



To: City of Milwaukee's Department of Neighborhood Services (DNS), Historic Preservation Commission (HPC)

CC: District 6 Alderwoman Milele A. Coggs

Re: RAZE-25-00261 at 140 W Garfield Ave (Taxkey 3530188000)

November 19, 2025

Dear City of Milwaukee,

Listed as Taxkey 3530188000, the property at 140 W Garfield Ave, owned by BREWERS HILL REDEVELOPMENT LLC, submitted an application for a permit to raze the building (RAZE-25-00261). The Historic Brewers Hill Association (HBHA) submits this letter in strong opposition to the Raze Permit application for the historic building located at 140 W Garfield Ave.

## **I. ABOUT THE HISTORIC BREWERS HILL ASSOCIATION**

Milwaukee's Historic Brewers Hill is a socially, economically, and culturally diverse neighborhood just north of downtown Milwaukee. The Brewers Hill neighborhood is bounded by North Avenue to the North, Pleasant Street to the South, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive to the West, and Holton Street to the East. Our southeastern border ends along the riverfront. Our neighborhood is one of two residential areas from the City of Milwaukee's original settlement period in the mid-1800s. Today, Brewers Hill is an urban, residential neighborhood comprised of over 900 household units. Our residents are equally proud of our rich history and diversity. We also pride ourselves as being incredibly involved in our neighborhood and City affairs.

The Historic Brewers Hill Association (HBHA) is a voluntary, not for profit, 501(c)(3) organization of property owners and renters alike, governed by a Board of Directors. For over 40 years, we have worked to promote property rehabilitation, eliminate blight, improve family environment, develop increased community concern, advance racial harmony, provide an effective voice in governmental affairs, and encourage local home ownership. To accomplish these lofty goals, HBHA's members devote an incredible amount of time to advancing our goals and cultivating a safe, prosperous, and beautiful neighborhood for all.



## II. HBHA POSITION / VISION FOR 140 W GARFIELD AVE

The charm and character of Historic Brewers Hill is exemplified in its architectural diversity and variety of the existing building stock, which dates back to the 1870s. According to historic records, the Early Gothic Revival church at 140 W Garfield Ave was built in 1887 and is located within the National Historic Register District.

According to the Wisconsin Historical Society, it is a contributing historic structure and retains key architectural features such as its historic massing, pointed-arch openings, and distinctive brickwork.

The DNS notice also confirms its location within a designated historic district, requiring review and approval by the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) before any demolition may occur.

As one of the few remaining 19th-century ecclesiastical structures in the area, the building contributes significantly to the architectural character and historic identity of Brewers Hill.

The HBHA opposes the raze permit for 140 W Garfield Ave because:

- The developer, Ryan Pattee, of the **Pattee Group** and Registered Agent of BREWERS HILL REDEVELOPMENT LLC, previously communicated intentions for **community-aligned adaptive reuse**, not demolition.
- On February 24, 2023, Mr. Pattee met with representatives from the HBHA Board of Directors (minutes enclosed). The minutes state that Mr. Pattee “**would like to host a listening session with as many neighbors as possible to find out what they would like in the space at 140 W Garfield Ave.**” Mr. Pattee was added as a guest speaker to the February 28, 2023 Neighborhood Meeting. It was also noted in this initial meeting that: “Community involvement is the underlying mission. Be a good citizen, developer, and community.”
- At the **February 28, 2023 Neighborhood Meeting** (minutes enclosed), Mr. Pattee stated they had purchased the church and two adjacent homes with the goal of finding uses and needs the community has for these properties and that fit the needs of the community rather than shoehorn something in.
- Despite those assurances, no updates were provided over the past year, even as:
  - the property was **listed for sale**,
  - a **Certified Survey Map** request was filed to divide the parcel, and
  - a **Raze Permit** was submitted on October 28, 2025 without any community engagement.
- The building is a **contributing historic structure**, built in 1887, documented in State and National records and prominently featured in architectural coverage.
- The raze permit record indicates **no structural emergency or condemnation order** that would justify demolition.

This abrupt shift contradicts both neighborhood expectations and the developer’s public reputation for working closely with communities, an approach highlighted in articles about Pattee Group projects.

### SPECIFIC ISSUES & NEIGHBORHOOD IMPACT:

#### 1. Lack of Transparency & Community Process

- a. The HBHA has received no recent communication from the developer, despite multiple attempts to request updates. Filing for demolition without re-engaging residents represents a breakdown of trust and contradicts commitments made to the neighborhood.

## 2. **Loss of a Historic Structure**

- a. The DNS notice confirms the building is within a designated historic district and requires HPC oversight.
- b. Demolition would result in irreversible loss of a 138-year-old Gothic Revival church, one of the few remaining examples of its type in the area.

## 3. **No Evidence of Structural Hardship**

- a. The permit record shows no emergency designation, no utilities connected, and a description simply reading “Church Demo.”
- b. Without a structural report or demonstrated hardship, demolition appears to be a matter of convenience rather than necessity.

## 4. **Precedent for Disinvestment**

- a. Allowing demolition without a demonstrated plan or hardship risks destabilizing the surrounding residential blocks and undermining historic district protections.

# III. HBHA REQUEST

The HBHA respectfully requests that the City:

- **Deny the raze permit** unless and until a community engagement process is completed, consistent with commitments made in 2023.
- **Require re-engagement** with the HBHA and impacted residents before any redevelopment or demolition activity proceeds.
- **Explore alternatives** consistent with properties in both the National Historic Register District and Local Brewers Hill Historic District, including sale to a preservation-minded buyer, or an adaptive reuse plan consistent with the property’s historic character.
- **Support local historic designation** of the property, temporary or permanent, through the Historic Designation Process.

The HBHA is committed to working collaboratively with the owner to rehabilitate the structure in a way that strengthens, beautifies, and improves the historic character of our neighborhood.

# IV. CONCLUSION

This demolition request is particularly concerning given the Pattee Group’s prior engagement with the neighborhood and their stated intention (during February 2023 discussions) to explore adaptive reuse rather than demolition. Despite repeated inquiries over the past year, **no follow-up communication** was provided to the HBHA Board of Directors.

140 W Garfield Ave is a **historically and architecturally significant building** whose loss would permanently diminish Historic Brewers Hill. Pattee group’s departure from earlier commitments, combined with the lack of demonstrated structural hardship, heightens the neighborhood’s concern and undermines expectations for responsible, transparent development. For these reasons and more, the

HBHA strongly believes the City of Milwaukee should deny this raze order and is prepared to resist future attempts to demolish the structure.

We urge the Department of Neighborhood Services and Historic Preservation Commission to uphold preservation standards and require meaningful community engagement before any action is taken.

Respectfully,

**Historic Brewers Hill Association Board of Directors**

*Kristen Labs, Rachel Marken, Laura Stephens, Aaron Hess, Trevor Santarius, Tara Peterson, Tim Baldwin, Evan Lindberg, Allyn Lottouzee*