



Royal Oak
**HISTORIC DISTRICT
STUDY COMMITTEE**

May 2021

Dear Royal Oak City Commission:

In November 2018, the City Commission unanimously passed a resolution requesting that the Historic District Study Committee (HDSC) study the Royal Oak Farmers Market for possible historic designation.

Our group of volunteers/appointees has studied the property, conducted research into the building and its history, and compiled our report. We, the HDSC, respectfully submit this report as our final report.

We maintain that the boundaries of the property are accurate as submitted in this final report. We used information that we gathered from the public record, the Courthouse project survey (provided by Neumann Smith), and site plans for the new City Hall project (readily available on the City website).

Again, we, the HDSC, respectfully submit this report as our final report for the Farmers Market historic designation study project.

Signed,

Ruth Cleaveland, Chairperson
and the Royal Oak Historic District Study Committee



Royal Oak Farmer's Market

316 E 11 Mile Rd, Royal Oak

Final Report

May 13, 2021

By ordinance dated December 19, 1994 the Royal Oak City Commission established the Royal Oak Historical District Study Committee in accordance with Michigan's Local Historic District's Act, Public Act 169 (1970), as amended.

Boundaries

Property Description:

T1N, R11E, Section 22 in the City of Royal Oak, Oakland County, Michigan.

Lot; 7, 8, 9, 10, including 18' x 256.60' alley to the west.

Tax Item Number

A portion of 72-5-22-104-023

Percentage of Historic and Non-Historic Resources

The percentage for historic resource is 76%. The percentage for non-historic resource is 24%.

Charge of the Study Committee

The Royal Oak Historic District Study Committee is charged with the mission of identifying, researching, and studying potential historic sites and districts within the city of Royal Oak. The research results are reported to the City and State in compliance with Michigan's local Historic Districts Act PA 169 of 1970, as amended in 1992.

James Krizan, on behalf of the Royal Oak City Commission, requested that this property be studied for possible historic designation. The Historic District Study Committee advised the City Manager of their decision and the study commenced.

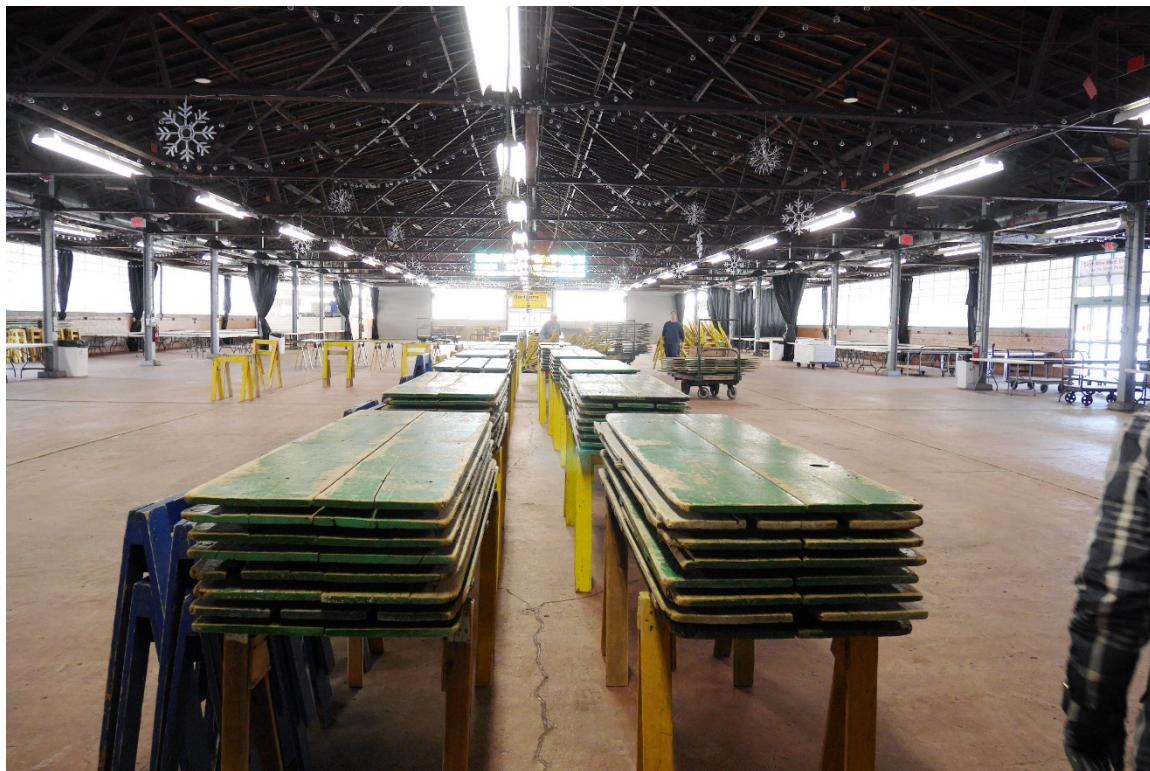
Statement of Significance

Criterion A: Associated with Significant Events.

Statement of Significance: Starting in 1927 the Farmers Market has had a reoccurring event. Every Saturday the local community supports the farmers selling their local produce at this building. The combination of people and building has established the place as a local cultural institution.

Criterion C: Design/Construction.

The original building as of 2019 has a steel frame structure with exterior walls which have held up to the function of a public space. It represents a space for continued use of public gatherings and selling of local agricultural products. The design of the Farmers Market signifies the time and the influence of local architect Albert Kahn with its industrial materials of steel, masonry, and glass.

**Resource Counts and Percentage:**

The Farmers Market is 92 years old and maintains over 50% of its integrity. The building has not moved and remains in its original location. The design intent has remained as an enclosed shed for selling farmers produce and public gatherings. The building is located within the downtown Royal Oak civic center. It is also located in close proximity to the Hilzinger historic district (shown on the location map).

