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: Sherburn Community Building
   Other names/site number: N/A
   Name of related multiple property listing: "Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1941"
   (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location
   Street & number: 116 N Main Street
   City or town: Sherburn
   State: MN
   County: Martin
   Not For Publication: N/A
   Vicinity: N/A

3. State/Federal Agency Certification
   As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
   I hereby certify that this 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 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
   local
   Applicable National Register Criteria:

   X

   Signature of certifying official/Title: Deputy SHPO, MN Dept. of Admin. Date: 9/3/2021

   In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

   Signature of commenting official: State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

   Title: State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government
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

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private: ☐

Public – Local ☑

Public – State ☐

Public – Federal ☐

Category of Property

(Check only one box.)

Building(s) ☑

District ☐

Site ☐

Structure ☐

Object ☐
Sherburn Community Building
Name of Property

Martin, Minnesota
County and State

**Number of Resources within Property**
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contributing</th>
<th>Noncontributing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

buildings

sites

structures

objects

Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

6. **Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**
(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/Theater and Community Building
SOCIAL/Meeting Hall

**Current Functions**
(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/Theater and Community Building
SOCIAL/Meeting Hall
7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

________________________________________

MODERN MOVEMENT/Art Deco

________________________________________

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)
Principal exterior materials of the property: Concrete

________________________________________

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a summary paragraph that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Sherburn Community Building is a two-story, rectangular, flat-roofed building constructed of reinforced concrete located between Front and Second Streets at 116 Main Street in Sherburn, Martin County, Minnesota. The building was constructed in 1940 by the City of Sherburn with assistance from the Works Progress Administration (WPA). The building is north of the Sherburn Commercial Historic District, which is comprised of buildings constructed circa 1898 to 1905 typical of early rural railroad communities.

The front façade of the Sherburn Community Building showcases the words “COMMUNITY BUILDING” stamped in concrete above second floor glass block windows. These glass block windows, while replacements of the original double-hung windows, do not alter the size or shape of the window openings. The main entrance leads into a lobby with a concession stand, auditorium, bathrooms, crying room, and original box office. The second floor contains the council chambers, theater projection room, and a vault. The basement contains a community hall with a platform, storage room, kitchen, check room, and a utilities room.

The building’s architectural details reflect the Art Deco style associated with Federal Relief Construction in the New Deal era despite exterior alterations and updates. The interior floor plan remains relatively unchanged from its 1940 completion, with minor updates to amenities such as
restrooms and lighting fixtures. The building’s sustained use within the community showcases its continued importance for cultural and public activities.

Narrative Description

Location

The community of Sherburn, Minnesota, is located in the southern portion of Martin County, approximately 10 miles north of the Iowa border (Figure #1). Sherburn is located between the communities of Alpha and Welcome, Minnesota. It is south of Interstate 90 and MN 4 (N Main Street) runs roughly north-south through the downtown area.

The Sherburn Community Building is located at 116 N Main Street, on original lots 11 & 12 Block 4 (Figure #2). The Sherburn Community Building is immediately adjacent to two other buildings. The building to the north located at 118 N Main Street, is a two-story brick building. The building to the south located at 110 N Main Street, is a single-story brick building that currently is home to a business called Custom Computers & Software. Along N Main Street between W 1st and 2nd Streets, there are a total of six existing buildings with entrances along N Main Street (Figures #2-#3, Photos #1-#2). One lot, located at 100 N Main Street, is currently vacant. To the east of this lot and across the alley is Sherburn City Hall. The City’s water tower is located in the backlot of City Hall, near the intersection of W 2nd Street and N Manyaska Street.

With assistance in the form of funds and labor from the Works Progress Administration (WPA), the City of Sherburn constructed a Community Building at 116 Main Street, which was “finally finished” in 1940.1 The primary façade faces Main Street to the west, with a roughly east-west building orientation.

Exterior

The Sherburn Community Building is a two-story, flat-roofed, poured concrete building with a rectangular footprint. The building was constructed by the City of Sherburn, with assistance from the WPA, beginning in the late 1930s, with construction completed in 1940. The style of the building sets it apart from the surrounding structures. The building’s origins and New Deal Era association are visibly apparent as the only Art Deco construction in the downtown area.

The Sherburn Community Building is 140 feet in length (roughly east-west) and 50 feet in width (roughly north-south) and faces Main Street (Photo #2). The building is attached to the south and north to the buildings at 110 Main Street and 118 Main Street, respectively. The exterior of the building is poured concrete construction.

