

**FINAL HISTORIC DESIGNATION STUDY REPORT  
BUNGALOW FIRE HOUSES THEMATIC NOMINATION**

**I. NAME**

- Historic:
1. Fire Engine House No.22
  2. Fire Engine House No.23
  3. Fire Engine House No.34
  4. Fire Engine House No.35
  5. Fire Engine House No.36

Common Name: Bungalow fire houses

**II. LOCATION**

1. 2901 North 30<sup>th</sup> Street
2. 1615 W. Oklahoma Avenue
3. 2669 North 47<sup>th</sup> Street
4. 407 North Hawley Road
5. 2509 W. Capitol Drive

Legal description

1. Tax Key Number: 309-0677-100  
  
Fond Du Lac Avenue Addition of Lots 13 to 35 incl of Cawker's Subd in NE ¼ SEC 13-7-21 BLOCK 6 LOTS (7-8 & 9) & S 20' LOT 6 & E 5' of S 110' LOT 10 & vac alley adj
2. Tax Key Number: 535-0660-000  
  
Morgandale in NE ¼ SEC 18-6-22 v 18 p 49 BLOCK 5 LOT 36 & E 60' (LOTS 37-38-39 & 40) exc st
3. Tax Key Number: 328-0401-000  
  
Boerth's Subdivision in SE ¼ SEC 14-7-21 BLOCK 1 S 54' (LOTS 1-2 & 3)
4. Tax Key Number: 404-0610-100  
  
RE-SUBD OF GOVERNMENT HEIGHTS IN SW ¼ Sec 26-7-21 BLOCK 5 LOT 13 & PART LOT 14 COM NW COR LOT 14-TH S 120'-TH E 63.68'-TH N 75.69'-th NELY ALG A CUR 17.09'-TH NLY 27.29'-TH W 64.52' TO BEG
5. Tax Key Number: 270-0301-000  
  
FREIHUBE'S SUBD, (E C) of SW ¼ SEC 6 & NW ¼ SEC 7-7-22 W 50' of E 310.84' of S 78' LOT 18

**III. CLASSIFICATION**

Structures

#### **IV. OWNER**

Mike Roney  
Real Estate  
Department of City Development  
809 North Broadway  
Milwaukee, WI 53202  
(1615 W. Oklahoma Ave. and 407 N. Hawley Road)

Lawrence A. Gardner, Chief  
Milwaukee Fire Department  
711 West Wells Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Milwaukee, WI 53233  
(2901 N. 30<sup>th</sup> Street and 2509 W. Capitol Drive)

Warren Sondericker  
2669 North 47<sup>th</sup> Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53210-2413

#### **ALDERMANIC DISTRICTS**

8<sup>TH</sup> Aldermanic District Ald. Frederick G. Gordon  
10<sup>th</sup> Aldermanic District Ald. Rosa Cameron-Rollins  
14<sup>th</sup> Aldermanic District Ald. Suzanne M. Breier  
16<sup>th</sup> Aldermanic District Ald. Michael J. Murphy

#### **NOMINATOR**

James Roevers

#### **V. YEAR BUILT**

1926 – 1928

#### **ARCHITECT:**

Charles Malig and staff of the Bureau of Bridges and Buildings, Milwaukee DPW

#### **VI. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION**

This thematic nomination includes all known bungalow style fire houses constructed in the city of Milwaukee. These fire houses were built within a relatively brief time span and although called “bungalow style fire houses” at the time of their construction due to their low residential profile, they feature details that we would call Colonial Revival or Georgian Revival today. Features common to this distinctive group of fire houses include: one story or story and a half height; gold/tan color brick veneer with corner quoins; gabled or double gabled façade; rear hose drying tower; and a floor plan that locates living and office quarters adjacent to, instead of above, apparatus room. All roofs are asphalt shingled and feature brick chimneys of varying heights. Quality ornamental features include copper gutters, downspouts, flashing and sheathing for dormers. The hose drying towers are articulated with the same detail as the main station house and sport hip

roofs, quoins and round headed windows. Their placement at the rear of the buildings signifies a change in the spatial organization of the fire house as well as an aesthetic shift away from the more “old fashioned” designs of the Victorian era in which the towered façade was a hallmark of the municipal fire house. A brief description of each station follows.

**Engine Company House No. 34** was the first station to be built in the new bungalow style with the permit taken out on December 19, 1925. Permit records also indicate that the \$30,000 structure was designed by Charles Malig and completed in 1926. It is located North 47<sup>th</sup> Street just south of Center Street on a 54-foot by 97-foot size parcel. The building fronts east onto 47<sup>th</sup> Street and is set back from the sidewalk behind a paved front yard. There are no side yards or rear yard as the building occupies most of its lot. A narrow walkway is located along part of the north property line. To the south is a public alley and the north elevation faces the rear of commercial buildings that have frontage on Center Street. The neighborhood surrounding the fire house is predominantly residential in character with block after block of fine single family and duplex residences. On Center Street are numerous small one to three story commercial buildings and apartment houses.