Members of the Study Committee

Ruth G. Cleaveland

Chairperson, Royal Oak Historic District Study Committee

Chairperson, Royal Oak Historic District Commission

Tammis Donaldson

Registered Architect

Member, Royal Oak Historic District Study Committee

Robert R. Duchene

Vice-Chair & Treasurer, Royal Oak Historic District Study Committee

Retired teacher, United States History

Dr. James Keillor

Psychologist

Member, Royal Oak Historic District Study Committee

Chris Kraska

Architect

Member, Royal Oak Historic District Study Committee

Leslie Snow

Teacher, on sabbatical

Secretary, Royal Oak Historic District Study Committee

“Know your farmers, know your food” is a slogan that aptly describes much of the appeal of today’s Farmers Market. But today’s Farmers Market is a recent revival of an institution that had fallen out of favor over 100 years ago. The re-emergence of the economic/social phenomenon that is the Farmers Market reflects the conflict between convenience and other prevailing values underlying the purchase of food.

The USDA defines a farmer’s market as “a multi-stall market at which farmer-producers sell agricultural products directly to the general public at a central or fixed location”. And what were then known as “curb markets”, places where a farmer could sell directly to urban consumers off the back of his wagon, these never really went away. The logic of buying fresh foods that were not long off the farm was always persuasive.

But as cities have evolved, the distance between growers and consumers has increased and this problem has been resolved in different ways. The “curb market” wherein the producers brings his wares to the city and sells directly to the city dweller is one time-honored and simple answer. Thomas Jefferson recorded purchasing eggs, beef and vegetables at a Georgetown market in 1806.

But as cities grew larger, the idea of a site with a multitude of stalls often selling similar products began to seem cumbersome. The institution of the middleman who reached out to buy from the farmer relieved that farmer of the necessity of making the trip to the increasingly distant city. And the farmer’s operation had changed as well –

from a small family farm to an increasingly industrial operation. Simultaneously, there were advances in transportation, food processing and packaging that changed the face of food sales.

By the end of the 19th century, direct exchange between farmers and citizens had all but disappeared. Markets were seen as rough places from which upper class people and women shied away while the retail grocery offered a more appealing environment with tiled floors and walls, lots of space to move around in and attractive well-lit counters.

The supermarket, a 1930s term, was a different solution to the challenge of farm to table commerce. The supermarket offered lower prices and larger volume with the increasingly important convenience attractive to the busy shopper. It was impersonal but efficient. It served those food consumption habits that had changed with a shift to ready-to-serve convenience foods. This trend continues to the present day. A 2004 Newsweek article found that 47% of home prepared suppers do not involve turning on the kitchen stove.

But countervailing trends could be found in communities such as Royal Oak in the 1920s. Royal Oak was experiencing population and economic growth and its citizens wanted food shopping choices. A prosperous largely middle-class community, this newly minted city had begun a partnership with Oakland County to establish a municipal open-

air Farmers Market on the northeast corner of Fourth Street and Troy in 1925. The agreement was that the County would run the operation and split costs with Royal Oak on a 60/40 basis, under the guidance of a Market Committee consisting of members appointed by both entities. This agreement would remain nominally in effect for the next 70 years.

And so, on October 14, 1925, on that Fourth Street site leased from Mrs. Mary Kenner for one year, the first Royal Oak Farmer's Market opened. The Daily Tribune had proclaimed that "a load of celery is expected from Kalamazoo". 40 farmers participated. The Daily Tribune reported that the community market "was forced to close early yesterday when all produce was sold out". But even though the new market was universally regarded as a success, the Daily Tribune reported that the City Attorney still felt it necessary to draw up an ordinance forbidding "hucksters from arriving early and gobbling up all the produce" only to re-sell later at a higher price.

By the next summer, the Market Committee had persuaded the City and County to acquire a permanent site and erect a building on that site. Property on First Street (11 Mile Road) and S. Troy was purchased for \$46,000. The homes of Mrs. Robb and Mrs. Mortenson were demolished for the site but a Christian Scientist Church at 101 S. Troy was spared. However, the Church leaders apparently did not appreciate the change in the neighborhood as the Church had re-located to the corner of W. Lawrence and Williams by 1929. Eventually the Market site absorbed that lot as well.

The new Farmer's Market building was constructed on Troy and 11 Mile by the N.S. Starr Company at a cost of \$32,128, which included a concrete floor. A petition signed by 28 businessmen and citizens had asked that there be no erection of a permanent obstruction in the center of the building. The entire roof rested upon two rows of steel columns running lengthwise. These rows of columns were set back from the east and west walls 17 feet which left that desired clear space in the center. The roof was constructed of cement tile. Brick walls and precast stone sills to the height of five feet completed the enclosure of the building. In addition, ventilators on the roof with a continuous ventilated steel sash provided light and air. Later ceiling-mounted furnaces were later added to provide comfort during winter months. The design was meant to ease access in and out and make it possible for farmers' trucks to enter the large doors in order to facilitate set-up.

At 630 a.m. on July 1, 1927, almost 75 farmers offered produce at the official opening of the Royal Oak-Oakland County Community Market. 2000 patrons attended, enjoying the grape punch and hot dogs offered. A variety of speakers extolled the virtues of the new facility, including Mayor Storz who proclaimed, "This is now the finest and most up-to-date market in the State of Michigan".

This new market also had adopted a policy that City Manager Beauvais articulated as "only those who grow their own products will be allowed to do business on the market". Rhubarb was particularly popular, so much so that by the 1930s, enthusiastic

boosters were proclaiming Royal Oak to be the “Rhubarb Capital of the World”. In addition, requests were being received almost from the first day in the new building about rentals for revival gatherings, dances, use as a roller skating rink and weekly community meetings. By 1928, markets were taking place three times a week – even in the winter.

World War II saw the market floor being used as a drill grounds for “Home Guards”, patriotic groups, award ceremonies and Boy Scout drum-and-bugle corps. Home gardeners during this time were strongly encouraged to grow more and can as much of that produce as possible to aid in the war effort. In September of 1943, the Market sponsored a “Victory Garden Harvest Show” to encourage these efforts.

By the 1950s and 1960s, markets were being held on Tuesday, Thursday, Friday afternoon and Saturdays. As the national economy slowly began to change and more women accepted employment outside the home, these weekday markets began to lose customers.

In 1960, there was a name change to “Royal Oak Farmers Market” and Market Master Richens estimated the volume of produce business transacted per annum “must run over \$1 million”. But storm clouds appeared on the horizon as Market Master Dziurman told the Daily Tribune that “The farmers are getting out of the business. They can’t compete with the big producers – not only in this business but big industry.” An offer was made in 1971 to buy the market and transform it into an antique/craft

showplace. Although rejected, this idea later was adopted by the City.

