

City of Detroit

CITY COUNCIL

HISTORIC DESIGNATION ADVISORY BOARD

218 Coleman A. Young Municipal Center, Detroit, Michigan 48226

Phone: 313.224.3487 Fax: 313.224.4336

Email: historic@detroitmi.gov

February 19, 2025

HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL:

RE: The boundary correction for the Brewster-Wheeler Recreation Center local historic district, located at 657 Brewster Street, Detroit, MI – Request for Referral to Formal for the Introduction and Setting of a Public Hearing

This request is for your Honorable Body to refer the boundary correction for the Brewster-Wheeler Recreation Center local historic district (Ord. No. 18-15, effective June 10, 2015) to Formal for the Introduction and Setting of a Public Hearing.

The revised and corrected boundary language for the Brewster-Wheeler Recreation Center Historic District has been approved by the Historic Designation Advisory Board, the City of Detroit/DPW, CED and the Law Department.

Staff is available to answer any questions and/or concerns you may have.

Respectfully submitted,



Janese Chapman, Director
Legislative Policy Division
Historic Designation Advisory Board

chapmanj@detroitmi.gov

313.224.3487

S U M M A R Y

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AN ORDINANCE to amend Chapter 21 of the 2019 Detroit City Code, History; by amending Article II, *Historic Districts and Landmarks*; Division 5, *Designated Districts*; Section 21-2-229 *Brewster-Wheeler Recreation Center Historic District*, by providing the corrected boundary provision.

1 **AN ORDINANCE** to amend Chapter 21 of the 2019 Detroit City Code, History; by
2 amending Article II, *Historic Districts and Landmarks*; Division 5, *Designated Districts*; Section
3 21-2-229 *Brewster-Wheeler Recreation Center Historic District*, by providing the corrected
4 boundary provision.

5 **IT IS HEREBY ORDAINED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE CITY OF**
6 **DETROIT THAT:**

7 Chapter 21 of the 2019 Detroit City Code, History; by amending Article II, *Historic*
8 *Districts and Landmarks*; Division 5, *Designated Districts*; Section 21-2-229 *Brewster-Wheeler*
9 *Recreation Center Historic District*, by providing the corrected boundary provision, to read as
10 follows:

11 **CHAPTER 21, HISTORY**

12 **ARTICLE II,**
13 **HISTORIC DISTRICTS AND LANDMARKS**

14 **DIVISION 5,**
15 **DESIGNATED DISTRICTS**

16
17
18 **Section 1.**

19 **Sec. 21-2-229 – Brewster-Wheeler Recreation Center Historic District**

- 20 (a) An historic district to be known as the Brewster-Wheeler
21 Recreation Center Historic District is established in accordance
22 with the provisions of this article.
- 23 (b) This historic district designation is hereby certified as being
24 consistent with the Detroit Master Plan of Policies.
- 25 (c) The boundaries of the Brewster-Wheeler Recreation Center

1 Historic District, as shown on the map on file in the Office of the
2 City Clerk, are as follows:

3 On the east, the center line of the southbound service drive of the Walter
4 P. Chrysler Freeway; on the south, the center line of vacated Brewster Street,
5 ~~as extended~~; on the west, the center line of the vacated alley, ~~as extended~~,
6 running ~~east-west~~ north-south between ~~Wilkins Street and Brewster~~
7 Street St. Antoine and the southbound service drive of the Walter P.
8 Chrysler Freeway; and on the north, the center line of Wilkins Street.

9 (d) The elements of design, as defined in Section 21-2-2 of this Code,
10 shall be as follows:

11 (1) Height. The single building rises in height from west to east,
12 and its articulation varies: the original, 1917 Section is a
13 single story in height with a tall, attic story; the central block
14 of the 1929 Addition is two stories in height with a flat roof;
15 and the eastern portion of the 1929 Addition is a single, tall
16 story, rising several feet above the remainder of the
17 building.

