

THE NORTH YORK YMCA FAMILY RECREATION CENTRE

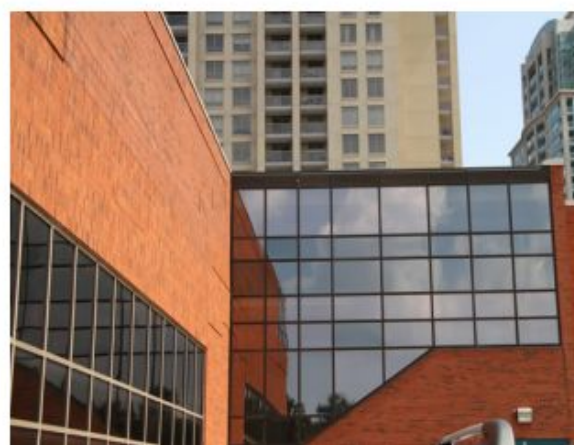


Image from:

The North York YMCA Family Recreation centre is part of YMCA, one of the worldwide leading organizations for sports and recreation. They are known for creating inclusive, healthier communities. This particular branch focuses on creating a family oriented connection and engages everyone from children to seniors. It is located near the intersection of Sheppard Ave East and Bayview at 567 Sheppard Ave East, North York (Figure 1). The facility was designed by Toronto's Shore Tilbe Irwin + Partners in 1979. The firm was known to have a broad-spectrum of design ranging from residential buildings, community centres, offices, educational institutions and the redesigning of the Nathan Phillips Square. Shore Tilbe Irwin + Partners formerly known as Shore and Moffat was established in 1945 post war and at the beginning of the modernist era.

However, the North York YMCA Family Recreation centre was designed in the postmodernist era (1960-mid 2000). This era was considered irrational, contradictory and based on individual perception. The societal, cultural and architectural evolution heavily reflected the era's lack of formality and identity. Architecturally buildings were designed based on a diversity of expression. The recreation centre is a prime example of postmodernism irony. The building generally clashes with the modernist era ideas of simplicity, order, minimalism etc. Instead of using simple minimal geometry the form takes on several shapes, angles, layers and sizes (Figure 2). In addition, the use of multiple modern and historic materials almost seem to clash with one another. Furthermore, the YMCA centre uses opposing material colours of red and blue rather than one unifying colour (Figure 3). The interior program of the building is also mixed, it consists of 3 levels and a basement. However, the main entrance is located on the second floor at grade level and the third floor is a mezzanine (Figures 4,5,6). The stylistic approach of the building despite its clashing themes does offer a functional aesthetic in terms of sustainability. One of which is the large angled skylight roof that allows light to penetrate to the lower level of the building (Figure 7).

Building Significance

The North York YMCA Family Recreation Centre is a significant building for a number of reasons. One of which is that one year after it was constructed the city of North York was amalgamated into the city of Toronto becoming part of the GTA. As such the centre can be viewed as a historical monument to the site. Another significant fact is that the design of a recreation centre during the 70s is a direct reflection of postmodernism expression in Toronto. In the 70s Toronto increased in population, economics and agriculture. As a result the city continued to build infrastructure most of which centred around entertainment and leisure such as ,shopping malls, music halls, theatres and community centres.

