



**GARDEN
HOMES**
LUTHERAN CHURCH & SCHOOL

2450 W. Roosevelt Drive
Milwaukee, WI 53209
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www.gardenhomeslutheran.org/school

TO: City of Milwaukee Zoning, Neighborhoods, and Development Committee

FR: Garden Homes Lutheran Church and School – Dr. Joel A. Nelson, Principal; Jeremy J. Mattek, Pastor

RE: Hearing on 101274: Substitute resolution designating the Garden Homes development as a City of Milwaukee historic district (1st Aldermanic District)

DA: January 11, 2013

Honorable Committee Members:

By this letter, and on the matter of 101274: Substitute resolution designating the Garden Homes development as a City of Milwaukee historic district (1st Aldermanic District), Garden Homes Lutheran Church & School ("Garden Homes Lutheran"), located at 2450 W. Roosevelt Drive, Milwaukee, WI 53209, wishes to express and have entered into the public record the following statement.

Garden Homes Lutheran has been a positive, valuable, and stable partner in the Garden Homes neighborhood since its founding in 1927. Today, Garden Homes Lutheran is a 300 member congregation with a 75/25% mix of African-American and Caucasian members. The church operates a state-of-the-art K3-Grade 8 elementary school in a building that was completed in 2004. Its 250 student population is 97% African-American with all but a couple of its families participating in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program. Garden Homes Lutheran also partners in a neighborhood youth center which serves 10-18 year olds out of the original school building, across Roosevelt Drive from our church and new school. We also run several other programs designed to strengthen our community and the families in it, for example, a food pantry, an outdoor Juneteenth celebration, Christmas and Easter events for neighborhood children, weekly worship services, local park clean-up efforts, and blood drives. We are, and will continue to be, an integral part of the Garden Homes community and want to see it flourish.

Garden Homes Lutheran remains supportive of locally designating the Garden Homes neighborhood as historic, and others in the neighborhood can attest to this. What we have struggled with, however, is the potentially negative impact such a designation could have on our efforts to develop the school's playground.

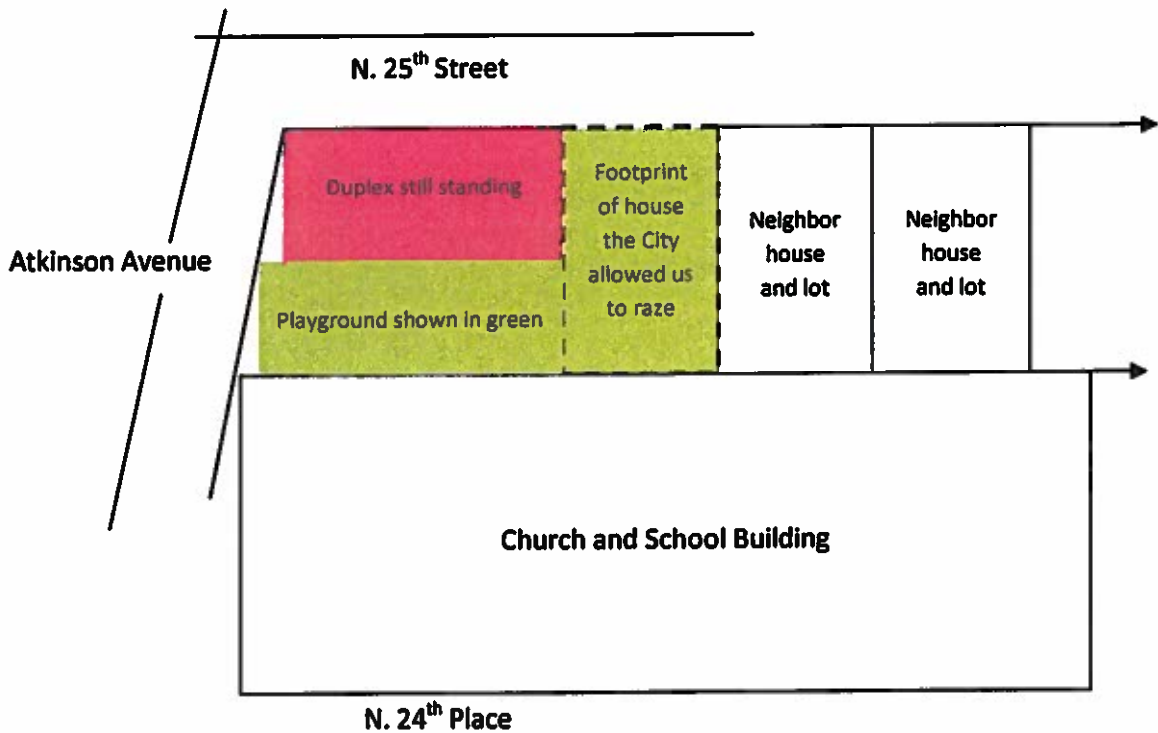
For several years, Garden Homes Lutheran has been trying to develop an outdoor playground space to enhance the education offered to our students. Some years ago, we purchased two homes adjacent to our campus for the purposes of razing to create the playground space. The homes are a duplex, located at 4316-4322 N. 25th Street, and a single-family adjacent to the duplex, located at 4330 N. 25th Street.