Then Market Master Steve Sendel (1972 to 1994) was told the facility would be closed within a year if profits could not be increased enough to pay costs. Mr. Sendel responded with a plan, part of which in 1972 became the Sunday Flea Market. The addition of this Sunday event ended up paying for improvements and repairs of the roof, bathroom expansion, an exterior roofed porch on the east face, new ventilation fans, paving of the east lot, and new windows.

The stained glass windows that adorn the north and south entrances were paid for in 1983 by a gift of \$34,500 by an anonymous donor. The northern window shows a 1921 Royal Oak street scene while the stained glass window on the south end shows a harvest cornucopia.

Over the years, Royal Oak residents have fretted about losing their Farmers Market. Rumors of the Market being sold or dramatically altered by Oakland County persisted. On October 17, 1993 Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson wrote an article in the Daily Tribune declaring that:

Rumors (who knows how they start or from whence they come) have been spreading like wildfire recently that the Royal Oak Farmers Market is destined to close. Let me state as unequivocally and emphatically as I can: The Royal Oak Farmers Market is NOT – I repeat NOT – going to be closed now or at any time in the foreseeable future.

The Royal Oak Farmers Market has my unqualified support.

Even though the Uptown Apartments on the east of the Market were demolished to add parking, rumors of the Flea Market being ended and the Market being demolished persisted.

Royal Oak residents continued to fret over their Market. A 1993 Royal Oak Downtown Development Authority study of the business district had seen the Farmers Market as so important to the development of the downtown that suggestions were made about improvements to the building and grounds. One long-time observer, Mary Dyer, noted that “People don’t know how important this is to the surrounding area”. A “Royal Oak Farmers Market Association”, made up of concerned citizens, farmers and flea market vendors was created.

Adding to the anxiety, Oakland County announced that the 44th District Court, which had occupied temporary quarters on the 3rd floor of City Hall, would be relocated to a site then occupied by an Elks Lodge adjacent to the Market. Plans were made to move the Elks to a County-owned building in Royal Oak. The Court would occupy this space.

The County then proposed selling the Market and property adjacent to the Market. The City moved cautiously, studying the condition of the building and financial records. Citizens were less circumspect, speaking noisily at Commission meetings and collecting an estimated 18,000 signatures on a petition to keep the Market open.

So it came to pass that in September of 1996 the Royal Oak City Commission voted to buy out the share of the Market owned by Oakland County for \$1.3 million dollars. This followed months of dramatic negotiations in which the County had threatened to sell the market, giving Royal Oak seven days in which to exercise first refusal. Mayor Cowan announced that “Our 75th birthday present is buying the Farmers Market”.

Almost to celebrate this historic purchase, the first wedding took place at the Market in October of 1996. A Farmers Market Standing Committee was established by the City Commission in 1997. This is an advisory committee that supports the work of the Market Master. It is comprised of one city liaison, one Commissioner, five citizens, a farmer representative and a flea market representative. There is an expectation that the Market will largely support itself.

So Royal Oak continues to be a leader in this apparent snub of modern food merchandising. What has sustained this momentum through economic downturns, wars and continued urbanization? There has been consistent resistance from wholesale produce merchants to tighten regulations and mandate more thorough inspection laws. Groceries increasingly pose as Farmers Markets in offering cooked foods prepared on site, mini bakeries, mini meat and fish markets. The rise of the two-income family has made shopping time increasingly scarce. But somehow shoppers turn out early every Saturday morning to the Market at 11 Mile and Troy in Royal Oak.

Part of the answer is just the social appeal. Besides being places of trade, market spaces are meeting places where shoppers enjoy a community setting. Petitions are circulated, neighborhoods news is swapped, children run free and vendors know their clients' names. Michael Pollan, in a "New York Review of Books" essay stated that "one sociologist calculated that people have ten times as many conversations at the farmers' market that they do in the supermarket."

Besides the social aspect, there is a belief that the farmer provides a fresher and thus more wholesome product. There is a suspicion of pesticides and herbicides that have become associated with industrial agriculture. Also there is a belief that local food production and transportation contributes less to fossil fuel pollution and thus global warming. In a health-conscious age, "Natural" products and "Organic" produce are increasingly the sort one wishes to serve one's family. The Farmers Market provides an outlet for that family value.

And the farmer apparently finds the market format satisfying as well. In the late 1970s, California peach farmers experienced an enormous peach harvest that the farmers could not unload in a timely fashion. Strict food safety laws interfered with direct sales to consumers. In frustration at the laws regarding packaging and selling of produce, farmers began to dump excess peaches on the state capitol lawn. Jerry Brown, the governor of California at the time, allowed an exemption for farmers to sell produce at farmers' markets. A time-honored tradition became an economic phenomenon.

Continued construction on the new Civic Plaza has eliminated much of the parking lots that had been purchased for customers of the Market. Addition of valet parking and leasing of adjacent lots are seen as remedies for the loss of those parking lots. Questions are raised about air conditioning and more creative uses of the space.

As of 2014, there were 8,268 Farmers Markets in the U.S. A number of factors explain this phenomenon. But beyond those, when one enters Royal Oak's Farmers Market, one is essentially transported back to 1925. The shed is essentially the same, sales are done largely in cash and buyers are conducting face-to-face interactions with vendors. The appeal of the Farmers Market is a hometown feel, something that has been lost at the chain grocery megastore.

One thing is eminently clear. The citizens of Royal Oak love their Market and want it to remain in the new cityscape that is taking shape. Like citizens around the country, there remains in this city an embrace of the values of the farmers who rise early in the morning to sell their wares to people with very different lives. The fact that many regard their produce as superior to that available in more conventional outlets keeps families much involved in how this Market's future will unfold. How this traditional marketplace will meld into the new Royal Oak remains to be seen.

