

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. 31-50

1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic Viers Mill Recreation Center¹; Viers Mill Village Recreation Center
 other Veirs Mill Recreation Building (current name-preferred)

2. Location

street and number Veirs Mill Local Park, 4425 Garrett Park Road __ not for publication
 city, town Wheaton __ vicinity
 county Montgomery

3. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name M-NCPPC
 street and number 8787 Georgia Avenue telephone 301-495-2595
 city, town Silver Spring state MD zip code 20910

4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Montgomery County Land Records liber 1899 folio 447
 city, town Rockville tax map HQ31 tax parcel P231 tax ID number 00969105

5. Primary Location of Additional Data

- Contributing Resource in National Register District
- Contributing Resource in Local Historic District
- Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
- Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
- Recorded by HABS/HAER
- Historic Structure Report or Research Report at MHT
- Other: M-NCPPC

6. Classification

Category	Ownership	Current Function		Resource Count	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce/trade	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> recreation/culture	<u>1</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> defense	<input type="checkbox"/> religion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> site		<input type="checkbox"/> domestic	<input type="checkbox"/> social	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> structures
<input type="checkbox"/> object		<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> objects
		<input type="checkbox"/> funerary	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Total
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> unknown	Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory _____	
		<input type="checkbox"/> health care	<input type="checkbox"/> vacant/not in use		
		<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> other:		

¹See Footnote 2.

7. Description

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Condition

excellent deteriorated
 good ruins
 fair altered

Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

SUMMARY

The Viers Mill Recreation Center², also known as the Viers Mill Village Recreation Center, is located off Garrett Park Road in the Veirs Mill Local Park in the Wheaton area. Constructed in 1954, the building embodies the architectural trends of the mid-20th century and is a good representative of the standardization of county recreation buildings in the Cold War years. The resource still functions in its original role and retains its original fabric, with the exception of the large picture window in the north wall.

SITE

Viers Mill Recreation Building is located on 17.52 acres at Garrett Park Road. The building is still surrounded to the west by an open lawn that includes playground equipment. The site has a rectangular, paved parking area in front of the building. The area to the north of the building that was originally designated for picnicking amid woodland is now made up of recreational fields, accessed via a series of descending steps. Basketball courts sit at the edge of the wooded trail that threads along Beach Drive in Rock Creek Park.

EXTERIOR

The Viers Mill Recreation Center is a west-facing, one-story, brick rectangular structure resting on a concrete foundation. It has a one-story wing to the south.

The building's basic components are intact, including an open recreation room; an open, but covered front terrace; small projecting front storage and rear kitchen nodes; and a restroom wing. The short kitchen extension to the rear and the restroom block to the south (which is set back from the façade) both serve to vary the otherwise uniform massing of the building. The short side of the building faces the street, but the parking lot immediately gives access and a view to the facade. The brick is laid in common bond and the roof is asphalt clad.

The main, or west, façade is composed of two identical wall sections that frame a massive red-brick chimney that used to have a working exterior fireplace (now bricked in). The wall sections to either side of the chimney feature a pair of solid double doors flanked by a wall that follows the modular rhythm of two by fours. The two by fours define areas of wallboard versus doors and also define a series of transoms overhead, now enclosed with wooden boards. The open terrace covering that runs the length of the façade is supported on exposed steel I-beams and the underside of its covering is tongue-and-groove board. The outdoor deck flooring is a simple concrete slab on grade, and picnic tables are situated on it. A short driveway off the parking lot leads right up to

²The spelling of the resource name was originally **Viers** Mill Village Recreation Center. The nearby subdivision was likewise platted as Viers Mill Village. In recent years, the park and the recreation center have been spelled **Veirs**.

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the southern of the two pairs of main doors to accommodate deliveries. An adjacent concrete path and stoop lead to a service door where there once probably was separate concrete stoop

The low, side-gable roof is covered in asphalt shingles. In addition to the main brick chimney, there is a second, smaller chimney, presumably for the boiler, that is located at the southern corner of the restroom block.

The south side elevation contains small, privacy-type windows, midway up the wall which defines the restroom. These have brick sills defined by a soldier course and are currently covered in metal grilles.

Windows and doors on the restroom wing have been closed up or altered over time, apparent in the different brickwork and wider mortar joints. A single door leads into the bathroom wing on the gable end.

The east elevation contains banded windows composed of three pairs of casements. These windows are not original to the period of construction. They pierce the wall at a height slightly higher than midway and extend up to the eave line, defined only by brick sills.