18 (2) Proportion of building's front façade. The front façade is
19 wider than tall. The building is articulated into three
20 sections, each of which are wider than tall.

21 (3) Proportion of openings within the façade. All façades of the

1 original, 1917 Section are composed of approximately 30
2 percent openings, all windows filled in with brick; round-
3 arched windows formerly contained fanlights. All façades
4 of the 1929 Addition are composed of approximately 25
5 percent openings.

6 (4) Rhythm of solids to voids in the front façade. Although the
7 building is asymmetrical in character, rhythm of solids to
8 voids is regular throughout. On the 1917 Section, the front
9 and rear (south and north) façades consist of five bays; the
10 side façade is two bays deep. Entrances are centered on the
11 façade of the 1917 Section and the central block of the 1929
12 Addition; these entrances are flanked by sidelights.
13 Openings are arranged one over another by floor, including
14 basement windows and a small attic window on the
15 westernmost bay of the tallest section of
16 the building. The front and rear (south and north) façade of
17 the 1929 Addition are asymmetrical, and are ten bays wide.
18 The east façade is five bays deep.

19 (5) Rhythm of spacing of buildings on streets. This district
20 contains one single building, surrounded on all sides by
21 open space.

1 (6) Rhythm of entrance and/or porch projections. The building
2 contains a single porch projection, centered on the façade of
3 the original, 1917 Section. A flat stone porch extends out
4 from the façade and is supported by two stone posts. A
5 secondary entrance on the rear (north) of the 1929 Addition
6 is accessible by a metal fire escape.

7 (7) Relationship of materials. All façades are clad in a brick
8 veneer. Shingles on the 1917 Section are asphalt. A raised
9 concrete foundation is visible on the entire building. A water
10 table and string courses are stone. The flat roof has a stone
11 coping. Windows, when extant, are metal; consisting of
12 divided lights in fixed sashes with operable hoppers.
13 Windows have cast stone sills and brick lintels. A paneled
14 wood double door remains on the 1917 Section.

15 (8) Relationship of textures. Overall, the building is smooth in
16 texture, with smooth, American bond brick and mortar
17 joints highlighted with smooth stone detail. By contrast the
18 trim surrounding the entrance to the 1929 Addition is rich
19 in carved stone ornament. The 1917 Section is somewhat
20 more varied in texture, with English cross-bond brickwork;
21 window openings are framed in decorative brick, and a

1 series of diamond-shaped medallions runs along the cornice
2 of the section.

3 (9) Relationship of colors. The primary relationship of color is
4 that of red brick contrasted with lighter stone trim. Windows
5 are steel and dark. Asphalt shingles are black.

6 (10) Relationship of architectural details. An entrance, centered
7 on the front (south) façade of the 1917 Section, projects
8 from the building and is framed with stone pilasters and is
9 topped with a stone elliptical hood with cornice returns; a
10 denticulate cornice runs along the hood and along the sides
11 of the entrance. A porch cornice is also denticulate. The
12 1929 Addition exhibits elements of classical, Art Deco and
13 Jacobethan styles, with cast stone and trim details, including
14 decorative stonework which caps brick pilasters and extends
15 above the roofline. The primary entrance to the 1929
16 Addition features the greatest detail, with a surround
17 containing rinceau, rosettes, and an egg and dart pattern
18 under a door entablature; a cornice projects slightly above
19 the doorway, above which is a stone panel inscribed
20 "CENTRAL COMMUNITY CENTER," surmounted by a
21 carved wood

1 panel reading "WHEELER." The entablature above this
2 entrance includes a denticulate cornice and a large, centered,
3 circular stone. A secondary entrance, centered on the front
4 (south) façade of the 1929 Addition, is completely enclosed
5 and has a simple stone surround. The east façade features a
6 string course of soldier-bond brick. The entablature of the
7 1929 Addition also features symmetrically-placed circular
8 stones.

