

April 8, 2021

To the honorable Chair and Commissioners:

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Milwaukee, WI 53204
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The Milwaukee Preservation Alliance supports the nomination of the Fifteenth District / McKinley School at 2001 W. Vliet St. to the National Register of Historic Places. We concur with the nominator's finding of local significance under Criterion C for its contributions to architecture as both an early example of the Romanesque Revival style and an addition within the period of significance that serves as a rare example of High Victorian Italianate style in school buildings in Milwaukee.

The original 1884 school building and 1888 addition were designed by noted architect Henry C. Koch, who went on to design the National Register listed City Hall (1895) and Pfister Hotel (1893, contributing to the East Side Commercial Historic District), and earlier designed the 1882 Ward Memorial Theater (a contributing building to the Milwaukee Soldiers Home National Historic Landmark District), as well as many additional school and other buildings throughout the City and region. The McKinley School is one of the earliest examples of a Romanesque Revival school in Milwaukee, and the style would go on to feature prominently in future City school buildings. As the nomination indicates, "The buildings feature distinctive characteristics of the style including gabled wall dormers, windows grouped beneath broad arches, tall pyramidal roofs with dormers and cupolas, and brick corbelling at the roofline."

The 1898 addition by architects Mollerus & Lotten compliments the earlier wings and was completed in the ornate High Victorian Italianate style featuring, as the nomination asserts, "tall and narrow windows, some of which are topped by transoms; an entrance flanked by Doric pilasters with a bow window above; prominent iron roofline cornice with modillions; and a low hip roof with polygonal cupola." Along with being an excellent example of the style, it is also the first use of it for a large school building in the City and remains very rare, with only one additional large school utilizing the style: the 1902 Phyllis Wheatley School.

Finally, while the building's condition is somewhat deteriorated, its integrity remains strong. The low 1915 and 1958 additions do not distract from the much taller earlier original building and addition, and changes such as security grates, infilled windows, and interior acoustic tiles are largely reversible. The building still easily conveys its significance as a late 19th century Romanesque Revival and High Victorian Italianate school building.

For these reasons, we believe the Fifteenth District / McKinley School deserves the commission's support for National Register listing.

Thank you as always for your hard work on behalf of the people and places of Milwaukee.

Respectfully,

Jeremy Ebersole
Executive Director
Milwaukee Preservation Alliance