Location of the Proposed District (Royal Oak Farmer's Market)

316 E Eleven Mile Farmers Market

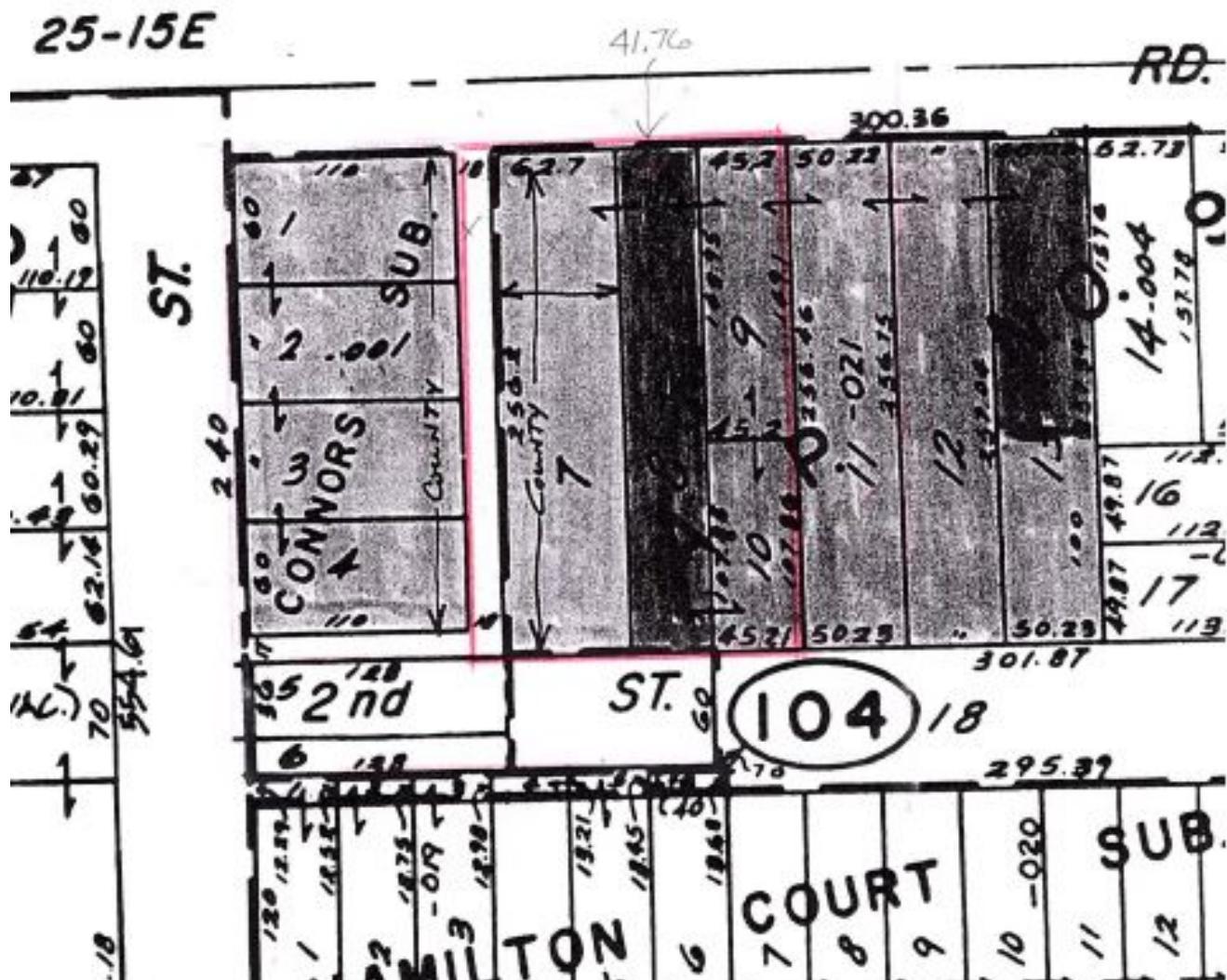


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Boundary of the Proposed District

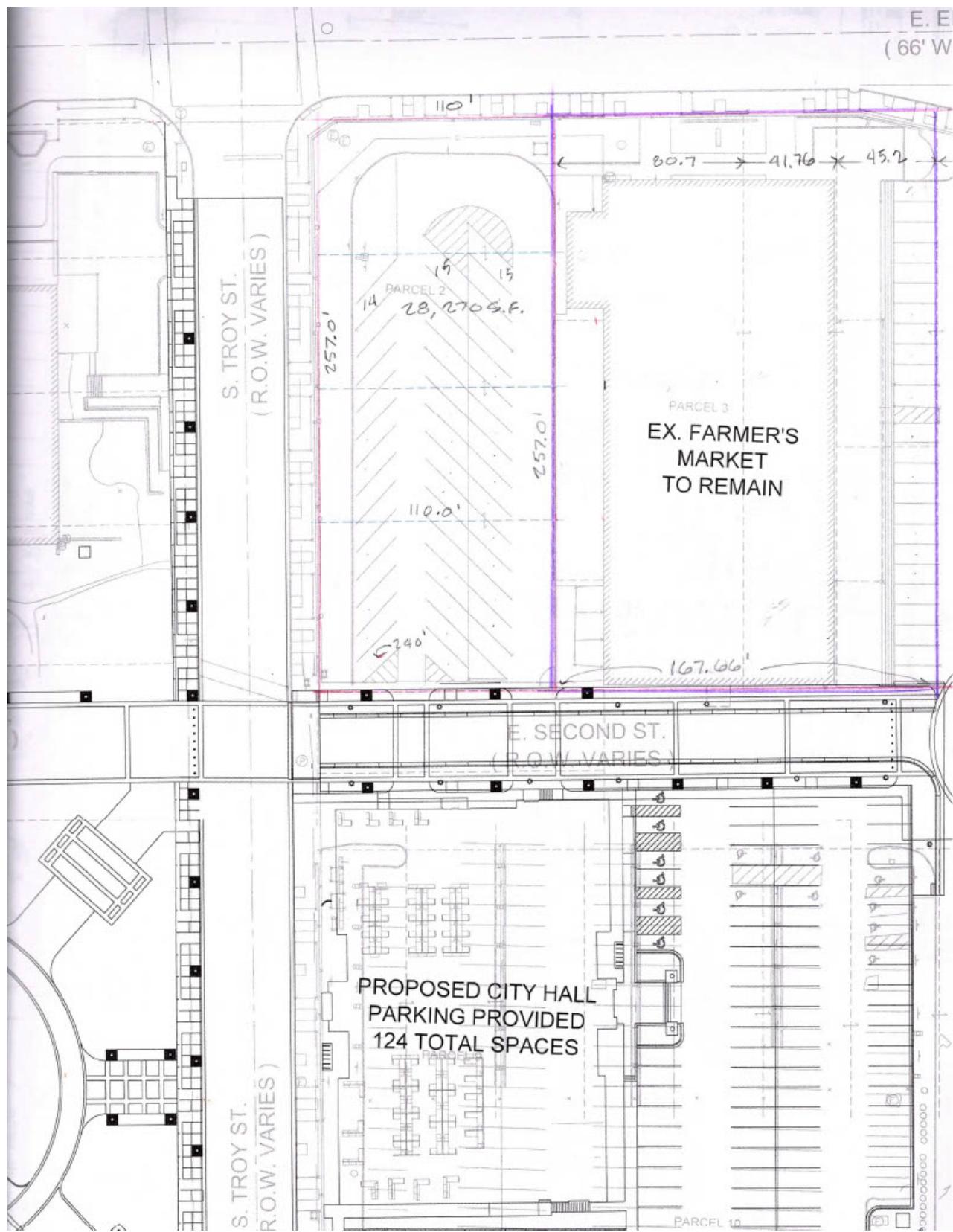
T1N, R11E, Section 22 in the City of Royal Oak, Oakland County, Michigan.
Lot; 7, 8, 9, 10, including 18' x 256.60' alley to the west.



