Department, however the lack of federal funding greatly affected the department's administration of aid to the citizens of Milwaukee County as the decade came to an end.

In 1996, Governor Tommy Thompson signed his Wisconsin Works program into law. Also known as W-2, the program systematically changed the state welfare system by providing state aid to working individuals and families instead of those who were not actively working.⁵⁸ At the federal level, Bill Clinton signed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) which replaced AFDC with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). TANF was meant to limit the amount of welfare an individual or family could receive while unemployed, incentivizing recipients to eventually enter the workforce, which AFDC was criticized for not promoting.⁵⁹ In 1998, it was revealed that Milwaukee County would discontinue welfare services at 1220 West Vliet Street and would replace with satellite offices dedicated to processing W-2.⁶⁰ A 1998 article in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* painted a solemn picture of the Milwaukee County Social Services Department, which had lost its purpose after serving the people of Milwaukee County for almost four decades (*Figure 4*). The article also portrayed the steady decline of the Vliet building and surrounding area, which had virtually been abandoned by 1998. The future was not clear for the use of the building after the end of its time as a welfare application center. However, despite not being authorized to administer W-2 aid, the Department of Human Services remained, providing food stamps, medical assistance,

⁵⁸ "Governor Tommy Thompson and Welfare Reform," Wisconsin Historical Society, August 3, 2012, <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS331>.

⁵⁹ 104th Congress of the United States, "Public Law 104-193" (The United States Federal Government, August 22, 1996), <https://www.congress.gov/104/plaws/publ193/PLAW-104publ193.pdf>.

⁶⁰ Margo Huston, "After Welfare, Building Again Loses Its Job.," *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, April 1, 1998, 1 & 6.

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child care, and energy services.⁶¹ In 2003, the Milwaukee County spent \$10.3 million on the renovation of the building, during which services continued in the building.⁶² In 2021, the State of Wisconsin as well as the Department of Human Services released proposals to relocate their staff to a larger building. The Bureau of Building Management drafted a report that outlined nine different scenarios for the current building, with three involving its sale.⁶³ In 2023, Gorman & Company, a local development firm, purchased the property with plans to turn it into affordable housing units.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The Milwaukee County Department of Welfare Building at 1220 W. Vliet Street replaced the offices at the Milwaukee County Courthouse to better serve the residents of Milwaukee County. The Milwaukee County Department of Welfare Building was strategically located near the center of Milwaukee County, and near the newly built Interstate 43, allowing for easy access from anywhere in the county. The previous location, located on the sixth floor of the Milwaukee County Courthouse, was in downtown Milwaukee and suffered from insufficient space, making it much less effective in distributing social services, and also an inconvenience for those who lived on the edges of the county (*Figure 6*). The need for social services skyrocketed in the 1970s and 1980s as the economic conditions in Milwaukee worsened, making its latter location at 1220 W. Vliet Street the more impactful and significant location of the two. After the department moved in 1963, the offices in the Courthouse were vacated. Additionally, there are no known satellite offices for the Milwaukee County Department of Welfare during its Period of Significance, illustrating its importance as the sole location to apply and receive welfare in Milwaukee County.

DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY OF 1220 WEST VLIET STREET

The Milwaukee County Welfare Department building at 1220 West Vliet Street was constructed in 1910 to accommodate the growth of Schuster's Department Store, a staple of Milwaukee commerce in the twentieth century.⁶⁴ Schuster's Department Store originated in 1883 when Edward Schuster, a German-Jewish immigrant, became the partial owner of the dry goods store,

⁶¹ "County Will Revamp Offices on Vliet St.," *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, November 23, 2002, 20.

⁶² "County Will Revamp Offices on Vliet St.," 20.

⁶³ Graham Kilmer, "MKE County: Coggs Building Could Be Abandoned," *Urban Milwaukee*, May 19, 2021, <https://urbanmilwaukee.com/2021/05/19/mke-county-coggs-building-could-be-abandoned/>.

⁶⁴ Wisconsin Historical Society, Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, "Schuster's Department Store," Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, WI, 78966.

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Poss & Schuster. In 1884, Schuster partnered with Alfred Friedman to open his own store, Edward Schuster & Co., at 2107 North 3rd Street in Milwaukee.⁶⁵ Schuster & Co. moved to a larger three-story building at the intersection of 3rd and Brown Streets in 1888 and opened a second location at 12th and Walnut in 1894.⁶⁶ Schuster's Department Store incorporated in 1901 and branded itself as a neighborhood store, primarily serving German and Jewish neighborhoods.⁶⁷

Historians consider the early 1900s to be the boom years of Schuster's Department Store. After Schuster's death in 1904, Friedman assumed control of the company and looked to expand the business's services and physical presence in Milwaukee.⁶⁸ Schuster's hired architects Kirchhoff and Rose to design a new store for the company in 1908.⁶⁹ The building, located at 3rd and West Garfield (now Martin Luther King Jr. Drive) Streets, served as the flagship store and headquarters for Schuster's Department Store and, after additions in the 1910s, became known as the "Colossus of Upper Third Street."⁷⁰

In 1910, Schuster's hired prolific Milwaukee architecture firm Brust & Philipp to construct a new building for the 12th Street location (1894).⁷¹ Known as the "Schuster's 12th Street Store," the subject building replaced the former Schuster's building at the intersection of 12th and Vliet streets and contained three stories and a basement.⁷² At this time, Schuster's Department Store, which already sold men's and women's clothing, also opened an upscale silk department, a Victor-Victrola department, a candy department. A soda fountain was also opened in the basement of the subject building.⁷³ In 1924, the store was expanded west to meet North 13th Street, doubling the size of the building and symbolizing the company's rapid success.⁷⁴

⁶⁵ Stephn Thiel, "Schuster's Department Store, 1220 West Vliet Street," Permanent Historic Designation Report and Preservation Guidelines (CCF 240025), Prepared for Milwaukee Historical Commission (June 2024): 3.

⁶⁶ Paul Geenen, *Schuster's & Gimbels: Milwaukee's Beloved Department Stores* (Arcadia Publishing, 2012), 25.

⁶⁷ Thiel, "Schuster's Department Store," 3-4.

⁶⁸ Thiel, "Schuster's Department Store," 4.

⁶⁹ "2153 N 3rd St (AKA 2153 N Martin Luther King Jr Dr) | Property Record," Wisconsin Historical Society, January 1, 2012, <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Property/HI108785>.

⁷⁰ Geenen, *Schuster's & Gimbels*, 26.

⁷¹ Wisconsin Historical Society, "Schuster's Department Store."

⁷² "Teachers! Free Bus Ride to Schuster's!" *Milwaukee Journal*, November 5, 1931, 19; Thiel "Schuster's Department Store," 4.

⁷³ Geenen, *Schuster's & Gimbels*, 25-26; "Store Project Almost Ready," *Milwaukee Journal*, September 26, 1937, 74.

⁷⁴ *Insurance Maps of Milwaukee, Wisconsin* (New York, New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1910), sheet 277; "Schuster's Will Close Store on N. 12th St.," *The Milwaukee Journal*, December 29, 1960, 10.

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Advertisements for the store frequented the local newspapers like the *Milwaukee Journal*, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, *Milwaukee Telegram*, and the *Jewish Chronicle*.

In addition to shoppers, the store also hosted events, like private parties and meetings.⁷⁵ These events indicate that Schuster's was not only a department store, but also a community center, often utilized by the local population. In 1928, the 12th Street store hosted Chicago's Japanese Consul in its "recreation hall" and displayed dolls made by Japanese ambassadors to promote friendship between the United States and Japan.⁷⁶ This event further conveys the significance of the 12th Street store as a local landmark and important commercial staple in Milwaukee. In the mid-1930s, Schuster's undertook a modernization program for its three locations, which included the flagship store at Third Street and West Garfield, the 12th Street store, and the store at 11th and Mitchell, constructed in 1914.⁷⁷ In 1936, a "homefurnishings floor" was added to the 12th Street store location.⁷⁸ Finished display rooms depicting furniture layouts and decorations characterized the new section of the store (*Figure 7*). By 1937, the entire interior of the 12th Street store had been "modernized." Alterations included a new Beauty Salon, an enlarged shoe department and women's coat section, and a 3,100 square-foot fountain dinette with seating for 146 people located in the basement.⁷⁹ A new circular stairway was added for greater accessibility between the first floor and basement.⁸⁰ Between 1937 and 1940, the rear parking lot was expanded northward to accommodate the increase in customers. The parking lot had a 151-car capacity and featured a control tower with a loudspeaker in order to direct customers around the lot to available parking spaces.⁸¹

Schuster's 12th Street store received no further major updates or changes until 1948, when the company spent \$4 million renovating its three department stores. This campaign was "the largest single undertaking of this nature in [Schuster's] sixty-four-year history."⁸² Part of this multi-store campaign entailed the remodeling of the 12th Street store interior. Newly installed escalators allowed easier access between floors, the rear parking lot doubled in size, and some interior departments were modernized, adding new finishes and displays (*Figure 8*).