Figure 1: Location at the intersection of Bayview and Sheppard



Figure 2: Image of the exterior entrance of the Recreation centre



Figure 3: Image of the interior material colours



Figure 4: Ground Floor plan of the Centre

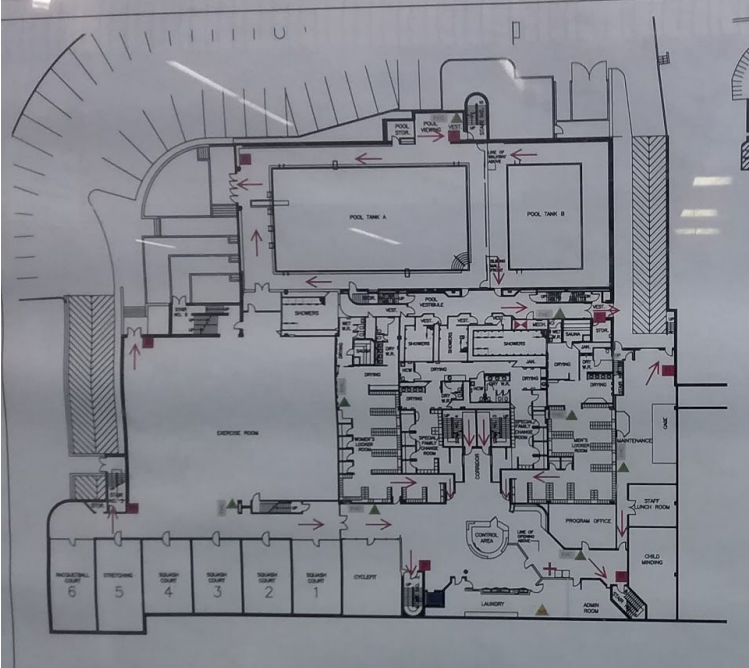


Figure 5: First floor plan of the centre, located below grade

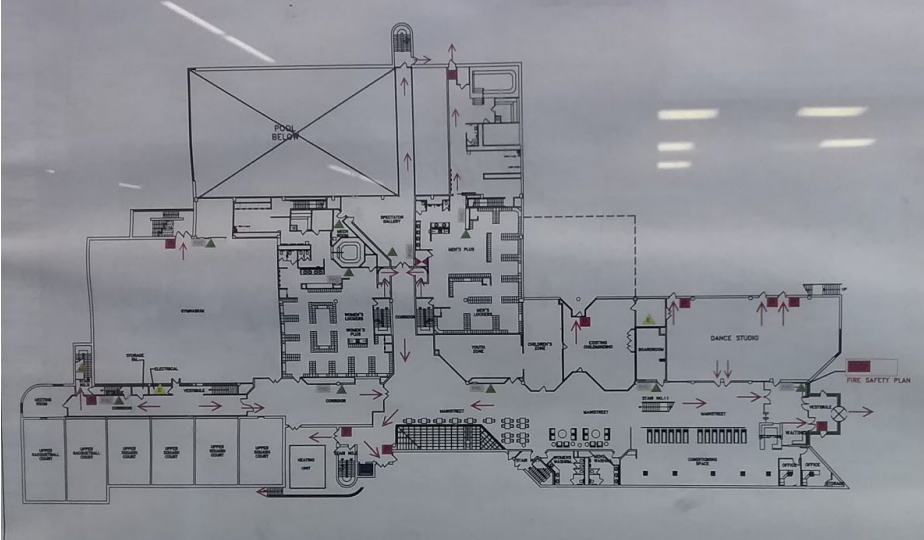


Figure 6: Third floor plan of the centre, the mezzanine

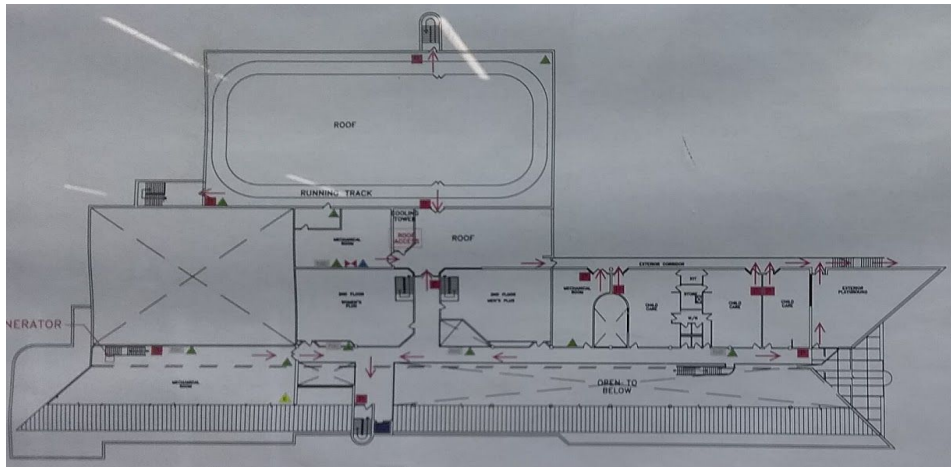


Figure 7: The angled skylight roof bringing in light



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