

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: Dunbar Recreation Center

Other names/site number: HK-0798

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

2. Location

Street & number: 300 Kessell Street

City or town: Weirton

State: West Virginia

County: Hancock

Not For Publication: ☐Vicinity: ☐**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

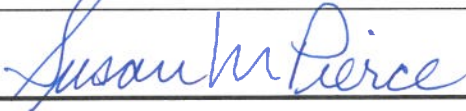
I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X 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 X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

 X A B C D

	Susan M Pierce	6/8/2021
Signature of certifying official/Title: Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer		Date
West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office		
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government		

In my opinion, the property <u> </u> meets <u> </u> 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

- Private: ☒
Public – Local ☐
Public – State ☐
Public – Federal ☐

Category of Property

- Building(s) ☒
District ☐
Site ☐
Structure ☐
Object ☐

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u> </u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u> </u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

EDUCATION/ education-related
SOCIAL/meeting hall
RECREATION AND CULTURE/auditorium
RECREATION AND CULTURE/sports facility

Current Functions

SOCIAL/meeting hall
RECREATION AND CULTURE/museum

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

OTHER: Concrete Block Building

Materials:

Principal exterior materials of the property: Foundation: Concrete Block; Walls: Concrete Block, Brick, Wood; Roof: Asphalt Shingles

Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

The Dunbar Recreation Center is situated on a slight hill on the corner of Weir Avenue and Kessel Streets in Weirton, WV. The west façade faces a precipice that overlooks the mill area of Weirton, whose landscape is rapidly changing as the mill is dismantled. Located in a semi-urban area, the building is one block north of the 1939 Dunbar High School and across Weir Avenue from the Mt. Olive Baptist Church. The one-story, front-gabled concrete block meeting hall was built in 1944 in a non-descript style and possesses few decorative elements beyond brick window surrounds and quoins. The Dunbar Recreation Center has a high-pitched roof and is banked with ground level entrances on both street-facing facades. Taupe-colored wooden siding is found in the gable ends, and the remainder of the building is concrete block, also painted taupe. Apart from a door that has been added to the southern end of the west-facing elevation, a repair to the same concrete block wall following an automobile accident and the installation of a dropped ceiling in the auditorium, the Dunbar Recreation Center maintains structural integrity via retention of original materials, design, and workmanship. Its interior, exterior, and fenestration are largely unchanged. The Center also maintains integrity of feeling and association with the community by continuing operation as a meeting hall and community gathering place for celebrations, such as wedding receptions, baby showers, and graduation parties.

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Narrative Description

The Dunbar Recreation Center was constructed sometime between July and December 1944 and is a front-gabled masonry concrete block building of non-descript style. It is situated on a slight hill near the corner of Weir Avenue and Kessel Street. The masonry building has a high roof pitch with cornice returns and the main elevation's front gable is covered with horizontal wood siding, painted taupe. The remainder of the building is concrete block, also painted taupe, with brick quoins. The windows all have a brick soldier and header course lintels with brick rowlock sills. A brick rowlock course is also found on all facades, marking the boundary between the main floor and basement level. The roof itself is covered in brown asphalt shingles.

The immediate setting is a mixture of residential, educational and religious buildings with scattered grass-covered lots. Kessel Street climbs upward with a large, tree-covered hill in the background. To the north, across Kessel Street, and east are vacant, grass-covered lots with low shrubbery. A few masonry houses and outbuildings are found further down the block. A playground with a large conifer comprises the parcel to the south and the old Dunbar High School is just beyond. The large masonry church, found to the west across Weir Avenue, blocks the view of the sweeping industrial area at the bottom of the hill. Landscaping is simple, with small decorative plantings found by the front entrance and small bushes evenly spaced along the west façade.

Exterior

The primary façade faces north and is symmetrical (Photo 1). A large, square, louvred vent is at the center of the siding-covered gable. The main entrance is protected by a small hipped projecting roof, which begins a little over halfway down the façade, just under the siding that covers the gable. This roof is covered with brown asphalt shingles that match what is used on the structure's roof and is held up by conservatively decorative brackets. On the fascia of this small roof is a white sign with scalloped corners that says "Dunbar Center" in black Times New Roman-style letters. Under the small roof are centered double metal doors, painted dark brown. To the left of the doors is a wall-bound mailbox, and to the right is a glass-fronted, wall-mounted coming-events case. Two one-over-one aluminum windows also appear in the front façade and are symmetrically situated on either side of the main entrance doors, with which they are horizontally aligned. In front of the left-hand window, a more recently added solid, white-plastic fence with a gate covers the lower portion of the window. To the right of this window is also the electrical meter, from which a pipe extends upward, carrying electrical lines to a junction area secured to the gable. At a 45-degree angle to the front façade is a sign, framed in weathered, taupe metal on which events are announced using interchangeable letters that are protected by plexiglass. Above the events, the words "Dunbar Center" appear in faded pinkish letters. On approaching the building from Kessel Street, there is a concrete pad and three concrete steps with a metal handrailing that lead to the metal double doors in front.

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The building's west elevation (Photo 2) faces Weir Avenue and Mt. Olive Baptist Church, which is directly across the street. The west elevation has four paired, one-over-one aluminum windows. These provide interior light to the main auditorium and—with the double window to the far right—to the stairwell that leads to the basement activity area. Also on the building's west elevation is an exterior red brick chimney, which is positioned 1/3 of the way across the elevation from left to right. A brick pilaster with decorative brick patterning like the quoins is positioned about 2/3 of the way across the elevation from left to right. To the left of this red-brick chimney is a metal coal chute door (Photo 3) on which is embossed the words "The Cove Valley Lumber Company / Holliday's Cove, WVA".¹ There are two metal man doors also on this elevation; one is between the coal chute door and the red-brick chimney and the other is to the far right, just around the corner from the rear elevation. This door leads into the basement activity area.

The building's asymmetrical rear elevation (Photo 4) includes two one-over-one aluminum windows and two small sliding aluminum windows. The two vertically-sliding windows are found on either side of the exterior red-brick chimney, located on the left side of the façade. The smaller horizontally-sliding windows are found evenly spaced on the right side of the façade. Again, above each window, are brick soldier course lintels and below are brick rowlock sills where the concrete blocks stop. The brickwork on the rear windows though is in a slightly different configuration with more header and stretcher bricks being used to make the surround. Centered on the façade near the ground is more decorative brickwork surrounding an opening that had once been a window, which was infilled when the group shower was installed in the 1950s. The rear has a gable-on-hip roof, covered by asphalt shingles.

The building's east elevation (Photo 5) is largely covered by overgrown foliage, but reveals a similar window patterning to the west elevation, with four paired one-over-one aluminum windows along the side, one set of which is entirely covered by bushes and ivy-like growth and the second set of which is only partially covered. The paired windows that provide illumination for the auditorium are in the front and are uncovered and free. The second paired window set from the right has a window air conditioner in the righthand lower window. Each set of paired windows is ornamented by brick soldier course lintels and brick rowlock sills. Due to the steeply pitched roof and the fact that the building is banked into the hill, the east elevation is more roof than wall.

Interior

The interior of the building includes a central auditorium that is reached by a set of centrally located double metal doors. Inside the auditorium is vacant space for tables and/or sporting events (Photos 6, 7, 8, and 9). An original elevated stage is at the south end of the room (Photo 6 and 7). It is this very stage that welcomed so many Lincoln-Douglass Banquet speakers, graduation ceremonies, and lectures by Dr. Anthony J. Major. The walls in this room are painted

¹ Weirton was not incorporated as a city until July 1, 1947 so Holliday's Cove was, in 1944, still an independent, incorporated town in its own right.

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cinder block with painted brick window surrounds, and the floors are covered with linoleum. Originally, the ceiling was vaulted, creating a sense of expansiveness. However, because of concerns related to the cost of heating the building, a drop ceiling was installed in the early 1970s in order to assist with insulation. Fortunately, the original vaulted ceiling and workmanship remains intact above the drop ceiling. In this main auditorium, there are two floor drains, and on the room's periphery there are the windows visible from outside; each has a wooden sill. On the walls are images of famous African American literary and political figures, including Frederick Douglass and Dr. Anthony J. Major, along with laminated articles about African American community pillars who worked at Weirton Steel and also gave back to their community. Near the floor on the right-hand side are two masonry cubes that hold grating for the ventilation/heating system (Photo 9).

When facing the stage, a restroom is located to the left (Photo 6). This restroom has two stalls, a Formica top with two sink bowls, linoleum floors, one closet door, and one door to the adjacent room (Photos 10, 11, and 12). A painted brick wall separates this restroom from the stage and auditorium area (Photo 12).