⁷⁵ "Card Parties.," *The Milwaukee Telegram*, November 18, 1928, 65; "Club Calendar.," *The Milwaukee Telegram*, June 9, 1929, 52.

⁷⁶ "Japanese Dolls to Bring Friendship to Children.," *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, April 8, 1928, 17.

⁷⁷ Geenen, *Schuster's & Gimbels*, 19.

⁷⁸ "Schuster's Homefurnishings Floor Advertisement.," *The Milwaukee Journal*, September 4, 1936, 20.

⁷⁹ "Schuster's Gala Opening Advertisement.," *Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle*, November 5, 1937, 8.

⁸⁰ "Section of New Schuster Store.," *The Milwaukee Journal*, September 26, 1937, 24.

⁸¹ "Control Tower Will Guide Parking Cars.," *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 14, 1940, 12.

⁸² "Schuster's Begins Building Program.," *The Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle*, August 13, 1948, 10.

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The 1960s marked a period of change for Schuster's. While Schuster's sales numbers reached between \$40 and \$50 million in the 1950s, by the early 1960s, Gimbels—Schuster's primary competitor—began to catch up. As explained in Paul Geenen's book *Schuster's & Gimbels: Milwaukee's Beloved Department Stores*, "In 1961, Gimbels topped Schuster's volume for the first time when Gimbels' \$48 million in sales surpassed Schuster's sales of \$47 million."⁸³ Despite having high sales figures and relative success, the 12th Street store started declining in sales. This could be due to the declining economic conditions of Milwaukee, making a department store an unnecessary expense, or the migration of Jewish residents out of the area as the African American Migration occurring east in Bronzeville continued to expand to the west. In 1960, the company revealed it would close the 12th Street store and transfer its departments and employees to the 3rd Street store.⁸⁴ The store officially closed on January 28, 1961.

A year later, in 1962, Schuster's merged with Gimbels, marking the largest retail transfer in Wisconsin up to that point.⁸⁵ Gimbels-Schuster's now had eight stores throughout the United States. It is unclear why Schuster's merged with Gimbels, since they were projecting healthy sales numbers and had added two newly constructed stores on State Highway 100 and in Madison, Wisconsin.⁸⁶

CONCLUDING SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT

The Milwaukee County Department of Welfare Building, later known as the Milwaukee County Department of Social Services located at 1220 West Vliet Street, is locally significant for serving as the principal location for county residents to receive welfare during a period of expansion and controversy over these programs in the city. Declining industrial employment and an influx of impoverished citizens to the city resulted in an increase in social welfare programs. The 1220 West Vliet Street location reflected this increase in government responsibility for social welfare during the 1960s as the need for a larger, more comprehensive center for administering aid was needed to respond to new policy expansion. These programs often caused controversy and became heavily politicized. The subject building is a physical and figurative representation of welfare politics throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, as the definitive location where aid was administered during one of the most contentious periods of social welfare administration. It

⁸³ Geenen, *Schuster's & Gimbels*, 60.

⁸⁴ "Schuster's Will Close Store on N. 12th St.," 1 & 10.

⁸⁵ Geenen, *Schuster's & Gimbels*, 61.

⁸⁶ "Schuster's Will Close Store on N. 12th St.," 1.

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represents the significant history of social welfare in Milwaukee during the mid-to-late twentieth century.

Land Acknowledgement (will be reviewed by the Office of the State Archaeologist)

This nomination recognizes the depth of human presence here, the ancestral homeland of American Indians for millennia. From as early as the seventeenth century, Euro-American exploration and settlement, military campaigns, and government programs, all had the effect of repeated displacement of Indians of many tribal affiliations. This continuous tribal movement resulted in Wisconsin being home to many tribes who originated from other parts of the country, generating a pattern of immigration, relocation, and formation of a new homeland. Some of these tribes remain in Wisconsin but others may not. We acknowledge that the property that is the subject of this nomination is located on land long occupied by American Indians.

Archaeological Potential (will be drafted and reviewed by the Office of the State Archaeologist)

Preservation Activities (for properties in CLGs)

The Milwaukee Historic Preservation Board designated the former Schuster's Department Store Building (now the Milwaukee County Department of Welfare Building) a local landmark in 2024 (CCF 240025). In March 2025, the National Park Service re-affirmed eligibility of the MCDW Building through a Historic Preservation Certification Part 1 Application prior to the writing of this nomination. As a partner with the Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the National Park Service (NPS) participating in the Certified Local Government (CLG) program, Milwaukee is required to maintain a system to survey and inventory historic properties. That entails regular surveys with updates every 20-25 years to identify properties that appear potentially eligible for the NRHP.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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 # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other
Name of repository: _____

Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory # and/or Archaeological Site Inventory #:

78966

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"Schuster's Will Close Store on N. 12th St." December 29, 1960.

"Section of New Schuster Store." September 26, 1937.

"Store Project Almost Ready." September 26, 1937.

"Teachers! Free Bus Ride to Schuster's!" November 5, 1931.

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: 2.31

Provide either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude:	<u>87°55'40"W</u>	Longitude:	<u>43°02'55"N</u>
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3. Latitude:	_____	Longitude:	_____
4. Latitude:	_____	Longitude:	_____

Or

UTM References

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☐ NAD 1927 or ☐ NAD 1983

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Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The physical boundaries of the 2.31 -acre property are the rights-of-way of N 12th Street (east), W Vliet Street (south), N 13th Street (west), and W Cherry Street (north). Milwaukee County, Wisconsin defines this parcel (no. 3611265100) as follows:

ORIGINAL PLAT OF THE TOWN OF MILW WEST OF THE RIVER IN SECS (20 & 29)-7-22 BLOCK 110 LOTS 6-7-8 & VAC LANE ADJ SD SUBD & LOTS (1 THRU 6 & 39 THRU 50 & 83 THRU 88> & E 20' (LOTS 7-38-51 & 82> BLK 16 SUBD INTO LOTS OF JOEL KNEELANDS PARK & VAC (ST & ALLEYS ADJ>

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

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The boundary represents all resources and land historically associated with the Milwaukee County Department of Welfare during the period of significance and the current property boundary.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Spencer Rubino/Project Coordinator with Claire Bushemi/Project Manager
and Jen Davel/Vice President, Midwest

organization: Heritage Consulting Group

street & number: 15 W Highland Avenue

city or town: Philadelphia State: PA zip code: 19118

Email: jdavel@heritage-consulting.com;
projects@heritage-consulting.com

Telephone: (608) 609-6856

Additional Documentation

Figure Log

- Provide a list of all maps, plans, and additional documentation provided

Figure 1: Locational map, showing the Milwaukee County Department of Welfare and the surrounding area.

Figure 2: Site boundary, not to scale (Bold line represents historic, current and project boundary) Source: Milwaukee County GIS Data Viewer.

Figure 3: Census map showing the extents of the African American population, including Bronzeville. Source: Vick, "From Walnut Street to No Street...", 136).

Figure 4: Image showing the condition of the first-floor service area inside the building before it ended service in 1998. Source: "After Welfare, Building Again Loses Its Job," *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, April 1, 1998.

Figure 5: Advertisement depicting the different displays on the Homefurnishings Floor. Source: Milwaukee Journal (4 September 1936): 20.

Figure 6: A circa 1920s postcard of the Milwaukee County Courthouse. The Milwaukee County Department of Welfare was located on the sixth floor prior to their move to 1220 W. Vliet Street in the early 1960s. Source:

<https://www.cartermuseum.org/collection/milwaukee-county-court-house-milwaukee-wis-p1976481356>

Figure 7: Advertisement for the gala opening of the "new era" of the 12th Street store. Pictures showing the modernization of the interior are shown in the advertisement. Source: *Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle* (5 November 1937): 8.

Figure 8: Advertisement for the gala opening of the "new era" of the 12th Street store. Pictures showing the modernization of the interior are shown in the advertisement. Source: *Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle* (5 November 1937): 8.

Figure 9: Current First Floor Plan

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Figure 10: Current Second Floor Plan

Figure 11: Current Third Floor Plan

Figure 12: Current Basement Floor Plan

Figure 13: Current Sub-Basement Floor Plan

Figure 14: Photo Map, Exterior and Penthouse/Roof, Photos 1-9, 18, 19.

Figure 15: Photo Map, First Floor, Photos 10-13.

Figure 16: Photo Map, Second Floor, Photos 14, 15.

Figure 17: Photo Map, Third Floor, Photos 16, 17.

Figure 18: Photo Map, Basement, Photo 20.