9 (11) Relationship of roof shapes. The original, 1917 Section
10 bears a broad, hip roof, contrasting with a flat roof on the
11 1929 Addition. An exterior chimney on the northwest of the
12 building projects slightly above the roofline. An interior
13 chimney also pierces the roof on the 1929 Addition. On the
14 1917 Section, two circular roof vents are visible, but a
15 skylight has been enclosed. On the central block, clerestory
16 windows are recessed from the façade.

17 (12) Walls of continuity. As the single building is surrounded by
18 open space, no wall of continuity exists within the broader
19 district. Although the 1929 Section of the building features
20 no setback, the front (south) façade of the 1917 Section is
21 set back from Brewster Street; a porch projection extending

1 forward to Brewster Street, creates a wall of continuity.

2 (13) Relationship of significant landscape features and surface
3 treatments. The open space is not generally landscaped,
4 although concrete sidewalks extend around the building as
5 well as around the perimeter of the site; wood light poles
6 and athletic fixtures also exist although the latter are in
7 disrepair.

8 (14) Relationship of open space to structures. The building is
9 surrounded on all sides by open space.

10 (15) Scale of façade and façade elements. Façade elements are
11 generally large, creating an imposing structure with details
12 that are clearly visible from a distance. More pedestrian-
13 scale details are centered around the two primary entrances,
14 one on the 1917 Section, and one on the 1929 Section of the
15 building.

16 (16) Directional expression of front elevation. The front
17 elevation of the building is vertical in expression due to a
18 high foundation, tall window openings, and tall brick
19 pilasters capped by stone ornamentation. A horizontal
20 contrast is provided by string courses.

21 (17) Rhythm of building setbacks. The 1929 Section of the

1 building features no setback from the public right-of-way,
2 fronting onto a sidewalk that runs alongside a truncated
3 Brewster Street. On the 1917 Section, a setback is adequate
4 to house a projecting front porch.

5 (18) Relationship of lot coverage. The building occupies
6 approximately one-third of its lot, with a paved parking area
7 to the east of the building, and a grassy lawn with several
8 mature trees to the north of the building.

9 (19) Degree of complexity within the façade. The degree of
10 complexity is low due to a simple articulation of rectangular
11 or arched window openings separated by brick pilasters. The
12 roofline, with a hip roof on the 1917 Section and a flat roof
13 on the 1929 Section, is also simple in nature. A somewhat
14 increased degree of complexity is added by stone trim at the
15 parapet wall of the 1929 Section, and decorative stonework
16 surrounding the central entrance.

17 (20) Orientation, vistas, overviews. The building is oriented
18 toward the south with its primary entrances opening onto
19 Brewster Street, which approaches the site from the east and
20 dead-ends at the building. The grade is flat and open space
21 exists for some distance in all directions.

1 (21) Symmetric or asymmetric appearance. The building is
2 asymmetrical in appearance, due to its original section being
3 expanded to the east with a two-story central block and a
4 somewhat taller, though single-story, eastern section.
5 Viewed from the east and west sides, the building has a
6 symmetrical appearance.

7 (22) General environmental character. The district consists of
8 one building, formerly associated with the Brewster and
9 Frederick Douglass Apartments. Due to the demolition of
10 these buildings, the district is now surrounded by vast open
11 space, especially to the south and east. To the east is the
12 Walter P. Chrysler Freeway, and to the north is multi-family
13 housing. As Wilkins Street is one of the few streets that
14 cross the freeway in the area, the district is visible to through
15 traffic.

16 **Section 2.** All ordinances or parts of ordinances in conflict with this ordinance
17 are repealed.


18 **Section 3.** This ordinance is declared necessary for the preservation of the
19 public peace, health, safety, and welfare of the people of the City of Detroit.

20 **Section 4.** If this ordinance is passed by a two-thirds (2/3) majority of City
21 Council members serving, it shall be given immediate effect and shall become effective
22 upon publication in accordance with Section 4-118 of the 2012 Detroit City Charter; if

1 passed by less than a two-thirds (2/3) majority of City Council members serving, it shall
2 become effective no later than thirty (30) days after publication in accordance with Section
3 4-118 of the 2012 Detroit City Charter; if this ordinance specifies a certain date to become
4 effective, it shall become effective in accordance with the date.