The first story of the primary façade contains four doors, two on each side of a central ticket window. The central doors lead into the theater lobby. The northernmost door leads to a staircase

---

that provides access to the basement, first, and second floors. The southernmost door leads to a room labeled “rest room” on the historic plans, which may have been a lady’s lounge. A small awning and painted sign are set within a stylized sign band above the entrance assembly. The second-floor fenestration consists of a central rectangular opening, previously three double-hung windows, filled with glass block. Flanking this is a pair of equally spaced window openings, historically holding single double hung windows. All openings are currently filled with glass block with a centered, single fixed pane window. The words “COMMUNITY BUILDING” are stamped in concrete along the upper second floor. The outermost windows and the integrated theater poster boxes are set off by a slight recess, topped with a decorative concrete panel. The recessed panel stretches from the ground to the parapet and is reminiscent of a pilaster.

The sides of the building, the north and south elevations, are constructed of flat poured concrete with no molding and do not have any windows. The rear of the building, the east elevation, has single, small, double-hung window centered above two, single doors at each of the corners of the building. The firebrick chimney is centered in the middle of the building on the rear façade (Photos #3-#4).

The exterior of the building has undergone some changes from the time of original construction. The windows on the primary façade have been replaced, along with the doors. Though all openings retain their historic sizes. The windows, now glass block with a center, fixed pane window, were originally double hung with horizontal glass panes. The four door openings were previously ¾ light double doors but are now full light, single doors with full sidelight and transoms. In 2001 the concrete exterior of the building was cleaned with chemical acid and spalled concrete was patched. The roof of the building was also replaced in 2001. It is possible that the historic skylight was removed at that time, although the date is unknown. A new furnace, central air system, and thermostats were installed in the basement in 2004.

The original marquee was removed prior to 1985. A more “modern” awning that ran the full length of the front of the building was installed following the removal of the marquee but was removed due to safety concerns in 2001. The desire is to install a marquee that will be a replica of the original (1940), to restore its historic aesthetic. A new marquee clock/memorial was installed at the second floor in 1950. The clock commemorates the World War II veterans of Sherburn.

The sidewalk in front of the building originally contained four sections of glass block that would be illuminated from the basement level. These were paved over, though the exact timing is unknown. The chimney on the rear exterior of the building is still present, composed of fire brick. Additional utilities are now found on the roof at the exterior of the building (air conditioning element, flue).

---

2 Brad Hughes, City Administrator, City of Sherburn. Personal communication, 2021.
**Interior**

**First Floor**
The first floor of the Sherburn Community Building contains the theater/auditorium and related elements. The table below lists the noted rooms/elements that comprise the first floor, any notes included in the original (1936) Community Building plans (Figure #4), the present (2020) observed condition, and notes of any known alterations based upon City of Sherburn records.

The central doors open to the lobby. The box office has a corresponding fixed, rectangular window at the building entrance, the space for which is located between the two entry doors (Photo #5). A concession stand is located against the north wall. Beyond the set of interior doors, the men’s restroom is to the north, and a crying room is located to the south (Photo #6). Beyond this the auditorium has three rows of theater seats, with two aisles. The floor slopes down to the stage that is flanked north and east by two doorways with stairs that lead to the stage entrance and dressing rooms at the extreme northeast and southeast corners of the building (Photo #7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Room/Element Name</th>
<th>1936 Plan Notes</th>
<th>2020 Condition</th>
<th>Known Alterations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lobby</td>
<td>Cement floor finish; Box office</td>
<td>Box office present; cement floor finish to entrance door, carpeted area before entrance to auditorium</td>
<td>Carpeting of portion of lobby; addition of doors between lobby and auditorium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men’s restroom</td>
<td>Cement floor finish, metal toilet stalls</td>
<td>Remodeled: tiled, ADA toilets, no metal stalls, intended to be single occupant</td>
<td>Tiled, metal stalls removed; toilet updated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s restroom</td>
<td>Cement floor finish</td>
<td>Cement floor finish; no longer restroom, now storage</td>
<td>No longer restroom, now storage; toilet, sink, etc. removed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crying room</td>
<td>Cement floor finish</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Reupholstered chairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditorium</td>
<td>Cement floor finish; concrete walls</td>
<td>Cement floors with carpeted aisles; wood paneling over concrete walls</td>
<td>Aisle carpeting; reupholstered chairs; LED lightbulbs (in original lighting fixtures on wall); ceiling lights and fans replaced; speaker updates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage</td>
<td>Hardwood finish floor</td>
<td>Same with additional composite stage; wood paneling on wall</td>
<td>Stage platform extended into auditorium ca. 2014-2015,3 stairs leading to addition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dressing rooms off stage</td>
<td>Cement floor finish</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The theater seats in the auditorium were taken apart and reupholstered, repadded, rusted areas were sanded, dents were fixed, and chairs were painted in 1989. The stage and entrance door curtains were also replaced the same year, as were ceiling lights and fans. Carpeted elements appear to have been installed in 1990.

