



Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report

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HPC meeting date 4/14/2025 **CCF #** 241828

Ald. Chambers **Staff reviewer:** Tim Askin

Property 5575 N. 76th St Browning School (former)
Greater Holy Temple Christian Academy

Owner/Applicant Milwaukee Public Schools/Milwaukee Rec Quorum Architects

Proposal

Demolish selected additions and outbuildings at the former Browning School. These facilities range in date from 1951-1999. The older portions, built from 1929-1943 will be retained. The school is not designated, but state law requires that Milwaukee Public Schools obtain the Historic Preservation Commission's approval of demolition of facilities of this age. The Commission does not have any design review authority on the new construction.

Wis. Stat. 119.16(10) SCHOOL FACILITIES.

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

Staff comments

Browning was built by one of the several school districts of the Town of Granville before annexation by the City. The property has been determined eligible for the National Register for its place in the history of education in Granville. Staff does not believe that the proposed demolitions will eliminate its integrity to such a degree that it will no longer be eligible.

Criteria; Certificates to Allow Demolition.

In determining whether to grant, grant with conditions, deny or defer action on a certificate of appropriateness to allow partial or complete demolition, the commission shall consider any of the following:

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| <i>h-1. Whether the structure is of such <u>architectural or historic significance</u> that its demolition would be detrimental to the public interest and contrary to the general welfare of the people of the city.</i> | <p>1. The additions to the main building border on the utilitarian. All sections of the building having elaborate architectural character will be retained.</p> <p>The detached kindergarten building is a respectable example of mid-century modern school design by a relatively prominent architectural firm: Ebling Plunkett and Keymar. They remain in business as Plunkett Raysich. It is not their best work nor architecturally significant within the context of MPS buildings. It is modestly styled mid-century building.</p> |
| <i>h-2. Whether the structure, although not itself an individually-designed historic structure, contributes to the distinctive architectural or <u>historic character of the</u></i> | <p>2. Not applicable</p> |

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| <i><u>district</u> as a whole and should be reserved for the benefit of the people of the city.</i> | |
| <i>h-3. Whether demolition of the structure on a historic site or within a historic district would be <u>contrary to the purpose and intent of this section</u> and to the objectives of the historic preservation plan for the applicable district as duly adopted by the common council.</i> | 3. Not applicable |
| <i>h-4. Whether the structure is of such <u>old and unusual or uncommon design, texture or material</u> that it could not be reproduced without great difficulty or expense.</i> | 4. The additions to be demolished at the primary building are ordinary mid-20 th century construction and newer. One addition is a decent example of the international style, but it does not rise to the level of having architectural significance for its design. |
| <i>h-5. Whether retention of the structure would promote the general welfare of the people of the city and state by <u>encouraging the study of American history, architecture and design</u>, or by developing an understanding of American culture and heritage.</i> | 5. All historical interest that could be inspired from this property is present in the portions that will remain standing. The proposed improvements including a community center with a pool and office for Milwaukee Recreation will better serve the public welfare than the existing structures which are not needed by the school district. |
| <i>h-6. Whether the structure is in such a deteriorated condition that it is not structurally or economically feasible to preserve, restore or use it, provided that any hardship or difficulty claimed by the owner which is self-created or a result of demolition by neglect cannot qualify as a basis for the issuance of a certificate of appropriateness.</i> | 6. There has been some neglect by the private school operator, it is not so severe that it is the primary motivation for demolition. The demolition request is based on community feedback that has found better community-serving uses for the land. |

Recommendation

Staff finds that the four applicable criteria for demolition have been met. Therefore staff recommends approval of the demolition with the condition that applicants provide photo documentation of the kindergarten building, including its interior. HPC staff can assist in this endeavor if necessary.