

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER/GEORGIA REGISTER NOMINATION

Name: Community House

Location: 10512 Ford Avenue, Richmond Hill, Bryan County

Description: The Community House is a two-story, Colonial Revival-style building located on Ford Avenue, one of Richmond Hill's main thoroughfares, and it served as a community space for several decades, providing social and home economics training for the area's white girls. The cross-gabled, wood-clad building has a wraparound porch, central gabled dormer, gable end brick chimneys, and a central entrance with sidelights. The front portion of the building contains a foyer, lounge, dining room, and former industrial kitchen on the first floor, while front portion of the second floor is fully occupied by a dance hall with wood paneled walls and ceilings, exposed wood trusses, and two stone fireplaces for hosting community dances. The rear portion of the building has numerous dormitory-style bedrooms with ensuite bathrooms on both floors. In 1997, a one-story chapel addition was constructed on the northwest elevation and is connected to the main building via a gabled hyphen.

Acreage & Boundary Explanation: 1.42 acres, following the legal boundary for the property

Period of Significance: 1936-1950

NR Criterion & Area of Significance: Criterion A, Social History and Social History: Women's History

Statement of Significance: The Community House is significant under Criterion A in the area of Social History for its association with Henry Ford's investment in and development of the community formerly known as Ways Station. In the 1920s, Ford and his wife Clara Bryant Ford adopted the community because of its agricultural potential and to exercise Ford's social vision. This building was one of nearly 300 constructed by Ford to help implement that vision, which proposed to, among other things, expand the horizons of the young white girls in the area, who would in turn, elevate the entire community as they became wives and mothers and who would thereby improve the lives of their husbands and children. All parts of Ford's vision were meant to support his ideas of proper social standards, and he approved all the center's activities and programs. These focused on instruction in home arts, domestic science, etiquette, and dance. The building is also significant in the area of Social History: Women's History as it was purpose built to convey opportunities for young white girls to improve their socioeconomic status, reflecting the values and gender roles of the white demographic present in the South at the time.

Suggested Level of Significance: Local

Sponsor: The nomination is sponsored by the City of Richmond Hill, and nomination materials were prepared by Ethos Preservation.

