

## Shelters

Shelters at West Park have come and gone. There appears to be no record of the date when the first shelter was constructed, but in 1929 a new shelter was built at the site of the old one. What those structures looked like is a mystery, but apparently the second one was a small warming shed for ice-skating. During 1958-59 a new shelter designed by a local architect, a U-M professor, was constructed.. City Council minutes show:

### “RESOLUTION RE PARK SHELTER

Moved by councilman Burns that an architect be selected for the proposed park structure to be erected in West Park.... This building should be erected during 1958 and should be sufficiently large to serve both as a park building and a polling place.” Motion carried unanimously.”

– City Council minutes, Jan. 6, 1958

### “PLANS FOR WEST PARK SHELTER

Moved by Councilman Burns that a contract be authorized with Robert C. Metcalf, Architect, for the preparation of plans, specification and for the supervision of the construction of a Shelter to be built at West Park, said contract to be in a form approved by the City Attorney and City Administrator, and that an appropriation from the Capital Improvements Account – West Park Shelter, in an amount not to exceed \$2,400.00 be authorized for this purpose.” Motion carried unanimously.” – City Council minutes, Feb. 20, 1958

On September. 29, 1958 City Council awarded the contract for constructing the Shelter to Niethammer and McDowell.

Parks Department files contain a personal letter dated February 19, 1960 describing the Shelter as follows:

“The enclosed portion on the left is used in winter as a skate change and warming house. It is also used for meetings and a precinct polling place. The open part is equipped with a fireplace and space for picnic tables. There are also two large toilet rooms, a utility room and a small equipment room for use of summer recreation supervisors. A driveway from the street and fairly adequate parking lot with 65 spaces is provided at the back and to the left of the building. The cost of the shelter, which is approximately 48' x 96', was \$39900.00”



[‘Construction of New Shelter in West Park’](#), AADL



[‘Interior of New Shelter in West Park’](#), AADL

The program for the West Park Shelter Dedication is dated July 22, 1959 (or in event of rain July 29). Activities included a softball game (City Council vs. Ann Arbor Police Dept.), potluck picnic, jazz combo, youth chorus, speech by Mayor Creal, table tennis exhibition, puppet show, and model sailboat races. As it was a Wednesday, a concert followed at the West Park Band Shell (where concerts were being held each Wednesday evening at 8 PM).



This photo shows the view from the open warming house part of the West Park Shelter.

['Winter Fun at West Park, December 1966'](#)  
, AADL

The Shelter underwent changes starting around 1980, when exterior benches were removed and the fireplace was covered. In 1984 improvements were made in the Shelter's restrooms. In 1988 youth murals from Ann Arbor Coop Heritage Project were installed on the exterior of the Shelter. Most likely the reasons for these actions revolved around a changing atmosphere with homelessness, drug and alcohol use, and reductions in government funding of mental health care playing

a role. Crime and harassment of the public had become concerns that continued to escalate in the 1990s.

The West Park Shelter was torn down at some point – possibly in the mid to late 1990s. An October 1994 Ann Arbor News photograph shows the shelter in use at a rally there regarding the Gelman Sciences dioxane plume, so it was still in active use as of that time. Once torn down, no new shelter was built to replace it.