



# Pioneer Group, Inc.

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Northeast Junior High - Front Facade Historic Photo

Project Name: Northeast Junior High Place

Project Location: Kanas City, Kansas

Completion Date: Dec.2008

Size: 56,487 sq. ft.

Architect: Treanor Architects, P.A.

General Construction Contractor: Kadean Construction Company

## *Project Description:*

This development project involves the acquisition and renovation of an historic school building, and converting that building to accommodate 43 affordable apartment units marketed for people age 55 and better. The classrooms will be converted into 6 two-bedroom apartment units (each about 1,100 square feet in size), 28 one-bedroom units (typically about 700 square feet each), and 9 studio apartments (about 500 square feet in size). Each apartment will enjoy modern amenities to include individual central heating and air-conditioning, individual water heaters for each unit, a refrigerator, range, kitchen exhaust fan, dishwasher, and disposal, plus a central laundry facility. The building also will have a number of common areas for meetings and recreation.

## *Historic Significance:*

Northeast Junior High demonstrates a unique step for Wyandotte County's education system - junior high school education for black children in accordance with the "separate but equal" concept prevailing in the United States prior to the 1954 Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education court ruling. Northwest Junior High School, designed and built in 1922-23, was constructed for the white students of the area, while Northeast Junior High School, designed and built in 1923-24, served the black population. The sister schools were designed by Rose and Peterson Architects, and were based on the same design.

Although the 14th Amendment to the Constitution ended slavery, a rift remained between blacks and whites. In 1892, the Supreme Court of the United States heard the case Plessy v Ferguson, which resulted in separate but equal accommodations for blacks and whites. This concept resulted in schools specifically designated for black students. Northeast Junior High School was opened in 1925 as the segregated intermediate school for black students in Kansas City, Kansas. Its "sister school" Northwest Junior High School was constructed for the white students. The floor plans for the two buildings are nearly identical, representing the separate-but-equal mentality of the time. It was not until the case of Brown v Topeka Board of Education in 1954 that "separate but equal" would no longer be the law of the land.

Kansas City was well known for its progressive school system and implemented one of the first junior high programs; however, Northeast Junior High was the only intermediate school in the area for black students. W.R. McCallop was a black businessman who ran a bus company that transported black children from all parts of the city to the Northeast Junior High School. McCallop and his family resided in Shawnee Mission, Kansas, but his own children attended Northeast Junior High because Shawnee Mission did not educate black children in the 1920s and 30s. The McCallop buses could be seen in the west bottoms of Kansas City, Missouri, the east bottoms of Kansas City, Kansas and they traveled as far west as Edwardsville, Kansas. The extent of this bus system demonstrates the far-reaching importance of Northeast Junior High. It is reasonable to conclude that nearly every black student in the area and of the time attended Northeast.

Northeast Junior High inspired pride in the students, faculty and the community who were supportive of activities both through active involvement and financial assistance. This support is evident in the improvements made to the school. A public address system in 1929, a sound film projector in 1932, a Hammond electronic organ in 1938, shrubbery, auditorium scenery, teacher's lounge furniture, athletic uniforms, and musical instruments were purchased through donations, fundraisers, and school funds. Pride in the student body inspired many to return as teachers and administrators.

The Supreme Court made a landmark decision in 1954 with Brown v Topeka Board of Education essentially ending the "separate but equal" mindset. In 1977 the school district received a decision from the United States District Court that did not require major and mandatory relocation of students, but did require the desegregation of Northeast Junior High and Sumner High Schools. While Northwest Junior High is still in operation, Northeast was closed later that year (1977).

Although Northeast Junior High and Northwest Junior High were constructed from the same floor plans, Northeast was actually of higher quality and enjoyed more elaborate detailing. However, this difference in quality and detailing did not affect the decision to close Northeast instead of Northwest. The post World War II population shift to the suburbs caused many neighborhood junior high schools in large cities to close. The location of Northwest Junior High was more convenient than Northeast, even if by only two miles, so Northeast Junior High closed, and in 1985 was sold by the school district to the Pleasant Green Baptist Church.

Pleasant Green Baptist Church members felt this would be a good building for seniors housing, and were pleased to team up with Pioneer Group after seeing the successful transformation of other historical school buildings renovated by Pioneer Group for similar uses.