The north elevation is all brick since one very large window has been enclosed. The change in brickwork makes this alteration obvious.

INTERIOR

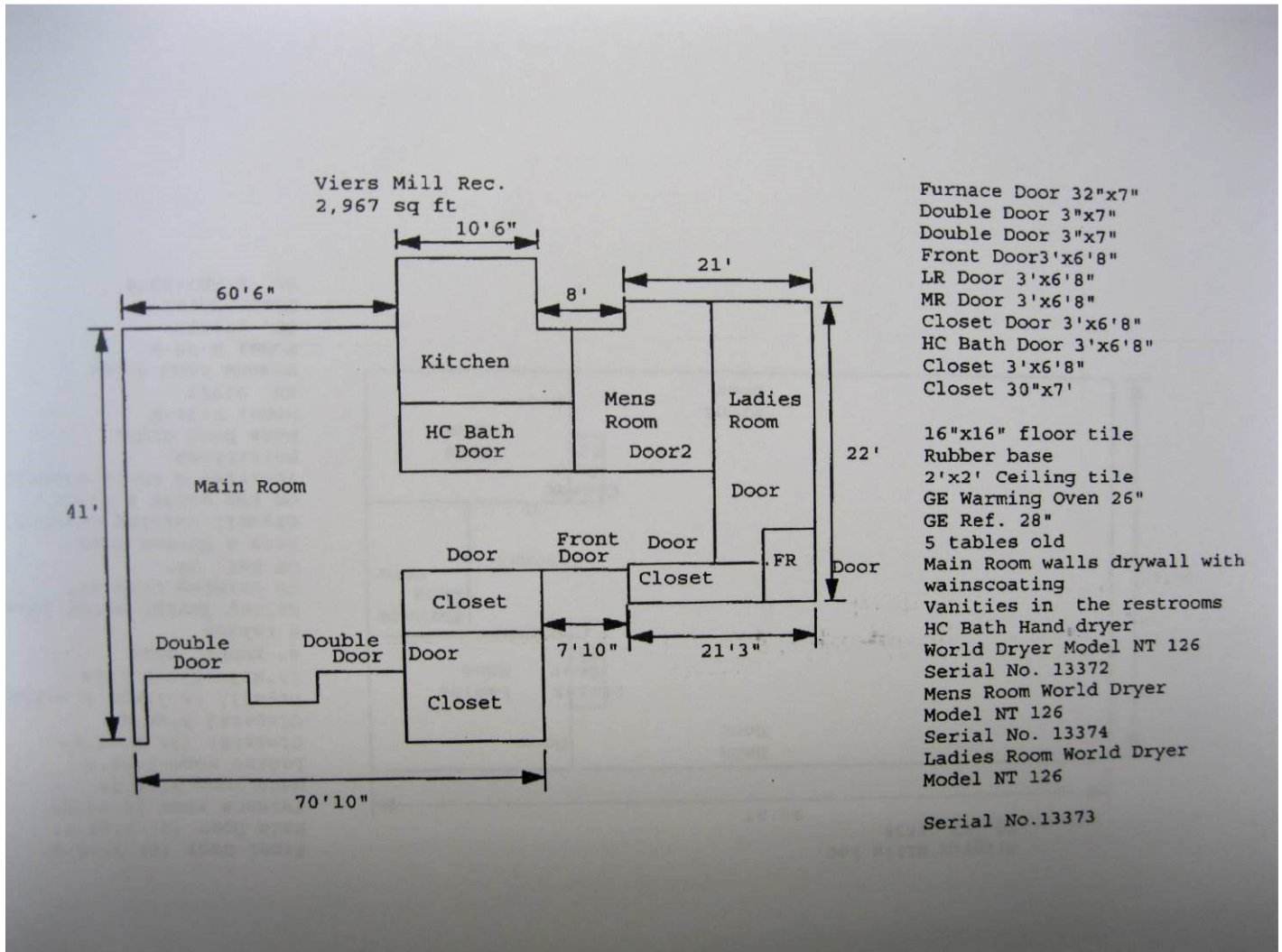
The interior of the main block has a large, open room finished in newer materials. Floors are vinyl tile. The ceiling is made of acoustic drop-in tiles with a regular pattern of infill fluorescent lighting. The facility has a kitchen, bathrooms, and ample storage.

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Facilities Management Floor Plan of Viers Mill Recreation Center, 2002. Courtesy: M-NCPPC

8. Significance

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Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment/ recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/ settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> social history
	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning		<input type="checkbox"/> maritime history	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation		<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other: _____

Specific dates

Architect/Builder M-NCPPC
(possibly staff Landscape Architect R. H. Porsch)

Construction dates 1954

Evaluation for:

National Register Maryland Register not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance projects, complete evaluation on a DOE Form – see manual.)