---

3 Brad Hughes, personal communication 2021.
The basement of the Sherburn Community Building contains a community space/hall and related elements. The table below lists the noted rooms/elements that comprise the basement level, any notes included in the original (1936) Community Building plans (Figure #5), the present (2020) observed condition, and notes of any known alterations based upon City of Sherburn records.

A staircase that is accessed by the northernmost exterior door leads down to the basement corridor. The corridor is flanked by a storage room, coat check room, and an entrance to the platform. At the south end of the corridor there are women’s and men’s restrooms to the west. The dining hall has a platform north of the corridor entrance that is enclosed on three sides (Photo #8). At the eastern end of the room are the kitchen and boiler room, along with two sets of stairs to the north and south that lead to the rear building exits. Two closets are located north and south of the staircases.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Room/Element Name</th>
<th>1936 Plan Notes</th>
<th>2020 Condition</th>
<th>Known Alterations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dining Hall</td>
<td>Hard Maple Floor</td>
<td>Appears unchanged. Florescent lights on ceiling, ceiling fans</td>
<td>Hanging speakers likely not original</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corridor</td>
<td>Cement finish floor</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Platform</td>
<td>Hard Maple Floor</td>
<td>Hard Maple Floor; carpeted and raised portion nearest building entrance</td>
<td>Carpeted and raised portion nearest building entrance, not noted on original plan; unknown if original</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check room</td>
<td>Cement floor; counter at entrance.</td>
<td>Appears unchanged</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storage room off stairway at front of building</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s &amp; Men’s restrooms; closet between restrooms</td>
<td>Cement floor, metal toilet stalls</td>
<td>Remodeled: tiled, ADA toilets, no metal stalls, intended to be single occupant. Closet between restrooms still present</td>
<td>Tiled, metal stalls removed; toilet/urinal updated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boiler room/Coal room</td>
<td>Cement floor</td>
<td>Room appears unchanged</td>
<td>Updates to utilities; not for coal storage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen</td>
<td>Cement finish floor</td>
<td>Vinyl flooring</td>
<td>Vinyl likely laid over original cement floor; updates to appliances, likely countertops also</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closets off staircases at rear of building</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staircases</td>
<td>Cement finish</td>
<td>Same, with stairlift</td>
<td>Installation of ADA stairlift on entrance stairs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Second Floor
The second floor of the Sherburn Community Building contains the council chambers and theater projection room. As noted on the plans, the second floor is accessed by the stair previously described and it is not a full floor. The table below lists the noted rooms/elements that
The Sherburn Community Building retains a high level of integrity. The essential physical features of the structure convey its historic identity and ties to the Art Deco movement, an architectural style somewhat synonymous with New Deal era construction. The building conveys its integrity of location, design, setting, workmanship feeling, and association. The poured concrete building exterior is unchanged but has been subject to cleaning through the years. The “COMMUNITY BUILDING” lettering near the top of the second floor and the restrained Art Deco styling indicative of the WPA construction of the building also remains unchanged.

Some building exterior elements have been modified through time. As noted, doors and windows have been replaced, but the frames of these elements conform to their original form. The original marquee has been removed, replaced by a memorial/clock installed below the building lettering, and for a short time a “modern” awning was installed above the first-floor doors that has since been removed.

The interior layout remains largely unchanged from the 1936 building plans. Amenities such as restrooms, kitchen appliances, and seating have been updated. The skylight has been removed but the brick chimney on the exterior rear of the building appears to remain unchanged. Additional utilities are now found on the roof at the exterior of the building (air conditioning element, flue).

A copy of the architectural plans for the Sherburn Community Building is kept in the City’s historic files. The plans list Albert G. Plagens of New Ulm, Minnesota, as the architect and the plan number is noted to be 230 and dated September of 1936. Figures comprise the second floor, any notes included in the original (1936) Community Building plans (Figure #6), the present (2020) observed condition, and notes of any known alterations based upon City of Sherburn records.
Sherburn Community Building                       Martin, Minnesota

Name of Property                                  County and State

#11-#19 include the nine plan pages. The floorplan today remains the same as that pictured in the 1936 plans, as shown in the internal sketch maps (Figures #4-#6) and accompanying photographs (Photos #5-#10).
Sherburn Community Building
Name of Property

Martin, Minnesota
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- 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
(Mark “x” in all the boxes that apply.)