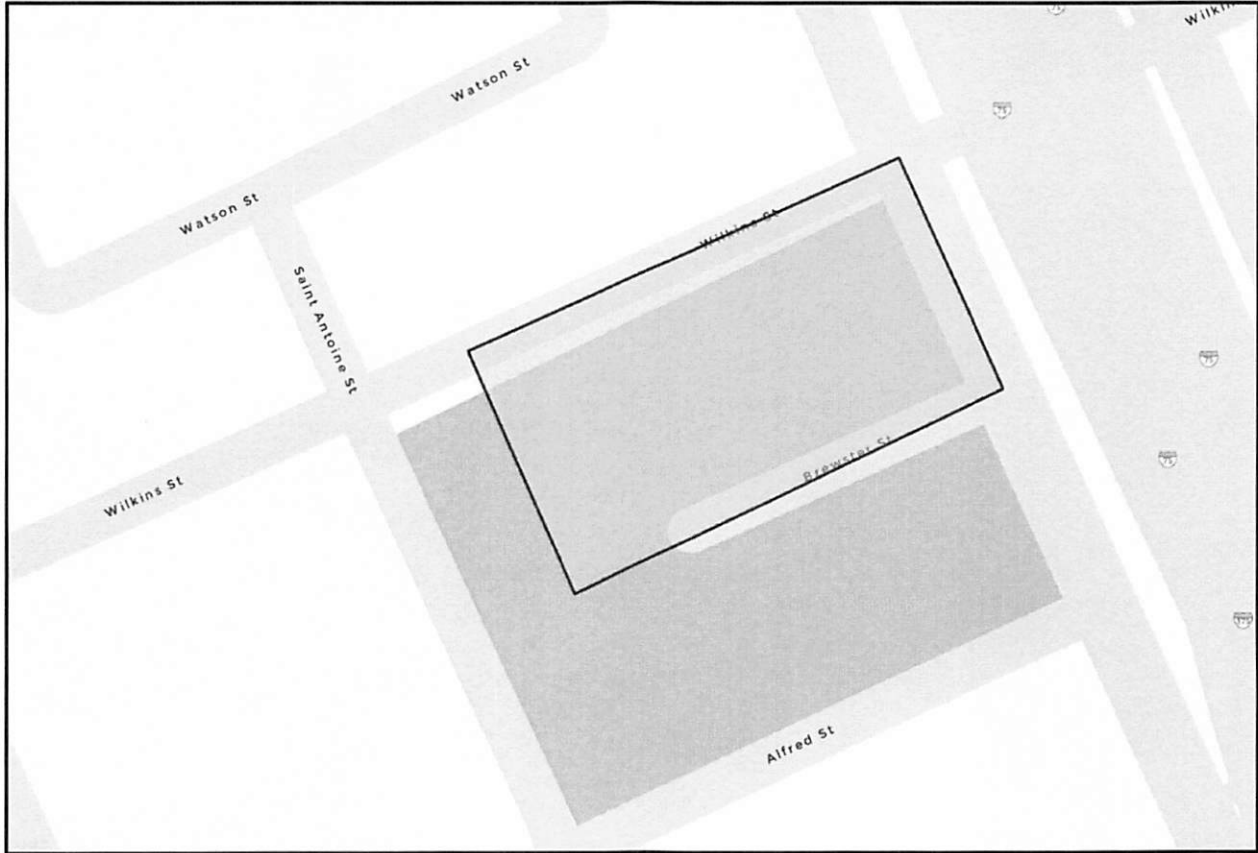
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6 Approved as to form:

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8 Conrad A. Mallett, Jr.
9 Corporation Counsel


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Brewster-Wheeler Recreation Center Historic
District boundary map
657 Brewster Street
Detroit, Wayne County