SUMMARY

Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) was founded in 1927 as a stream-valley park system protecting the headwaters of the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers. In addition, the Commission's charge was to oversee subdivision review and the creation and maintenance of a recreational park system. Along the stream valleys and, later, in the neighborhood and regional parks, the Commission augmented the natural landscape with the construction of buildings to house indoor recreation activities, such as parties, club meetings, scouts, daycare, and summer camps.

As M-NCPPC approaches its 100th anniversary and out of a mission to provide cultural resource stewardship, the Montgomery County Department of Parks has identified park recreation buildings worthy of preservation. Currently, there are 30 buildings that serve or have operated as recreation buildings (now termed park activity buildings) throughout the 35,000 acre park system³. Originally, there were at least 41 of these community facilities. Some of these structures were "purpose-built," while others were converted to recreational use. In order to show a history of the evolution of park activity buildings over the lifetime of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (1927 to present), the Department of Parks' Cultural Resources Stewardship Section proposes to preserve at least one building from each of the five respective park community/recreation building eras.⁴

***Era I: The Origins of the M-NCPPC Park System: 1927-1940**

***Era II: The World War II-Era Buildings: 1941-1946**

³ 2007 M-NCPPC *Catalog of Recreation and Ancillary Buildings* defines recreation buildings as "operated for the benefit of the general public, rented by the hour with Fees set by the Park Commission, reserved through Park Permits, and maintained by the Department of Parks Central Maintenance Divisions."

⁴ In addition to recognizing the recreation buildings still standing, it is worth identifying the (at least) eleven structures that have since been demolished or transferred to the Montgomery County Recreation Department: Cabin John Recreation Center (off MacArthur Blvd.), Garrett Park Estates Community Building, Jesup-Blair Cabin, Kensington Park Community Building (off Frederick Ave.), Long Branch Recreation Center, Randolph Hills Recreation Center, Rosemary Hills Recreation Center, Scotland Community Building, Sligo Avenue Recreation Center, Sligo Cabin, and Wheaton Woods Recreation Center.

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***Era III: Conversion of World War II Federal Surplus Buildings: 1953-1956**

***Era IV: Purpose-Built Community Recreation Centers during Cold War Suburbanization: 1950-1990**

***Era V: Repurposing Structures to Become Activity Buildings, 1937-1968**

Five recreation buildings are being nominated to the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*. Each is the best representative of each of the different eras. Viers Mill Recreation Center was selected to represent Era IV.⁵

The Viers Mill Recreation Center is a large brick structure constructed in 1954 for the Viers Mill Local Park. Standardized in form and material, this facility reflected the need of M-NCPPC to efficiently and economically mass produce this high-demand public amenity in post-war Montgomery County. The building has strong architectural integrity, retaining details that harkened back to the mid-20th century period. Surrounding acreage along Rock Creek Park remains undeveloped. Therefore, Viers Mill Recreation Building meets the following criteria of the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Ordinance, Section 24A-3:

1(a) has character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the County, State, or Nation;

1(d) exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, political, or historic heritage of the County and its communities;

2(a) embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction;

NARRATIVE HISTORY

By the time M-NCPPC released the 1956 *Master Plan of Schools, Parks, and Recreation*, Montgomery County had developed 39 local parks. As a result, the Commission opted to not develop any new local parks in the “built-up portion of the Regional District,” the area south of Kensington.⁶ Instead, emphasis was placed on creating larger regional parks, beginning at Wheaton, followed by Rock Creek, Cabin John, Northwest Branch, Little Bennett, and Black Hill. Small local parks made a resurgence in the 1960s, with 28 land acquisitions establishing new parks throughout the county, as the jurisdiction of M-NCPPC extended beyond the original 294 square-mile metropolitan district established in 1927. Today, M-NCPPC maintains 95 neighborhood parks, of which 57 were initiated between 1968 and 1990. The focal point of several of these new local and neighborhood parks was an accommodating recreational center. A significant number of these buildings were either designed or ultimately reviewed by M-NCPPC Chief Landscape Architect Joseph Kondis, who would eventually serve as Chief of the Engineering and Design Division of Montgomery County Parks.

Emphasis was placed on creating larger structures, with more overall square footage, and promoting longevity with the use of primarily brick and/or concrete (CMU) block as the major building material. Architectural forms

⁵ For further information on the various design periods, see MIHP nomination forms for Meadowbrook, Pinecrest, Ken-Gar, and Norbeck.