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Parcel 3 on the Royal Oak City Hall Concept Plan by NF Engineers. October 16. 2017.



Boundary Justification

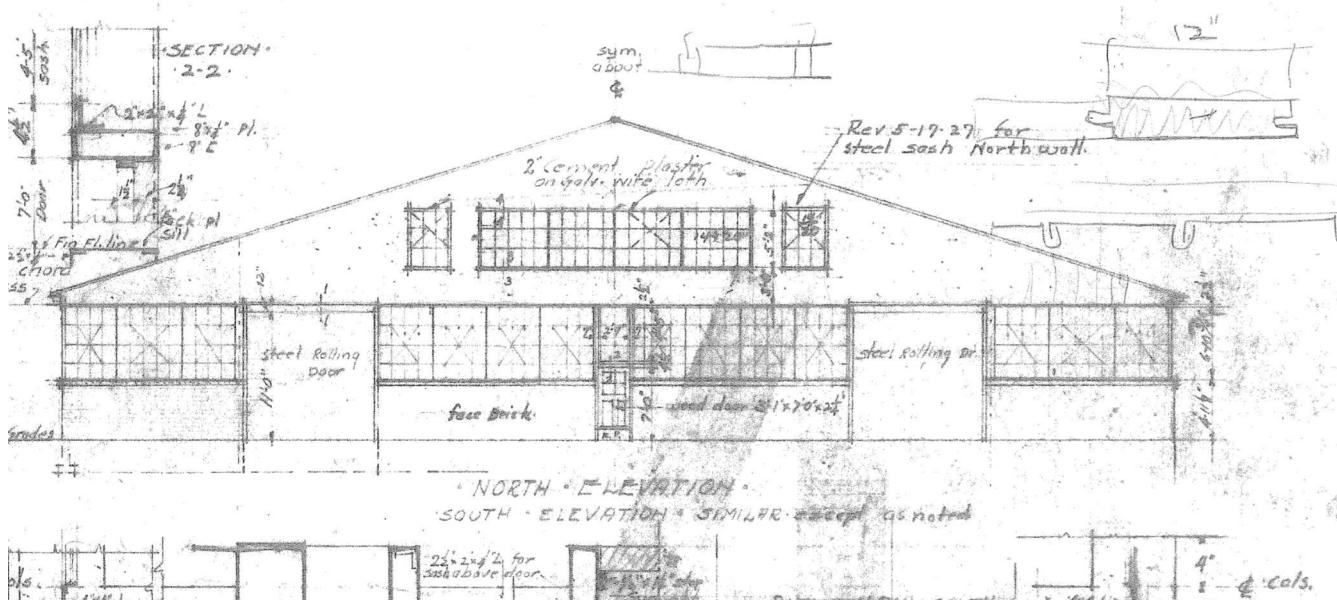
The Royal Oak Farmers Market is located in the civic area of the City of Royal Oak. To the west of the Farmers Market is the Royal Oak Public Library. To the east of the Market is the new Police Station. To the south is the new City Hall. To the southeast is the Court House. The northern boundary of the Farmers Market is East Eleven Mile Road. The western boundary is City parking bounded by South Troy Street. The eastern boundary is the City parking lot. The southern boundary is East Second Street. The proposed district is a single resource property.

Architectural Description

In 1926 parcels of land at the corner of East 11 Mile Road and Troy Street were purchased by the county and city for the proposed Farmers Market building.

January of 1927 the City of Royal Oak employee R.J. Whitney & C.R Hauke of the city engineering department designed and detailed the Farmers Market. R.J. Whitney was the City Manager at the city of Royal Oak at that time. Sealed proposals were submitted on March 11, 1927. N.A. Starr Company was the awarded bidder. Opening day was scheduled for July 1, 1927. The N.A. Starr Company was located in the Royal Oak Savings Bank building in Royal Oak, MI. The Starr family in Royal Oak are some of the founding members of the area and the Orson Starr house is a historical district. The Almon Starr house is not historically designated it is on the list of possibilities with the HDSC.