- 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
Sherburn Community Building
Name of Property

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)
ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance
1940-1971

Significant Dates
1940

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Albert G. Plagens; Works Progress Administration
The Sherburn Community Building is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A. The building is considered locally significant because it was the first, and only, indoor community gathering space once construction was completed in 1940. The building is still used today as the City’s only movie theater and local theater production venue, and the basement is still used as a meeting place. The continued use by the community as its only indoor public gathering space for the arts and other public uses highlights the Sherburn Community Building significance within the community’s social fabric. The Sherburn Community Building is also eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C. The building is considered significant at the local level as the only example of Art Deco architecture in the City of Sherburn. This construction type is often associated with, and emotive of, New Deal era Federal Relief Construction within the state and country. While the Sherburn Community Building plans date to 1936, the period of significance begins when WPA construction concluded in 1940 through its continued use into 1971, the fifty-year threshold for property eligibility without criteria considerations. The building has always served as a symbol of pride, heritage, and patriotism for the citizens of Sherburn. The building retains sufficient integrity to convey its historic significance, despite some exterior alterations and interior updates.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Sherburn Commercial Historic District NRHP form includes a detailed history of the downtown portion of Sherburn. An overview of the history of Sherburn drawing upon the NRHP Form and other data is found below.

Martin County Pre-EuroAmerican Settlement

The area that is now called Martin County borders the state of Iowa. The county is in State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) Archaeological Region 2s: Prairie Lakes South. The landscape of the county is one of a typical ground moraine, with hilly end moraines in the southern portions. There are numerous lakes in the area, but none are very deep. Martin County was covered in tall grass prairie at the time of EuroAmerican settlement. Resources would have included bison, other herds of large ungulates, and numerous other smaller fauna near lakes. Previously recorded precontact archaeological sites within Martin County are clustered near large, stable water bodies.

---

4 Theobald. *Centennial History of Sherburn.*
The land that would come to be called Martin County was acquired by the United States government in 1851 from Dakota land cession treaties. Martin County became a county officially on May 23, 1857, with Fair Mount (Fairmont) the designated county seat.

Before the official founding of Sherburn, the location that would come to be known as such in Martin County housed a sod tavern owned by George Archer that served as a resting point for travelers between Fairmont and Springfield. A prairie post office was established for the approximately one hundred pioneers in the area. Stagecoach lines from Fairmont to Jackson and St. James to Estherville crossed this location until 1878.

_Southern Minnesota Railroad Towns_

The mid to late 1870s witnessed the arrival of many settlers to Martin County. Growth in this area was largely spurred by the railroad constructed through the middle of Martin County. Cargill, Bassett, and Hunting, a company from La Crosse, Wisconsin, purchased the land that is now Sherburn in anticipation of the westward expansion of the railroad from Fairmont. Steam locomotives during this period required water frequently, with related infrastructure located approximately every 15 miles. The townsite, previously referred to as Lone Cedar for a post office near the location, was called Sherburn after Sherburne S. Merrill, the general manager of the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad.

In 1878 the Southern Minnesota Railroad line was constructed, and the townsite of Sherburn was platted in 1884. Commerce in the townsite received a boost when another railroad, the Minneapolis and St. Louis rail line, was built through town. Typical of an early railroad community, businesses were mostly wood framed structures that were replaced by second generation brick buildings. Many of the downtown commercial buildings lining N Main Street extant today were constructed in the 1890s to early 1900s.

Block 4 of the downtown area, which would eventually be the site of the Community Building, has seen significant changes through time. The Community Building is currently located in Lots 11 and 12 of Block 4. According to Bureau of Land Management records, the original property holder for T102N, R32W, Section 7 was George P. Munger. The Village of Sherburn acquired Block 4, Lots 11 and 12 from John F. Yurek as a quit claim deed in August of 1936 (Record #129919). Yurek had acquired the property from the Sinclair Estate Inc. in 1935 (Record #131061). The property appears to have been held largely by someone with the last name “Sinclair” since around 1897 (Record #24160). In January of 2001, the City of Sherburn granted Block 4, Lots 11 and 12 to the Public by declaration (Record #350230).

