



# Then and Now

## Football Field Swapped for Downtown School Building

In April 1991, a building known as the old middle school had been sitting quietly for four years after the City of Stillwater and Stillwater Public Schools made a land swap.

You see, for some reason the city owned Hamilton Field at Couch Park – where the schools played football – and some other properties being used by schools. The schools owned a building in downtown that was no longer needed after the new middle school was built.

According to the April 7, 1991 Stillwater NewsPress special publication highlighting the award-winning plan Outlook 2010: Looking into the 21st Century, the Stillwater Downtown Area Plan 2010 was included. Part of THAT plan was for a community center area to be located along Duck Street from Seventh Avenue to 12th Avenue and an Eighth Avenue Plaza.

The community center area would be anchored by the Sheerar Museum on the north side and the new library to the south.

Why? To attract people to downtown Stillwater.

A 14-member Community Center Task Force appointed by the Stillwater City Commission was to consider usages of the two-story building located at Eighth and Duck.

This group originally considered developing the building as a “civic center,” according to the NewsPress article. But they opted for the name of Stillwater Community Center “because the focus should be on more than just the Stillwater community.”

The 2010 plan states the primary vision of the community center area “is to provide a place for community activities to occur, have a strong connection to the Main Street area, be an attraction for the downtown area and Stillwater and meet some of the cultural needs of our citizens.”

While there were many uncertainties, the Elderly Nutrition Program needed a new home by August (1991). The old middle school cafeteria seemed just right.

A federal grant was sought to renovate the cafeteria and library for possible use by the program, now known as Project Heart. The city commission would budget funds to resurface the adjacent parking area if the group did decide to take the spot.

Teens in town also needed a space somewhere.

An organization trying to develop a teen center for Stillwater debated between the old school and vacant Leachman Theater. They chose the school and for several years “Lockers” was a hopping place for Stillwater’s teenagers.

Working diligently, the task force decided that rather than renovate the building and then determine usages, they would seek clubs, organizations and social agencies to identify areas of interest within the building.

The article continued that renovation of those areas would come later, with present attention centered on the ground floor – except the second story area adjacent to the auditorium. The auditorium needed extensive remodeling to bring it up to standards, especially the seats.

That, though, is another story for another day.



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**Ann C. Houston** is a longtime supporter of the Stillwater Community Center and member of the Stillwater Community Center Foundation.

The Stillwater Community Center Foundation and the Friends of Stillwater Community Center strive to provide supplemental resources for the Stillwater Community Center to ensure its accessibility, affordability and sustainability for its use by residents and visitors of Stillwater and surrounding area. Visit [www.sccfriends.com](http://www.sccfriends.com) for more information.

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