



March 19th, 2025

Historic Preservation Commission
City Clerk's Office
841 N. Broadway, Room B-1
Milwaukee, WI 53202

RE: Project Name: Milwaukee Recreation Community Center
5575 N. 76th St., Milwaukee, WI 532218
Quorum Architect's Project Number: 23009.00

Description of Project:

History & Architecture:

The former Browning school is brick-masonry school building designed by local architect John Topzant in 1929, with a 1937 vertical addition, and later a gymnasium addition in 1943 by local architect Charles Smith. The building sits at the southwest corner of N 76th Street and Silver Spring Drive, occupying a portion at the northeast corner of the site, roughly equivalent to one block in the surrounding mid-twentieth century suburban development. The building is not listed nationally or locally, and is an example of school buildings from the first half of the twentieth century in Milwaukee.

These portions of the building display a symmetrical eastern façade with extensive limestone trim around openings and demarcating the difference between the building's basement, first floor, upper floor, and parapet. Carved limestone details and decorative brick bonding patterns are found across the facades of the building, with spolia of a cornerstone from an earlier 1876 school at the site found at the northeast corner of the building base. Moving west along the north façade, facing Silver Spring Drive, the 1943 gymnasium addition presents with finely detailed, art deco limestone trim and decorative friezes, along with more decorative brick bonding patterns on the expanses of the gymnasium walls.

Later additions were made with an out building trimmed in matching brick and limestone in the international style to the southwest of the original building in 1951, and further additions in painted CMU and some brick and limestone trim the international style attached to the southwest of the original building in 1954 and 1999.

Proposed Scope:

In response to State Statute 119.16 and 120.12, we are seeking local historic preservation approval of demolishing several more recent additions to the Browning School to be able to reuse the earlier sections of Browning School (1929, 1937 & 1943) as part of a new Milwaukee Recreation Community Center (see attached proposed demolition and site plans in exhibits). State Statute reads:

119.16(10) SCHOOL FACILITIES.

(a) The board may not demolish any school facility that is 50 years old or older without the approval of the city historic preservation commission.

Architectural Design • Interior Design • Site Design

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120.12(21) CONSIDERATION OF EFFECTS ON HISTORIC PROPERTIES.

(a) In the earliest stage of planning any action related to the following, determine if its proposed action will affect any historic property that is a listed property, as defined under s. 44.31 (4), or that is on the list of locally designated historic places under s. 44.45:

- 1. Long-range planning for facilities development.*
- 2. Razing any historic property that it owns.*

(b) Notify the state historic preservation officer of any proposed action that the school board determines under par. (a) would affect any historic property.

We are proposing to demolish the later additions and outbuildings from 1951 – forward that our earlier studies found are not suitable for reuse as Milwaukee Recreation facilities. The 1929, 1937, & 1943 school and gymnasium portions will remain as they are in a better state of repair and will be incorporated into a larger new construction for Milwaukee Recreation as a swimming pool, gymnasium, community center, and administrative offices as shown in the provided proposed site plan.

With this demolition and new addition, we are able to maintain portions of the historic building that is part of the fabric of the area that was originally the Granville Township, while providing functional space for Milwaukee Recreation to utilize for vital community recreation, programs, administration, and outreach in the northwest corner of the city.

Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

Allyson Nemec, AIA, NCARB, LEED AP
Principal Designer
Quorum Architects, Inc.

Attached:

- Existing Site Plan
- Proposed Site Plan
- COA photos