---

9 Theobald. _Centennial History of Sherburn_.
10 Theobald. _Centennial History of Sherburn_.
A 1913 Sanborn Fire Insurance map shows a Cement Block Factory toward the middle of Lot 12 – Block 4, though it is noted that “Bldg. to Be Removed” (Figure #7). A 10-foot-wide structure is located on the western portion of Lot 11 – Block 4 on the 1913 map but noted to be “Vac. S.” indicating a vacant store. Both of these buildings are noted to be of wooden frame construction. By 1928 a Sanborn map shows Lots 11 and 12 of Block 4 to be vacant (Figure #8). A historic photograph also demonstrates a vacant space in the lots immediately before construction of the Community Building (Figure #9).

Agriculture has always been present in Sherburn and within Martin County, though not without struggle and market fluctuations. Early settlers in the area were Englishmen intent on becoming rich on large bean monocrops.12 The 1870s grasshopper plague hit Sherburn in its early years, which decimated the bean crops, as well as the marginal tobacco crops. Approximately one quarter to one half of the grain crops were salvaged.13 Many Englishmen left the county after the plague and ensuing immigration from other western European countries changed the agricultural makeup of the area. By 1920, corn was the primary crop supplemented by sugar beets and dairy farming, evidenced by the three grain elevators and multiple creameries within the City of Sherburn at the time.14 Despite this diversification after the grasshopper plague, Sherburn and Martin County were greatly impacted by the Great Depression.

The Great Depression Reaches Southern Minnesota

The Great Depression was an economic crisis that resulted in a drop in income of more than one third for the average family in the United States from 1929 to 1933.15 Preceding the economic collapse, prices for crops and livestock fell through the 1920s and farmers struggled to produce even more product to pay for their expenses. By the 1930s prices fell so low that many farmers went bankrupt, losing farm properties that had been in their families for generations. City dwellers also suffered during the Great Depression, as these families could not produce food to feed their families and enrolled for welfare assistance.16

Hollywood’s “Golden Age”

The 1930s also was a period of increased interest in watching films in movie theaters; the decade is referred to as the “Golden Age” of cinema, which produced some of Hollywood’s most salient works.17 In response to the economic crisis gripping the nation, theater owners lowered admission prices, and the public flocked to the theaters. Movies served as a form of escapism

---

from daily pressures and anxiety, particularly with the fallout of the Great Depression and the tense global events leading up to World War II.

New Deal Era Federal Relief Associated Programs

The New Deal era from 1933 to 1939 ushered in the advent of dozens of agencies and programs that were created by various laws and executive orders. Not only were new programs and agencies created, but some existing programs were expanded during this period. Some of the agencies and programs only existed for a few short years, and others changed names mid-course. Numerous programs existed with wide-ranging purposes, including those related to art, theater, and historic records inventories, to name a few.

The most commonly known programs of the New Deal era were those that were newly created and tied to Public Works. Programs such as the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) are two such examples. The Civil Works Administration (CWA), founded in 1933, served as the model for the later WPA. The WPA, founded in 1935, was the largest of the public works programs, involved the broadest range of projects, and hired unemployed individuals. The CCC, founded in 1933, conducted work largely in parklands and in rural areas, and was staffed by unemployed and unskilled young men. Both of these programs are noted to have set up transient camps for workers during some projects. The CCC included a special work division, the CCC-ID (Indian Division), that was very active in Minnesota parks and historic sites.

Programs such as the Public Works Administration (PWA), founded in 1933, hired private contractors to construct large-scale, state-proposed projects. The Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), founded in 1933, awarded grants at the state-level for programs to hire the unemployed, along with providing relief payments to the indigent.

Sherburn Builds a Community Space

In 1920 a Community Hall for Sherburn was proposed. The Sherburn Advance-Standard newspaper documents that the “building [is] needed badly and plans should be made to start soliciting soon” and furthermore that the proposal was backed by the American Legion. The March 4, 1920, article notes that “at present our town is sadly lacking in facilities for the

---

22 The Living New Deal Website: Projects in Minnesota.
23 The Living New Deal Website: Projects in Minnesota.
wholesome amusement and entertainment of its younger generation, to say nothing about the older folks.” The article goes on to discuss the desired building design:

The main floor would contain the auditorium proper with a stage large enough to handle all attractions that would be desired here. This floor would also be equipped with rest rooms, toilets, etc… The basement would contain banquet hall, kitchen, furnace and coal rooms…

The article notes that the building will be used by townspeople and “farmer neighbors.” The article calls for a call to action by the community to boost the project and see it become realized. The project was not to be realized, however, until over a decade later.

In 1935 a petition to pave the Main Street roadway with WPA funds was made. In 1936 a reported $14,000 in bonds were sold at 2 ¾ percent interest for the community hall, which was to also use WPA funds. In 1938 the community hall cost is noted to have risen to $50,000, and in 1940 the community hall is noted to have been “finally finished.”