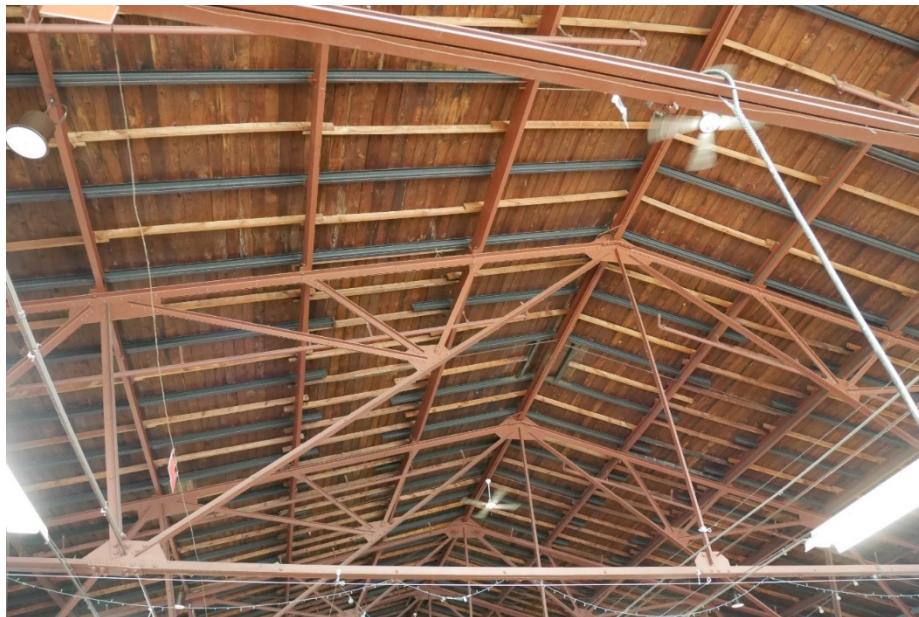
The 1927 drawing (attached) of the building shows a rectangular floor plan with a gable roof, ribbon windows, and a masonry base. The construction of the 225.33' x 104' building is based on interior steel frame of 14 bays at 16'-0" on center. The steel trussed gable roof is supported by steel "H" columns. In essence the frame allows for an exterior curtain wall with steel sash windows and a brick base. This system allows for an open floor plan for vendors. A steel channel purlin system spans the steel roof trusses and above that a wood deck that is both the buildings ceiling and roof deck. The wood ceiling gives a sense of warmth to the interior building as well as providing some acoustical values. The drawings show (4) agricultural type ventilators on the roof. These ventilators no longer remain, however there is evidence of them from the interior wood ceiling. The drawings also show continuous skylights in the gable roof. As per letter (March 14, 1927) to the city from N.A. Starr Co. the skylights were omitted to save cost. At each gable end there are rolling doors for vehicles to enter with products. At each eave end there are doors for the public to enter.



The steel column with steel roof truss, brick curtain wall, steel sash window was the same type of construction happening down the street on Woodward Avenue in Highland Park at Albert Kahn's designed Ford Motor Assembly plant. Albert Kahn's architecture could very well have influenced the design of the Royal Oak Farmers market building. An interior of the Ford assembly plant photo (circa 1913) and a current interior photo of the Farmers Market are very similar. The roof pitch, wood ceiling on steel channel purlins on steel roof truss and the skylights match. The Royal Oak Farmers Market skylights were deleted from the plan to save costs.



Ford Motor Company-Highland Assembly plant circa 1913.



Royal Oak Farmer Market roof truss (2019). Note the skylights were omitted for budget reasons.

As buildings tend to do, the Royal Oak Farmers Market evolved. It has remained a farmer's market from its inception to today. However, the building materials change while still keeping the original intent of the design. The steel sash windows grew to be problematic as the glass was often broken and there was very little energy value to them. In 1991 the steel sash windows were replaced with a translucent fiberglass pane. The size of the ribbon window has not changed, and the material replicates the glazing pattern.



A busy Saturday in 1940



A busy Saturday 2019.

The roof has been through a couple of generations, the current roof is an asphalt shingle roof. To extend the popular marketplace, covered porches were added to the eave sides of the building. The first rendition was in the early 2000's designed by Oakland County (O.C.) facilities department. In 2005 the architectural firm Neumann Smith & Associates was hired to make corrections and improvements. They upgraded the building from a market use group to a public assembly use group by adding a fire protection system as well as improving the insulation at the roof (outboard insulation) and improvements to the HVAC system. The O.C. facility designed covered porches were removed and

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Neumann Smith designed new open porches at the eave sides with new entry towers.