⁶ M-NCPPC, *Master Plan of Schools, Parks, and Recreation* (Silver Spring, 1956).

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designed for recreation centers became more standardized, with distinction found in the application of various materials. One stylistic detail that evolved over time was the shape and location of windows. While previous recreation facilities had large windows for users to partake of the scenic views from within an enclosed structure, later in this era, the number of windows decreased, as did the size of these openings, with the application of 'privacy windows.' This design was intentional, as these narrow and highly placed windows kept spectators from viewing special private events that took place within these permitted public facilities.

Era IV: Purpose-Built Community Recreation Centers during Cold War Suburbanization: 1950-1990

Recreational buildings in the parks constructed during the second half of the 20th century are fairly numerous, and have been categorized into different sub-typologies based on building materials and design aesthetics. Below is the breakdown, and it can be seen that Viers Mill is representative of a popular type:

Representative Buildings:

a. Log Building

- North Four Corners (1947/alterd 1956)
Address: North Four Corners Local Park, 211 Southwood Avenue, Silver Spring

b. Contemporary

1. 1950s: Eave Centered Chimney, Original Curtain Windows, and Over-hang covered patio

- Glenmont (1954)
Address: Glenmont Local Park, 3201 Randolph Road, Wheaton
- Lynnbrook (1950)
Address: Lynnbrook Local Park, 8008 Newdale Road, Bethesda
- Viers Mill (1954)
Address: Veirs Mill Local Park, 4425 Garrett Park Road, Wheaton
- 2. 1960s: Gable-End Chimney, Ribbon Windows, Brick and Wood siding***
- Clarksburg (1968)
Address: Clarksburg Neighborhood Park, 22501 Weems Road, Clarksburg
- Kemp Mill Estates (1967)
Address: Kemp Mill Estates Local Park, 120 Claybrook Drive, Wheaton
- North Chevy Chase (1968)
Address: North Chevy Chase Local Park, 4105 Jones Bridge Road, Chevy Chase
- Pilgrim Hill (1965)
Address: Pilgrim Hill Local Park, 1615 East Randolph Road, Silver Spring

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- Sligo-Dennis (1960)

Address: Sligo-Dennis Avenue Local Park, 10200 Sligo Creek Parkway, Silver Spring

- Stoneybrook (1962)

Address: Stoneybrook Local Park, 4105 Harvard Street, Wheaton

- Tilden Woods (1965-1969)

Address: Tilden Woods Local Park, 6800 Tilden Lane, Potomac

c. *Post War Functional: Concrete-Block Minimalism*

- Capitol View-Homewood (1951/major renovation 1988)

Address: Capitol View-Homewood Local Park, 2929 Edgewood Road, Kensington

- Colesville (1959)

Address: Colesville Local Park, 610 Hobbs Drive, Colesville

- Maplewood-Alta Vista (1961)

Address: Maplewood-Alta Vista Local Park, 5209 Alta Vista Road, Bethesda

- Nolte (1958)

Address: Nolte Local Park, 200 Denver Road, Silver Spring

d. *Agricultural Influenced: Gambrel Roof, Barn-Like*

- Indian Spring Terrace (1973)

Address: Indian Spring Terrace Local Park, 9717 Lawndale Drive, Silver Spring

- Owens (1970)

Address: Owens Local Park, 19900 Beallsville Road, Beallsville

- Quince Orchard Valley (1973-1974)

Address: Quince Orchard Valley Neighborhood Park, 12015 Suffolk Terrace, Gaithersburg

e. *Post-1975 Modern*⁷

- Argyle (1990)

Address: Argyle Local Park, 1030 Forest Glen Road, Silver Spring

- Spencerville/Mildred Pumphrey (1979)

Address: Spencerville Local Park, 15701 Good Hope Road, Spencerville

- Sligo Avenue- (1976, renovated 1985)

Address: Sligo Avenue Neighborhood Park, 500 Sligo Avenue, Silver Spring

⁷ Until 1984, M-NCPPC-owned Park Activity buildings were the only publicly owned rental options available to county citizens. Since then, the Montgomery County Recreation Department, Montgomery County Board of Education, and Montgomery County Public Libraries have provided other alternatives.

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Candidate(s) for Preservation:

- Viers Mill: eligible for the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*
- Tilden Woods: future consideration for the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation* in **2015**.

Both Viers Mill and Glenmont-Connecticut Avenue Recreation Centers⁸ were constructed in the Wheaton vicinity and both opened in May 1954 – several years prior to the opening of Wheaton Regional Park in 1961. Their dedication ceremonies occurred on the same day, at 10 AM for Viers Mill Local Park and the “formal send-off” an hour-and-a-half later at Glenmont Local Park.⁹ At a cost of \$45,000 per structure, these new facilities included “community rooms, kitchen facilities, porches, and storage space.”¹⁰ In fact, these structures have the exact same floor plan. The larger activity room has a smaller side ell attachment containing the bathrooms, but initially it was utilized as an apartment most likely for Parks staff (usually a Ranger and/or Manager). The kitchen and storage closets are located in between the main block and the ell. With the completion of these two buildings, there were 33 recreation centers in Montgomery County.

The Viers Mill Village Recreation Center represents a Mid-Century Modern example of architecture applied to a community building. It was potentially designed by M-NCPPC Landscape Architect R. H. Porsch.¹¹ The structure has the trademark characteristics of the style: A massive exterior brick chimney that pierces through the eaves to the roofline; a substantial overhanging front eave over an open covered terrace; fenestration pattern based upon a standard module; an open interior floor plan; and a simple, unadorned style. The other character defining component was a large picture window. This feature has been bricked-in at both Viers Mill and Glenmont. Three newer casement windows, each with transom above, have been installed at Lynnbrook and have metal mesh exterior coverings. These large windows were bricked-in, probably in the 1970s, to resolve a host of problems, including high energy cost, vandalism, cost of broken glass by accidental breakage, and to ensure privacy for pay-use patrons.

The building’s *Preliminary Development Plan and Planting Plan* dates to March 1954, coinciding with the development of the surrounding community. The original planting plan for the recreation building site included American Holly, Flowering Dogwood, American Redbud, Pink Indigo Azalea, and other decorative plants situated right up close up to the building, none of which appear to remain today.

⁸Now known as Glenmont Recreation Center.

⁹“Recreation Centers Will Be Dedicated,” *Washington Post* 29 April 1954.

¹⁰“New Play Spots for County,” *Washington Post* 2 May 1954.

¹¹There are no known original architectural drawings for the Veirs Mill Recreation Building at Parkside. However, an undated drawing of Glenmont was produced by Landscape Architect R. H. Porsch. Both facilities have the same plan.

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Today Veirs Mill Recreation Center remains an excellent example of the standardization process seen in mid-20th century Montgomery County recreational facilities. It serves as an intact representative reminder of this important period of expansion within the Parks system.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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M-NCPPC Archives, Saddlebrook. Collection includes M-NCPPC *Annual Reports*.
M-NCPPC Papers (Minutes/Proceedings), Maryland State Archives
Viers Mill File, Parkside.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property 64.39 acres (originally part of Rock Creek Stream Valley Park)
Acreage of historical setting 17.52 acres (Veirs Mill Local Park)
Quadrangle name Kensington Quadrangle scale: 1:24000

Verbal boundary description and justification

The historic environmental setting includes that part of the parcel associated with the recreation building and its functions in the Veirs Mill Local Park. The additional acreage in the parcel that is associated with Rock Creek Stream Valley Park (Units 4 and 5 of the original park acquisition) does not function in association with the recreation building, and are therefore not part of the setting.

11. Form Prepared by

name/title	Jamie F. Kuhns, Senior Historian, Cultural Resources Stewardship Section		
organization	M-NCPPC, Montgomery Parks	date	15 August 2013
street & number	9500 Brunett Avenue	telephone	301-450-4362
city or town	Silver Spring	state	MD

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
Maryland Department of Planning
100 Community Place
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023
410-514-7600

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Figure 1. USGS Kensington Quad. Courtesy: M-NCPPC.

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Figure 2. Tax Map: Property P606. Recreation Center marked with an X. Courtesy: M-NCPPC.

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Figure 3. Aerial view of Veirs Mill Recreation Center, 2008. Courtesy: M-NCPPC.

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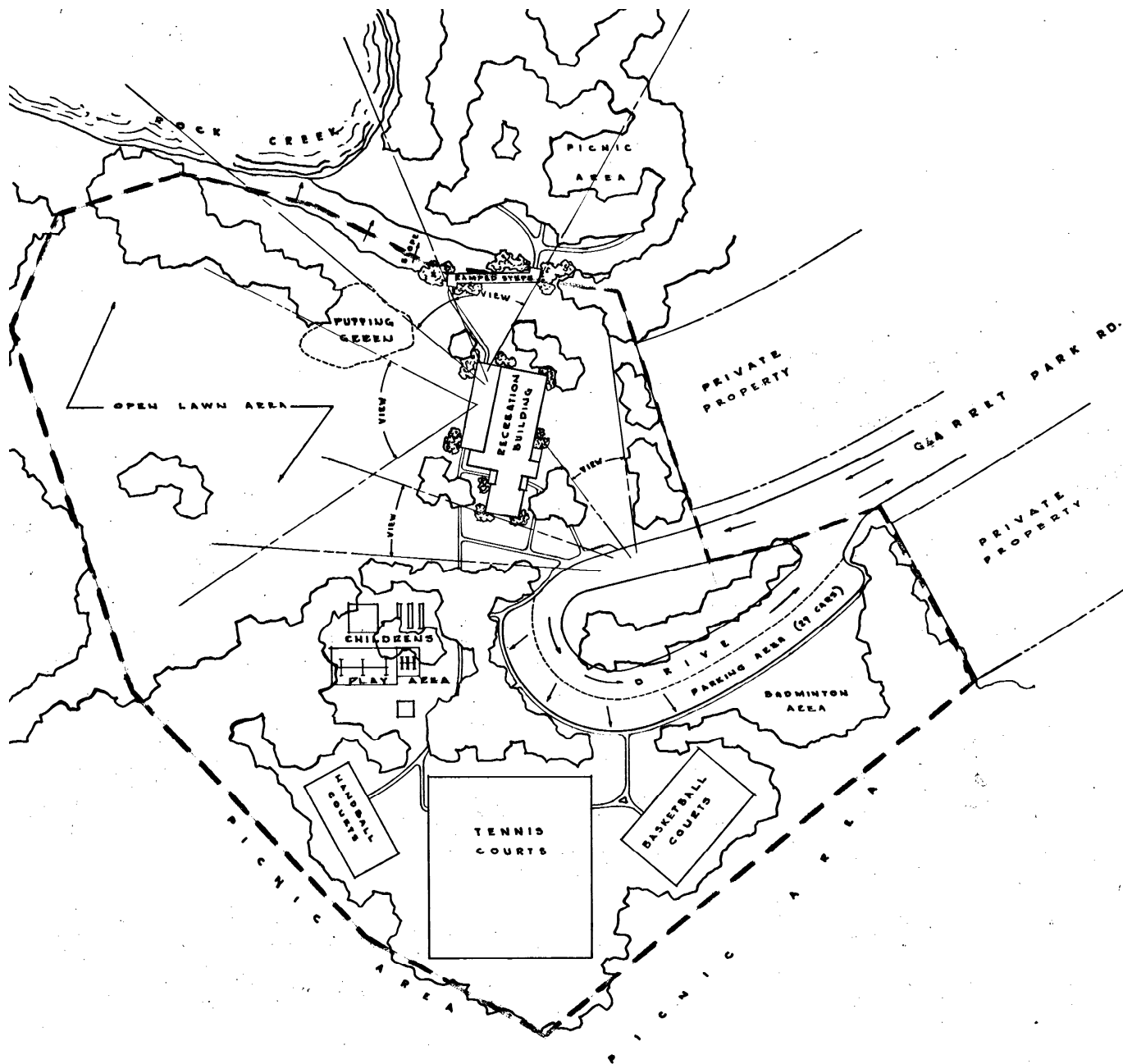


Figure 4. "Preliminary Development Plan for Veirs Mill Recreation Center, 1954." Courtesy: M-NCPPC.

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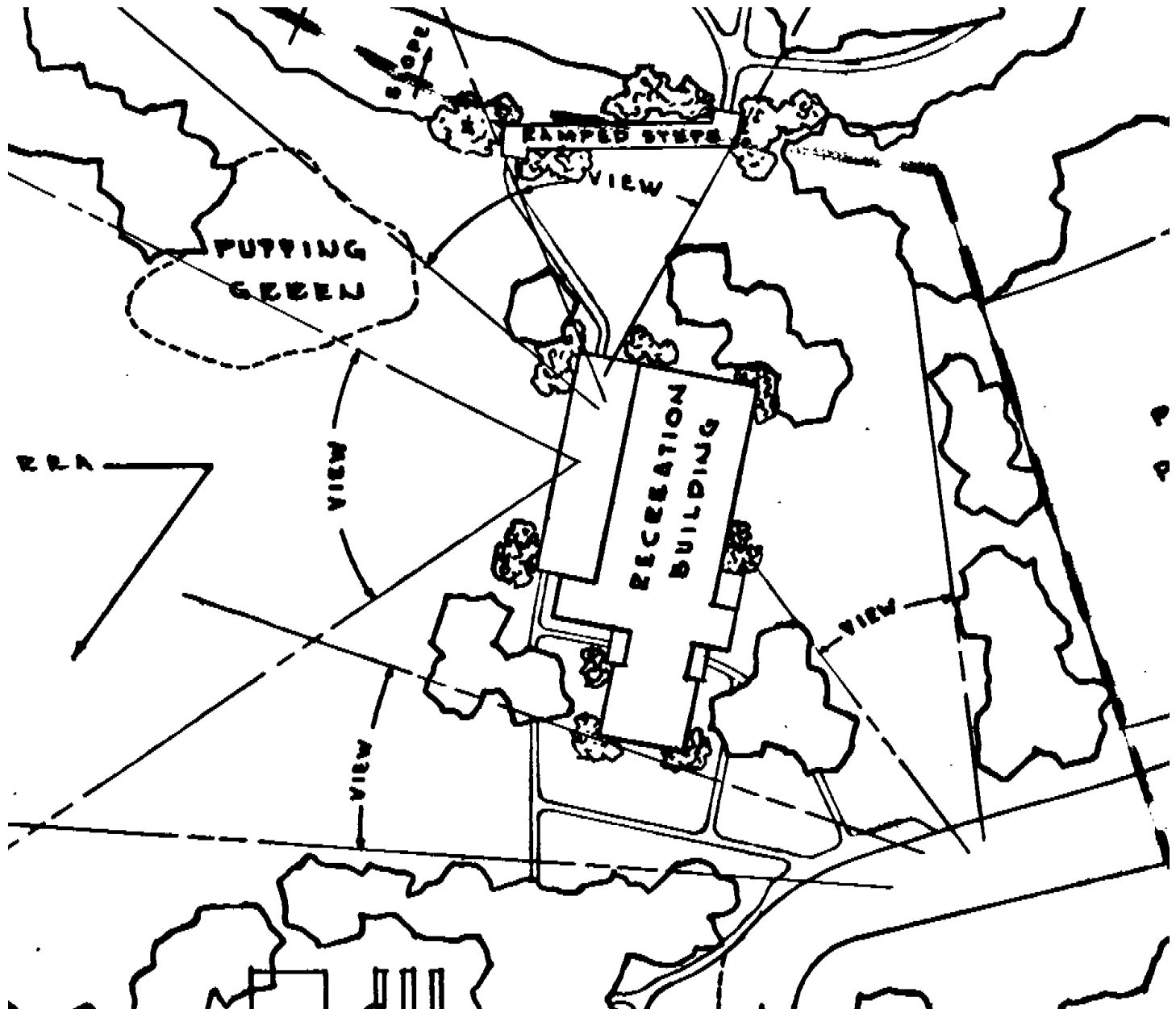


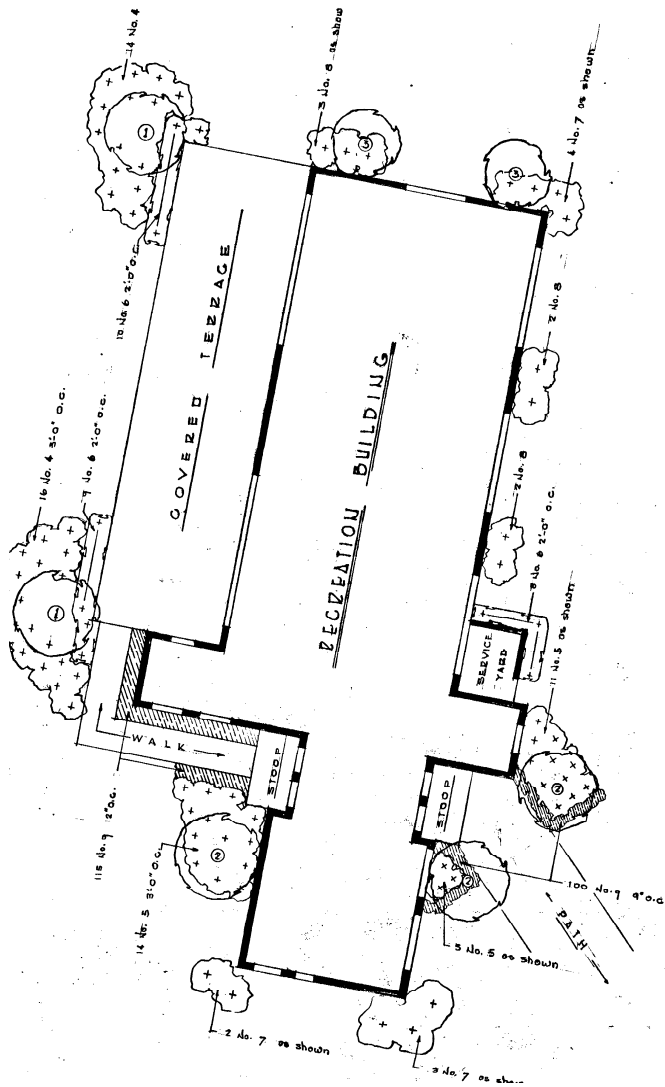
Figure 5. Detail, Veirs Mill Recreation Building, from 1954 "Preliminary Development Plan". Courtesy: M-NCPPC.

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PLANTING PLAN FOR VIERS MILL VILLAGE RECREATION CENTER

SCALE: $\frac{1}{8}'' = 1'-0''$ MARCH 29, 1954

PLANT LIST

NO.	BOTANICAL NAME	COMMON NAME	SIZE	TYPE	QUANTITY
1	ILEX OPACA	AMERICAN HOLLY	8'-10'	D&B	2
2	CORNUS FLORIDA	FLOWERING DOGWOOD	8'-10'	D&B	3
3	CERCIS CANADENSIS	AMERICAN REDBUD	6'-8'	D&B	2
4	AZALEA IUDICA ROSEA	PINK IUDICA AZALEA	10'-24'	D&B	30
5	ABELIA GRANDIFLORA	GLOSSY ABELIA	2'-2 1/2'	D&B	14
6	BERRBERIS JULIANAE	WHITEGLOBE BARBERY	2'-2 1/2'	D&B	27
7	PYRACANTHA COCC. LALANDI	LALAND FIRETHORN	3'-4'	CAUS	9
8	EUONYMUS ALATUS	WINGED EUONYMUS	3'-4'	BR	7
9	VIUCA MINOR	PERWINKLE	3 YR.	BR	215

Figure 6. "Planting Plan for Veirs Mill Village Recreation Center," 1954. Courtesy: M-NCPPC.

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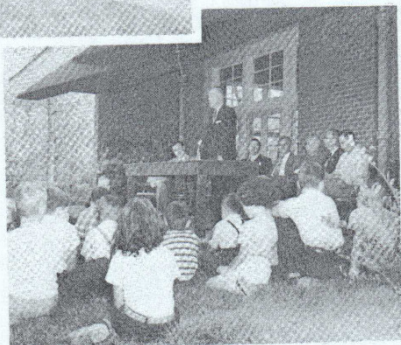
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Park Commissioner Sidney M. Oliver (center, wearing glasses) presents key to the Glenmont-Connecticut Avenue Community Building at dedication ceremonies. At Mr. Oliver's right is Commissioner Herbert W. Wells.



Commissioner Wells speaking at ceremonies dedicating the Veirs Mill Village Community Building. The two structures cost a total of \$90,000.

Interior of the Glenmont-Connecticut Avenue Community Building, located at Bluhill and Randolph Roads. The same plan was used for both buildings.



Exterior of the Veirs Mill Village Community Building, located at Ivy Glen and Garrett Park Roads, near Dewey Road.

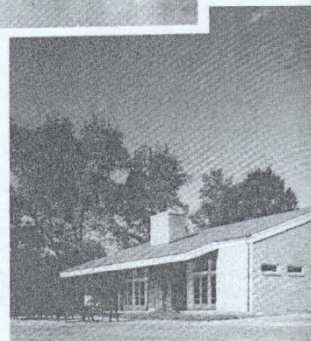


Figure 7. Documentation of the official opening and dedication of both "Veirs Mill Village Community Building" and "Glenmont-Community Buildings" appeared in the *M-NCPPC Annual Report 1954-1955*. Courtesy: M-NCPPC.

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Figure 8. Veirs Mill Recreation Building, west (front) elevation.

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Figure 9. View of Viers Mill Recreation Building, northwest corner.

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Figure 10. View of Veirs Mill Recreation Building, south elevation.

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Figure 11. View of Veirs Mill Recreation Building, east (rear) elevation.

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Figure 12. View of Viers Mill Recreation building, east (rear) elevation.

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Figure 13. View of Veirs Mill Recreation Building, north elevation.

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Figure 14. Interior detail of open space, Veirs Mill Recreation Building.