On March 5 of 2010, we applied for a demolition permit to raze the single-family home. This action motivated a Garden Homes neighborhood resident, Ms. Martha Love, to petition the City's Historic Preservation Commission to designate this home as historic, thus preventing its demolition.

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Between March 31, 2010 (the date of the petition) and September 15, 2010, the Historic Preservation Commission considered the matter and found that designating an individual home as historic was not appropriate. This finding was later affirmed by the City of Milwaukee Common Council, and on September 30, 2010, a demolition permit was approved and issued. The property located at 4330 N. 25th Street was razed soon thereafter.

On April 8, 2011, Garden Homes Lutheran attempted to advance the playground project and applied for a permit to demolish the second home, the duplex. Unfortunately, this permit was not issued. Between the first home demolition and the application for the duplex demolition, the Garden Homes Neighborhood Association and its president, Mr. Joe Bova, petitioned the Historic Preservation Commission to designate the entire Garden Homes neighborhood as historic. Since then, any demolition permits have been put on hold, and we have been hamstrung with our playground project and unable to complete it as planned for our students. Below is a diagram and photo showing where things are to this point. The duplex remains a critical issue and needs to be removed in order to allow us the opportunity to complete the project.



The duplex yet to be razed is in the upper left corner of the photo at right. The incomplete playground is in a very inconvenient "L" shape. We have temporary fencing around the duplex to keep children away from the structure while on the "L" playground. Once the duplex is razed, we will complete the landscaping and fencing around the entire playground.



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Garden Homes Lutheran remains committed to any effort which makes the community stronger and healthier. We have demonstrated that commitment for 86 years. We strongly believe, however, that in the event the designation is approved, we should be provided a special exemption because of the prior actions of the Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission and City of Milwaukee Common Council. Both bodies reviewed the matters relating to historic designation and the playground project and did not prevent the issuance of a permit to raze the first of the two homes on the playground site. Garden Homes Lutheran relied on the representations offered by the City with the full expectation that the City would issue the second demolition permit and allow us to complete the playground. We further believe that preventing us from razing the duplex located at 4316-4322 N. 25th Street, would be inequitable, leaving the school with an incomplete and unsafe playground. Moreover, preventing the school from completing the playground project would create an additional and burdensome expense, particularly in light of the ongoing obligations to maintain the property, a property which the school had no intention to use for anything beyond the enjoyment and advancement of its students.

As you consider the historic designation of the Garden Homes neighborhood, please also keep in mind the significant impact such a designation will have on Garden Homes Lutheran's efforts to improve its school program and through it, the lives of 250 Milwaukee children. If possible, Garden Homes Lutheran respectfully requests that the City issue the demolition permit so that the duplex can be razed, freeing up essential space for the completion of the playground. In the event this is not possible in light of the anticipated historic designation, please consider an expedited process to provide an exception for us under the new designation.

Respectfully submitted,



Dr. Joel A. Nelson, Principal



Jeremy J. Mattek, Pastor