West Side

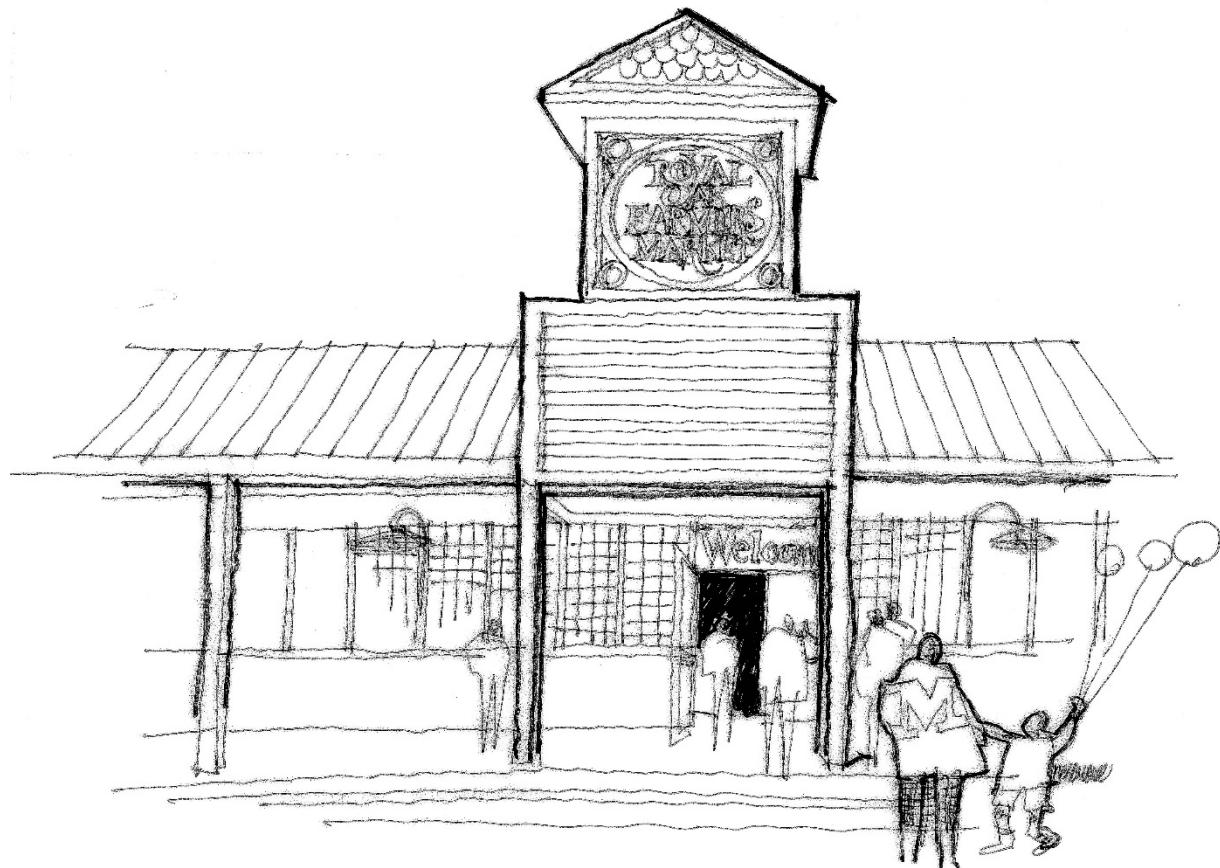


East Side

From Neumann Smith & Associates letter to the city commission;

“The Design Concept:

As architects with a history in town we are very aware of the interest the community takes in such projects, so we worked closely with the Farmers Market Committee, with input from the vendors, and, in keeping with their desires, worked with a concept of Agri-Industrial design, which we felt would fit the character of the Farmers Market, meet the community's needs, and yet, introduce a bright new look to the market building in keeping with the expanding uses and the proposed new customers who might be introduced to Royal Oak, through attendance at an event at the market. We then took this information and together we put together a program and design that met the budget requirements.”



Ken Nuemann's concept sketch

The proposed Royal Oak Farmers Market historical district has retained its integrity with its setting, materials, feeling, and association. It has remained in operation as designed since it was built in 1927. Not only does the market provide fresh and local food, it is also a social hub for the community.



A shopper makes a point with Gov. Milliken this morning at Farmer's Market in Royal Oak. In background are County Executive Daniel Murphy (center) and John E. (Jack) Olsen, GOP candidate for Congress in the 18th District. (Tribune Photo)

Saturday, October 6, 1976

DAILY TRIBUNE - Page 1.

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| | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Original footprint: | 23,435 square feet. |
| Additions: | 630 square feet |
| East covered porch addition: | 2,464 square feet |
| West covered porch addition: | 2,464 square feet |
| Addition subtotal: | 5,558 square feet |
| Ratio: | 24% altered, 76% original |

The proposed Royal Oak Farmers Market is a contributing single district historic resource.

Resources:

Royal Oak Images, by the Roundtable of Royal Oak Historical Organizations

Royal Oak Historical Society

Architectural Firm: Neumann Smith & Associates. Provided electronic copies of the original building drawings by the city engineering department as well as the drawings as the building evolved to its current condition.

City of Royal Oak; city documents of the 1927 bidding process

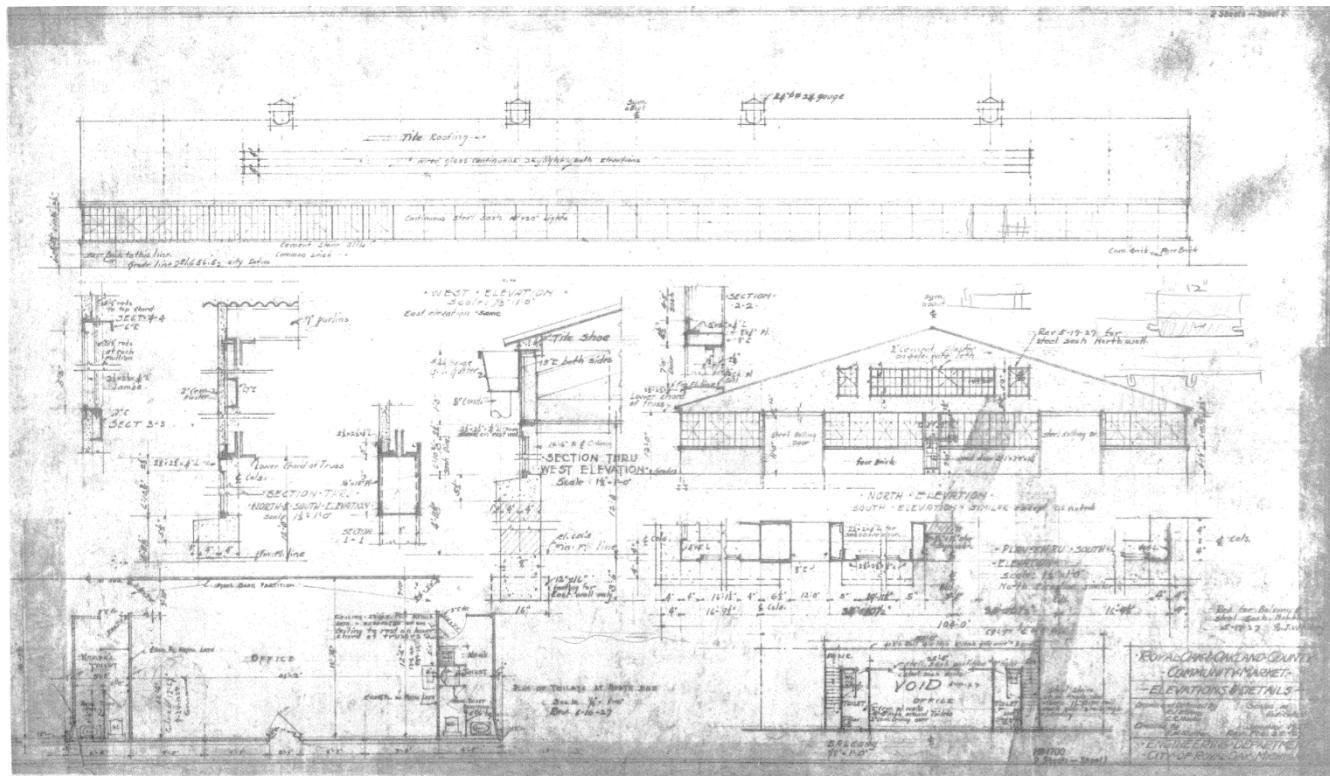
Special thanks to John and Rosalie Wendland for their remarkably detailed Farmers Market scrap book.

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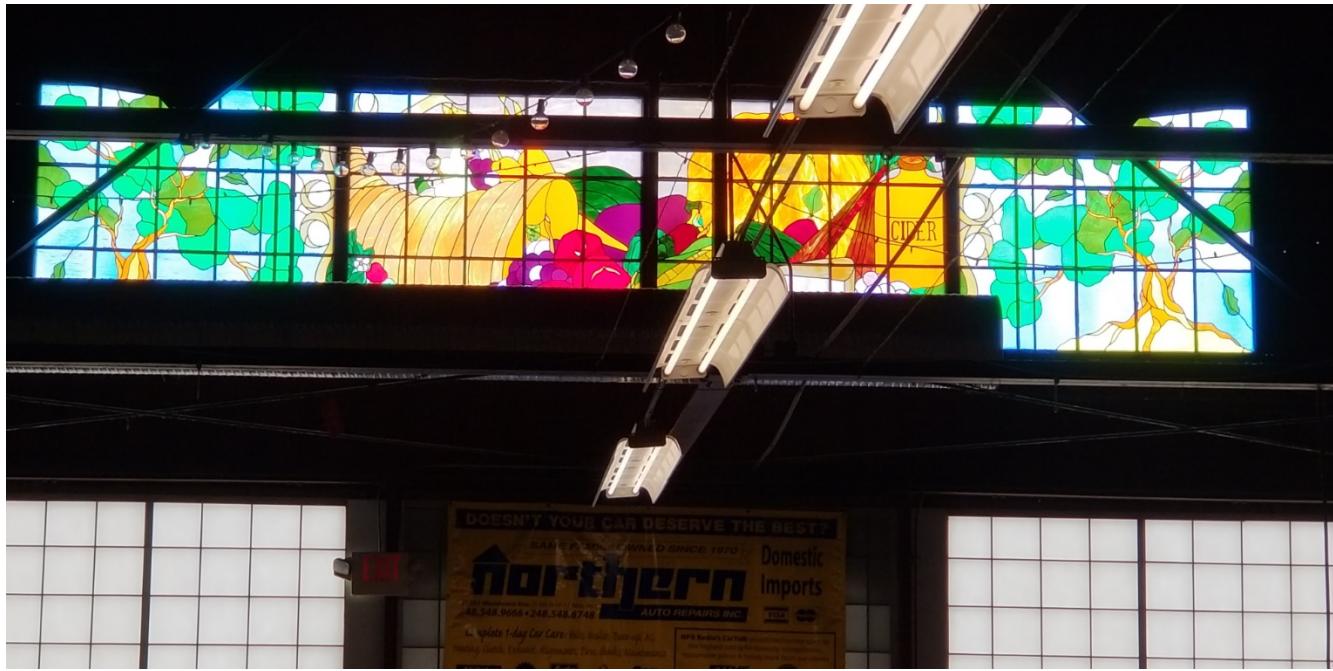
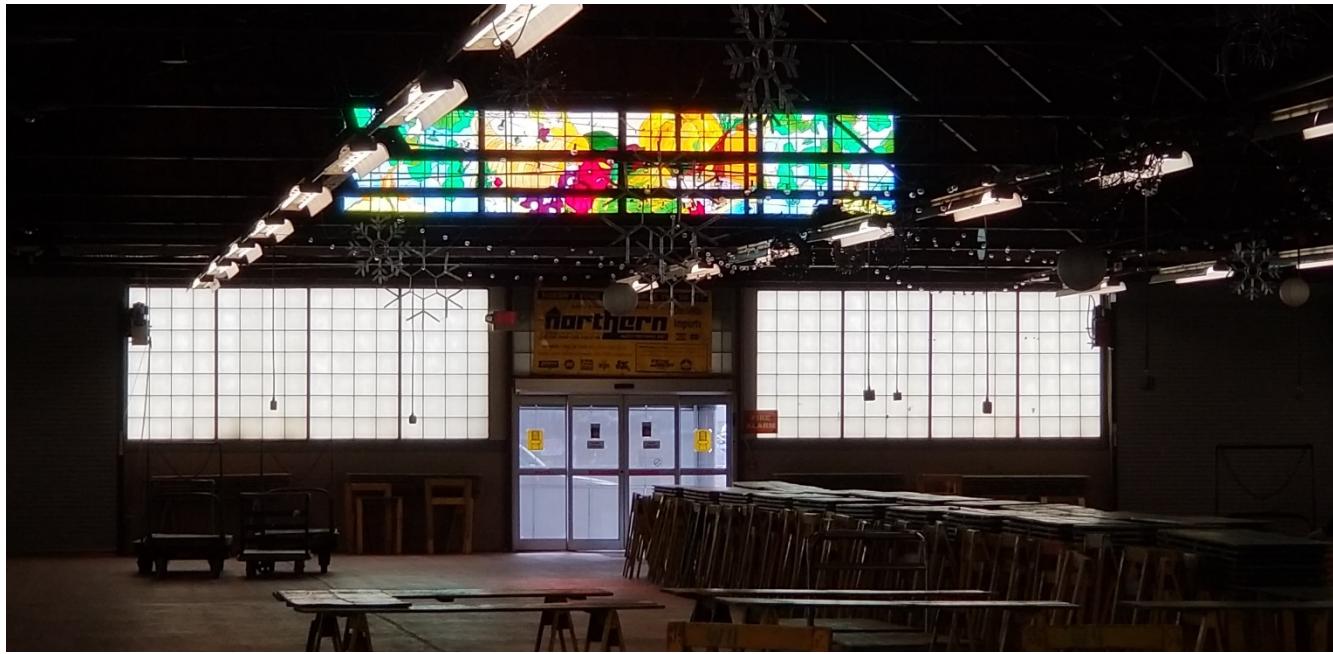
Attachment A:

Complete architectural drawing, an enlarged portion of which is seen on page 21



Attachment B:

South stained glass window



North stained glass window



Attachment C:

Original curb side market