In 1935 a petition to pave the Main Street roadway with WPA funds was made. In 1936 a reported $14,000 in bonds were sold at 2 ¾ percent interest for the community hall, which was to also use WPA funds. In 1938 the community hall cost is noted to have risen to $50,000, and in 1940 the community hall is noted to have been “finally finished.”

Historic aerial imagery from 1938 of Sherburn shows the exterior of the building has been completed by at least this time. As the only known New Deal era Federal Relief building constructed in the City, the Sherburn Community Building is easily recognizable amid the neighboring downtown buildings (Figure #10). The Sherburn Community Building is listed in the WPA Accomplishments in Minnesota 1935-1939, clearly demonstrating the State’s pride of its New Deal funded projects.

The architect of the Community Building is Albert G. Plagens, a consulting architect from New Ulm, Minnesota. During the New Deal era Plagens worked on several WPA-sponsored projects. Plagens is responsible for the Public Library and Historical Museum in his hometown of New Ulm. The New Ulm Public Library and Historical Museum structure exemplifies the Moderne-style so common during this period. Several of Plagens’ New Ulm buildings are now listed as contributing resources to the New Ulm Commercial Historic District, including the Grand Theater, Waneeda Bakery/E.W. Baer Hardware/Ulrich Electric, and Dengler Store. His interpretation of the Streamline Moderne style also stemmed to transportation-related structures including the Split Rock Creek Bridge in Pipestone County, Minnesota.

Until the construction of the Community Building, Sherburn lacked a designated community meeting space. The Community Building also includes a movie theater, another recreational property type missing before the construction of this building. The theater remains the only movie theater within the community to the present (2021). In 2007 the community raised a substantial amount of money ($33,000) to pay for a new projector, surround sound, and screen for the theater.

---

27 Theobald, Centennial History of Sherburn.
28 Theobald, Centennial History of Sherburn.
30 Mead & Hunt, Inc. Minnesota Architecture History Inventory Form for a Local Historic Bridge Phase II Study in Eden Township, Pipestone, Minnesota. 2013. On file at SHPO.
31 Mead & Hunt, Inc. Local Historic Bridge Phase II Study in Eden Township.
The continued use of the Community Building largely reflects its intended use. The auditorium and stage have been used as a theater, both for productions and movies, since its construction. In 1956, the City of Sherburn ordered rent to be free for the theater in order to keep the theater in business.32 Still, in 2001, the movie theater was often filled during showings by the community, surrounding communities, and farming families living as far as Iowa.33 The basement is still used as a banquet/dining hall. The council chambers still host meetings for Sherburn’s various active groups and organizations, such as the Senior Citizens’ Club in the late 1960s,34 the Lions Club and Alcoholics Anonymous in the early 2000s,35 and the Sherburn Area Task Force in the early 2020s, a not-for-profit organization that engages community members to complete renovation and beautification projects throughout the city.36

Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1943 Historic Context

The Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) for Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota outlines the types of properties potentially eligible to the NRHP under the MPDF, along with some registration requirements by property type.37 Given the Sherburn Community Building’s association with the New Deal era, and specifically the WPA, this property is best evaluated under this context. The MPDF specifically discusses Social and Recreational Facilities, which includes Auditoriums and Community Buildings. In addition to being built using WPA funds (requirement 1) and constructed prior to 1943 (requirement 2) a property eligible under Criterion A must also be “an important project through size/scope of work, or number of people involved; represent a significant contribution to community (programs, amenities, recreational activities, community services) not previously available.”38 The Sherburn community building represents a significant contribution to the community, as no such space previously existed. A property can be eligible under Criteria C is a property meets requirements 1 and 2 (above) “if it is a distinctive construction method associated with Federal work programs of this period.”39 The Sherburn community building is a distinct local example of the Art Deco style. This style is commonly associated with municipal buildings constructed by the WPA.

Conclusion

Following review of the Multiple Property Document Form for Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1943, the Sherburn Community Building is eligible under National Register Criterion A because it was, and continues to be, a significant contribution to the community by being used as the first facility in Sherburn for social and recreational programs to the public. Completed in 1940, the Sherburn Community Building housed the City’s first movie theater, created space for local theatrical productions, and provided opportunity for the community to

---

32 Theobald, Centennial History of Sherburn, 13.
33 Kathy Bailey, Community Hall Building Restoration Grant Application. Minnesota Historical Society Grant Application Form. 2001. On file at Sherburn City Hall.
34 Theobald, Centennial History of Sherburn, 61.
35 Bailey. Community Hall Building Restoration Grant Application.
37 Anderson. Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1943.
gather. This community building has continued to serve the City of Sherburn as its only movie theater and indoor community center well after 1971 and into the 21st century, therefore showcasing that the building continues to be a significant community fixture in Sherburn.