The room adjacent to the restroom and directly behind the stage is what is now used as a computer room (Photos 13 and 14). The external walls are painted cinder block, while the walls that separate it from the stage and the adjacent restroom are painted brick. The concrete floors are covered in low-pile carpet. Green chalkboards are mounted on both the westward wall that separates this room from the adjacent stairwell (Photo 13) and the eastward wall that separates this room from the adjacent restroom (Photo 14). The northward brick wall, which is shared with the stage, has a door that leads onto the stage and auditorium on the eastern side, and part of the HVAC system and breaker boxes are situated at the center of this wall. A door on the westward wall opens onto the stairwell that leads to the basement. Concrete steps with a painted metal pipe railing lead to the basement activity area (Photos 15 and 16). A window in the westward wall illuminates this stairwell.

The basement activity area has a painted concrete floor and cinder block walls. Visible in the basement ceiling are multiple steel beams reinforcing the ground-level floors (Photos 17 and 18). On the westward wall, at the bottom of the stairwell, is a door that leads outside to the elevation that looks onto Weir Avenue (Photo 17). The stairs are supported by brick walls that surround a closet space beneath the stairs. This is accessible by a wooden door. On the central, eastern-oriented wall, which is covered with paneling, is the door to a restroom in which there is a larger plastic laundry sink and a single metal stall with a toilet (Photo 19). Just outside this restroom is a group shower, partially enclosed by a masonry wall and wooden baluster spindles. No longer in use and its entrance now covered by a tarp, this shower was previously used by Dunbar High sports teams before 1955 and by Weir High sports teams in 1956.

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Integrity

The Dunbar Recreation Center retains historic integrity with little changing since its completion in 1944. The setting is still semi-rural and is not marked by modern intrusions. While some minor modifications have occurred to the fenestration, the Dunbar Recreation Center maintains structural integrity via retention of original materials, design and workmanship. Only superficial changes have occurred to the interior; for example, the dropped ceiling simply covers the intact original vaulted ceiling above. The Dunbar Recreation Center also retains integrity of feeling and association through its continued use as a community meeting space. The most important elements of these aspects of integrity are preserved and includes the stage and openness of the main room which allows for a variety of programs to this day.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

- ☒ 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

- ☐ 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

Ethnic Heritage: Black
Social History

Period of Significance

1944-1970

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The Dunbar Recreation Center (DRC) is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level under *Criterion A: Ethnic Heritage (Black)* and *Criterion A: Social History* for its significant contribution to Weirton's African American history. The land parcel on which the current DRC building stands was conveyed to Dunbar High School Principal Dr. Anthony J. Major on June 5, 1944, and the completed DRC building was officially opened just over six months later, on December 21, 1944. The DRC's Period of Significance spans from 1944 to 1970 when it acted as a vital, tri-state-serving community hub. Specifically, from the time of its 1944 opening until 1970, when funding became increasingly difficult to secure and usage significantly declined. In this building, both African American adults and youth from eastern Ohio, western Pennsylvania, and West Virginia's northern panhandle were able to congregate and celebrate significant community events and achievements. The Dunbar Recreation Center—apart from the three-story Dunbar High School, built in 1939 and one block away from the DRC, and Mt. Olive Baptist Church, which is directly across Weir Avenue from the DRC—is the only building significant to Weirton's African American community still in existence. The DRC became, following its official opening in December 1944, a vibrant community meeting place, an auditorium, a banquet hall, a location for graduation ceremonies, and a gymnasium for just over a quarter of a century.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Development of the City of Weirton

The city of Weirton began as an unincorporated company town in 1909, when Ernest T. Weir brought the Phillips Sheet and Tin Plate Company from Clarksburg, West Virginia, to the extreme north end of the agrarian community of Holliday's Cove. Prior to Weir's arrival, Holliday's Cove was largely agricultural, with its inhabitants raising livestock, tending orchards, and operating grist mills. By 1912, the mill was developing so rapidly that Holliday's Cove feared a loss of its distinct identity and incorporated in order to secure its boundaries. It thereby became distinct from the growing company town to the north. Because of the jobs offered by the rapidly developing mill, more than 46 ethnicities flocked to the company town of Weirton (Jones, *History*). And by 1913, with the Great Migration in its incipient stages, African Americans began moving to the company town from southern and eastern states in search of mill jobs. Weir Avenue was one of the streets on which African American families settled, and it was soon dubbed "Calico Hill" due to the numerous ethnicities residing there. Many African American families specifically established homes in the area between Howard and Baker Streets, blocks of which no longer exist in present-day Weirton, as they were located on land eventually absorbed by the mill.

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Weirton School System

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Just after the American Revolution, one-room schoolhouses developed in the area now known as Weirton. By 1808, Liberty School was begun in a log cabin, which was situated along Cove Road in the present-day area of Weirton Heights. Other one-room schools developed in various locations around Hancock County, including Swearingen Hill, Lick Run, and Zalia, an area between present-day Weirton and New Cumberland, to the north of Weirton. However, by 1839, Holliday's Cove Academy, a subscription school, was established, and it became Holliday's Cove School when West Virginia became an independent state in 1863 (Jones, *Images*). In 1902, Cove School, as it came to be called, was rebuilt as a two-story wooden structure, but it was destroyed by fire just before Christmas in 1909, just a few months after Ernest T. Weir's arrival in Holliday's Cove. Thereafter, a school was started at the bottom of Avenue C, in the company town of Weirton. Weir High, originally known as Central High School, was established in 1916. And by 1917, Butler School was constructed on the corner of Virginia Avenue and Orchard Street, near the mill.

Due to segregation, separate schools for African American children were soon established. In the late autumn of 1917, on the corner of Kessel Street and Weir Avenue—the current location of the Dunbar Recreation Center—a grade school for African American children was established, with the first teacher listed as Miss Catherine Cozzens. It served 43 pupils that first year, and that number grew to 50 by 1919. According to both the October 1919 and December 1923 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for Weirton, this was a frame building, fitted with electric lights and heated by stove. This elementary school took its name from the African American poet Paul Lawrence Dunbar, making it the very first Dunbar School in Weirton, West Virginia. By 1926, the school took on even more pupils, and a new principal, J.W.C. Gay, took over. However, this school only provided education up through the eighth grade, and a high school was still needed to educate African American children in grades 9-12. Until 1932, African American students were transported—often by streetcar—to either Wheeling or Steubenville. When Steubenville and Wheeling cited overcrowding of their own Black schools and refused continued enrollment to Weirton's African American students, Dr. Anthony J. Major spearheaded a movement to bring a high school for Black students to Weirton. After at least three location moves, the three-story Dunbar High School was built on Weir Avenue—one block away from the current Dunbar Recreation Center property—as part of a 1939 WPA Project that also saw the construction of the Marland Heights School and Liberty School, both for elementary grades. Dr. Anthony J. Major became Dunbar High School's first principal and the first African American high school principal in West Virginia to hold a doctorate. In 1955, when desegregation was implemented in Weirton, both black and white children attended Weir High, while Dunbar High School was used as a site for special education.

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The land parcel located at 300 Kessel Street—the former site of Weirton's very first Dunbar School—was conveyed on June 5, 1944 to Dunbar High School principal Dr. Anthony J. Major by nearby homeowners and Dunbar Parent-Teachers Association members Alex and Lula

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Walker. The deed for the land parcel (Figure 6) specifically indicates that Major, holding the property in trust for the Dunbar Parent-Teachers Association, could not mortgage, sell, or convey the premises “except by authority granted him by resolution duly passed by a majority of the members of the said Dunbar Parent-Teachers Association of Weirton, Hancock County, WV” (Hancock County). Following the land conveyance, Major collaborated with the Weirton Steel Corporation’s Weirton Improvement Company to build the steel-beamed, masonry building. The Dunbar Center was dedicated and officially opened to the public a little over six months later, on December 21, 1944. It initially became the Dunbar Parent-Teacher Association headquarters. However, for the next quarter century, the Dunbar Recreation Center (DRC), as it came to be known, became a central gathering place and cultural hub and, consequently, grew to have special historical significance to the African American community in Weirton and the larger tristate area. Despite its lack of a distinct architectural style, the DRC helped to define the African American community’s sense of identity even more than the nearby Art Moderne-style Dunbar High School, as its outreach was significantly broader; it was the site of many speeches, dinners, and community meetings, and all age-groups within the tristate area came to the DRC for these events.

During the Dunbar Recreation Center’s Period of Significance—between 1944 and 1970—it was an auditorium, ballroom, theatre, banquet hall, general assembly space, and gymnasium for the nearby Dunbar High School, which did not have a designated indoor sports area until 1954, fifteen years after its original construction. Moreover, the DRC served as a temporary gym for students of Weir High, which had been exclusively white before desegregation. In early 1956, both Weir High practice sessions and competition games took place there (“Meeting on Gym Issue”).

From 1944 to 1970, the Dunbar Recreation Center not only served as the Dunbar PTA headquarters, it also hosted numerous events that contributed to the advancement of Weirton’s African American community, including PTA-sponsored Lincoln-Douglass Banquets, Negro Americanism rallies, United Negro College Fund Drives, sports banquets, commencement exercises, and other significant community celebrations.

Significance as a Meeting Hall

Among the earliest events that took place at the Dunbar Recreation Center following its conveyance to Dr. Major were the annual, Dunbar-PTA-organized Lincoln-Douglass Banquets. At the February 14, 1947 banquet, Rev. Donald G. Jacobs, pastor of Steubenville’s Quinn A.M.E. Church, paid homage to both President Lincoln and Frederick Douglass and urged the 150 people in his audience to continue their education, indicating that “freedom is an individual responsibility” and that “freedom comes through education” (“Dunbar PTA Honors”). Rev. Francis M. Strong, pastor at nearby Mount Olive Baptist Church on Weir Avenue, gave the invocation.

Many vital African American organizations held their major events at the Dunbar Recreation Center, including the Weirton Progressive Federal Credit Union (WPFCU), the first credit union

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in Hancock County. In January 1948, WPFCU celebrated their seventh anniversary at the Dunbar Recreation Center in conjunction with the Weirton Cooperative Association, which was in its second year (Figures 7-8). Since its inception seven years before, WPFCU had loaned more than \$100,000 to members in order to facilitate homeownership, and consequently, Weirton had the largest percentage of Black homeowners in the tri-state area. The event's principal speakers were Dr. Anthony J. Major and Maurice Moss, Executive Secretary of the Pittsburgh Urban League. During his speech, Moss urged "racial cooperation and pooling of finances" in order to achieve community improvement ("Seventh Anniversary").

Also in 1948, the United Negro College Fund held a money-raising campaign, co-chaired by Dr. Anthony J. Major and Thomas E. Millsop, Weirton's first mayor (Figure 9). At the Dunbar Center, Dr. Major presided over the meeting and, for the fourth year in a row, succeeded in securing more than the original goal of \$5,000, returning with a total of \$6,800. ("Negro College Fund Drive"). Unfortunately, just one year later, in 1949, Dr. Anthony J. Major—who had been such a driving force in Weirton, was the Dunbar PTA trustee, and was an active member in more than 18 service organizations, including the West Virginia Human Relations Commission and the Weirton Planning Commission—passed away suddenly from a cerebral hemorrhage, prematurely ending his vibrant and productive career.

Following Major's death, the Dunbar PTA continued his legacy of education and community-building by keeping the Dunbar Recreation Center active. On July 2, 1950, the Weirton Goodwill Civic Club sponsored a Negro Americanism rally at the Dunbar Recreation Center (Figure 10). The event featured speaker Malvin Russell Goode (1908-1995), who became a prominent figure in American history. Goode started in the circulation department at the *Pittsburgh Courier* in 1948 and, by 1962, was the first African American network news correspondent, reporting from the UN on the Cuban Missile Crisis for ABC News. The first black member of the Radio and Television News Directors Association, Goode was inducted into the National Association of Black Journalists' Hall of Fame in 1990. Goode's 1950 speech at the Dunbar Recreation Center was titled "America's Road Tomorrow," in which he discussed the perils presented by socialism ("Negro Americanism Rally").

Still another significant Dunbar Recreation Center orator was Dr. Milton S. J. Wright (1903-1972), who delivered the keynote speech at the February 15, 1951 Lincoln-Douglass Banquet, organized by the Dunbar PTA. Wright received his PhD in economics from the University of Heidelberg in 1932, met with Adolf Hitler the same year, and recounted this tense meeting in an article that appeared in the June 1950 issue of *Ebony*. Less than a year after the article appeared, Wright delivered his speech, "Powers of Love, Light, and Life" at the Dunbar Center to nearly 200 people from the tri-state area ("200 Attend").

Three months later, in May 1951, the Secret Sisters, an organization begun in November 1950 and comprised of 82 of Weirton's leading Black women, held a fund drive at the Dunbar Recreation Center. The drive's goal was to fully furnish a semi-private room at the Weirton General Hospital. At the time of the drive, the Secret Sisters had achieved pledges amounting to more than \$300 of the \$750 goal and were confident they would more than achieve their target

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amount by November. As part of the event, the Secret Sisters Choir, comprised of 16 voices, also sang in celebration of their progress ("Secret Sisters").

Dunbar High School commencement exercises were also regularly held at the Dunbar Recreation Center until desegregation, and the July 1951 *Weirton Steel Employees Bulletin* honors the most recent Dunbar High School graduates, who were photographed in front of the Dunbar Recreation Center's front entrance on May 29, 1951.

By February 1953, the Dunbar PTA held its annual Lincoln-Douglass Banquet at which former Columbus Board of Education member Mrs. Cora Jordan White spoke to a crowd of nearly 300 people (Figure 11). White's banquet speech, titled "That the People Might Not Perish from the Earth," addressed the need for freedom for people both abroad and at home ("Lincoln-Douglass Banquets"). In the three years preceding her speech at the Dunbar Recreation Center, White had been writing a column, titled "It Seems to Me...", for the *Ohio State News*, and at the time of her 1953 speech, she was the editor of the *Ohio Baptist News*.

The Dunbar Boosters Club also held annual sports banquets at the Dunbar Recreation Center, where Dunbar High football and basketball players were honored. At the spring 1953 banquet, the keynote speaker was William "Bill" Willis (1921-2007), then defensive tackle for the Cleveland Browns. In his speech at the Dunbar Center, he urged the Dunbar athletes to "do your best with what you have and whatever you're doing" and that "a boy can pick up many valuable lessons in citizenship while playing sports" ("Dunbar Boosters Club"). Moreover, the Dunbar High cheerleaders were also honored on the DRC stage during the Dunbar Boosters Club event.

By late 1955, following desegregation, the Dunbar Recreation Center became a temporary gym for Weir High School, and by January 1956, both practice and competition games were regularly held there ("Meeting on Gym Issue Delayed"). The April 1956 issue of the *Weirton Steel Employees Bulletin* lauds James T. Wares—a 1932-33 NAIA all-American football player from West Virginia State and science teacher and coach at nearby Dunbar High School from 1934-1955—for his work in co-directing the evening athletic program at the Dunbar Recreation Center during the winter ("Bulletin Sports").

Another documented Lincoln-Douglass Banquet, organized by nearby Morning Star Baptist Church, was held on February 14, 1958 at the Dunbar Recreation Center. This time, the event's keynote speaker was V. O. Johns, president of the Maryland Baptist Center and School of Religion in Baltimore, MD ("Dinner Planned").

The Lincoln-Douglass banquets continued into the new decade at the Dunbar Recreation Center, and in February 1960, Dr. N. G. Harris delivered a keynote speech titled "Our Heritage and Our Challenge," which explored Black history and the continued concerns regarding race relations. Essays honoring Lincoln and Douglass were also read and a solo, titled "He" was performed by Weirton community member Mrs. Naomi Jeter ("150 Attendance").

Later that year, on October 22, 1960, a Democratic Rally was held at the Dunbar Center at which West Virginia's Assistant Attorney General, George H. Mitchell, was the guest speaker. And on

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December 2, 1960, a Fashion Show was sponsored by the NAACP. It featured the models, hairstyles, and formalwear designs of local African American businesses, including those as far away as McDonald, Pennsylvania.

Throughout the 1960s, monthly Dunbar PTA meetings were held at the Center, and these often featured guest speakers, such as the January 14, 1964 meeting at which Rev. Joseph O. Bass spoke ("Dunbar PTA"). Classes in practical skills, like sewing, were also taught there. In December 1968, the Dunbar PTA hosted a Christmas party to which 125 parents and children came ("Program Held").

Into the early 1970s, the Dunbar Recreation Center was the site of wedding receptions, local church functions, and even 4H-related events. And in March of 1973, Weirton Sheriff Anthony Rocchio met with African American community leaders in a drug forum that aimed to tackle the area's growing narcotics problem ("Drug Forum"). The Dunbar Recreation Center's manager at the time, Mrs. Elizabeth Young, who was also Cove Elementary School principal and Dunbar PTA supervisor, resigned the building management position sometime in mid-1973, and the Weirton Human Rights Commission took over and responded to community calls for more youth programming and recreation equipment, including pool tables, wrestling mats, and a juke box for local youth ("Status of Dunbar Center"). Ultimately, the Weirton Human Rights Commission partnered with the Weirton Civic Improvement League and organized a Dunbar Recreation Center Board of Directors to create a center that would showcase youth projects and again host general meetings, as it had in the 1950s. ("Plans Made"). Weirton's mayor Mike Andochik then assisted in securing city funds to help supplement the \$300 building maintenance subsidy provided by Weirton Steel, then a division of National Steel.

While the 1980s saw the development of a significant after-school program at the Dunbar Recreation Center, changes in population—due to a sharp decline in the number of available mill jobs and the advancing age of Weirton's African American community—have caused the DRC to scale back its community-centered activities. The DRC still continues to provide space for events and gatherings (Figure 12), and as of 2020, anyone can rent the DRC auditorium for weddings, baby showers, or parties. Thanks to the efforts of the Dunbar Recreation Center Board, the DRC remains a location for community-pride celebrations, like the 2017 ceremony honoring two African American police officers during Black History Month ("Officers Honored"). Also of vital importance is that the DRC hosts Weirton's annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Walk along Weir Avenue; the reception following the walk always occurs in the DRC auditorium. Located at the geographical heart of what was once Calico Hill, the Dunbar Recreation Center remains crucial to the Black community's cultural identity, for both those who live in Weirton and those who have moved away.

Dunbar Recreation Center
Name of Property

Hancock, West Virginia
County and State

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Dunbar Recreation Center

Name of Property

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Dunbar Recreation Center
Name of Property

Hancock, West Virginia
County and State

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: Weirton Area Museum & Cultural Center

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: 0.095 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84:

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☒ NAD 1983

1. Zone: 17N

Easting: 535252.66

Northing: 4473627.96

Dunbar Recreation Center
Name of Property

Hancock, West Virginia
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Verbal Boundary Description

A parcel of land, situated in the District of Butler, County of Hancock, State of West Virginia, known as Lot Number Six (6) in a plan of lots entitled "Weirton Improvement Company's Fourth Addition to Weirton," which plan of lots is recorded in the offices of the Clerk of the County Court of Hancock of Hancock County, West Virginia, in Plat Book No. 1, Pages 154-155. The size of the said lot being shown on the plat as 44 feet by 94 feet.

Boundary Justification

The Dunbar Recreation Center is situated on lot number 6 within the Fourth Addition to Weirton. This parcel represents the historic boundaries for the nominated property and includes, but does not exceed, all historic features associated with the Dunbar Recreation Center.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Savannah Schroll Guz, Executive Director (& Emily Vance, National Register Coordinator, West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office)
organization: Weirton Area Museum and Cultural Center
street & number: 3149 Main Street
city or town: Weirton state: WV zip code: 26062-0517
e-mail: savannahguz@gmail.com
telephone: (304) 224-1909
date: June 30, 2020

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or 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:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Dunbar Recreation Center
Name of Property

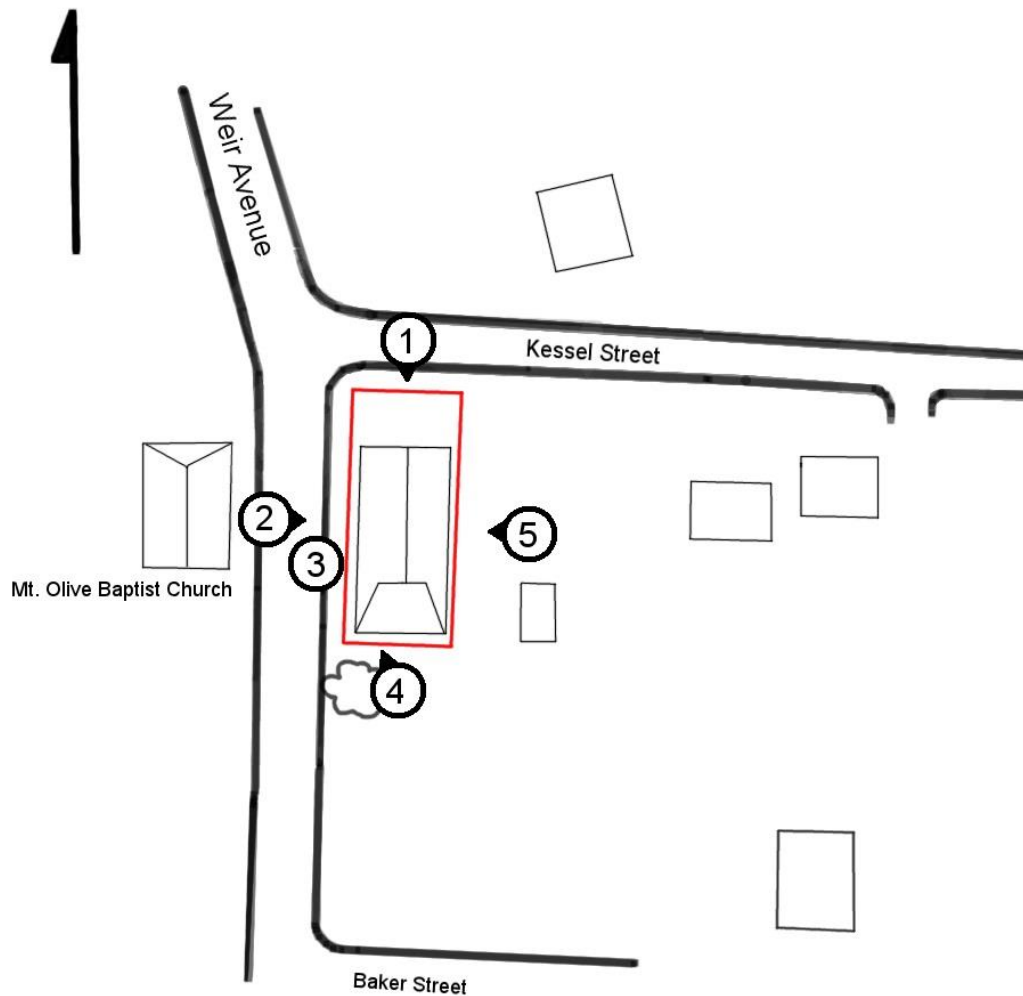
Hancock, West Virginia
County and State

Figure Log

- 1 of 12 Site Plan with Photo Key
- 2 of 12 Parcel Map
- 3 of 12 USGS Topographical Locational Map
- 4 of 12 Floor Plan with Photo Key, Main Floor
- 5 of 12 Floor Plan with photo key, basement
- 6 of 12 Dunbar Recreation Center Deed (deed book 61, page 448), June 7, 1944
- 7 of 12 "Dr. Anthony J. Major Speaks at the Seventh Anniversary of the Negro Credit Union." *Weirton Steel Employees Bulletin*, Jan. 1948, p. 25.
- 8 of 12 "Weirton Cooperative Association." *Weirton Steel Employees Bulletin*, Jan. 1948, p. 25.
- 9 of 12 "Negro College Fund Drive Over the Top," *Weirton Steel Employees Bulletin*, Nov. 1948, n.p.
- 10 of 12 "Negro Americanism Rally." *Weirton Steel Employees Bulletin*, Aug. 1950, p. 24.
- 11 of 12 "Mrs. C. J. White Speaks, Lincoln-Douglass Banquets." *Weirton Steel Employees Bulletin*, Mar. 1953, p. 18.
- 12 of 12 Third annual Martin Luther King Day March on Weir Avenue event, pictured left to right: Royal Mayo (former NAACP Steubenville, Ohio Chapter President), Ricky Thompson (Weir Avenue resident) and Weirton Mayor Harold "Bubba" Miller, January 18, 2021, photo courtesy of Savannah Guz.

Dunbar Recreation Center
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Dunbar Recreation Center Sketch Map
300 Kessel Street, Weirton, Hancock County WV 26062

 National Register Boundaries

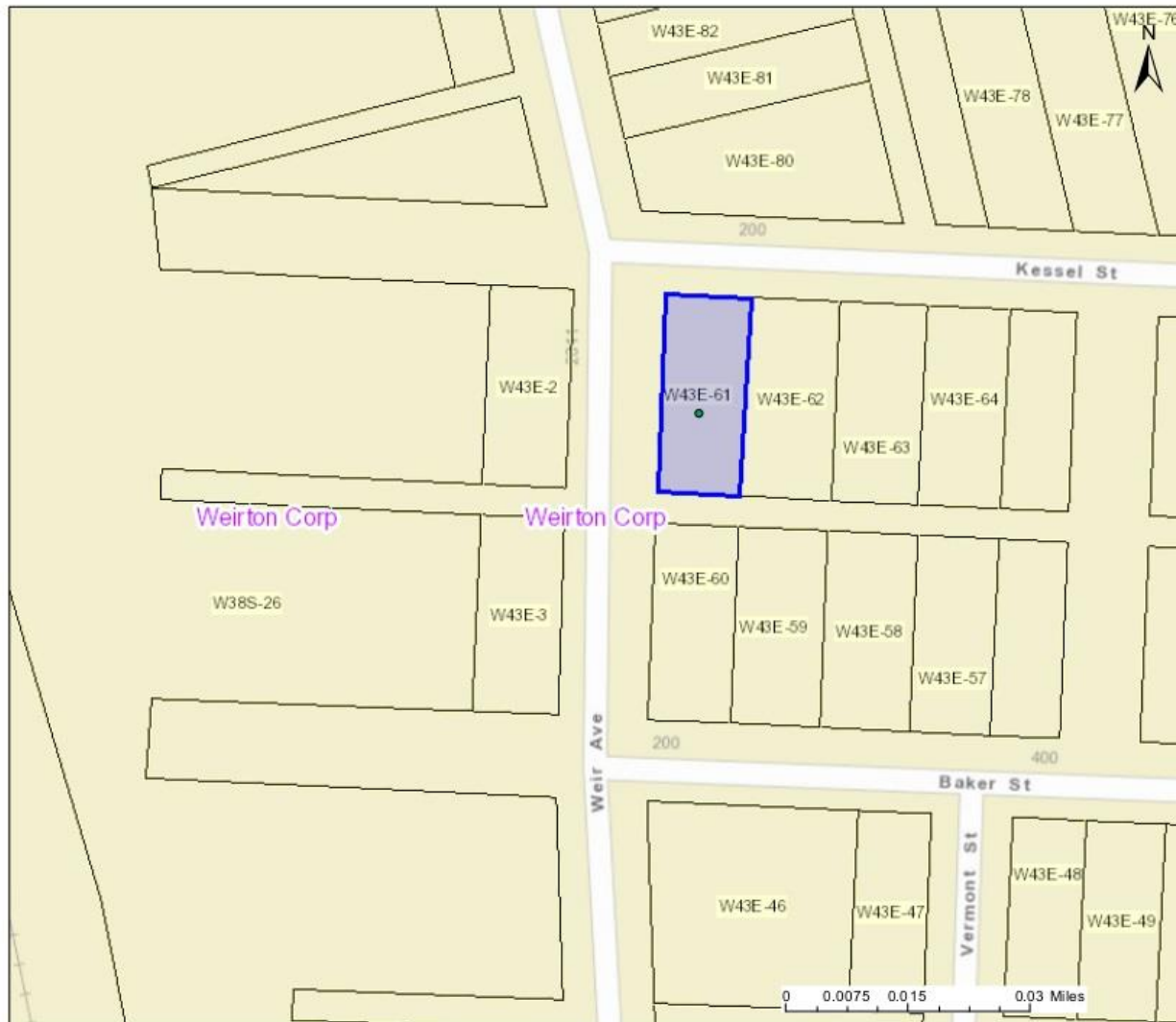
 Photo Vantage Points

Note: not to scale

Figure 1: Site Plan with Photo Key

Dunbar Recreation Center
Name of Property

Hancock, West Virginia
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Legend

 National Register Boundaries

Parcel ID: 15-06-W43E-0061-000

Address: 300 Kessel Street, Weirton WV 26062

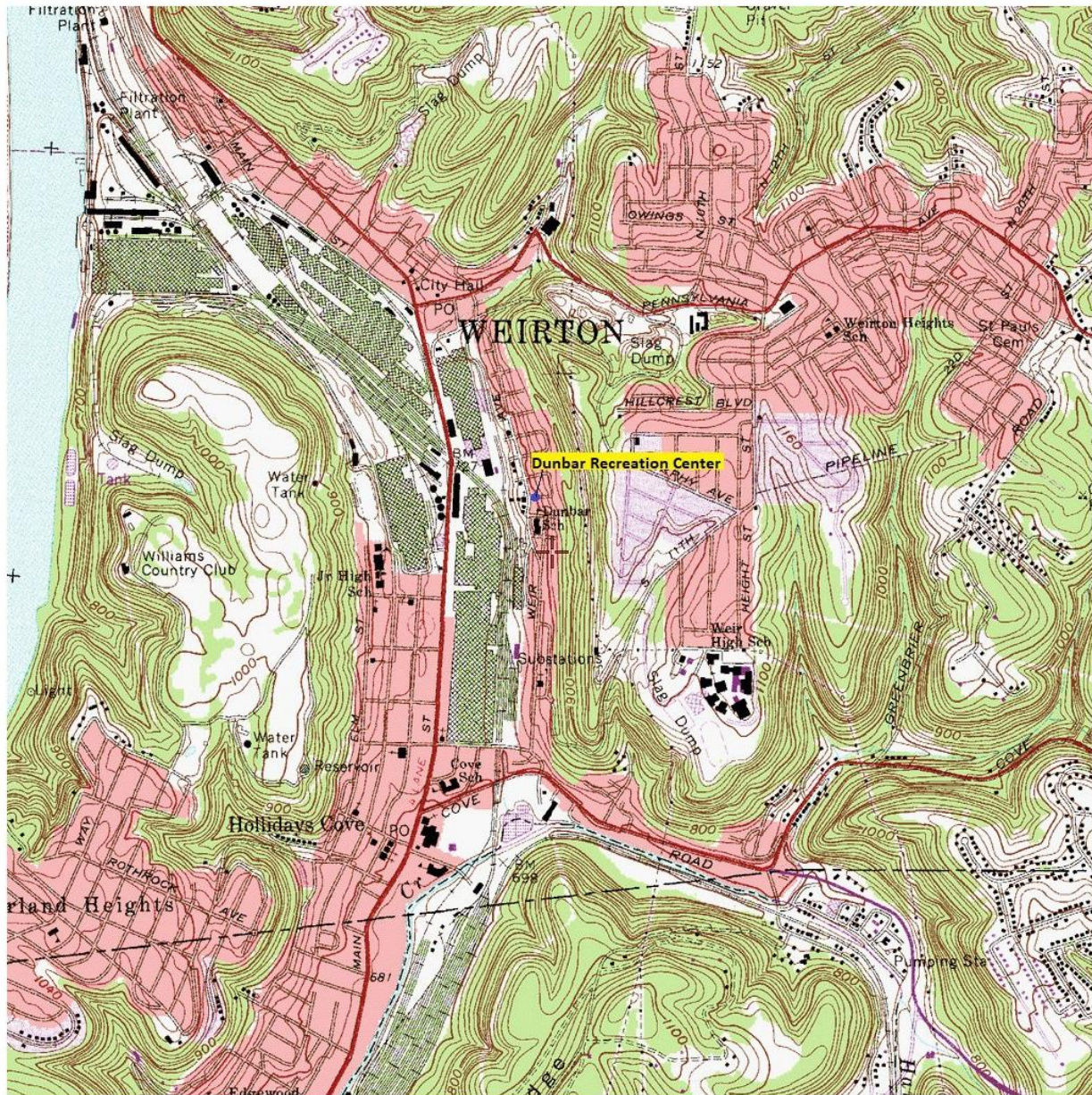
Legal Description: 6 W I 4th ADN

Map courtesy of WV Property Viewer at mapwv.gov/property

Figure 2: Parcel Map

Dunbar Recreation Center
Name of Property

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USGS Map Weirton, WV
Map MRC: 40080D5
Datum: NAD83

UTM Reference Zone: 17N N: 535252.66 E: 4473627.96

Figure 3: USGS Topographical Locational Map

Dunbar Recreation Center

Name of Property

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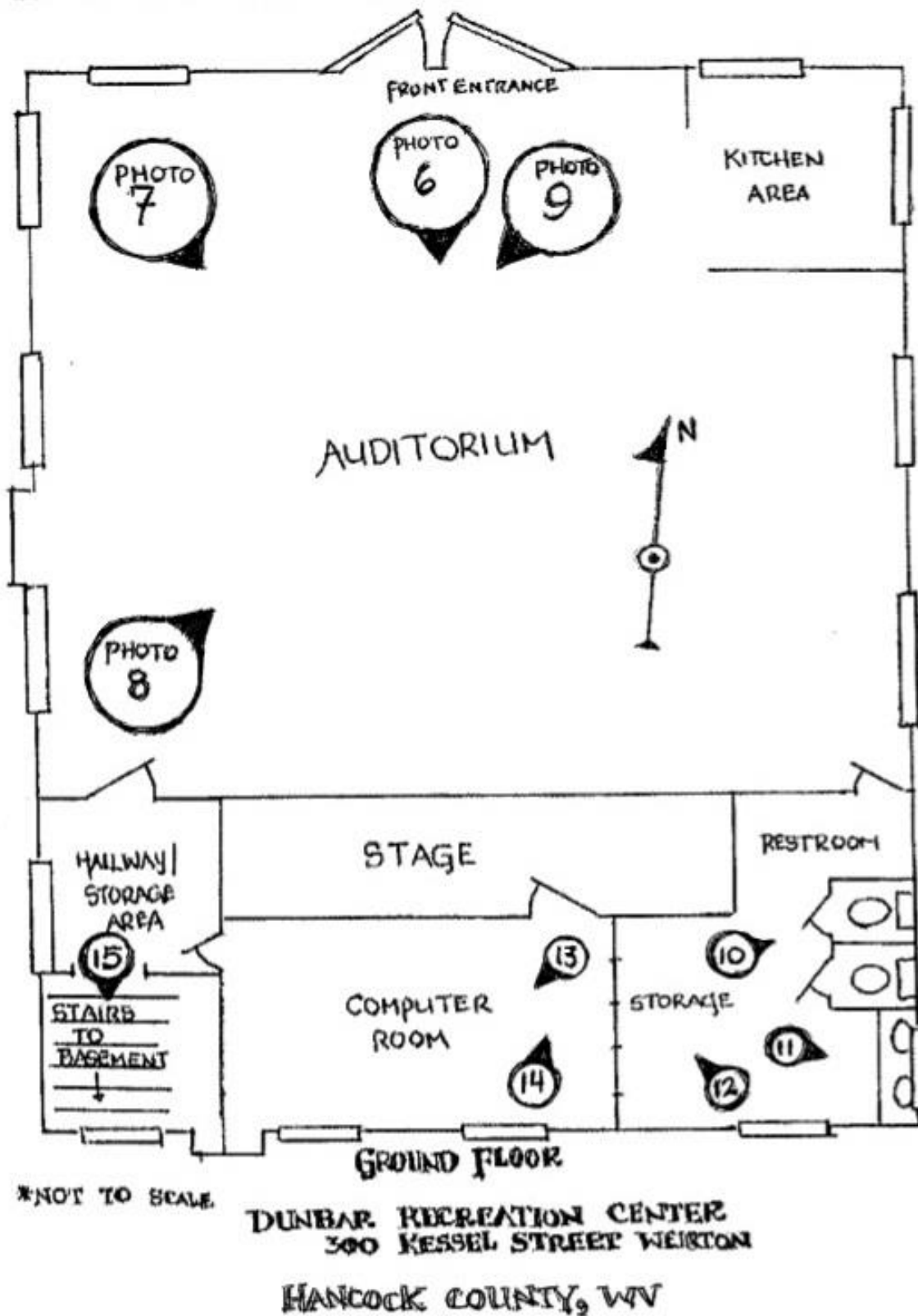
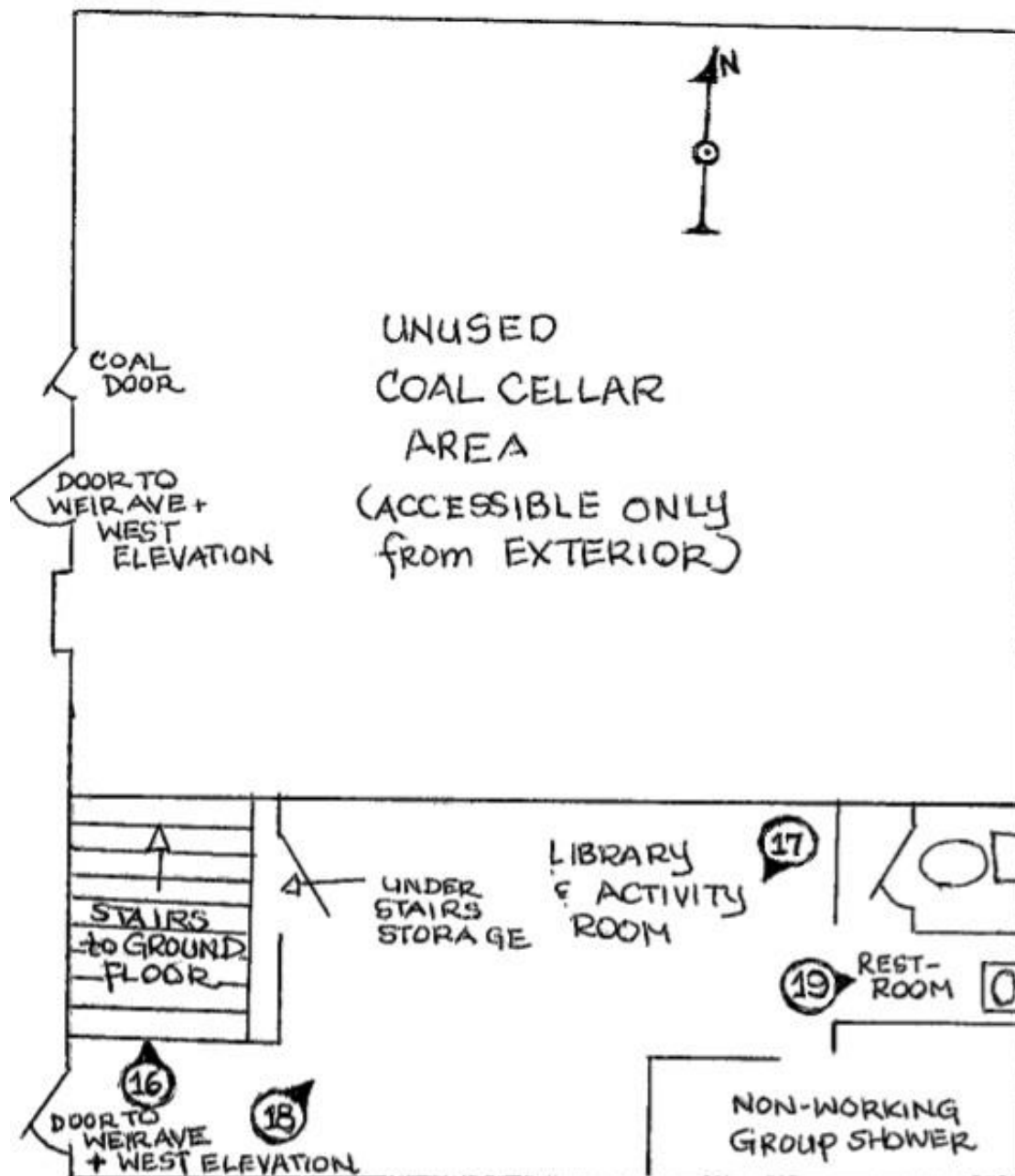


Figure 4: Floor Plan with Photo Key, Main Floor

Dunbar Recreation Center
Name of Property

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BASEMENT LEVEL

*NOT TO SCALE

DUNBAR RECREATION CENTER
300 KESSEL STREET, WEIRTON
HANCOCK COUNTY, WV

Figure 5: Floor Plan with Photo Key, Basement

Dunbar Recreation Center

Name of Property

Hancock, West Virginia

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Alex Walker etux
to
Anthony Major, Trustee
#6 W. Impr. Co. 4th Addn
to Weirton

THIS DEED, made this the fifth day of June, 1944 by and between Alex Walker and Lula Walker, his wife, parties of the first part, and Anthony Major, TRUSTEE, party of the second part.

WITNESSETH: That for and in consideration of the sum of One Dollar (\$1.00) and other good and valuable consideration, the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, the said parties of the first part do hereby grant and convey unto the said party of the second part, the following described property, that is to say:

All that certain lot or parcel of land, situate in the District of Butler, County of Hancock, State of West Virginia, known as Lot Number Six (6) in a plan of lots entitled "Weirton Improvement Company's Fourth Addition to Weirton", which plan of lots is recorded in the offices of the Clerk of the County Court of Hancock County, West Virginia, in Plat Book Book No.1, Pages 154-155. The size of the said lot being shown on said plat as 44 feet by 94 feet.

The said Anthony Major, shall hold the premises herein conveyed for the use and benefit of the Dunbar Parent-Teachers Association of Weirton, Hancock County, West Virginia. The said Trustee shall have no right to mortgage, sell or convey these premises, or any part of them, except by authority granted him by resolution duly passed by a majority of the members of the said Dunbar Parent-Teachers Association of Weirton, Hancock County, West Virginia.

And the said parties of the first part hereby covenant with the said party of the second part that they will warrant generally the property hereby conveyed.

WITNESS the following signatures and seals:

(\$1.10 I.R. Stamp here cancelled)

Alex Walker (SEAL)
Lula Walker (SEAL)

State of West Virginia, County of Hancock, to-wit:
I, Anthony Peklinsky a notary public of, in and for the county and State aforesaid, do hereby certify that Alex Walker and Lula Walker, his wife, whose names are signed to the writing hereto annexed, dated June 5th 1944, have this day acknowledged the same before me in my said county and state.
Given under my hand this 5th day of June 1944.

(Notarial Seal)

Anthony Peklinsky Notary Public
My comm. exp. Nov 27 1951.

State of West Virginia, County of Hancock, to-wit:
I, D.G. Stewart, Clerk of the County Court of the County and State aforesaid do hereby certify that the foregoing writing dated June 5th 1944 and together with the certificate of acknowledgment thereto was presented for and by me duly admitted to record on the 7th day of June 1944 at 9:40 A.M.

D.G. Stewart CLERK.

Figure 6: Dunbar Recreation Center Deed (deed book 61, page 448), June 7, 1944

Dunbar Recreation Center
Name of Property

Hancock, West Virginia
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Figure 7: "Dr. Anthony J. Major Speaks at the Seventh Anniversary of the Negro Credit Union." *Weirton Steel Employees Bulletin*, Jan. 1948, p. 25.



Figure 8: "Weirton Cooperative Association." *Weirton Steel Employees Bulletin*, Jan. 1948, p. 25.

Dunbar Recreation Center
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Figure 9: "Negro College Fund Drive Over the Top," Weirton Steel Employees Bulletin, Nov. 1948, n.p.

Dunbar Recreation Center
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Figure 10: "Negro Americanism Rally." Weirton Steel Employees Bulletin, Aug. 1950, p. 24.



Figure 11: "Mrs. C. J. White Speaks, Lincoln-Douglass Banquets." Weirton Steel Employees Bulletin, Mar. 1953, p. 18.

Dunbar Recreation Center
Name of Property

Hancock, West Virginia
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Figure 12. Third annual Martin Luther King Day March on Weir Avenue event, pictured left to right: Royal Mayo (former NAACP Steubenville, Ohio Chapter President), Ricky Thompson (Weir Avenue resident) and Weirton Mayor Harold “Bubba” Miller, January 18, 2021, photo courtesy of Savannah Guz.

Dunbar Recreation Center

Name of Property

Hancock, West Virginia

County and State

Photographs

Photo Log

Name of Property: Dunbar Recreation Center

City or Vicinity: Weirton, West Virginia

County: Hancock State: WV

Photographer: Woody Miller

Date Photographed: June 17, 2020

- | | |
|----------|---|
| 1 of 19 | Main Elevation, Facing South
WV_Hancock County_Dunbar Recreation Center_0001 |
| 2 of 19 | West Side Elevation, Facing East
WV_Hancock County_Dunbar Recreation Center_0002 |
| 3 of 19 | Coal Chute Door
WV_Hancock County_Dunbar Recreation Center_0003 |
| 4 of 19 | South Side Elevation, Facing North
WV_Hancock County_Dunbar Recreation Center_0004 |
| 5 of 19 | East Side Elevation, Facing West
WV_Hancock County_Dunbar Recreation Center_0005 |
| 6 of 19 | Main Auditorium, Facing South
WV_Hancock County_Dunbar Recreation Center_0006 |
| 7 of 19 | Main Auditorium, Facing Southeast
WV_Hancock County_Dunbar Recreation Center_0007 |
| 8 of 19 | Main Auditorium, Facing North
WV_Hancock County_Dunbar Recreation Center_0008 |
| 9 of 19 | Main Auditorium, Facing Southwest
WV_Hancock County_Dunbar Recreation Center_0009 |
| 10 of 19 | Restroom Stalls, Facing Northeast
WV_Hancock County_Dunbar Recreation Center_0010 |

Dunbar Recreation Center

Hancock, West Virginia

Name of Property

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- | | |
|----------|---|
| 11 of 19 | Restroom Stalls, Facing Southeast
WV_Hancock County_Dunbar Recreation Center_0011 |
| 12 of 19 | Storage, Facing Northwest
WV_Hancock County_Dunbar Recreation Center_0012 |
| 13 of 19 | Computer Room, Facing Southwest
WV_Hancock County_Dunbar Recreation Center_0013 |
| 14 of 19 | Computer Room, Facing Northwest
WV_Hancock County_Dunbar Recreation Center_0014 |
| 15 of 19 | Stairwell to Basement
WV_Hancock County_Dunbar Recreation Center_0015 |
| 16 of 19 | Stairwell to Ground Floor
WV_Hancock County_Dunbar Recreation Center_0016 |
| 17 of 19 | Basement Activity Area, Facing Southwest
WV_Hancock County_Dunbar Recreation Center_0017 |
| 18 of 19 | Basement Activity Area, Facing Northeast
WV_Hancock County_Dunbar Recreation Center_0018 |
| 19 of 19 | Basement Restroom, Facing East
WV_Hancock County_Dunbar Recreation Center_0019 |

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.

Dunbar Recreation Center
Name of Property

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Photo 1: Main Elevation, Facing South
WV_Hancock County_Dunbar Recreation Center_0001

Dunbar Recreation Center
Name of Property

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County and State



Photo 2: West Side Elevation, Facing East
WV_Hancock County_Dunbar Recreation Center_0002

Dunbar Recreation Center

Name of Property

Hancock, West Virginia

County and State



Photo 3: Coal Chute Door

WV_Hancock County_Dunbar Recreation Center_0003

Dunbar Recreation Center
Name of Property

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County and State



Photo 4: South Side Elevation, Facing North
WV_Hancock County_Dunbar Recreation Center_0004

Dunbar Recreation Center
Name of Property

Hancock, West Virginia
County and State



Photo 5: East Side Elevation, Facing West
WV_Hancock County_Dunbar Recreation Center_0005

Dunbar Recreation Center
Name of Property

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Photo 6: Main Auditorium, Facing South
WV_Hancock County_Dunbar Recreation Center_0006

Dunbar Recreation Center

Name of Property

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Photo 7: Main Auditorium, Facing Southeast
WV_Hancock County_Dunbar Recreation Center_0007

Dunbar Recreation Center
Name of Property

Hancock, West Virginia
County and State



Photo 8: Main Auditorium, Facing North
WV_Hancock County_Dunbar Recreation Center_0008

Dunbar Recreation Center
Name of Property

Hancock, West Virginia
County and State



Photo 9: Main Auditorium, Facing Southwest
WV_Hancock County_Dunbar Recreation Center_0009

Dunbar Recreation Center
Name of Property

Hancock, West Virginia
County and State



Photo 10: Restroom Stalls, Facing Northeast
WV_Hancock County_Dunbar Recreation Center_0010

Dunbar Recreation Center
Name of Property

Hancock, West Virginia
County and State



Photo 11: Restroom Stalls, Facing Southeast
WV_Hancock County_Dunbar Recreation Center_0011

Dunbar Recreation Center
Name of Property

Hancock, West Virginia
County and State



Photo 12: Storage, Facing Northwest
WV_Hancock County_Dunbar Recreation Center_0012

Dunbar Recreation Center
Name of Property

Hancock, West Virginia
County and State



Photo 13: Computer Room, Facing Southwest
WV_Hancock County_Dunbar Recreation Center_0013

Dunbar Recreation Center
Name of Property

Hancock, West Virginia
County and State



Photo 14: Computer Room, Facing Northwest
WV_Hancock County_Dunbar Recreation Center_0014

Dunbar Recreation Center
Name of Property

Hancock, West Virginia
County and State

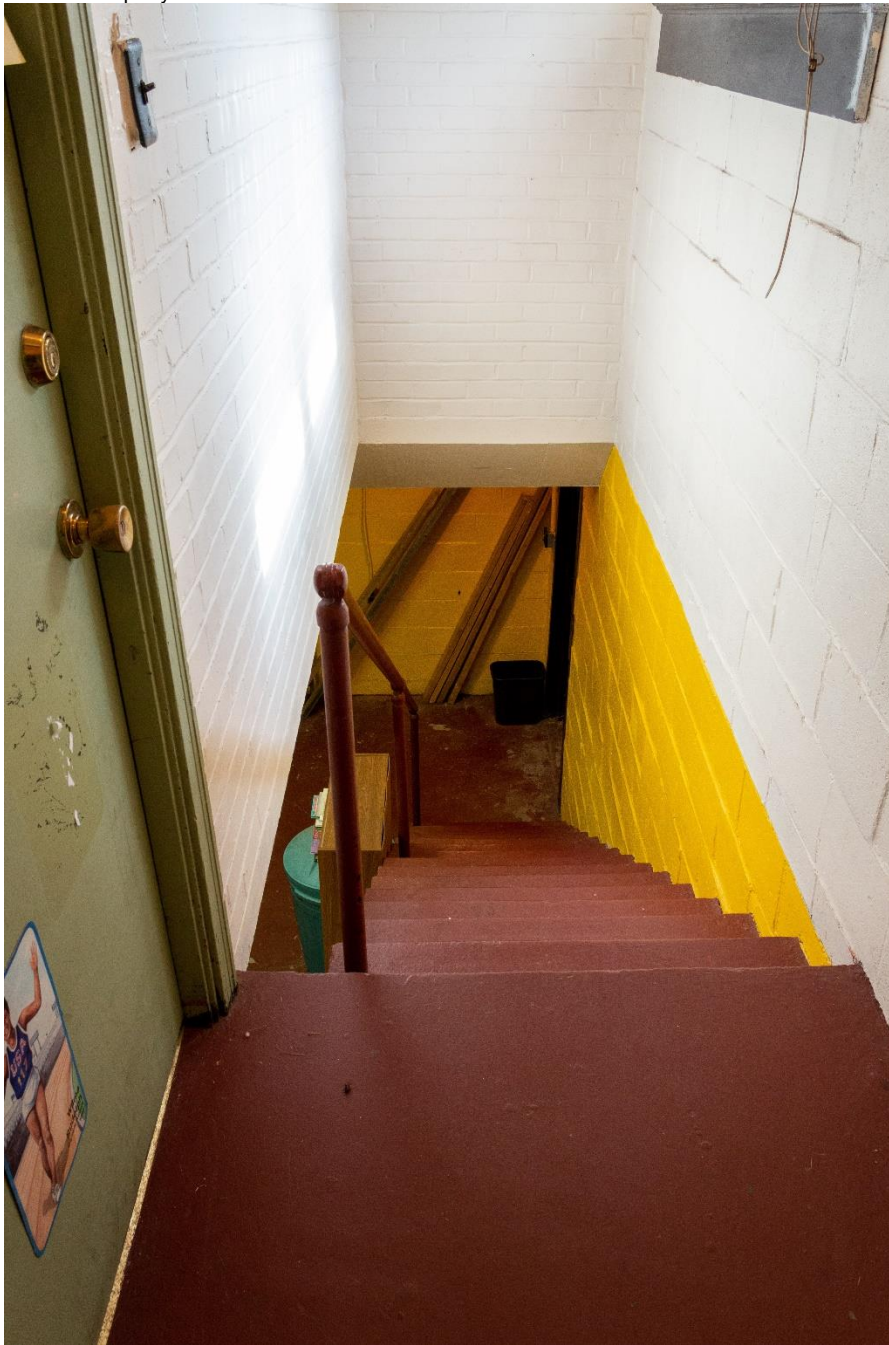


Photo 15: Stairwell to Basement
WV_Hancock County_Dunbar Recreation Center_0015

Dunbar Recreation Center
Name of Property

Hancock, West Virginia
County and State

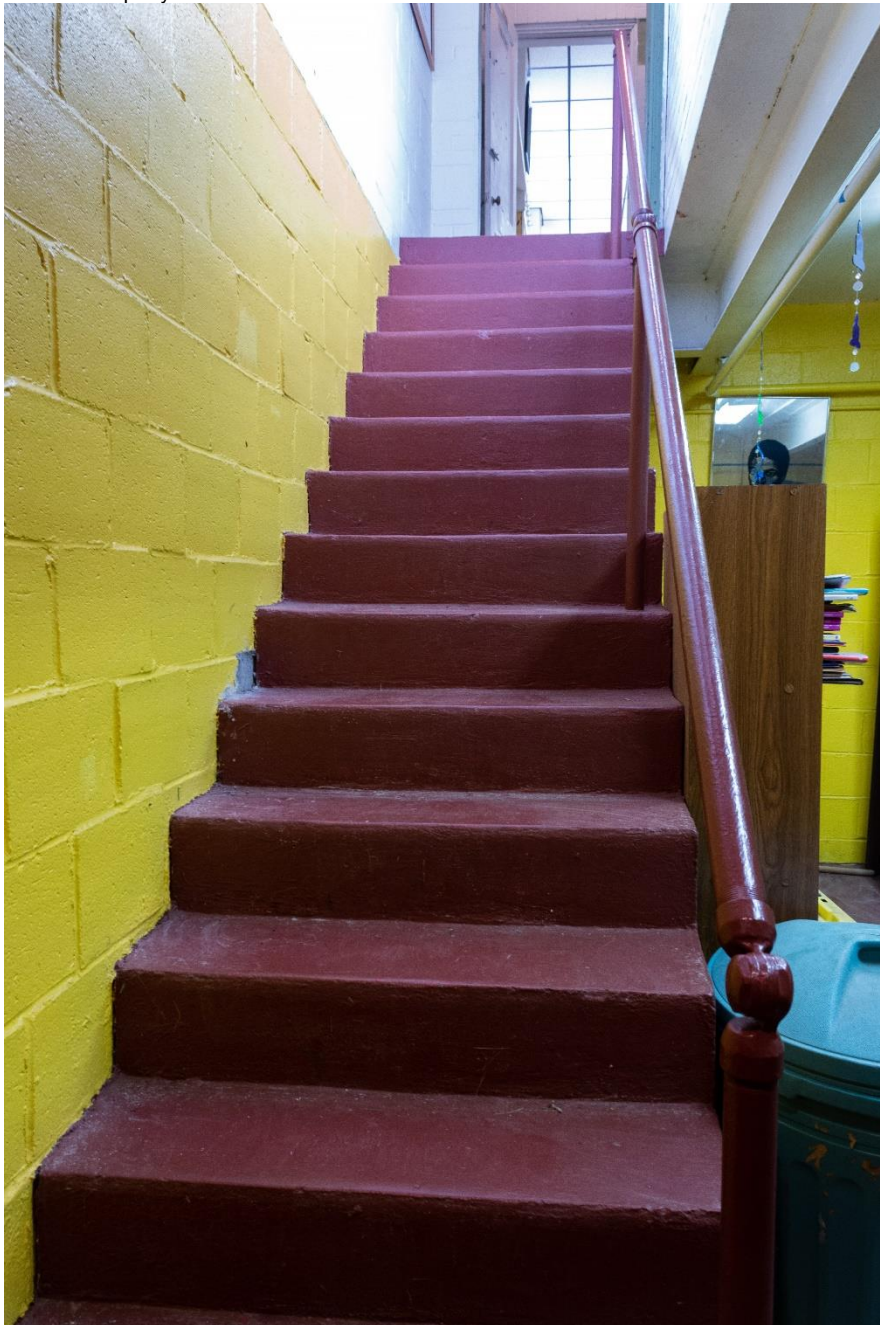


Photo 16: Stairwell to Ground Floor
WV_Hancock County_Dunbar Recreation Center_0016

Dunbar Recreation Center
Name of Property

Hancock, West Virginia
County and State



Photo 17: Basement Activity Area, Facing Southwest
WV_Hancock County_Dunbar Recreation Center_0017

Dunbar Recreation Center
Name of Property

Hancock, West Virginia
County and State



Photo 18: Basement Activity Area, Facing Northeast
WV_Hancock County_Dunbar Recreation Center_0018

Dunbar Recreation Center
Name of Property

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Photo 19: Basement Restroom, Facing East
WV_Hancock County_Dunbar Recreation Center_0019