The rectangular hip roof structure is built on grade and features a double gabled façade. The larger north gable once crowned an enclosed porch that served as the pedestrian entrance into the building. It had a center entrance with transom and sidelights flanked by Tuscan columns and three casement windows each having leaded glass and transoms. The pediment and the bulkhead area beneath the casement windows were clad with stucco. The pediment featured a lunette window with spider-web tracery and a prominent keystone. Window boxes for plants helped to complete the residential character of the building.

Set back slightly from this bay is the gabled apparatus entrance that featured an elliptical opening with prominent keystone surmounted by a name plaque. A small copper clad dormer window is located at the hip roof between the two prominent gables. A two-story hose-drying tower is located at the southwest corner of the building. Five tall windows with stone lintels and sills are situated on the alley façade. Similar windows are located at the north façade. The rear façade has one large and one small window opening. A small brick chimney extends from the apex of the roof and there is a small, windowless dormer on the west slope of the roof adjacent to the hose-drying tower.

Alterations to this structure have changed the building’s articulation but not form. While the building was still owned by the fire department the elliptical apparatus entrance was enlarged and changed to a rectangular opening to allow better access for larger vehicles. More recent changes have occurred as a result of the conversion to a residence in 1996. The Standards and Appeals Commission allowed the current owner to block down most of the windows although most of the openings retain their original dimensions. A large opening on the rear elevation has been blocked up with brick. The main pedestrian entrance has been removed and blocked up and the lunette window in the gable has been replaced by a rectangular one.

Work on **Fire Engine House No.23**, addressed today at 1615 W. Oklahoma Avenue, was begun in January, 1927. Permit records show the construction costs at \$37,000. The fire house occupies approximately 60-feet by 90-feet of an L-shaped parcel owned by the city. Its main façade fronts north onto Oklahoma Avenue and is set back from the street behind a paved area in which is located a flagpole. The east and west elevations are built up to the property line and at the rear or south portion of the site is a paved

driveway bordered by chain link fencing. The remainder of the property is occupied by a small, one story, gold brick gabled structure that matches the fire house and was built at approximately the same time. This small structure houses a power substation for the city street lighting system and is addressed at 3112 south 17<sup>th</sup> Street. The neighborhood surrounding the fire house and power sub-station is predominantly residential in character, with blocks of bungalows and cottages. The St. Francis Hospital complex is located one block to the south and there are commercial buildings and multi-family apartment buildings along Oklahoma Avenue.

Fire Engine House No. 23 repeats some of the same forms as its sibling on 47<sup>th</sup> Street but with a few differences. The tan brick, one story, hip roof structure is built on grade and features a hip roof, prominent front gable and separate pedestrian and apparatus entrances. The corners are embellished by quoins and the two-story hose-drying tower is located at the southwest corner of the building. In contrast to Engine Company House No. 34, the large front gable crowns an open portico with brick corner piers and two center, stone, Tuscan columns. Two entrance doors, two large multi-light windows and a narrow arched window are symmetrically arranged at the portico. The gable is clad with stucco and features a small arched window. The apparatus entrance is situated on the west side of the building and set back from the main pedestrian entrance. Rather than repeat another large gable, a gabled dormer with round headed sash window accents this entrance bay.

The east elevation, sited along a public alley, features a series of sash windows of varying sizes that have stone lintels with keystones and stone sills.

The rear or south elevation repeats the same window design while a portion of the wall is recessed. The west elevation continues with a series of windows.

Alterations to this fire house appear to be minimal and consist of the enlarging of the apparatus door. Details on each of the dormer windows have been simplified by the removal of keystones and encasing with aluminum. Like Station House No. 34, this fire house has been decommissioned. A new fire house is located just blocks away and work is underway to convert this original building to a museum of fire fighting history.

The permit for **Fire Engine House No. 22** was taken out on June 11, 1927. The \$35,000 structure is sited on a 110-foot by 130-foot parcel at the northwest corner of North 30<sup>th</sup> and West Locust Streets. The main façade fronts east onto 30<sup>th</sup> Street. The area is characterized by a neighborhood of duplexes and single family residences to the east and industrial/manufacturing buildings to the north, south and west. This industrial corridor follows the route of the Soo Line Railroad right-of-way that is located approximately 225 feet behind or west of the fire house.

The design of Fire Engine House No. 22 is virtually identical to that of Engine Company No. 23 on Oklahoma Avenue. The same front gable with portico design was used and the same alterations were made to the apparatus entrance. The brick appears to be more golden in tone than the station on Oklahoma and might have been cleaned. Decorative security grilles cover most of the window openings. The small front lawn is planted with grass and bushes and there is a flagpole at this location. Fire Engine House No. 22 is the sole bungalow fire house still in active use by the fire department. In 1994 an addition was built on the north side of the structure approximately 49-feet by 28-feet and 24-feet by 27-feet in dimension. The million dollar structure provided for a new kitchen, recreation room, laundry and officer's quarters for the station. It was designed to blend in with the existing structure and features gold brick, a prominent front gable with

simulated window, corner quoins, and stone or cast stone lintels and sills. The windows themselves are smaller in scale than the originals, however.

The construction permits for **Fire Engine House No. 35** no longer exist but plumbing records show the building to have been under construction in July 1927. The fire house occupies a 114-foot by 120-foot parcel at the northwest corner of West St. Paul Avenue and North Hawley Road and the building fronts east onto Hawley Road. Across the street is the locally designated Calvary Cemetery. To the north one block is Blue Mound Road with its mix of commercial and residential buildings. To the west and south is a neighborhood of single family and duplex residences. The fire house is sited toward the north end of its lot and has a paved driveway along the north façade and a side yard planted with grass along the St. Paul Avenue frontage. The building is set back from Hawley Road behind a small grassy lawn.

Fire Engine House No. 35 very closely resembles the stations at Oklahoma and 30<sup>th</sup> Streets. Here the brick is tan rather than gold, and the apparatus door has been enlarged as in the other stations. The large front gable over the portico retains its original stucco cladding and half timbering and the gable window has intact trim and casings although these are now clad in aluminum. In contrast to the above two stations, the Hawley road building has a larger dormer above the apparatus entrance. It is stucco clad and features a Palladian window with intact trim. The side and rear elevations resemble the other two built in 1927. The hose-drying tower is situated at the rear northwest corner of the building. Most windows retain their original size. This station was just recently decommissioned by the fire department and replaced by a new facility built nearby on the site of the former Fairview Mausoleum.

The last of the bungalow fire houses to be constructed was **Fire Engine House No. 36** at 2509 West Capitol Drive. Permits for this \$60,000 structure were taken out on November 22, 1927 and the building was completed in June 1928. Fire Engine House No. 36 occupies a small 78-foot by 50-foot lot alongside an alley that bisects the block bounded by North 25<sup>th</sup> Street, North 26<sup>th</sup> Street, West Melvina Street and West Capitol Drive. The fire house fronts north onto Capitol Drive. The neighborhood is characterized by block after block of single family and duplex residences and Capitol Drive features a mix of apartment houses and commercial buildings.

The design of Fire Engine House No. 36 differs from the four stations that preceded it, most likely due to the small size of the lot. Here the building features a cross-gabled roof, simplified façade and tan brick and the building is one and a half stories in height. Instead of the broad double gabled façade with portico, a shed roof porch marks the pedestrian entrance with two stone columns in Tuscan style. Above this porch is a small gabled dormer with arched window. The single door is surmounted by a transom and is flanked by 6-over-6 leaded glass sash with transoms. The apparatus entrance is only slightly offset from this porch and its front gable features three arched windows in front of which is positioned a decorative wrought iron balconet. The difference in roofline from the fire houses mentioned above is due to the fact that the firefighters' dormitory was located in the half-story above the apparatus room rather than adjacent to it. The narrow lot probably necessitated this design variation.

The west or alley elevation features a series of windows with stone lintels and sills, including a window in the gable end. There are also two small doors, one with a metal security storm door and the other having a 6-panel colonial design. The hose-drying tower is located at the southwest corner of the building. On top of the tower is located a metal truss tower for sirens or radio communications.

The east elevation likewise features a series of windows and, in addition, a small projecting bay and a pedestrian door with transom. A handsome corbelled chimney is located on the east slope of the roof at this elevation.

The rear or south elevation is simple in character with various windows on the first story and in the gable.

Alterations to the fire house have been minimal. The apparatus door has been enlarged and much of the wood trim has been clad with aluminum. The windows, for the most part, are intact with glass block infill in one of the openings on the east elevation. The arched windows on the façade have been blocked down but the casings and trim remain intact. This station has been decommissioned by the fire department.

## **VII. SIGNIFICANCE**

The five bungalow fire houses are significant for their innovative design and their what they represent about local government in the 1920's. As the City of Milwaukee grew in size through annexations the need for fire protection was met by the construction of a series of fire houses located in primarily residential areas. This expansion coincided with the effort to upgrade fire-fighting technology and move away from apparatus that was horse-drawn to motorized vehicles. This change resulted in the need for station houses to have a new form. While a station house still had to provide living quarters for fire fighters, it no longer had to stable horses and hay and other accoutrements tied to the accommodation of draft animals. While hose drying was still a necessity, the tower it required no longer was tied to the need of a watchtower due to the telephone and firebox call system. The familiar front tower visible on so many of our local fire houses gave way to discreet rear towers. One-story structures with combination gable-hip roofs integrated well into the fabric of the burgeoning residential neighborhoods and neighborhood commercial districts. They took on the appearance of fine residential structures, and although they were designed in the Colonial Revival/Georgian Revival style, came to be known as the "bungalow fire house." Credit for the design is said to go to city architect Charles Malig and his initials appear on the plans for the buildings. The efforts at building fine new fire stations coincided with Socialist Mayor Daniel Hoan's goal at bringing well-run, honest and efficient city services to all areas of the city. In many ways the 1920's can be thought of as the golden era of civic improvements in Milwaukee with the completion of Lincoln Memorial Drive in 1929, and the construction of many new parks pavilions, handsome ward yard buildings, the Kilbourn Avenue Bridge and public bus shelters and comfort stations.

## **VIII. HISTORY**

Milwaukee's fire department began as a volunteer effort in 1837 with the creation of the village of Milwaukee. The first company, Hook and Ladder No.1, included such notables as Alexander Mitchell. The meager equipment was purchased by the companies themselves or by benefactors and was kept at the city's first fire house, a shed on East Wisconsin Avenue. Early volunteers came from all walks of life. Grateful storekeepers and hotel managers would frequently feed the volunteers during bouts of fire fighting. Members were also expected to help quiet civil disturbances when called upon. By 1859 there were some eleven volunteer companies in the city. (*History of Milwaukee* 1881 p. 346-347, 358, 362)

In 1861 a half-pay department was inaugurated whereby firemen would hold regular daytime jobs but be on standby for emergencies. Equipment consisted of hand pumped engines,

hoses and ladders. The work was arduous, dangerous and fires were frequent. (*History of Milwaukee* 1881 p. 370) In 1874 a regular, full time, paid fire department was instituted, administered by a chief engineer who was appointed by the mayor and subject to confirmation by the Common Council. By 1885 the force consisted of 119 men and ten steam engines. It was in that year that the Board of Fire and Police Commissioners was created to rectify abuses in the appointment of the fire chief and chief of police. The Commission was empowered to set employment standards and examine candidates for positions in the fire and police departments. It also had the authority to appoint the respective chiefs and the power to remove them from office. (*Milwaukee Board of Fire and Police Commissioners* p. 6) Largely through the efforts of the Commission, the Fire Department has remained a stable and well run institution. In the 1930's and 1940's the department won achievement awards from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce for fire safety and waste management. (*Milwaukee Board of Fire and Police Commissioners* p. 10)

Since the time that the fire department became a full department of city government, its history has been one of continued growth and adaptation to new technology. The first motor driven engine was put into use in 1914 and the last horse drawn apparatus was retired in 1928. A fire prevention bureau was organized in 1915 and a Drill School instituted in 1922. From 1889 to 1984 the department also ran fireboats along Milwaukee's 27 miles of canal, river and lake frontage. In addition to fire fighting, the fireboats were used for ice breaking, snow dispersal, lifesaving and pumping water to land engines. An underwater rescue team was formed in 1962 and since 1980 the department has also provided the city with paramedics. Through the paramedical unit, the force's first two women joined the department in 1981 and the first woman graduated from the training academy in 1982. (*Milwaukee Board of Fire and Police Commissioners* p. 12, 16, 17; *Menomonee Valley Industrial Survey* 1979)

Fire station design has always constituted an interesting and colorful part of the city's architectural heritage. Early buildings tended to be makeshift sheds as reported above but substantial brick stations were constructed by the 1860's, even before the institution of a full-time force. These buildings were constructed of local cream color brick, were generally two stories high and featured prominent front or side towers that served as watchtowers and a place for a signal bell. In later years hoses would be hung to dry in these towers as well. These towers were among the most prominent features of the 19<sup>th</sup> century skyline, rivaled only by the soaring steeples of the city's churches. Sometimes the buildings would accommodate horses or an adjacent stable structure would be built for the animals.

The fire houses themselves took on the prevailing styles of the day but featured large apparatus entrances and the aforementioned towers. Their sturdy construction and fine architectural design were prominent visual reminders of the importance that the city accorded public services and fire fighting in particular. Fire houses could be found within residential and industrial sections of the city even before branch police stations were conceived of.

The earliest surviving station building is located at 411 North 3<sup>rd</sup> street, built in 1866. The Italianate style cream brick structure underwent significant remodeling in 1901 with the removal of its 76-foot tower and the addition of a new façade. In recent years more remodeling has obscured the side elevations as well. A fairly well preserved example from the 1870's is the Chief Lippert Co. No.1 station at 642 W. North Avenue. It was built in 1876 and designed by local architect Thomas Philpot. The cream brick Italianate building had a prominent front gable, bracketed cornice and wooden corner tower, now reduced in size from its original height. No longer used by the fire department, the old doors have been converted into windows and the brick has been painted. Since the 1970's the building has

housed the Inner City Arts Council. The Chief Lippert Station is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

As the city grew rapidly in size and density, the old way of contracting out design and construction of fire houses became too costly and lengthy. To quote *Built in Milwaukee*:

In 1885, under the leadership of Chief James Foley, the department embarked upon a new program to control and standardize the design and construction of fire houses. He directed Sebastian E. Brand, foreman of Engine 9 and an ex-mason, to design all the new stations. Brand's work expressed both the increased concern for functionalism and a stolid masonry interpretation of Victorian styles. He often mixed Gothic and Classical detailing in generally vertical elevations. At least ten of Brand's designs – spanning nearly three decades – survive today, either in continuous use as fire engine houses or with a new use. Many of the smaller buildings were remarkably similar employing a two-story, three-bay design. In this scheme, two smaller bays with narrow windows [and a pedestrian door] flanked a central engine door. Otherwise straight cornices were varied on some structures by an inset gable over the central bay. A corner tower was sometimes added.(page 104)

About 1913, the city's Bureau of Bridges and Public Buildings took charge of the design and construction of fire houses. As trucks replaced horses, Brand's work was supplanted by that of Charles E. Malig of the bureau who, like his predecessor, was a fixture in the engine house design role for several decades. (*Built in Milwaukee* p. 104-105)

In the first decade that the Bureau of Bridges and Buildings took over design, two known fire houses were built, both in 1915, Engine Company House No. 32 at 3920 W. Vliet Street, and the fireboat station for Engine No. 15 at 105 North Water Street. Permit records show Charles Malig as the architect of record for both. While the building on Vliet Street can be considered Classical Revival in style, the two-story form and vertical emphasis carry over from the earlier station models. The fireboat house is more eclectic in style befitting its more unique function, and is two stories in height but with a horizontal emphasis. It was not until the 1920's that station house design would take a dramatic turn.

It was during the 1920's that the city experienced its greatest period of expansion up to that time. In 1920 Milwaukee's land area consisted of 26.089 miles, a figure that had increased to 43.109 square miles by 1930. Milwaukee's population also boomed from 373,857 residents in 1910 to 457,447 persons in 1920 to 578,249 in 1930. (John Gurda, *Making of Milwaukee*, p. 248) Such increases were accompanied by an unprecedented development boom whereby scores of new middle class subdivisions were platted and built up and new neighborhood commercial districts blossomed. Such construction was welcomed and seen to alleviate the severe housing shortage experienced in the late teens and early 1920's. Interestingly the 1924 Report of the Common Council indicated that Milwaukee was the most congested of the large cities in the US after New York City but that aggressive annexation was changing this status. Although the era popularized the period revival styles such as the Tudor and Colonial or Georgian, the predominant house type of the era was the bungalow and its larger incarnation, the bungalow flat or duplex. While the latter was often two and a half stories in height, the bungalow hugged the ground at a single story or story and a half giving the new neighborhoods a regularity and orderly quality not seen in the 19<sup>th</sup> century neighborhoods. These factors influenced the design of the new fire houses. Technology also played a role.

In the early years of fire fighting, crews would rely on watchtower observation to located evidence of fires. The first alarm system with call boxes was installed in 1869 with 45 street boxes by which any citizen could ring in an alarm. By 1926 there were 988 alarm boxes



throughout the city. This would be relayed to the fire house in closest proximity. Telephone service became significant in speeding up the response time especially when phones became commonly installed in private residences and businesses. Motorization of equipment began in 1914, was about 70% complete by 1921 and fully realized in 1927.(1921 Report of the Common Council p. 29; 1927 Report of the Common Council p. 31) This led to the elimination of the fleet of 250 horses once used by the department and also their harnesses, haylofts and the other necessities required by these animals. Different kinds of apparatus were required for the motorized vehicles. In addition to these changing technologies, the city began a pro-active approach to fighting fires. Surveys were made of various districts throughout the city and the elimination of fire hazards became paramount. The 1926 Report of the Common Council boasted that all buildings in the fire limits (downtown, industrial, and local business districts) were inspected four times yearly and that buildings outside these limits were inspected twice yearly. Instruction and demonstrations were given on fire safety during fire prevention week, radio spots were made and lectures given. Publications were distributed throughout the public schools. The 1924 Report of the Common Council boasted that many commercial and factory buildings of mill construction had been eliminated in recent years (page 42). Some 400 buildings were razed in 1928 alone, of which 350 were frame structures.(1928 Report of the Common Council p. 37)

With this shift toward a modern fire department came the need for fire house design changes that would reflect the new and more efficient operation. Since most of Milwaukee's growth during this time period was in the residential sector, it became paramount that the new fire engine houses be located in the neighborhoods and that they blend in with the predominant architectural forms of the day. City architect Charles Malig, with the Bureau of Bridges and Public Buildings, came up with a novel design for a low, residential scale building to house the fire engines and firemen. The brick veneered structures took on architectural detailing from the Colonial Revival and had the appearance of well-built, upscale houses.

Efforts to build the first of these, Fire Engine House No. 34, began in 1922 but it was not until the fall of 1925 that a site was chosen on a residential block of 47<sup>th</sup> street. Permits for the work were taken out in December of 1925 and the building was completed the following year. The fire house made a handsome addition to the neighborhood with its double gabled front and glazed entry porch with planter boxes, and looked much like a period revival style house with attached garage.

Efforts for a second fire house of this design began with a Common Council resolution in August 1925 and a site was purchased that November for \$4,650. The permit for the structure was taken out on January 4, 1927 and the building was completed in August that year. Located on busy Oklahoma Avenue between South 16<sup>th</sup> and South 17<sup>th</sup> Streets, Fire Engine House No. 23 was an asset to the surrounding residential neighborhood that literally developed overnight as hundreds of frame and brick bungalows were built in uniform blocks to the north and south of the station. Fire Engine House No. 23 differed slightly in design from its predecessor by having an open portico that sheltered two pedestrian doors and by having a round headed window in the gable end and a gabled dormer above the apparatus entry. The city also chose to build a power substation on this site as well, used for the street lighting system. This substation, designed to match the fire engine house in style and scale, is not included in the nomination due to its different function.

Fire Engine House No. 22, was built to replace an aging structure at 27<sup>th</sup> and Center Streets which had been constructed in 1897. In November 1926 a new site was purchased at the northwest corner of 30<sup>th</sup> and Locust streets. Permits for construction were taken out on June 11, 1927 and the new fire house was completed that year. This fire house is virtually

identical to its Oklahoma sibling. The old fire house at 27<sup>th</sup> and Center Streets was subsequently remodeled and converted into a branch public library.

The Common Council authorized the fourth of the bungalow fire houses in 1926 following annexation of land west of the Wisconsin Avenue Viaduct. The lot at the northwest corner of Hawley Road and West St. Paul Avenue was purchased in November 1926 and work began on the new structure in the summer of 1927. The building was ready for occupancy in 1928. Fire Engine House No. 35 closely resembles those on Oklahoma Avenue and 30<sup>th</sup> Street. It is the most intact and least altered of the fire houses and retains its original half-timbering in the gable of the portico and its wood trim detail although these elements are now encased in aluminum. In keeping with the theme and variations concept of these fire houses, the gabled dormer above the apparatus entrance features a Palladian window motif, the only bungalow fire house to have one.

The final bungalow fire house, for Engine Company No. 36, was built on West Capitol Drive between North 25<sup>th</sup> and North 26<sup>th</sup> Streets. The Common Council resolution authorizing the search for a site was passed in February 1925 but land already owned by the city for the opening of Capitol Drive was chosen. Permits for construction were taken out on November 22, 1927 and the station was manned on May 16, 1928. The new \$60,000 fire house resembled the prior structures but substituted a shed roof for the gable above the pedestrian entrance to the building. A small dormer with a round-headed window enlivened this shed roof. Above the apparatus entrance was a trio of round-headed windows accented by a small, wrought iron balconet. Unlike the above fire houses, Fire House No. 36 had living quarters in the half-story above the first floor. The building retains most of its original detail although the trio of windows (or just the storm windows) above the apparatus entrance has been blocked down although the openings have been retained.

The above five bungalow fire houses would serve the city well for many decades. With the onset of the Great Depression, not many new fire houses were built. In 1931 new stations were constructed at 5174 N. Hopkins St. and 1439 S. 8<sup>th</sup> St. as well as the High Pressure Station at 2011 S. 1<sup>st</sup> St. but their design departed from the bungalow model. During the remainder of the 1930's older structures underwent interior remodeling with the help of WPA funding and some like Fire Engine House No. 1 at 784 N. Broadway were so altered on the exterior as to constitute a new building. Such remodeling continued into the 1940's as towers were shortened and facades were given face-lifts. With the advent of ever-larger trucks, original entrance doors were enlarged and ornamental wooden doors were replaced with steel ones. All the bungalow fire houses display the altered apparatus entrances. Fire house design shifted away from the period revival styling in the World War II era and post war decades to embrace the Art Deco and International Styles. Recent construction, like the new fire house for Engine Co. No. 35 at 100 North 64<sup>th</sup> Street, has returned to more traditional design with steeply pitched roofs and towers.

As fire response time has been improved and new stations have been constructed, more of the older fire houses in the city's oldest neighborhoods have been retired from service. Some have been retained as storage for the city. Others have been sold off to private parties or demolished. Of the five bungalow fire houses, only one is currently in operation, Fire Engine House No. 22. It was recently (1994) enlarged with an addition that was sympathetic to the original design. Fire Engine House No. 34 was sold to a private owner and is the most altered. Fire Engine House No. 23 is being converted into a fire-fighting museum. Engine Houses No. 35 and No. 36 are vacant, with Engine Co. 35 recently moving into a new facility at 100 North 64<sup>th</sup> Street, the site of the former Fairview Mausoleum.

## **The Architect**

Charles E. Malig who worked for 38 years as a staff architect for the city's Department of Bridges and Buildings designed the series of bungalow fire houses. An article about his retirement in 1949 indicates that he "became an architect the hard way". Malig took special engineering and design courses and then apprenticed to various local architects. For over ten years he was a director and instructor in architecture at the Rhuede & Heine College, a local architectural and engineering school. He began working for the city in 1911 and during his tenure is credited with the design of South View Hospital (begun in 1911) at 2320 W. Mitchell Street/1640 South 24<sup>th</sup> street, the Matthew Keenan Health Center (1932) at 3200 North 36<sup>th</sup> Street, the Johnston Emergency Hospital (1930) at 1230 West Grant Street, the Kilbourn Avenue and Cherry Street Bridges and all or most of the fire houses and police stations and ward yard buildings built during his 38 years at the city. He is also said to have designed the 10<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Ward schoolhouses while in private practice.

Private firms designed many municipal structures over the years, but during the Great Depression when construction work had nearly ground to a halt, city government took a more active role in the design and construction of public buildings. School Board proceedings and other records indicated the cost savings and time savings that resulted from having an in-house permanent design staff. The consistency in design of buildings erected by the Department of Bridges and Buildings throughout the 1920's and 1930's attests to the continuity of its staff, especially Charles Malig. While period designs dominated the public restroom facilities and ward yard buildings in the 1920's and 1930's and bungalow fire houses prevailed in the 1920's, Malig turned to the burgeoning Art Deco style in his later commissions. The Matthew Keenan Health Center and Third District Police Station are among those designed in the new modern style. Malig's later work reflects the growing interest in Modernism and buildings became starker in appearance with fewer historical references and embellishments. Malig can be credited for helping create the "golden age" of Municipal buildings in Milwaukee.

Malig and his wife Kate lived for many years in the Washington Heights neighborhood at 2551 North 51<sup>st</sup> Street. After his retirement at the age of 70 in 1949, the Maligs moved to a new house at 7222 West Burleigh Street where they lived until Charles Malig's death in 1960 at the age of 81.

## **IX. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the Bungalow Fire Houses (Fire Engine Houses Nos. 22, 23, 34, 35, and 36) at 2901 North 30<sup>th</sup> Street, 1615 West Oklahoma, 2669 North 47<sup>th</sup> Street, 407 North Hawley Road and 2509 West Capitol Drive be given historic designation as City of Milwaukee Historic Structures as a result of their fulfillment of criteria e-1, e-5, e-6, and e-9 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Section 308-81(2)(e) of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances.

- e-1. Its exemplification of the development of the cultural, economic, social or historic heritage of the City of Milwaukee, State of Wisconsin or of the United States.
- e-5. Its embodiment of the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or specimen.
- e-6. Its identification as the work of an artist, architect, interior designer, craftsman or master builder whose individual works have influenced the development of the City of Milwaukee, State of Wisconsin or of the United States.

- e-9. Its unique location as a singular physical characteristic which represents an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community or the city of Milwaukee.

## X. PRESERVATION GUIDELINES

The following preservation guidelines represent the principal concerns of the Historic Preservation Commission regarding this historic designation. However, the Commission reserves the right to make final decisions based upon particular design submissions. Nothing in these guidelines shall be construed to prevent ordinary maintenance or the restoration and/or replacement of documented original elements.

### A. Roofs

Retain the roof shape. Skylights or dormers are discouraged but may be added to roof surfaces if they are not visible from the street or public right of way. Avoid making changes to the roof shape that would alter the building height, roofline or pitch. If replacement is necessary, duplicate the appearance of the original roofing as closely as possible. Dormers are to be retained as they are distinctive elements of the bungalow or residential character of the fire houses.

### B. Materials

#### 1. Masonry

- a. Unpainted brick, terra cotta, or stone should not be painted or covered. Avoid painting or covering natural terra cotta or stone. This is historically incorrect and could cause irreversible damage if it was decided to remove the paint at a later date.
- b. Repoint defective mortar by duplicating the original in color, style, texture and strength. Avoid using mortar colors and pointing styles that were unavailable or were not used when the building was constructed.
- c. Clean masonry only when necessary to halt deterioration and with the gentlest method possible. Sandblasting limestone, terra cotta, brick or cream brick surfaces is prohibited. This method of cleaning erodes the surface of the material and accelerates deterioration. Avoid the indiscriminate use of chemical products that could have an adverse reaction with the masonry materials, such as the use of acid on limestone.
- d. Repair or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the old as closely as possible. Avoid using new material that is inappropriate or was unavailable when the building was constructed.

#### 2. Wood/Metal

- a. Retain original material, whenever possible. Avoid removing architectural features that are essential to maintaining the building's character and appearance.
- b. Retain or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the appearance of the old as closely as possible. Avoid covering architectural features with new materials that do not duplicate

the appearance of the original materials. Covering wood trim with aluminum or vinyl is not permitted.

#### C. Windows and Doors

1. Retain existing window and door openings. Retain the existing configuration of panes, sash, surrounds and sills, except as necessary to restore to the original condition. Avoid making additional openings or changes in existing fenestration by enlarging or reducing window or door openings to fit new stock window sash or new stock door sizes. Avoid changing the size or configuration of windowpanes or sash. Use storm windows or protective glazing which have glazing configurations similar to the prime windows and which obscure the prime windows as little as possible.
2. Respect the building's stylistic period. If the replacement of doors or window sash is necessary, the replacement should duplicate the appearance and design and material of the original window sash or door. Avoid using inappropriate sash and door replacements. Avoid the filling-in or covering of openings with inappropriate materials such as glass block or concrete block. Avoid using modern style window units, such as horizontal sliding sash or casements, in place of double-hung sash or the substitution of units with glazing configurations not appropriate to the style of the building. Vinyl or metal clad prime window units are not permitted. Glass block basement windows are not permitted, except on elevations where they will not be visible from the street.
3. Steel bar security doors and window guards are generally not allowed. If permitted, the doors or grates shall be of the simplest design and installed so as to be as unobtrusive as possible.

#### D. Porticoes

The open porticoes on four of the five Bungalow Fire Houses shall not be enclosed or filled in as these are major design features of the buildings. Glazing that is sensitive to the design of the entries may be allowed under some circumstances.

#### E. Trim and Ornamentation

There should be no changes to the existing trim or ornamentation except as necessary to restore the building to its original condition. Replacement features shall match the original member in scale, design, color and appearance.

#### F. Additions

No additions will be permitted on the front elevations of the buildings, as this would destroy the character of the buildings. Any other addition requires the approval of the Commission. Approval shall be based upon the addition's design compatibility with the building in terms of height, roof configuration, fenestration, scale, design, color, and materials, and the degree to which it visually intrudes upon the principal elevations or is visible from the public right of way.

#### G. Signs/Exterior Lighting

The installation of any permanent exterior sign or light fixture shall require the approval of the Commission. Approval will be based on the compatibility of the proposed sign or light with the historic and architectural character of the building. Plastic internally illuminated box signs are not permitted.

#### H. Site Features

New plant materials, paving, fencing, or accessory structures shall be compatible with the historic architectural character of the building if visible from the public right of way.

#### I. Guidelines for New Construction

It is important that new construction be designed to be as sympathetic as possible with the character of the structure.

##### 1. Siting

New construction must respect the historic siting of the building. It should be accomplished so as to maintain the appearance of the building from the street as a freestanding structure.

##### 2. Scale

Overall building height and bulk, the expression of major building divisions including foundation, body and roof, and individual building components, such as overhangs and fenestration that are in close proximity to a historic building must be compatible to and sympathetic with the design of the commercial building.

##### 3. Form

The massing of the new construction must be compatible with the goal of maintaining the integrity of the building as a freestanding structure. The profiles of roofs and building elements that project and receded from the main block should express the same continuity established by the historic building if they are in close proximity to it.

##### 4. Materials

The building materials, which are visible from the public right-of-way and in close proximity to the building, should be consistent with the colors, textures, proportions, and combinations of cladding materials used on the building. The physical composition of the materials may be different from that of the historic materials, but the same appearance should be maintained.

#### J. Guidelines for Demolition

Although demolition is not encouraged and is generally not permissible, there may be instances when demolition may be acceptable if approved by the Historic Preservation Commission. The Commission shall take the following guidelines, with those found in subsection 9(h) of the ordinance, into consideration when reviewing demolition requests.

1. Condition

Demolition requests may be granted when it can be clearly demonstrated that the condition of a building or a portion thereof is such that it constitutes an immediate threat to health and safety and is beyond hope of repair.

2. Importance

Consideration will be given to whether or not the building is of historical or architectural significance or displays a quality of material and craftsmanship that does not exist in other structures in the area.

3. Location

Consideration will be given to whether or not the building contributes to the neighborhood and the general street appearance and has a positive effect on other buildings in the area.

4. Potential for Restoration

Consideration will be given to whether or not the building is beyond economically feasible repair.

5. Additions

Consideration will be given to whether or not the proposed demolition is a later addition that is not in keeping with the original design of the structure or does not contribute to its character.