Based upon review of the Multiple Property Document Form for Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1943 the Sherburn Community Building is also eligible for the National Register under Criterion C as the only existing local example of Federal Relief Construction and its distinctive Art Deco architectural style. The Sherburn Community Building is also distinct from the rest of the buildings in downtown Sherburn, which are currently comprised of 1890s-1900s and post-World War II era commercial buildings.
9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Government Land Office Records

Living New Deal Website

NRHP Form

NRHP MPDF

Sommer, Barbara W.

Theobald, Francis M.

Withrow, Russ

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:
_X_ State Historic Preservation Office
____ Other State agency
____ Federal agency
_X_ Local government
____ University
____ Other
Name of repository: _________________________________

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): MR-SHC-024

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property  less than one acre

UTM References
Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927  or  ☒ NAD 1983

1. Zone: 15  Easting: 360718  Northing: 4834901

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)
Lots 11 & 12 of Block 4 of the original plat of the City of Sherburn, Minnesota

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)
These city lots are the historic and present location of the Community Building.

11. Form Prepared By
Name/Title:  Jammi Ladwig & Danielle Kiesow; Cultural Resources Specialists
Organization:  Bolton & Menk, Inc.
Street & Number:  12224 Nicollet Avenue
City or Town:  Burnsville  State:  MN  Zip code:  55337
E-mail  jammi.ladwig@bolton-menk.com
Telephone:  507-594-0445
Date:  June 11, 2021
Sherburn Community Building                                        Martin, Minnesota
Name of Property                                                County and State

Additional Documentation
Submit the following items with the completed form:
- **Maps**: A USGS map (7.5 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch maps** keying all external and internal photographs.
- **Photo Log**

Name of Property: Sherburn Community Building
City or Vicinity: Sherburn  County: Martin  State: MN
Photographer: Jammi Ladwig  Date Photographed: 02/19/2020

Photo #1: (MN_MartinCounty_SherburnCommunityBuilding_001.jpg)
Sherburn Community Building, west façade, camera facing north

Photo #2: (MN_MartinCounty_SherburnCommunityBuilding_002.jpg)
Sherburn Community Building, west façade, camera facing northeast

Photo #3: (MN_MartinCounty_SherburnCommunityBuilding_003.jpg)
Sherburn Community Building, south and east facades, camera facing northwest

Photo #4: (MN_MartinCounty_SherburnCommunityBuilding_004.jpg)
Sherburn Community Building, east facade, camera facing west

Photo #5: (MN_MartinCounty_SherburnCommunityBuilding_005.jpg)
Sherburn Community Building, detail of the box office, camera facing northwest

Photo #6: (MN_MartinCounty_SherburnCommunityBuilding_006.jpg)
Sherburn Community Building, view of the crying room, camera facing southeast

Photo #7: (MN_MartinCounty_SherburnCommunityBuilding_007.jpg)
Sherburn Community Building, auditorium, camera facing east

Photo #8: (MN_MartinCounty_SherburnCommunityBuilding_008.jpg)
Sherburn Community Building, dining hall platform, camera facing northwest

Photo #9: (MN_MartinCounty_SherburnCommunityBuilding_009.jpg)
Sherburn Community Building, council chambers, camera facing northwest

Photo #10: (MN_MartinCounty_SherburnCommunityBuilding_010.jpg)
Sherburn Community Building, original vault door, camera facing east

Photo #11: (MN_MartinCounty_SherburnCommunityBuilding_011.jpg)
Sherburn Community Building, first floor stairs, camera facing east

Photo #12: (MN_MartinCounty_SherburnCommunityBuilding_012.jpg)
Sherburn Community Building, first floor “rest room,” camera facing southwest
List of Figures

Figure #1: USGS 7.5 Minute Topographic Map Detail, Sherburn Quad, 2016.

Figure #2: Aerial Site View, 2016 Google Earth Imagery.

Figure #3: Sketch map of external photograph locations surrounding the Sherburn Community Building.

Figure #4: Sketch map of photograph locations taken on the first floor of the Sherburn Community Building, overlaid on the original 1936 buildings plans designed by Albert G. Plagens, architect from New Ulm, Minnesota.

Figure #5: Sketch map of photograph locations taken on the basement floor of the Sherburn Community Building, overlaid on the original 1936 buildings plans designed by Albert G. Plagens, architect from New Ulm, Minnesota.