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Embed figures

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or digital equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** such as floor plans of representative spaces, photo keys, historic images, etc.(Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

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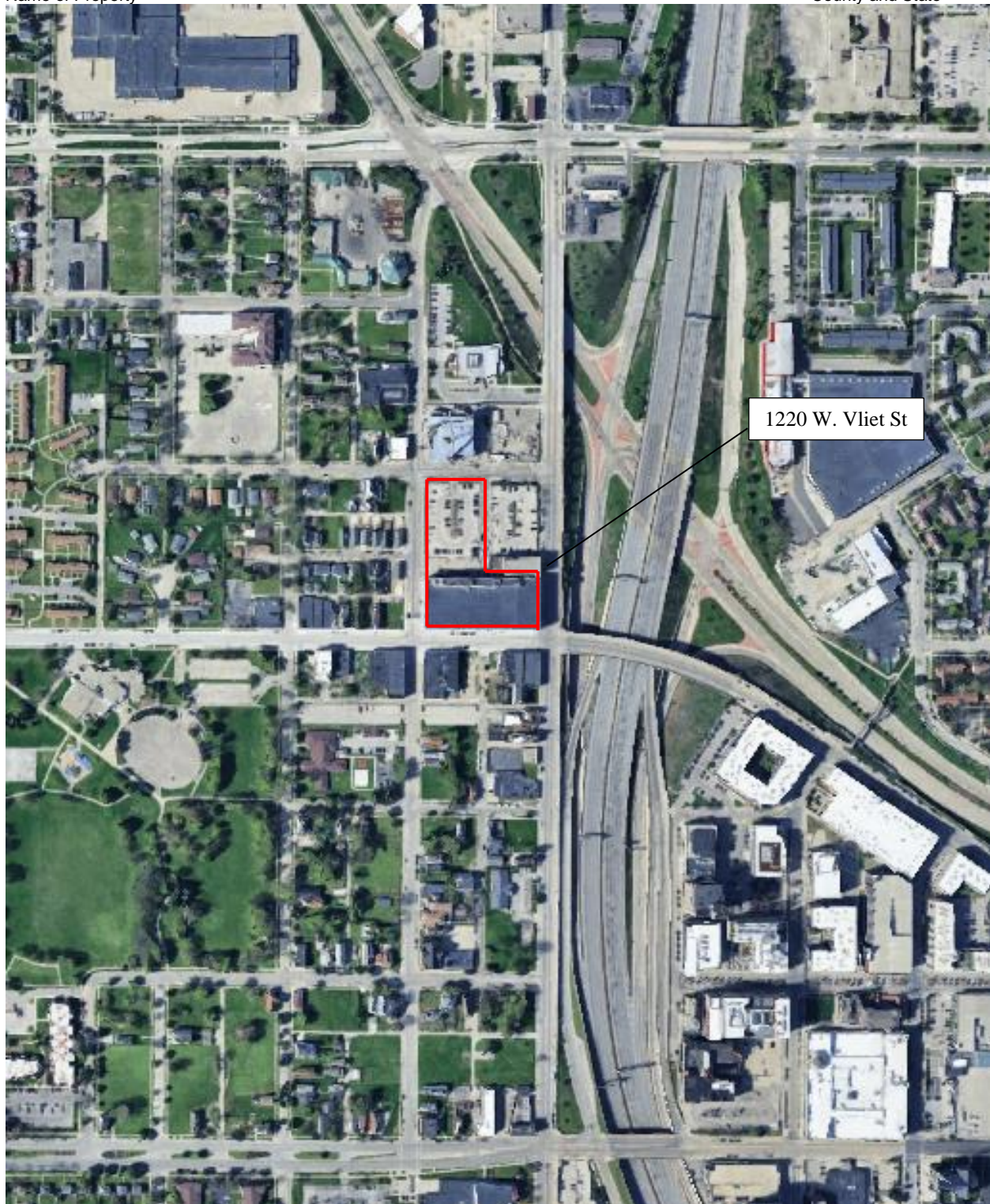


Figure 1. Locational map, showing the Milwaukee County Department of Welfare and the surrounding area. Base map from Google Maps.



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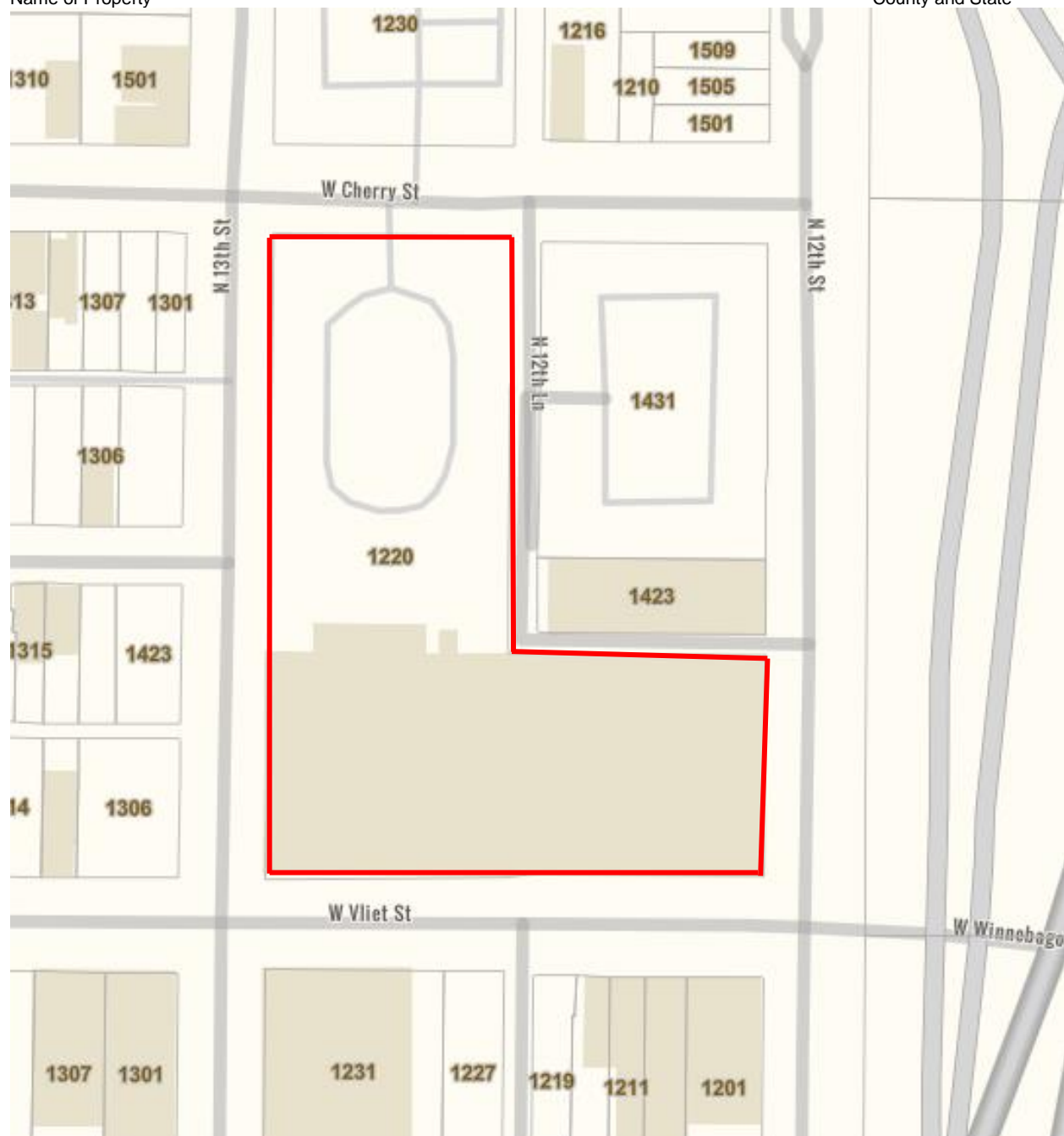


Figure 2. Site boundary, not to scale (Bold line represents historic, current and project boundary)
Source: Milwaukee County GIS Data Viewer.

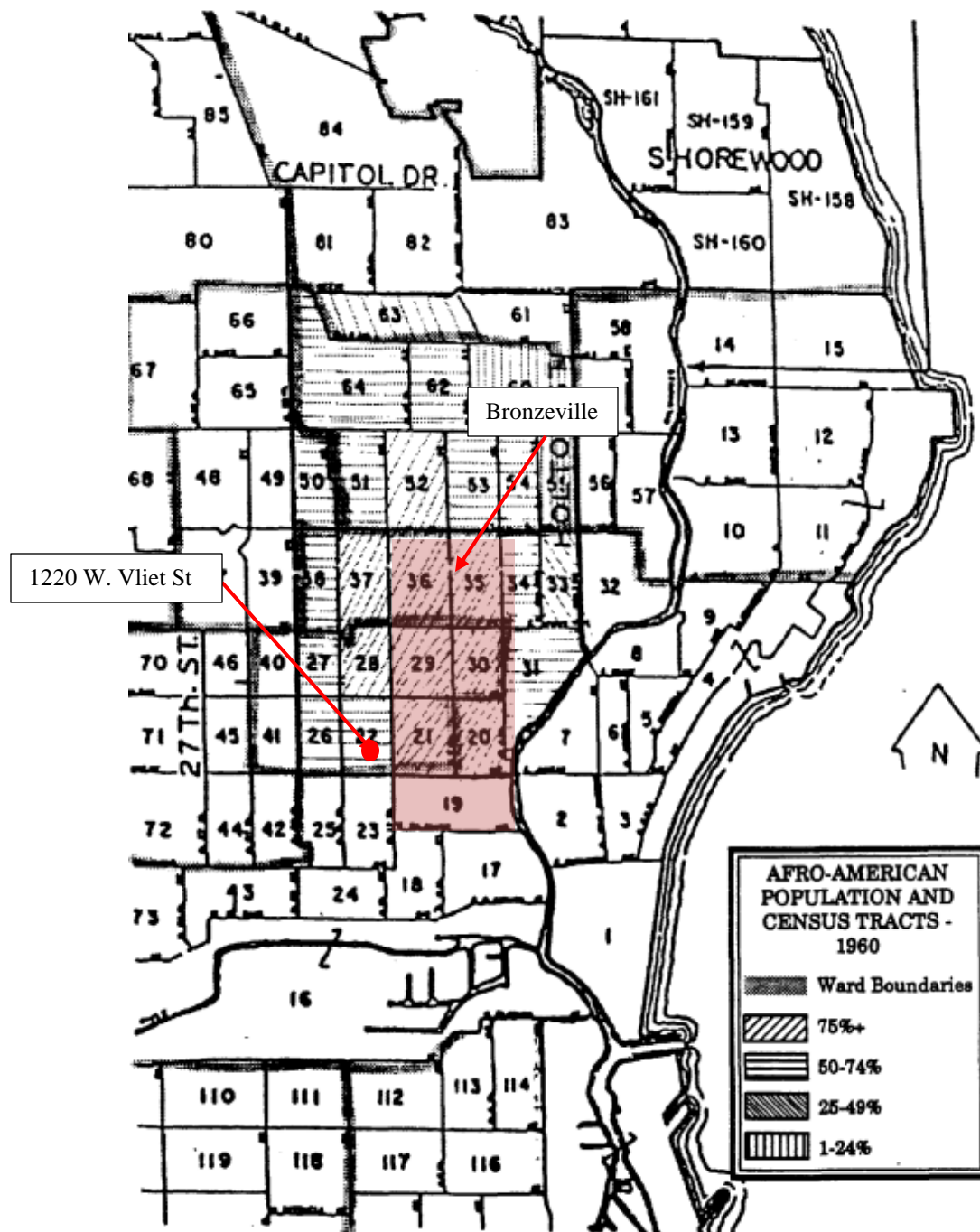
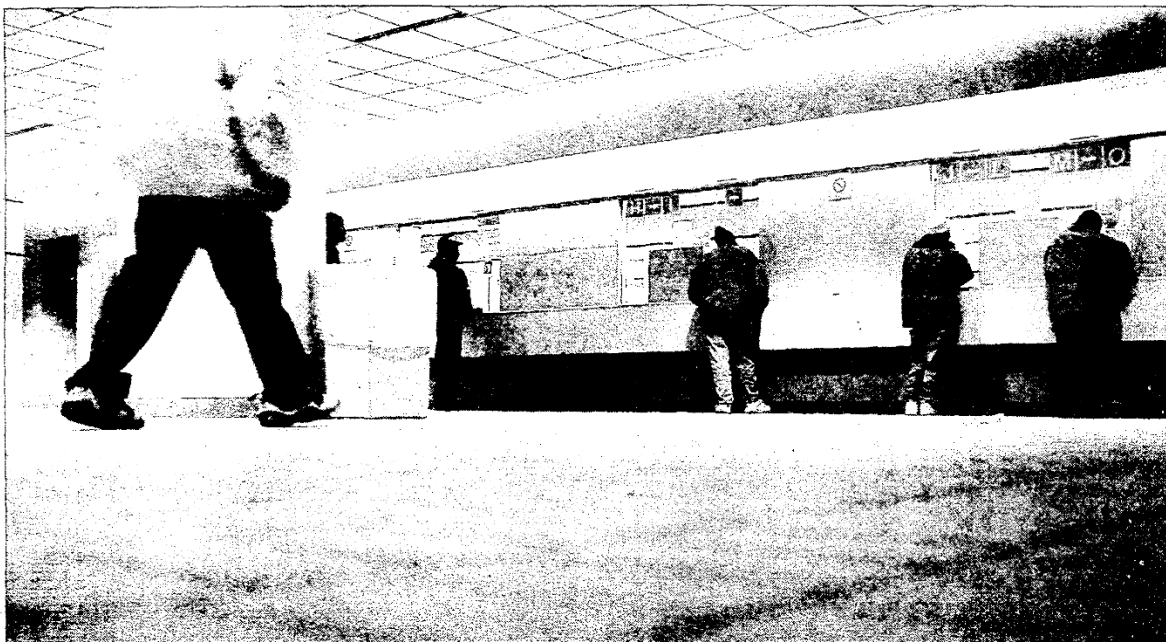


Figure 3. Census map showing the extents of the African American population, including Bronzeville. Source: Vick, "From Walnut Street to No Street...", 136).

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BENNY SIEU/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

The "ballroom," which used to be filled with people waiting for food stamps, was almost empty recently as the Milwaukee County Department of Human Services building at 1220 W. Vliet St. loses its role with the end of AFDC.

Vliet/Busy building fades with welfare

Figure 4. Image showing the condition of the first-floor service area inside the building before it ended service in 1998. Source: "After Welfare, Building Again Loses Its Job.," *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, April 1, 1998.

Figure 4. Image showing the condition of the first-floor service area inside the building before it ended service in 1998. Source: "After Welfare, Building Again Loses Its Job.," *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, April 1, 1998.

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Figure 6. A circa 1920s postcard of the Milwaukee County Courthouse. The Milwaukee County Department of Welfare was located on the sixth floor prior to their move to 1220 W. Vliet Street in the early 1960s. Source: <https://www.cartermuseum.org/collection/milwaukee-county-court-house-milwaukee-wis-p1976481356>

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 1936 THE MILWAUKEE JOURNAL FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 1936

SCHUSTER'S Saturday Store Hours: 9 a. m. to 6 p. m. • Free Parking Station • Please Read Schuster's Ad, Page 20

Outstanding ★★★★★ 4 Star Achievement!

Schuster's Is Proud to Announce the Completion of Another Important Step in Its Great 3-Store Modernization Program

THE NEW Homefurnishings Floor

AT SCHUSTER'S 12th AND VLIET STREET STORE

At Schuster's 12th and Vliet St. Store—A dramatic setting for well-known makes of dependable radios.

Stretching away under the magic of indirect lighting—walls, ceilings, Venetian blinds a warm ivory, it is one of the most beautiful and modern floors of its kind.

The theme has been to make it easier to shop by presenting merchandise as it will appear in your home. Each item is displayed for its own beauty and importance. We've tried to show, in the way we've arranged things, that we appreciate the place they will take in your home.

The entire floor is one more expression of our position as Wisconsin's Greatest Home Furnishers, and all of the shopping resources and services it offers are, of course, found at all Three Schuster Stores.

At Schuster's 12th and Vliet St. Store—With Schuster's model rooms for the latest and best in home furnishing trends.

At Schuster's 12th and Vliet St. Store—Curtains and hangings at windows.

THESE SHOPPING ADVANTAGES

at All 3 Schuster Stores
Wisconsin's Greatest Home Furnishers

- Furniture displayed in model rooms so that you know how it will look in your home. Schuster's is a leader in the present movement to produce good furniture, comfortable, well designed and well proportioned, at moderate prices.
- A Drapery Department famous for its wide selection of fashionable merchandise and for the high quality of work done on hangings, upholstery and slip covers.
- Floor Coverings for every room, to key in with every decorating scheme; and advisory and measuring service offered without obligation.
- Lamps scientifically designed for correct lighting, styled to harmonize with present fashion trends.
- Fine Pictures for every type of room; a picture framing department with a wide assortment of all types of frames.
- Radies—Famous Arlington, R. C. A., Victor, Philco, General Electric, Zenith, Crosley, Admiral, and others.
- Instruction Without Charge in knitting and crocheting in the Art Goods Department—and a full assortment of charming gifts.
- A Modern Credit Policy individually suited to your needs, which makes it easy for you to have beautiful furnishings for your home while you distribute the payments over a period of months.
- And, of course, there are always the advantages of Schuster's free, convenient parking, and valuable Schuster Stamps.
- And this is only part of the story why more and more people are turning to Schuster's for every home furnishing need.

At Schuster's 12th and Vliet St. Store—Model rooms show the correct background and accessories for furniture.

At Schuster's 12th and Vliet St. Store—Pictures displayed as in an art gallery—each one has its share of background.

Have you seen the unusually fine Facsimiles of the work of Vincent Van Gogh at Our 12th and Vliet St. Store? (New Home Furnishings Floor)

★★★★ The pictures will be sold, priced at from \$1 to \$20 (A few fine Van Gogh facsimiles at 50¢)

And, in further proof of our thoughtfulness for your convenience, we offer our extended summer delivery service.

SCHUSTER'S

At Schuster's 12th and Vliet St. Store—Lamps built for beauty and for better, scientific lighting.

At Schuster's 12th and Vliet St. Store—Clearer indirect lighting at the base of the napier makes linoleum patterns and colors easily visible from the floor.

SCHUSTER'S 4 VALUABLE SCHUSTER STAMPS WITH EVERY 10¢ CASH PURCHASE SCHUSTER'S

Figure 7. Advertisement depicting the different displays on the Homefurnishings Floor.
Source: Milwaukee Journal (4 September 1936): 20.

... Founded 1884 -- In Milwaukee ...

SCHUSTER'S

N. 3rd at W. Garfield (Con. 2000) N. 12th at W. Vliet (Marq. 5300) W. Mitchell at S. 11th (Mit. 4000)



Smart Entrance to the New Beauty Salon.



A Corner of the New Enlarged Shoe Department

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

EXTRA!! GALA OPENING

of

Schuster's Magnificent "New Era" 12th and Vliet St. Store

at 9:30 A. M. Saturday, November 6th

Also — GRAND OPENING CELEBRATION SALE IN ALL THREE SCHUSTER STORES

At 9:30 Saturday morning, at Schuster's 12th & Vliet Street Store, thousands will join in the dedication of the finest, most modern department store in Milwaukee and Wisconsin — one of the finest in all America — the magnificent "New Era" 12th & Vliet Street Schuster Store. For months rebuilding and modernization work has been going on — the entire interior of the store has been transformed. Not an old store rebuilt — but completely new, as if from the ground up — over one hundred departments have been either enlarged or relocated and refitted. These thrill-packed new departments await your inspection and approval.

Bargain Feast and Gala Program

This beautiful new store will be dedicated on Saturday with one of the Greatest Sales in Schuster History. Join the joyous thousands who will shop and save in this mighty merchandising event.

Be Sure to See The Aetna Highway Safety Demonstration at SCHUSTER'S "NEW ERA" 12th and Vliet St. Store

At 9:30 a. m. Saturday Mayor Hoan accompanied by Police Chief Kluchsky and the Safety Commission Members will officially open this very interesting exhibit and demonstration. This Highway Safety demonstration will be open to the public free of charge daily during Store Hours from Saturday November 6, through Saturday November 13. Find out how quickly you can stop your car in an emergency, take the glare test, the traffic-light color test and steering and speed estimation test.



Gay and Colorful — New Fountain Dinnette



The New Enlarged Women's and Misses' Coat Section

Figure 8. Advertisement for the gala opening of the "new era" of the 12th Street store. Pictures showing the modernization of the interior are shown in the advertisement. Source: *Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle* (5 November 1937): 8.

Milwaukee County Department of Welfare
Name of Property

Milwaukee County, Wisconsin
County and State

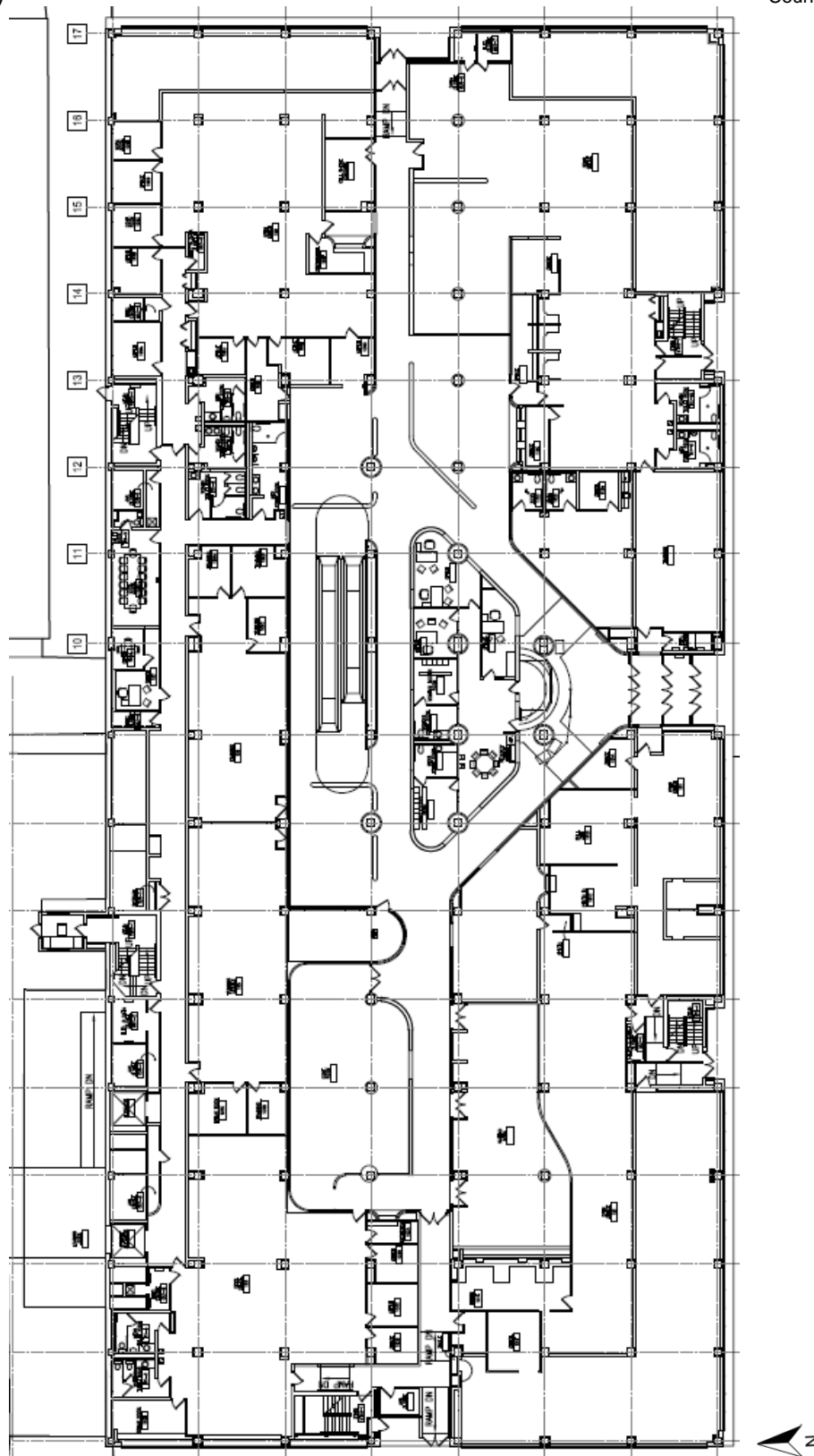


Figure 9. Current First Floor Plan (Quorum Architects). Not to scale.

Milwaukee County Department of Welfare
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Milwaukee County, Wisconsin
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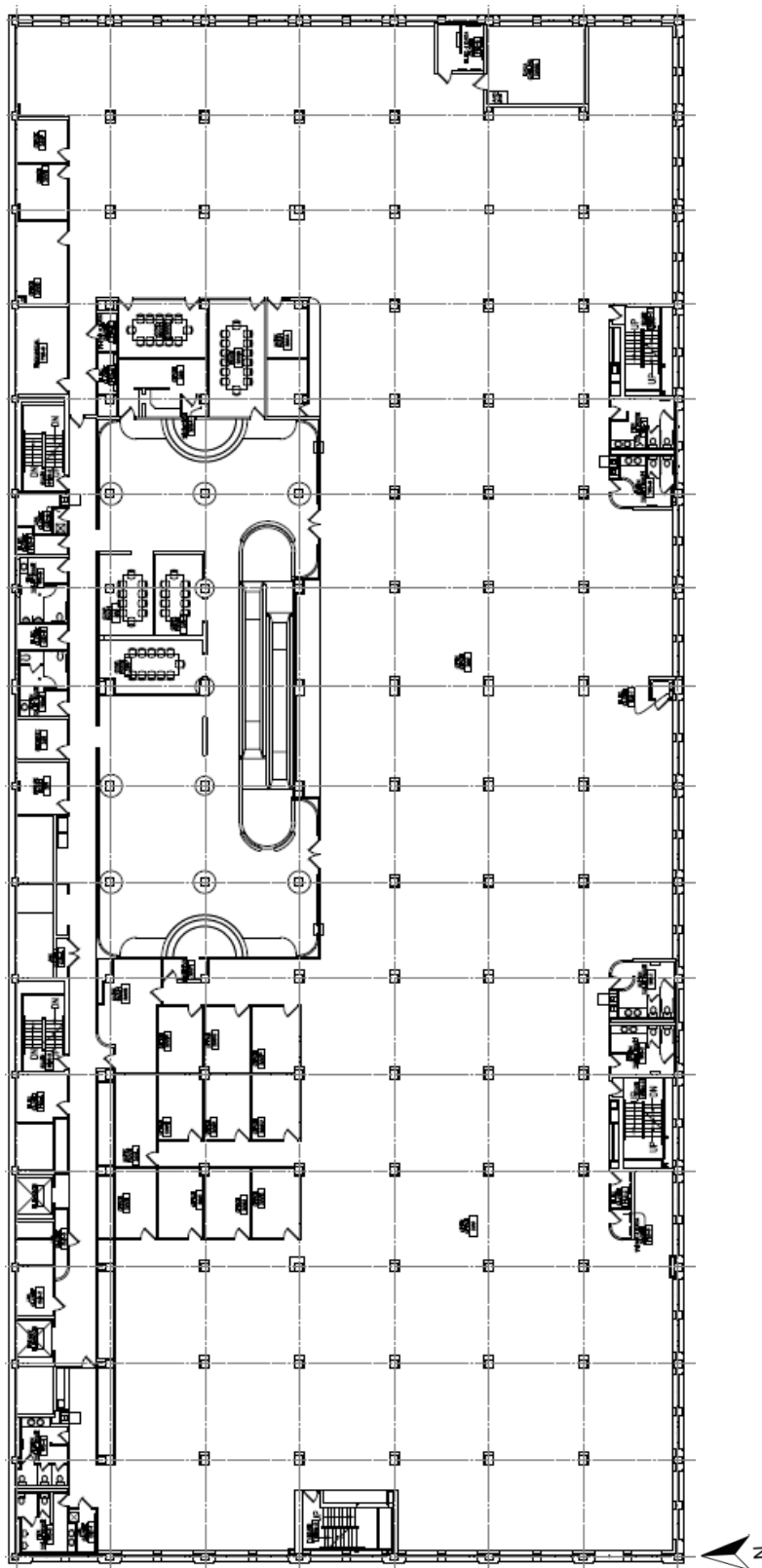


Figure 10. Current Second Floor Plan (Quorum Architects). Not to scale.

Milwaukee County Department of Welfare
Name of Property

Milwaukee County, Wisconsin
County and State

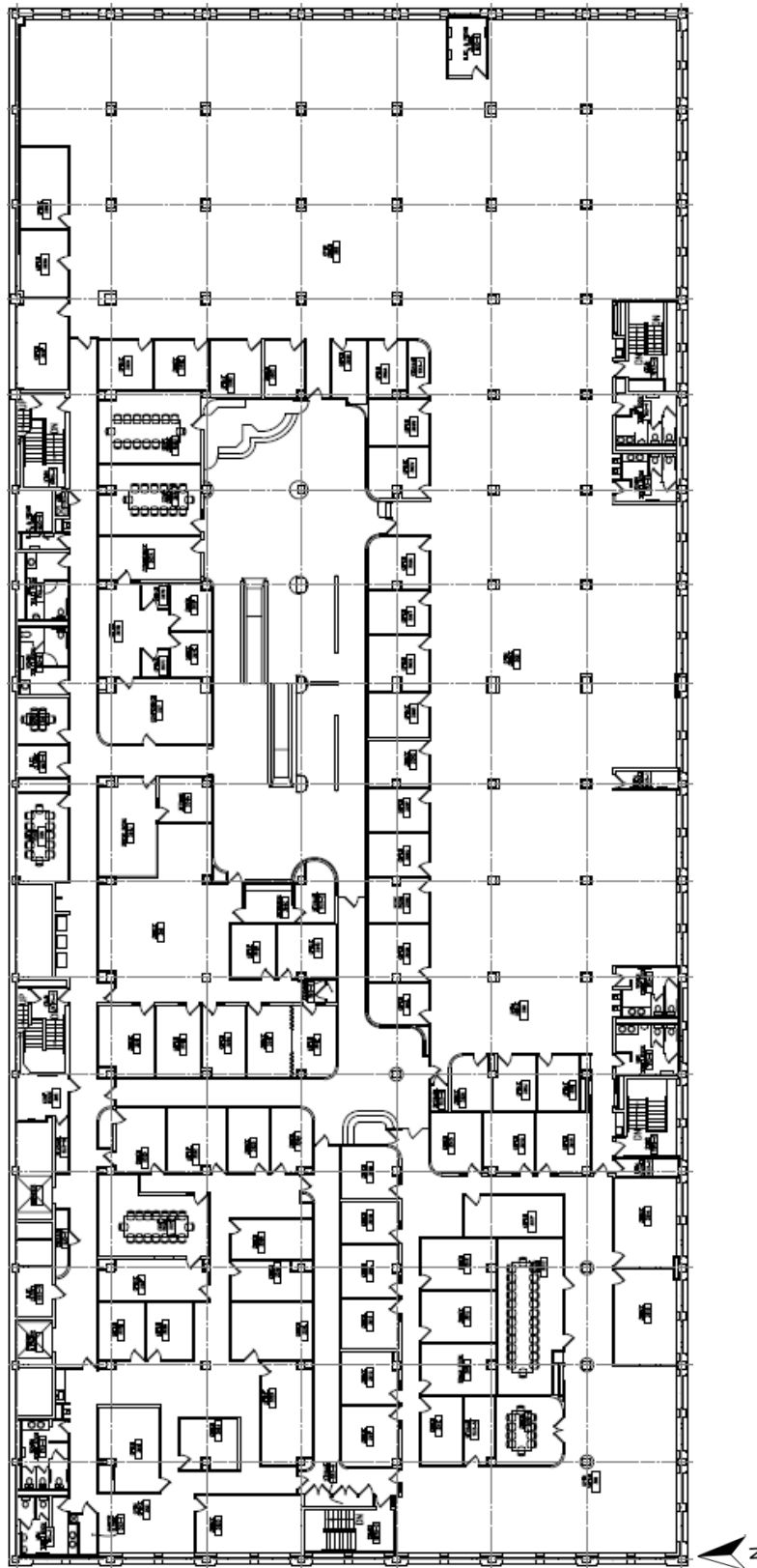


Figure 11. Current Third Floor Plan (Quorum Architects). Not to Scale.

Milwaukee County Department of Welfare
Name of Property

Milwaukee County, Wisconsin
County and State

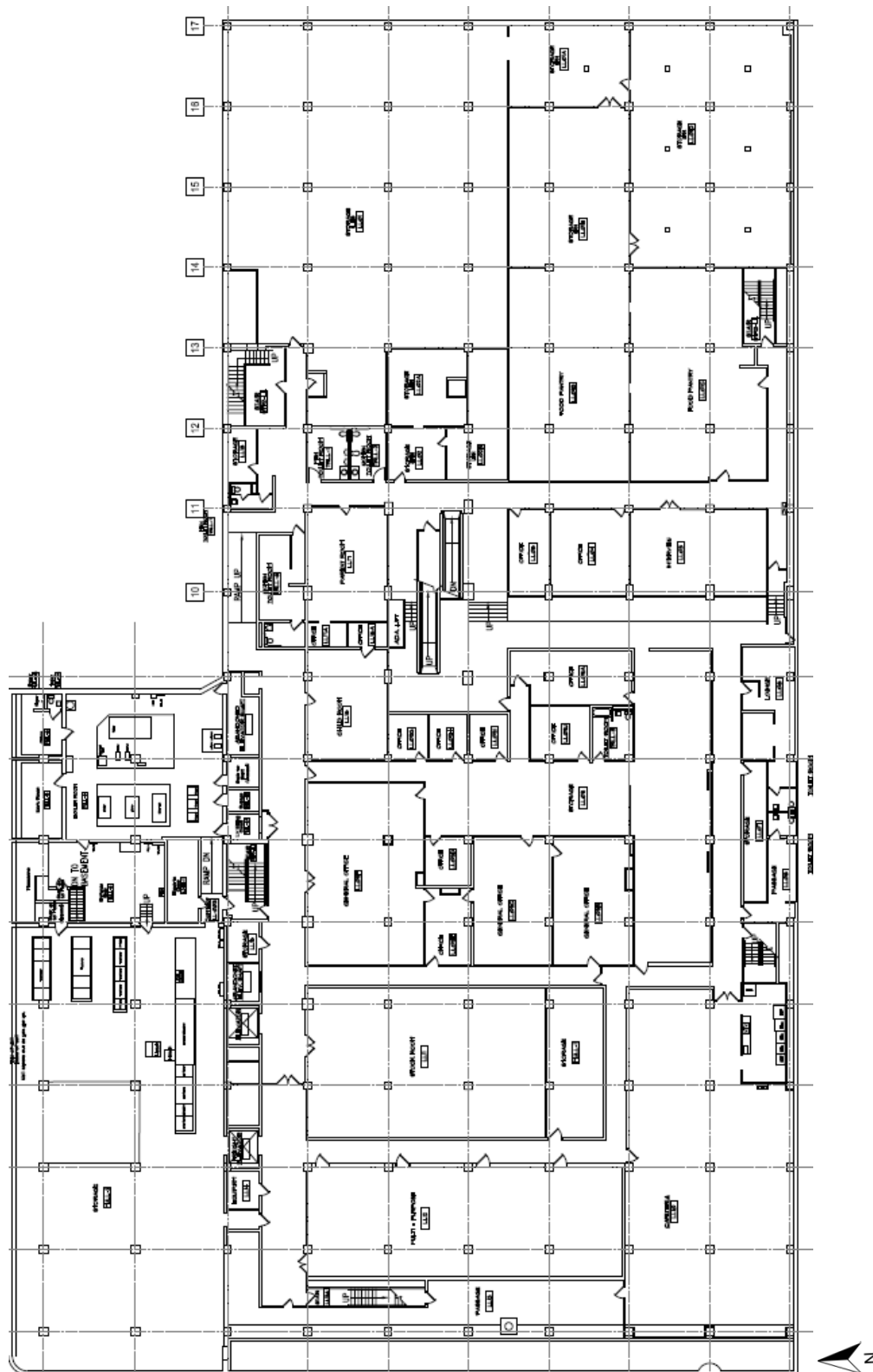


Figure 12. Current Basement Floor Plan (Quorum Architects). Not to Scale.

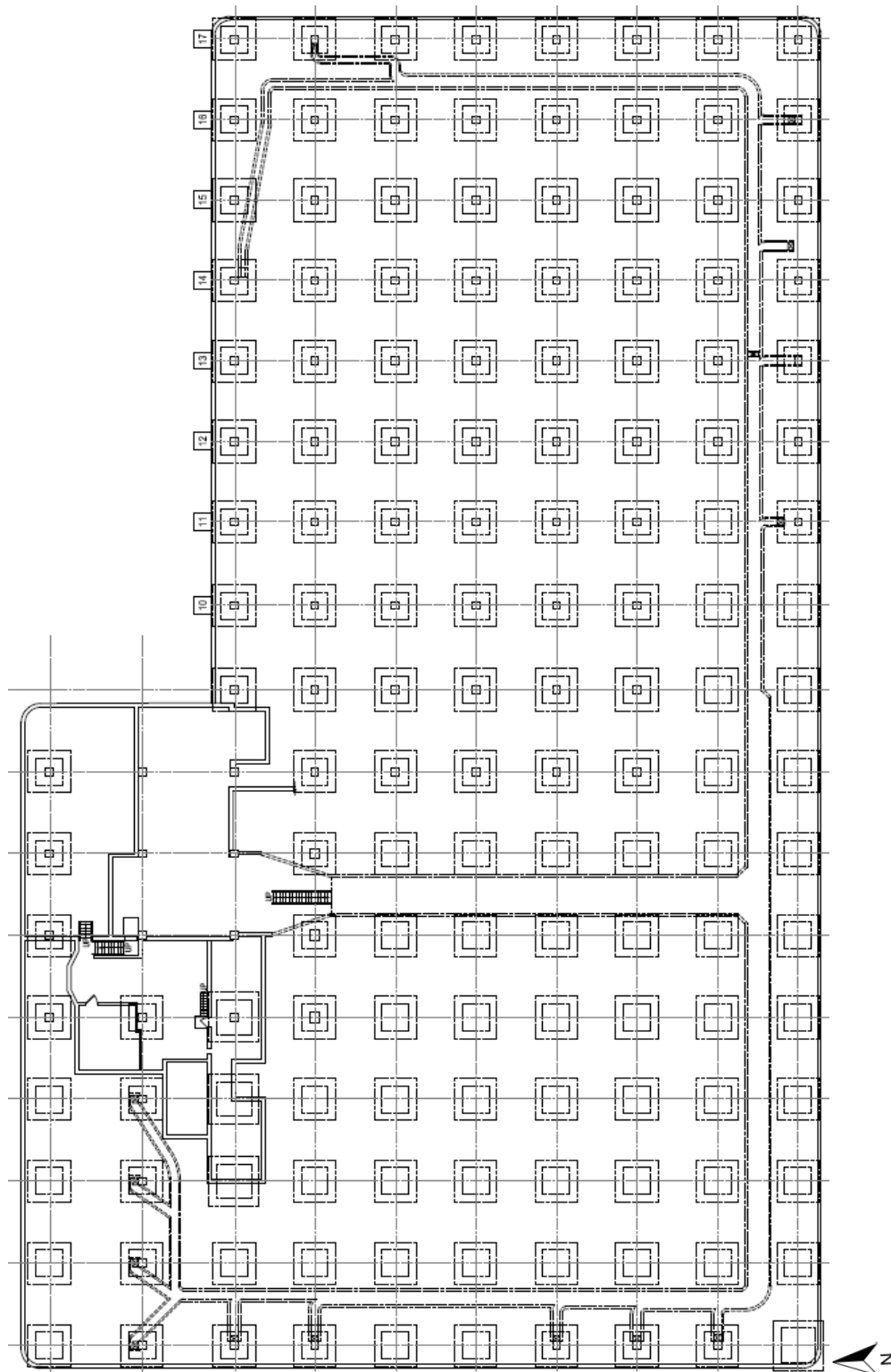


Figure 13. Current Sub-Basement Floor Plan (Quorum Architects). Not to Scale.



Figure 14. Photo Map, Exterior and Penthouse/Roof, Photos 1 to 9, 18, 19.

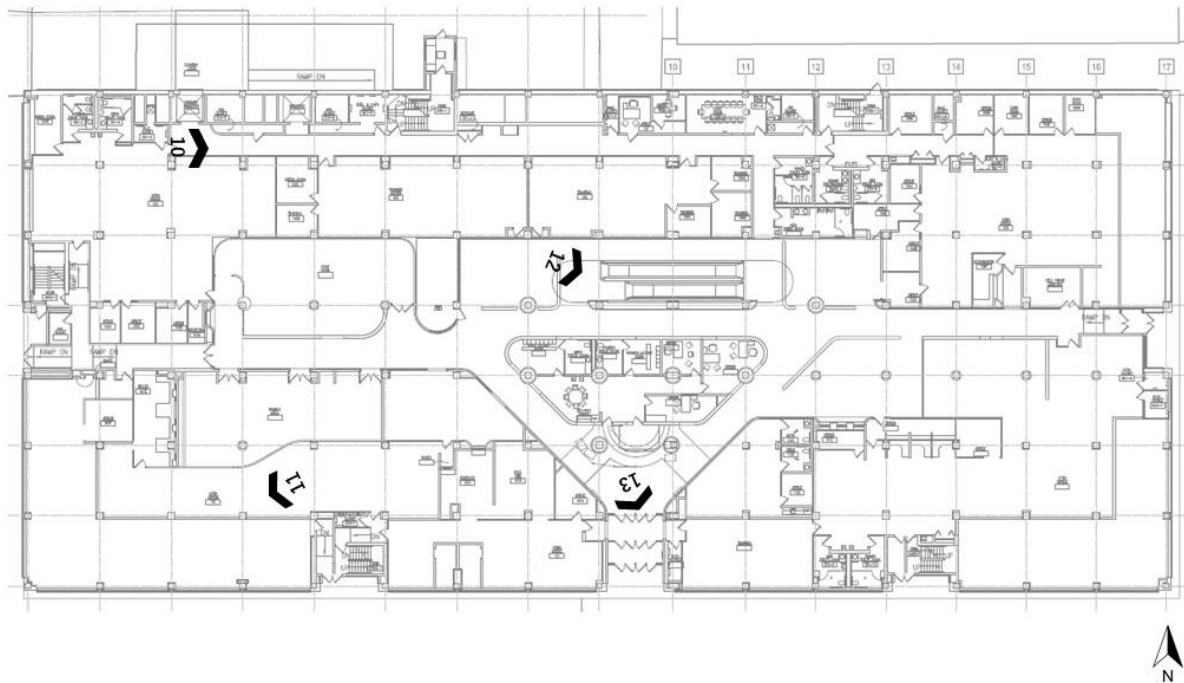


Figure 15. Photo Map, First Floor, Photos 10 to 13.

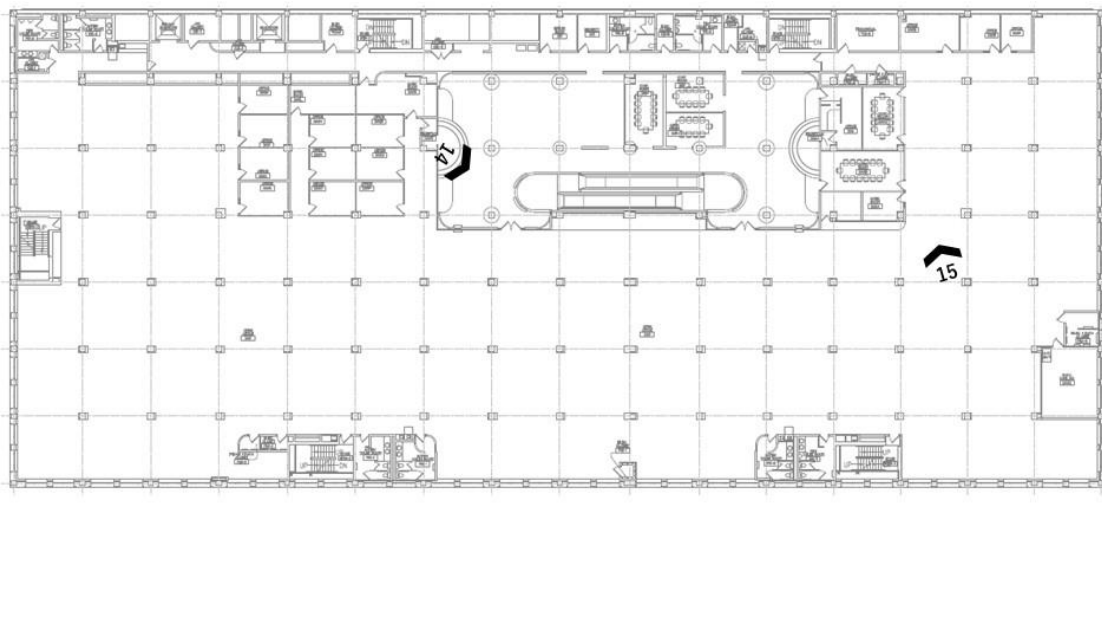


Figure 16. Photo Map, Second Floor, Photos 14, 15.

Milwaukee County Department of Welfare
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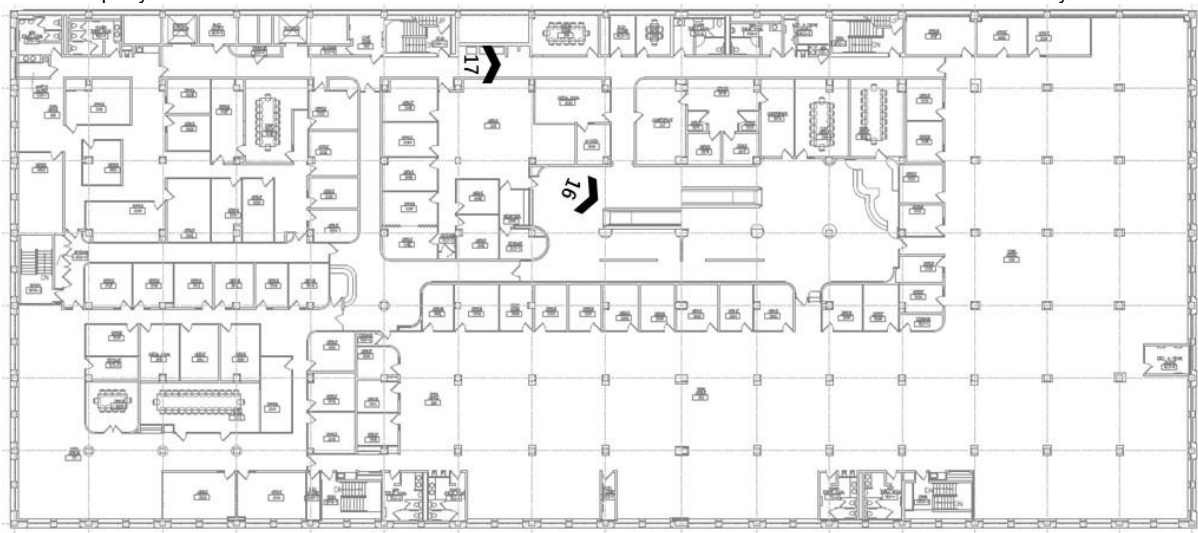


Figure 17. Photo Map, Third Floor, Photos 16, 17.

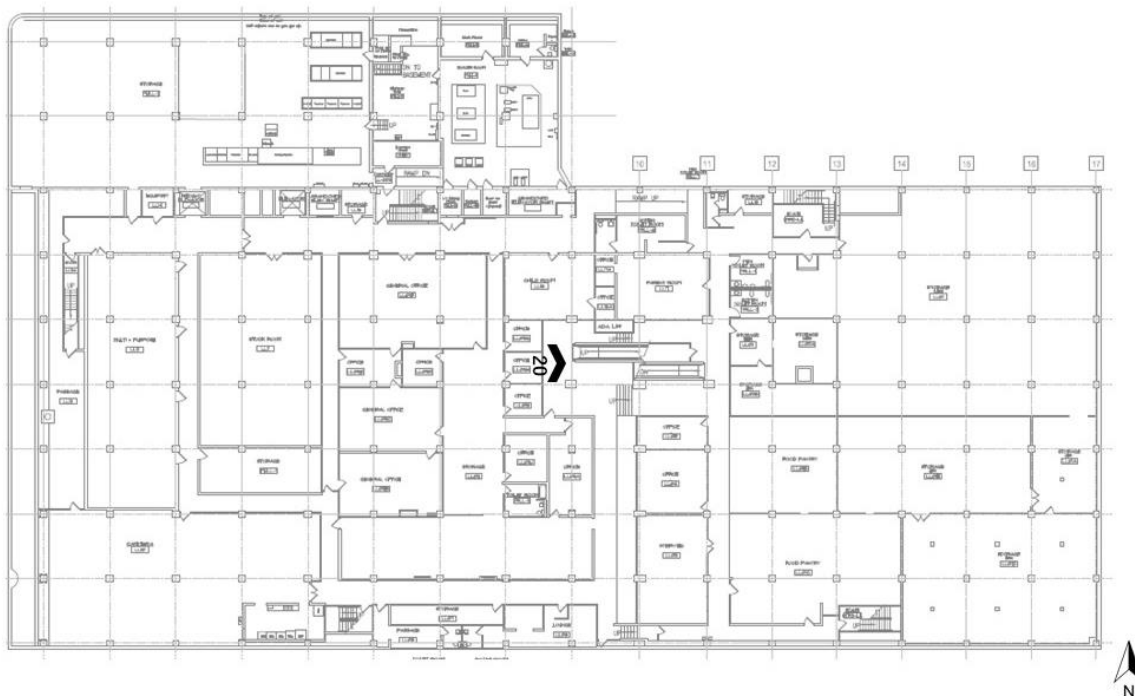


Figure 18. Photo Map, Basement, Photo 20.

Milwaukee County Department of Welfare
Name of Property

Milwaukee County, Wisconsin
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Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once in the photograph log. The photograph order must correspond with the photograph log.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Milwaukee County Department of Welfare
City or Vicinity: Milwaukee
County: Milwaukee State: WI
Photographer: Jen Davel
Date photographed: 7/31/2024

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 20. Exterior, South Elevation, view looking northwest. Photo taken by Heritage Consulting Group.
- 2 of 20. Exterior, South Elevation, view looking north. Photo taken by Quorum Architects.
- 3 of 20. Exterior, South Elevation, view looking northeast. Photo taken by Quorum Architects.
- 4 of 20. Exterior, South Elevation, Entrance, view looking north. Photo taken by Quorum Architects.
- 5 of 20. Exterior, West Elevation, view looking northeast. Photo taken by Quorum Architects.
- 6 of 20. Exterior, North Elevation, view looking southwest. Photo taken by Quorum Architects.
- 7 of 20. Exterior, North Elevation, view looking southeast. Photo taken by Quorum Architects.
- 8 of 20. Exterior, North Elevation, view looking southwest. Photo taken by Quorum Architects.
- 9 of 20. Exterior, East Elevation, view looking northwest. Photo taken by Quorum Architects.
- 10 of 20. Interior, First Floor, Corridor, view looking east. Photo taken by Heritage Consulting Group.
- 11 of 20. Interior, First Floor, Office, view looking southwest. Photo taken by Heritage Consulting Group.
- 12 of 20. Interior, First Floor, Escalator Lobby, view looking southeast. Photo taken by Heritage Consulting Group.
- 13 of 20. Interior, First Floor, Entrance, view looking southeast. Photo taken by Quorum Architects.
- 14 of 20. Interior, Second Floor, Lobby, view looking southeast. Photo taken by Quorum Architects.
- 15 of 20. Interior, Second Floor, Office, view looking northwest. Photo taken by Quorum Architects.
- 16 of 20. Interior, Third Floor, Escalator Lobby, view looking southeast. Photo taken by Quorum Architects.
- 17 of 20. Interior, Third Floor, Corridor, view looking east. Photo taken by Quorum Architects.

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Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

Name of Property

County and State

18 of 20. Interior, Rooftop Penthouse, view looking west. Photo taken by Heritage Consulting Group.

19 of 20. Interior, Rooftop Penthouse, view looking east. Photo taken by Quorum Architects.

20 of 20. Interior, Basement, view looking northeast. Photo taken by Heritage Consulting Group.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
Tier 2 – 120 hours
Tier 3 – 230 hours
Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

Milwaukee County Department of Welfare
Name of Property

Milwaukee County, Wisconsin
County and State

Property Owner

Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name/title	Ceclia Benton, Milwaukee County Economic Development Director		
organization	Milwaukee County	date	
street & number	633 W. Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 903	phone	414-278-4905
city or town	Milwaukee	state	WI
		zip code	53203

If there are other interested parties that should be noticed, please provide in the tables below

name/title			
organization		date	
street & number		phone	
city or town		state	WI
		zip code	

name/title			
organization		date	
street & number		phone	
city or town		state	WI
		zip code	

name/title			
organization		date	
street & number		phone	
city or town		state	WI
		zip code	