Figure #6: Sketch map of photograph locations taken on the second floor of the Sherburn Community Building, overlaid on the original 1936 buildings plans designed by Albert G. Plagens, architect from New Ulm, Minnesota.

Figure #7: 1913 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map showing a Cement Block Factory near the middle of Lot 12 – Block 4, though it is noted that the building would soon be removed (“Bldg. to Be Removed”). A 10-foot wide structure is located on the western portion of Lot 11 – Block 4, but noted that it was a vacant store (“Vac. S.”) at the time. Both these buildings are noted to be of wooden frame construction.

Figure #8: 1928 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map showing vacant Lots 11 and 12 of Block 4 as corroborated by photographs into the late 1930s.

Figure #9: 1938 Historic photograph of downtown Sherburn, showing the vacant Lots 11 and 12 of Block 4.

Figure #10: 1939 Historic photograph of the Sherburn Community Building, courtesy of MnHS Collections Online.

Figure #11: 1936 Sherburn Community Building Plan, page 1, showing the plot/parcel plan. Building plan designed by Albert G. Plagens, architect from New Ulm, Minnesota.
Figure #12: 1936 Sherburn Community Building Plan, page 2, detailing the basement and footing designs. Building plan designed by Albert G. Plagens, architect from New Ulm, Minnesota.

Figure #13: 1936 Sherburn Community Building Plan, page 3, detailing the first floor design. Building plan designed by Albert G. Plagens, architect from New Ulm, Minnesota.

Figure #14: 1936 Sherburn Community Building Plan, page 4, detailing the second floor design. Building plan designed by Albert G. Plagens, architect from New Ulm, Minnesota.

Figure #15: 1936 Sherburn Community Building Plan, page 5, showing the roof plan. Building plan designed by Albert G. Plagens, architect from New Ulm, Minnesota.

Figure #16: 1936 Sherburn Community Building Plan, page 6, showing the front elevation and thru-section of the building. Building plan designed by Albert G. Plagens, architect from New Ulm, Minnesota.

Figure #17: 1936 Sherburn Community Building Plan, Page 7, showing the half-front elevation, thru-section of front wall, and details regarding decorative motifs, corners, and window design. Building plan designed by Albert G. Plagens, architect from New Ulm, Minnesota.

Figure #18: 1936 Sherburn Community Building Plan, page 8, showing elevations on the north and south façades. Building plan designed by Albert G. Plagens, architect from New Ulm, Minnesota.

Figure #19: 1936 Sherburn Community Building Plan, page 9, detailing a thru-section of the building from east to west. Building plan designed by Albert G. Plagens, architect from New Ulm, Minnesota.
Sherburn Community Building
Name of Property
Martin County, Minnesota
County and State
Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1943
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure #1
Sherburn Community Building
Name of Property
Martin County, Minnesota
County and State
Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1943
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure #2
Sherburn Community Building
Name of Property
Martin County, Minnesota
County and State
Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1943
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure #3
Sherburn Community Building
Name of Property
Martin County, Minnesota
County and State
Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1943
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure #4

Figure #5
Sherburn Community Building
Name of Property
Martin County, Minnesota
County and State
Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1943
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure #6
Sherburn Community Building
Name of Property
Martin County, Minnesota
County and State
Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1943
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure #7
Sherburn Community Building
Name of Property
Martin County, Minnesota
County and State
Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1943
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number  Additional Information  Page  9

Figure #8
Sherburn Community Building
Name of Property
Martin County, Minnesota
County and State
Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota,
1933-1943
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Information Page 10
Sherburn Community Building
Name of Property
Martin County, Minnesota
County and State
Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1943
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure #11
National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section number</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure #12
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section number</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**National Register of Historic Places**

**Sherburn Community Building**

**Name of Property**

Martin County, Minnesota

**County and State**

Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1943

**Name of multiple listing (if applicable)**

*Figure #13*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section number</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sherburn Community Building**

**Name of Property**

Martin County, Minnesota

**County and State**

Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1943

**Name of multiple listing (if applicable)**

Figure #14
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section number</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure #15

Sherburn Community Building
Name of Property
Martin County, Minnesota

County and State
Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1943
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)
Sherburn Community Building
Name of Property
Martin County, Minnesota
County and State
Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1943
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure #16
Sherburn Community Building

Name of Property
Martin County, Minnesota

County and State
Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1943

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure #17
Sherburn Community Building
Name of Property
Martin County, Minnesota
County and State
Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1943
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure #18
Sherburn Community Building
Name of Property
Martin County, Minnesota
County and State
Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota,
1933-1943
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure #19