

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**National Register of Historic Places Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of PropertyHistoric name: Burbank, Luther, Elementary SchoolOther names/site number: Fisher, Dorothy, Magnet Middle School

Name of related multiple property listing:

Public Schools of Detroit

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. LocationStreet & number: 15600 East State Fair AvenueCity or town: Detroit State: MI County: WayneNot For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,


I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A B X C D

		Deputy SHPO	February 4, 2022
Signature of certifying official/Title:		Date	
<u>State Historic Preservation Office</u>			
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government			

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In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ☒ entered in the National Register
☐ determined eligible for the National Register
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register
☐ removed from the National Register
☐ other (explain:) _____

James Gabbert
Signature of the Keeper

3/15/2022
Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private: ☐
Public – Local ☒
Public – State ☐
Public – Federal ☐

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s) ☒
District ☐

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Site ☐

Structure ☐

Object ☐

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION/school

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT/Art Deco

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick, limestone, terra cotta, concrete

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Luther Burbank Elementary School (or simply the Burbank School) is located at 15600 East State Fair Avenue in Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan. It was constructed in four major building campaigns between 1931 and 1949, with a non-contributing addition connected at the rear (northeast) corner in 1992. The first block of the school was completed in 1931 with subsequent additions in 1944, 1946, and 1949 (based on completed dates).¹ The original block was designed by the architectural firm Van Leyen, Schilling & Keough, with later additions designed by Edward A. Schilling. The two-story 1931-1949 school is an example of an Art Deco public school building with a U-shaped footprint that is oriented to the west so that north and south wings enclose a grassy central courtyard. The west facing short ends of the north and south wings are the school's principal facades. A detached powerhouse with an adjacent smokestack, also constructed in 1931, are located east of the main school building within a partially paved interior courtyard formed between the historic school building and the 1992 addition. The 1931 building and the powerhouse are physically connected via an underground tunnel.

¹ Detroit, Mich. Board of Education, *Histories of Detroit Public Schools*, (Detroit, Mich. Board of Education, 1967), 132.

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Art Deco characteristics are seen through decorative reliefs throughout the building, as well as in an emphasis on parallel lines, sculptural ornamentation with floral and animal motifs, and symmetrical facades. The 1992 addition has restrained ornamentation, but material and massing are still in conversation with the original school building. The addition occupies the eastern half of the block and is physically attached to the northeastern corner of the historic school building. For this reason, the original "U" shape plan of the school and all principal facades are all still largely intact. The non-contributing addition, though large in size, does not significantly detract from the integrity of the historic Luther Burbank Elementary School. Overall, the Burbank School possesses historic integrity and is able to convey its historic and architectural significance. The school retains all seven aspects of integrity. The exterior remains remarkably intact, with highly decorative masonry detailing that clearly conveys the Art Deco style.

The school also retains its original steel multi-light windows and fenestration patterns. The 1931-1949 interior plan remains intact and most spaces retain their original volume. Many original finishes remain throughout the school including wide corridors with perimeter classrooms, built-in wood cabinetry and furnishings, wood flooring, and tile corridor cladding. Minor alterations include installation of dropped acoustic ceiling tiles, non-history vinyl flooring, and some damage to the building including graffiti and buckled floors due to water damage. These alterations and existing conditions do not significantly impact the interior's reflection of the building's historic function as a school or its architectural integrity overall.

Narrative Description

SETTING AND SITE

The Luther Burbank Elementary School (Burbank School) is located at 15600 East State Fair Avenue, Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan. The school is located in the Regent Park neighborhood, 9.5 miles northeast of downtown Detroit. The school property occupies the entirety of the block on which it is located and is bounded to the west by Crusade Street, to the south by Tacoma Street, to the east by Rex Avenue, and the north by East State Fair Avenue. The historic portions of the school, constructed between 1931 and 1949, are centered on the western half of the block. The 1992 addition occupies the center and eastern portions, while a large surface parking lot takes up the remaining eastern end of the block.

The Burbank School is surrounded by a series of manicured lawns dotted with mature tree and floral plantings. The lawns are separated by concrete pathways that provide circulation to and from the school building. A perimeter sidewalk separated from adjacent streets by a small buffer of greenspace lines the edges of the block in which the school building sits. The parking lot on the eastern end of the property opens to Tacoma Street to the south and East State Fair Avenue to the north. The parking lot contains a single concrete median and is lined on its eastern boundary by a row of mature tree plantings that extend slightly west on the north and south perimeters. Transmission and electrical line poles also line the perimeter of the property, some equipped with small solar panels. At least since the early 1950s, the land occupied by the 1992 addition was cleared according to historic aerials. Historic Sanborn maps and plans for the school

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building do not indicate this area was ever a manicured lawn or greenspace/playground, but instead a surfaced playground.

The surrounding blocks to the north, south, and east are largely residential while the block to the west is occupied by a large modern school complex. The latter is a long rectilinear block that is home to the Fisher Magnet Lower and Upper Academies, a community center, playgrounds and maintained paths, and several recreational sections including a track, tennis courts, and basketball courts. This elongated block interrupts the otherwise regular grid of the neighborhood. The immediately surrounding area is made up largely of 1940s-era Minimal Traditional style homes including the blocks to the north, east, and south, though some appear to have been demolished with empty lots interspersed among the housing stock.

The historic boundary for the Burbank School corresponds with the existing legal parcel for the property consisting of a 3.8-acre lot including the school building and grounds historically associated with the school.

EXTERIOR

Overview

The Burbank School was built in phases between 1931 and 1949. The historic school has a concrete foundation, masonry exterior walls, and a flat roof. Each elevation features exterior walls with multi-shaded brown brick laid in decorative patterns and smooth light gray limestone detailing. Brick is arranged in a variation of manners but most of the exterior is finished in a simple, five-course common bond brick pattern. Bays are divided by vertical piers of molded and rounded brick that produce a fluted appearance. These piers are capped with terra cotta, stylized Art Deco motifs resembling acanthus leaves and anthemias. Above the piers is a limestone entablature and cornice. Regularly arranged window openings are found on each elevation. Although these have all been clad over with steel security panels or plywood, most, if not all still contain original multi-light steel-framed windows.

Projecting entrance bays are centered on both principal facades facing west and on the eastern ends of the north and south elevations. These projecting bays each feature an identical decorative frontispiece of smooth limestone blocks. The name "BURBANK SCHOOL" within a long rectangle with clipped corners is carved in the limestone above the door opening. Below the name panel and to its sides is additional relief work by the sculptor Corrado Parducci that consists of a small owl flanked by stylized Art Deco floral patterns and griffin at each end.

While the school was constructed in phases several years apart, the historic portions of the school are all modeled to impressively match the original Art Deco 1931 section. The only obvious break in architectural style and rhythm is seen in the non-contributing 1992 addition which was designed with restrained architectural ornamentation. The exterior of the 1992 addition is clad in brick and contains a stone stringcourse and cornice, which is in conversation with the historic portions of the school. Evenly spaced pilasters are also placed on each elevation, some of which contain pentagonal concrete capitals, providing a more restrained interpretation of the molded brick pilasters found on the historic school building. The addition consists of a series of flat and

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shallow pitched gabled roofs that form an irregular footprint on the rear of the historic school. Entrances are found at the western end of the northern elevation, the eastern elevation, as well as several overhead doors on the western end of the southern elevation.

1931 Section

Constructed in 1931, the original section of the school has a simple rectangular footprint. The north façade faces East State Fair Avenue while the west façade faces Crusade Street, and both contain prominent entryways. The eastern elevation is largely obscured by the 1944 addition, while the southern elevation is only partially obscured at its far eastern end. The remaining sections of the southern elevation face inward toward the school's central courtyard formed by the later, historic additions to the school building.

The western façade is five bays wide with its central bay projecting forward as well as up rising above the flat roofline of the building. Two bays flank either side of the central projecting bay while a projecting rounded stringcourse rests below the first story windows. First story windows are covered by modern steel security panels but indicate paired windows in each opening. Limestone sills rest on top of the first story window openings. Where fenestration would naturally be located on the second story, these areas are filled with diagonally patterned brick, contrasted with brown and red coloring. Below the diagonal brick cladding is a decorative herringbone brick panel centered by a small limestone carving depicting a floral motif. Bays are divided by vertical piers of molded and rounded brick that imitate the appearance of a fluted column. These piers are capped with terra cotta, stylized Art Deco motifs resembling acanthus leaves and anthemias. Above the piers is a limestone entablature and cornice capped by a neat row of soldier bond bricks.

The central bay houses a primary entrance which is enclosed with steel security panels. The round arch entryway opening has inverse rounded corners and is housed within a smooth limestone frontispiece with a stepped gable finished with a flat top. The name "BURBANK SCHOOL" within a long rectangular panel with clipped corners is carved in the limestone above the door opening. Below the name panel and to its sides is additional relief work by the sculptor Corrado Parducci that consists of a small owl flanked by stylized Art Deco floral patterns and griffin at each end. The second story of the central projection contains a round arch window opening that is currently boarded up. The window opening is capped by a brick clad transom with a polychrome central tile design, resembling a flower. Brick pilasters frame the window opening and are capped with the same decorative limestone capitals found elsewhere on the façade. Concentric courses of brick headers emphasize the round arch of the central window opening and rest below a central section of herringbone patterned brick. The projection of the central bay extends above the center of the flat roof and is slightly raised with concrete coping. Two hipped roof dormers rise from the center of the flat roof.

The northern façade is a continuation of the design features found on the western façade over a greater length of eleven bays. The three easternmost bays are characterized by many of the same design features found on the western façade. The two easternmost bays however, date from 1944 and 1946 additions to the school. A projecting entrance bay extends forward from the third easternmost bay. The two bays to the east (constructed between 1944 and 1946) contain large

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areas filled with diagonal patterned brick separated by decorative round brick pilaster with a carved limestone capital. A limestone entablature and cornice separate the second story from the brick coping that wraps around the top of the building framing the flat roof. Herringbone pattern brick panels with central limestone decorations separate the first and second stories. A partially visible concrete foundation lines the bottom of the façade and is separated from the first story windows by a section of brick below a rounded stringcourse that also functions as a continuous sill for the first story fenestration. This fenestration and architectural design patterns are extended to the remaining eight bays found on the western side of the entrance bay. The greatest differentiation is that large openings are boarded up with hiding multi-light, steel-frame windows. These window openings also have a greater horizontal span and appear to be groupings of three window panels rather than two found on the western elevation. The entrance bay is identical to the one found on the western façade with the exception of the use of non-historic metal double doors in the recessed doorway.

The exposed section of the southern façade of the 1931 block is the northern wall of the school's central courtyard. Tripartite window openings line the elevation with the replication of fenestration and design patterns found on the western and northern façades. The easternmost bay that is only partially visible as it integrates into the 1944-1946 additions, is slightly taller than its counterparts but contains no additional architectural elaboration. A steel and glass conservatory with a curvilinear half-gabled roof is centered on this façade in the courtyard. Roughly six historic bays are visible until the 1944 addition consumes the remainder of the façade. Windows are boarded up with plywood or steel security panels but some sections of multi-light steel frame windows are visible beneath deteriorating cladding.

1944 & 1946 Sections

The section of the Burbank School constructed between 1943 and 1944 has a "L"-shape plan that, when joined to the northeastern corner of the original 1931 portion of the school, forms a U-plan that was ubiquitous with Detroit public schools of this particular era. It was originally built as a one-story addition completed in 1944, with the second story added and completed in 1946.

Starting within the courtyard, the western façade follows similar fenestration patterns and detailing found on the 1931 western façade. It is five bays wide with a central projecting bay encased in smooth limestone on both the first and second stories. Minimal decorative carving is present on this wing at the center of the second story in the form of a floral motif. Window openings are large and square in shape on the first and second stories and are presently boarded over with steel security panels. On either side of the central bay are two paired bays. These bays are divided by decorative rounded brick piers topped with carved limestone capitals. A rounded stone stringcourse acts as a continuous sill below the first story windows. The first and second stories are divided by panels of herringbone brick with a decorative limestone centerpiece. At least one bank of first story windows have been enclosed with modern brick, while the others are clad in with metal or plywood. Some multi-light steel frame windows. A continuation of brick coping over a limestone entablature and cornice continues from the 1931 building into the 1946 block. The southern wall of the courtyard (or the northern elevation of the 1944-1946 block) reflects the same fenestration pattern and design details found across the courtyard on the 1931 interior wall. This elevation however is not outfitted with an attached conservatory.

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The southern projecting wing completing the courtyard formation has a symmetrical, five-bay western façade which matches its northern partner in fenestration pattern and design detailing. However, all visible window sections are clad in decorative diagonally patterned polychrome brick. Additionally, much of this façade is obscured by mature tree plantings.

The southern elevation of the 1944-1946 block differs slightly from the architectural rhythm found elsewhere on the building. This section of the addition is seven bays wide with a prominent entry bay on the far eastern end and a one-story, two-bay wide projection on the far western end that functioned as the kindergarten room. The remaining bays are divided by rounded brick piers with decorative limestone capitals, boarded up windows grouped in three, and herringbone brick patterned panels with limestone centerpieces separate the first and second story. A rounded concrete stringcourse functions as a continuous sill define the first floor while a limestone entablature and cornice top the building below brick coping. The entrance bay is identical in organization and architectural detail to the northernmost western projection from the 1931 block of the school building.

The remainder of the 1944-1946 addition extends to the north, obscuring much of the eastern end of the 1931 school block. Partially obstructed by mature tree growth and the later 1992 school addition, this eastern (rear) elevation follows the same fenestration and ornament patterns found on side elevations of the school. Windows are multi-light steel frame windows separated into bays by decorative round brick pilasters with carved limestone pediments. A continuation of entablature and cornice also extends to this rear elevation.

1949 Section

This block was constructed between 1948 and 1949 and has an “L”-shaped footprint that is situated on the southeastern corner of the school building’s 1944-1946 addition. The addition is mostly one-story in height with slightly shorter eastern and northern wings. The most prominent elevation faces south and is finished with a variation of the fenestration pattern found elsewhere on the school. A concrete foundation lines the bottom of the addition with a rounded stringcourse. The elevation is then divided into five bays separated by the same rounded brick pilasters with decorative limestone capitals found elsewhere on the building. Rather than full-height windows, this addition has smaller paired windows (clad in steel security panels) that rest on decorative herringbone patterned brick panels.

Powerhouse

A detached, one-story powerhouse and smokestack dating to 1931 is situated off the rear elevation of the school, east of the school. It has been reported to connect to the 1931 school through an underground tunnel, and Sanborn maps confirm this connection. The exterior is clad in brick with a concrete foundation and concrete coping on the flat roof of the building. Visible windows are multi-light steel windows with limestone sills. Some window openings are clad in steel security panels. A continuous lintel of limestone rests above the window openings and wraps around the exterior. The powerhouse is now enclosed in a non-historic, paved courtyard between the 1931-1949 sections of the school and the 1992 addition.

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1992 Addition

The one-story 1992 rear addition has a modern steel-frame, walls of concrete masonry unit (CMU) and exterior veneer of brick and cast stone with very few windows, and a mix of flat and shallow pitched roofs. This addition is internally connected at the rear (northeast) corner in and externally connected by a veneer wall at the southeastern corner of the historic school building. The exterior of the addition is clad in brick and contains a stone stringcourse and cornice, echoing the design of the historic portions of the school. Evenly spaced pilasters are also placed on each elevation, some of which contain pentagonal concrete capitols, providing a more restrained interpretation of the molded brick pilasters found on the historic school building. The addition forms an irregular, "H"-shape footprint on the rear of the historic school. Entrances are found at the western end of the northern elevation, the eastern elevation, as well as several overhead doors on the western end of the southern elevation.

INTERIOR

Overview

The interior of the 1931-1949 sections of the school has a double-loaded U-shaped circulation plan with stairs and entrances at all ends. It has thirty box-like classrooms arranged around both the perimeter of the building and facing the central courtyard. An original auditorium and gym/kitchen, which has been converted into classroom space, form a cluster in the southeast corner. Original steel-frame windows and lockers are present throughout. Finishes include terrazzo flooring at entry vestibules, stairs and bathrooms, vinyl tile in corridors, and wood plank flooring in classrooms. Corridor walls are of glazed tile block and painted CMU. Classroom walls are of glazed tile and painted plaster and feature stained wood trim. Original wood built-in cabinets are also typical in classrooms. Original ceiling heights remain throughout, but they typically feature non-historic acoustic tiles and drop ceilings. The auditorium retains its original raked wood floor, wood seating, and balcony.

Basement

According to historic plans for the Burbank School, the basement is largely unexcavated with the exception of portions of the 1931 block including the plenum chamber which connects to the separate boiler house through an underground tunnel. Access is provided at the northeast corner of the school building which connects to several smaller mechanical rooms, a fan room and eventually a passage to the east that leads to the boiler and coal rooms of the detached building.

First Floor

Starting in the northern rectangular wing (constructed in 1931) the central western entrance opens into a long corridor lined with classrooms to the east and west. The northern half contains four equally sized classrooms while the southern end contains three equally sized classrooms and a girls' bathrooms with several storage closets at the eastern end of the hall. The two central classrooms on the southern side of the hall that have symmetrical exterior openings that provide egress to an attached conservatory located in the central western courtyard. The conservatory is still extant.

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An elongated corridor that runs north-south separates the western half of the school, containing primarily classrooms, bathrooms, and offices, from the western half of the school which contains the gym, auditorium and several specialty classrooms including what were historically identified as “manual training” and “practical arts.” Vestibules are located at the southern and northern entrances of this corridor.

Moving south through the large corridor is the start of the 1944-1946 addition that forms the “U” plan of the school. Immediately to the west (north of the girls’ bathroom) is a cluster of administrative offices including several waiting rooms, a clerk’s office, principal’s office, and a storage closet. The library is located south of the principal’s office. These offices and the library look west into the central courtyard and are centrally located in the heart of the school building with easy access to each wing of the school.

Moving south to the end of the long corridor is the remainder of the 1944-1946 addition consisting of another wing of classrooms that extend to the west, completing the “U” shape plan of the Burbank School. This southern wing has a similar layout to its northern counterpart with a central corridor flanked on either side by classrooms. The northern half contains two large classrooms and a boys’ bathroom. The southern half contains a “teacher’s room” and two kindergarten classrooms with a connecting cloak room. The westernmost kindergarten classroom contains a one-story bay window projection creating a rounded alcove for pupils.

On the western side of the main north-south corridor exist portions of both the 1944-1946 addition and the 1949 addition. The 1944-1946 addition is located to the north and consist of two large rectangular classroom spaces with adjoining storage closets. On historic plans, the northernmost room is identified as a “manual training” room while the southernmost room is identified as a classroom for “practical arts.” To the south is the 1949 addition which attaches in an “L” shape to the southern half of the 1944-1946 addition. The southernmost section of this block houses a large gym. On the eastern side of the gym as a long rectangular room that functioned as a kitchen with several small rooms the north including gym storage and physical director’s office. North of the gym is a long rectangular storage closet separating it from the auditorium to the north. The auditorium sits at the northern end of the 1949 addition with the stage to the south. Both the gym and auditorium are more than one story in height while the stage area extends to two full stories in height.

First-floor corridors are lined with glazed orange tile and painted CMU above. The tile is interrupted by large spans of metal lockers. Some areas in the corridor contain recessed alcoves for drinking fountains. Vestibules at the end of the southern and northern corridor contain terrazzo flooring and decorative plaster ceiling molding with continuing geometric and floral Art Deco motifs. Pairs of double wooden doors capped by a transom divide the vestibule from the interior corridor. The original gym has been converted into classroom space but still contains its full height ceiling. Historic wood flooring has buckled in some areas due to deferred maintenance and water damage.

Classrooms on the first floor contain historic wooden built-in cabinets, plaster walls with wooden wainscoting, and wood flooring. Some classrooms have been clad in vinyl tile over the wood

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flooring in addition to the introduction of a drop ceiling. Classrooms also contain a long chalkboard that takes up the full length of a primary wall. Lighting in general is non historic with hanging fluorescent lighting being the dominant source of electrical light. Classrooms from the 1940s additions appear to lack plaster and instead most walls are painted CMU. Ventilation grates are found throughout classrooms and corridors as well.

The auditorium still maintains its historic raked wood flooring, seating, stage, and balcony. Decorative plaster molding lines the ceiling of the auditorium. Walls are painted CMU. The stage has a decorative wood façade with stairs on either end leading from the auditorium to the stage. The proscenium showcases a streamlined design with little ornamentation but instead prominent rounded corners framing the stage and curtains. The balcony retains its classroom to the east along with metal railings that frame the staircase from the first floor.

Staircases between the first and second stories are lined with glazed tile with historic enclosed iron banisters. Simple in design, the banisters contain detailing including small capitals on end posts and simple geometric patterns at landings.

Second Floor

The second floor largely echoes the arrangement of the first-floor plan with some exceptions where specialty rooms are not duplicated. The second floor is accessed through several stairwells at the end of corridors, mainly at the western ends of both the 1931 and 1944 sections that form a “U” and at both ends of the large central corridor that runs north-south. The northern, 1931, block consists of a central corridor with four classrooms to the north and three classrooms and the boys’ bathroom to the south.

The southern wing consists of a central corridor with two classrooms and a girls bathroom to the north and two classrooms and a band room with an adjacent specialty room the south. Between these two wings on the western half of the school are two rectangular rooms including a classroom and what was historically a “homemaking room.”

The same central north-south corridor separates the classroom wings from the specialty wings. Three classrooms are located at the northern end and are part of the 1944-1946 addition. The remainder of the western half consists of the upper floors of the auditorium and gymnasium with a section labeled as activity room and balcony at the northern end of the 1949 addition.

Second-floor corridors are also clad with glazed orange tile and painted CMU above. The glazed tile is also showcased in some second story classrooms. Wooden built ins, large chalkboards continue throughout. Wood flooring is present in classrooms though some areas show severe buckling from water damage. Ceiling heights are also intact, but some classrooms contain drop ceiling panels fixed with hanging fluorescent lighting.

1992 Addition

The interior of the 1992 addition is discussed separately because it is non-contributing to the property. The interior features an H-plan layout with wide corridors. Walls are typically clad in square tile with a pebbledash finish in corridors. Interior spaces include a full-size gym with

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attached locker rooms, a cafeteria/auditorium, a kitchen, music rooms, and offices – all of which feature modern materials and finishes.

SUMMARY OF ALTERATIONS AND INTEGRITY

The Burbank School retains excellent exterior and interior integrity and continues to convey its Criterion C significance in the area of Architecture. Within the period of significance, the Burbank School received three major additions: one in 1944 (to form the U-plan), 1946 (second story addition on the 1944 addition), and 1949 (gymnasium and auditorium). Outside of the period of significance the Burbank School received a large addition to the east in 1992. The school's historic setting is largely preserved within the immediate surroundings of the building, including courtyard areas. The one-story 1992 addition does not significantly impact the integrity of the 1931-1949 school. It is only connected at the northwest corner of the 1931-1949 school and does not impact any character defining exterior or interior elements and spaces. It is clearly distinguishable as a non-contributing addition.

Overall, the Burbank School possesses historic integrity and is able to convey its historic and architectural significance. The school retains all seven aspects of integrity. The school remains in the residential neighborhood in which it was constructed and operated as a school until its closure in 2009 establishing integrity of location, setting, as well as feeling and association. The exterior remains remarkably intact, with highly decorative masonry detailing that clearly conveys the Art Deco style showing integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. The school also retains its original steel multi-light windows and fenestration patterns. The interior plan of the 1931-1949 sections remain intact and most spaces retain their original volume. Many original finishes remain throughout the school including wide corridors with perimeter classrooms, built-in wood cabinetry and furnishings, wood flooring, and tile corridor cladding. Minor alterations include installation of dropped acoustic ceiling tiles, non-historic vinyl flooring, and some damage to the building including graffiti and buckled floors due to water damage. These alterations and existing conditions do not prevent the building from conveying its historic function and significance as a school or impact its key architectural features.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☐ B. Removed from its original location
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☐ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☐ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE
EDUCATION

Period of Significance

1931-1960 (Criterion A)
1931-1949 (Criterion C)

Significant Dates

1931
1944
1946
1949

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Van Leyen, Schilling & Keough
Parducci, Corrado (ornament)

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Luther Burbank Elementary School, located at 15600 East State Fair Avenue in Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan, is locally significant under National Register Criterion A in the area of Education. The school illustrates and embodies the prevailing policies and trends of elementary school education in the city of Detroit in the 1930s and 1940s. The school is also locally significant under National Register Criterion C in the area of Architecture. The school building is an excellent example of Art Deco architecture as applied to Detroit Public Schools with a “U” -shaped plan built during the Great Depression and possesses the distinctive characteristics of the style. The school was constructed in phases between 1931 and 1949 and reflects the growth of the surrounding neighborhood and the city of Detroit into the 1940s. It also tells the story of the financial limitations imposed upon the city in the Depression era with much needed additions to the 1931 school not constructed until the 1940s. These additions blend in seamlessly with the original Art Deco school block constructed in 1931. The most impressive Art Deco detailing on the school consists of exterior sculptural work completed by noted architectural sculptor Corrado Parducci. The school is nominated under the *Public Schools of Detroit* Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF).

The Burbank School meets all identified registration requirements outlined in the *Public Schools of Detroit* MPDF. The Burbank School was built as a public school building in the Detroit Public School system within the period of significance for the MPDF (1888-1960). The building is in its original location and continued operation as a school until 2009. It also retains levels all aspects of integrity. Despite the building being vacant for over ten years and in poor condition due to vandalism, graffiti, and deferred maintenance, it retains a remarkable degree of integrity including historic windows, decorative brick work, overall massing and roof form, and exceptional decorative carving. The basis of the character of the interior remains intact as well despite the condition, and retains original room layout, circulation, interior tile cladding, and wood tongue and groove closets in classrooms. For these reasons, the Burbank School is eligible under Criterion A for its association with the development of education in Detroit, Michigan, between 1931 and 1960, and under Criterion C as a prominent example of Art Deco as employed in the design of public school buildings in Detroit between 1931 and 1949.

The Luther Burbank Elementary School’s period of significance for Criterion A begins in 1931 with the construction of the school and extends to 1960, which is closing date of the “Development of Public Education in Detroit” context of the *Public Schools of Detroit* MPDF. 1960 was also the final year the Burbank School served exclusively as an Elementary School. The period of significance under Criterion C encompasses the years of construction of the school’s character-defining Art Deco architecture, spanning from 1931 with the construction of the original building to 1949 when the fourth addition was completed on the southeastern corner of the school.

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Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOL ARCHITECTURE

The Luther Burbank Elementary School, constructed in four major campaigns in 1931, 1944, 1946, and 1949, reflects the physical design dictated by modern, progressive developments in public education. Such developments influenced the design of public school buildings in Detroit and other cities throughout the country in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Major changes included the introduction of age-grading, the separation of primary and secondary grades into separate buildings, the inclusion of kindergarten in primary school education, and the modernization of school buildings to include specialized spaces and amenities such as central heating, ventilation, and indoor plumbing. The Burbank School is an embodiment of these ideals in its physical form, while also serving as a prominent example of an Art Deco public school in Detroit.

As described in *An Honor and an Ornament*, a study of the historical and architectural development of public school buildings in Michigan, there were several important factors that dictated the form and design of what are now iconic examples of public school architecture in Michigan. These included but were not limited to: state legislation; social, health, and educational reforms; architectural journals and publications; early-twentieth century standardization; development of architectural styles; and economic conditions. Together, these factors ushered in new ideas about school buildings in both urban and rural areas throughout the state. As the largest urban center in Michigan, Detroit in particular went through a significant period of reform between 1900 and 1930 as populations skyrocketed. The number of school aged children was growing rapidly and the Board of Education recognized the need to create a more modern school system and produce modern school buildings en masse. By 1900, enrollment for Detroit public schools reached almost forty thousand students, up from around fourteen thousand in 1875. Between 1910 and 1930, 180 new school buildings were constructed in Detroit.² Superintendent Charles E. Chadsey, who served from 1912 to 1919, is largely credited for modernizing, reforming, and ultimately reorganizing Detroit's Public School system.³ In particular, Chadsey recognized Detroit as a crucial industrial center for the country and wanted to draw a direct line from Detroit's industrial character to the education system.

Acts and laws constituted at the state level had effects throughout Michigan and are seen in the physical expression of many extant school buildings today. Firstly, legislation allowed for the creation of school districts which established the earliest building types, one room school houses, union schools, and ward schools. In 1827 the then Michigan Territory enacted a law requiring all townships with fifty or more residents to have a school leading these building types to proliferate statewide.⁴ Municipal boards of education were formed in the following decades including the

² John Grover and Yvette van der Velde, *A School District in Crisis*, (Detroit, MI: Loveland Technologies, 2016), website: accessed June 16, 2021, <https://landgrid.com/reports/schools>.

³ Goldstein, *Public Schools of Detroit*, Section E Page 5.

⁴ Grover and Yvette van der Velde, *A School District in Crisis*.

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establishment of the Detroit Board of Education in 1842.⁵ The mandate of attendance for compulsory education at the Michigan state level was introduced in the 1871 with the passage of a law requiring children from age eight to fourteen to attend school.⁶ For this reason, significant effort was placed on creating a school environment that was safe, healthy, and modern. This manifested in curriculum, but also in design and construction of school buildings. Eventually the State Superintendent of Public Instruction was granted more influence over public school building design and the buildings began to adopt a more uniform identity. Specifically, a law in 1915 gave the Superintendent authority to review all plans and specifications for new school buildings or additions that would cost more than three hundred dollars, eventually leading to an ease in standardization of school plans. Other laws including the 1919 Millen Law had a direct impact on what services the school building provided. The Millen Law required physical education to be part of school's curriculum resulting in more playgrounds, gymnasiums, and even pools in some later schools, greatly impacting the physical form of the building.⁷ The school board formally adopted a law in 1928 which required the construction of detached boiler houses and associated chimney stacks, as seen at the Burbank School.

Social, health and educational reforms were also a driving force in informing legislation and ultimately the design and construction of public schools. This significant shift in thought elevated the importance of health concerns and creating suitable learning environments to the same level as the architecture itself. Progressive era reforms in particular advocated for the opening of public schools for use by the entire community (playgrounds, auditoriums, etc.), more diverse curricula including physical fitness, incorporation of kindergartens, manual and vocational training, as well as improved conditions including indoor plumbing and ventilation. The rectangular plan, seen in the wings of the Burbank School, was also adopted as a reaction to fire safety code. This is characterized by long hallways or corridors flanked by classrooms as well as paired entrances at ends of the building providing for easily accessible exits. The school garden movement in the early 1900s can also be seen into twentieth century school buildings with the inclusion of conservatories in many schools, especially urban schools. Burbank School still retains its conservatory which was built with the 1931 original school block. These became common in Detroit schools in the first few decades of the twentieth century into the mid-twentieth century.⁸

Fenestration evolved from single window openings to grouped window openings. These grouped window openings had a specific purpose to maximize natural light and minimize shadows to allow as much interior visibility as possible with natural light, which was the primary light source for students into the first several decades of the 1900s. While natural light was key, many prominent elevations of schools, including Burbank, have blind facades with no windows present. This was a result of only placing grouped window openings on one elevation. Schools built at this time would commonly only have light enter one side of the room, usually the left shoulder of the students, to prevent eye strain due to shadows and it was believed most students

⁵ Grover and Yvette van der Velde, *A School District in Crisis*.

⁶ Goldstein, *Public Schools of Detroit*, Section, Section E Page 4.

⁷ *An Honor and an Ornament: Public School Buildings in Michigan*, Lansing, Michigan: State Historic Preservation Office, September 2003, 4.

⁸ Goldstein, *Public Schools of Detroit*, Section, Section E page 21.

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were right-handed.⁹ By 1910 many of these health and safety standards for school construction were written into the code in many American cities, including Detroit.

Another major design influence was the proliferation of architectural publications and educational journals. State superintendent Henry R. Pattengill published his own pamphlet on school design in 1895, following prior national design publications being included in Michigan's annual reports between 1859 and 1897. These publications explored new ideas about modern school buildings including lighting, ventilation (particularly in cities), room organization, architectural styles, and additions. With populations rapidly expanding throughout the city, many of these schools were also constructed with future expansion in mind. As stated in the 1950 Superintendent's Annual Report: "The Burbank Elementary School, representative of Detroit schools built twenty years ago, was constructed in units...and was added to as the community grew."¹⁰ This proactive thinking regarding additions and expansions helped give way to a more standardized school design palate moving into the twentieth century.

Economic conditions also influenced how and when schools were built or expanded. As the city's population continued to increase, existing schools required expansion while newly established neighborhoods needed new educational facilities. Many of these schools built in the late 1920s and early 1930s were built with the knowledge that they would need to be expanded, and they were, albeit later than expected or needed. This trend is illustrated by the Burbank School. The school was originally constructed in 1931 with later additions not constructed until the mid-to-late 1940s. Standardization was key in order to maximize cost and efficiency. This ushered in the use of alphabet plans, including C, E, H, U, or T configurations for school buildings. While the Burbank School is an example of a "U" plan, the most popular plans were "H", "I", "T", and "C" and were applied to two- to three-story schools. The namesake indicated the footprint of the building plan, somewhat unsurprisingly. The plans are generally quite symmetrical and uniform in terms of layout and organization. Stylistically however, these schools spanned numerous architectural approaches depending largely upon financial constraints and the fashion of the time.

The introduction of age grading also had a significant impact on which schools were built and the forms they followed. The Burbank School was constructed as an elementary school, a building type that had evolved from early ward schools and were typically built for students at school age through sixth to eighth grade. Junior high schools emerged as a type in the early 1910s, which limited elementary schools more commonly through grade six. This was based on the 6-3-3 system which reflected the six years of elementary education, three years of junior high or intermediate education, and three years of high school to complete the educational tract. While many of the early middle schools are no longer extant, the Joyce School (1915) and Miller Junior High School (1919) are still early examples of the form. Additionally, kindergartens were more frequently introduced into elementary schools. This kindergarten room was typically situated on the first floor in a corner near a primary entrance, sometimes with a fireplace. The kindergarten room at Burbank is housed in the 1944 addition, within the one-story limestone bay projection,

⁹ *An Honor and an Ornament*, 5.

¹⁰ Detroit Public Schools, *Annual Report*, 1950, 14.

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showing the early influence of rounded kindergarten classrooms. High schools typically included grades nine through twelve and became one of the most constructed building types in the early twentieth century. Putting additional stress on the school system was the lack of job opportunity for young, working aged youths with the onset of the Great Depression. Prior to 1930, it was quite common for individuals (ages 14 to 18) to leave school prior to completion and enter the workforce. With employment plummeting, more and more of these teen individuals chose to stay in school and a particular weight was felt in the need for high school buildings.¹¹ Between 1920 and 1931, eight elementary schools were built in the city of Detroit. Twelve intermediate or junior high schools were also built along with several senior high schools.¹²

The architecture of public school buildings became increasingly important as it became a testament to the prosperity of the city and its commitment to education. Also, the shift to large school buildings with modern amenities and modern curricula energized working architects to develop a distinctive style that would be easily identifiable as a school building. This larger national trend was first illustrated in Detroit by the architectural firm of Malcomson & Higginbotham. The firm was the first to dominate and ultimately define the arena of Detroit's public schools. They were used almost exclusively by Detroit's board of education as architects for their schools between 1893 and 1923, though very few of these buildings remain extant.

By the end of the nineteenth century, school building forms throughout the state were fairly uniform in terms of type and plan and the city had a variety of architectural treatments applied to the exteriors. Popular treatments in the last decades of the 1800s included more picturesque styles like Late-Victorian and Romanesque Revival. The 1900s ushered in a new era of style. Elaboration varied based on financial constraints, but most schools from this period feature decorative brickwork, masonry trim, terra cotta, or tile. Styles ranged from Neo-Tudor and Neo-Gothic to Arts & Crafts, which were popular styles in other forms of architecture at the time. Classical influences were also ubiquitous, ranging from Beaux Arts to Neoclassical and Colonial Revival.¹³ Massing also became simpler, with the adoption of flat roofs to invoke more public, less domestic appearances. The earliest example of a flat roofed school building in Detroit is the William T. Sampson Elementary School (1912).¹⁴ Other prominent school buildings from this era include the Jefferson Intermediate School (Extant, NRHP Listed), and the James A. Garfield School (Extant, NRHP Listed). The former was constructed in 1922 in the Tudor Revival Style designed by Malcomson, Higginbotham, & Palmer located at 938 Seldon Street on Detroit's near north side. The latter is an earlier example of a Malcomson and Higginbotham school building constructed in 1896 in the Late Victorian style. This school is located at 840 Waterman Street southwest of downtown.

In the 1920s the school board employed a number of notable architectural firms to design new Detroit public schools rather than one specialized architectural firm. As noted in the *Public Schools of Detroit* MPDF, some of those firms included: Vernor, Wilhelm & Molby; Donaldson & Meier; George D. Mason; Smith, Hinchman & Grylls; Bonnah & Chaffee; J. Ivan Dise;

¹¹ Goldstein, *Public Schools of Detroit*, Section E Page 9.

¹² Goldstein, *Public Schools of Detroit*, Section E Page 22.

¹³ Goldstein, *Public Schools of Detroit*, Section, Section E Page 19

¹⁴ Goldstein, *Public Schools of Detroit*, Section E, Page 19.

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Burrowes & Eurich; McGrath, Dohmen & Page (continuation of Malcomson & Higginbotham & Palmer)

Between 1930 and 1944, Art Deco was one of, if not the most dominant style in public school architecture in Detroit. The Burbank School was constructed in the heart of this craze and is a relatively early example of the style showcasing the shift in aesthetics from historical influences to more forward thinking architectural treatments to match the aspirations of a modern school system. The later, historic additions of the Burbank School, though constructed in the postwar period under the MPDF architectural context, reflect the design aesthetic of the early 1930s as they match the detailing, brick pattern, and ornamentation of the original 1931 school building, which created one cohesive building.

This period of public school architecture that immediately preceded the construction of the Burbank School was integral in the realization of Burbank's many architectural features, character, and form. The standards developed under the work of Malcomson & Higginbotham created a solid foundation for future construction of Detroit public schools, particularly in the difficult years during the Depression. The Burbank School was constructed in one of the most tumultuous times in American history. Bookended by the onset of the Great Depression and World War II, it was a defining era for Detroit and its school board.

The Detroit Public School system has experienced great changes since the mid-twentieth century as desegregation preceded a declining population of school age children and an aging infrastructure. The city of Detroit reached its population peak in the 1950s at 1.85 million while the school district peaked in population in the 1960s with nearly 300,000 students enrolled in the Detroit Public School system in 1966. After over a century of a seemingly endless race with student population growth, the public school system embarked on a steady decline. Just under fifty thousand were enrolled in 2016. They faced, and still face, competition from charter schools and nearby school districts in adjacent suburbs. For this reason, particularly in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, more and more Detroit public schools have closed. Between 2000 and 2015 alone, 195 schools have closed, eighty-one of which were vacant or not in use as of 2016. A city that once had 380 active public school buildings, only has ninety-three today.¹⁵

DEVELOPMENT OF DETROIT'S EAST SIDE NEIGHBORHOODS

According to the City of Detroit Interactive Neighborhood District Map, the Burbank School is centrally located within the Regent Park neighborhood, with the northern boundary line for both the city and the county located just a few blocks to the north. The city of Eastpointe (Macomb County) is just north of Regent Park across the city and county boundary line, Eight Mile Road, with the city of Harper Woods to the east. The Detroit neighborhoods of Mohican Regent, Franklin, and Mapleridge are located to the west and south. Gratiot Avenue and Eight Mile Road are major thoroughfares with commercial centers, with the Burbank School centrally located between these integral roadways. The northeastern stretch of the city was a late entrant in city

¹⁵ Grover and Yvette van der Velde, *A School District in Crisis*.

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boundaries, with incorporation occurring in 1926.¹⁶ Much of Detroit's residential development coincided with the rise of the personal automobile, and for this reason mobility to and from downtown allowed families to live miles away from work and the city center and still have access to its amenities.¹⁷ This is reflected in the development of Detroit's east side neighborhoods where the Burbank School was constructed.

Prior to its annexation by the city of the Detroit, this area of the county was known as Gratiot Township. Annexations of the 1910s and 1920s greatly expanded the footprint of the city and by 1926, much of the area up to the northern border of Wayne County was part of Detroit. Historically, the east side was home to large farming developments, country clubs and golf courses, and rural estates before land started to become attractive to homebuilders in the early 1900s. By the mid-1920s, Detroit's east side was booming with development. As the fourth largest city in the United States, Detroit was growing at an unprecedented scale and a need for housing followed.¹⁸ Ads for new subdivisions on the east side were advertised as "accessible to the Great East Side Industrial Section, but out of the smoke..."¹⁹ Local highways were improved in the 1920s including Van Dyke Avenue, Mt. Clemens highway, and Mack Avenue, all providing better and safer access to and from downtown, industrial areas, and newly constructed subdivisions.²⁰ Some of the new developments were even known as "Eastern Superhighway Subdivisions."²¹ This in conjunction with the widening and commercial development along of Gratiot Road in the early 1920s attracted commercial investors and homebuilders alike. The mayor at the time had this to say about the developing east side:

The east side offers the unusual situation of a great industrial area centered close downtown with fine a residential section as any city can boast lying just a little further out. Through this section runs some of our most important business thoroughfares. Mt. Elliot, Van Dyke, Gratiot, Harper, Warren, Mack, Kercheval and Jefferson Avenues.²²

Newly located factories east of downtown increased the demand for workers and affordable homes throughout the city, but particularly on the east side. East side real estate values were reported to have risen five hundred percent in the first half of the 1920s.²³ In 1925 some two hundred factories were located on Detroit's near east side.²⁴ Companies included Packard, Hudson, Essex, Chrysler, Hupmobile, Studebaker, Ford Highland Park Plant, Dodge, Chevrolet, Standard and Graham Truck. Collectively these factories employed about 250,00 workers who

¹⁶ Drawing Detroit, "Detroit Annexation 1806-1926," accessed June 16, 2021, [http://www.drawingdetroit.com/detroit-annexation-1806-1926/#:~:text=Detroit%20was%20officially%20incorporated%20on,lost%20this%20designation%20until%201815\).&text=Detroit%20is%20reincorporated%20as%20a,and%20east%20to%20the%20river\).](http://www.drawingdetroit.com/detroit-annexation-1806-1926/#:~:text=Detroit%20was%20officially%20incorporated%20on,lost%20this%20designation%20until%201815).&text=Detroit%20is%20reincorporated%20as%20a,and%20east%20to%20the%20river).)

¹⁷ Grover and Yvette van der Velde, *A School District in Crisis*.

¹⁸ "Detroit Annexation 1806-1926," Drawing Detroit.

¹⁹ Advertisement, "Regent Park No. 2," *Detroit Free Press*, April 18, 1926.

²⁰ "East Side Home Development Near Great Industrial Area," *Detroit Free Press*, December 13, 1925.

²¹ Advertisement, *Detroit Free Press*, December 13, 1925.

²² "500% Jump in Realty Values Not Unusual," *Detroit Free Press*, December 13, 1925.

²³ "500% Jump in Realty Values Not Unusual."

²⁴ "500% Jump in Realty Values Not Unusual."

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lived throughout the city,²⁵ which created a very real need for housing near or accessible to these factories.²⁶ While much of the earlier east side development occurred closer to the near east side adjacent to these plants, areas like Regent Park and Maple Ridge slowly grew in time, starting in the mid-1920s and into the late 1940s. Subdivisions in the area that were developed and sold out prior to the construction of the Burbank School include King's Heights, the John E. Salter Farm subdivision, Ridgemont Gardens, and Tepper Golf Park Subdivision.²⁷ One developer said of the area: "Located just a mile inside city limits...[it]...is the most rapidly populating section of Detroit..."²⁸

According to a 1925 feature in the *Detroit Free Press* that detailed the growth of Detroit's east side, \$8,500,000 worth of residential construction permits were issued in the first ten months of that year in the district bounded by Van Dyke Street to the west, Harper Road to the south, Kelly Road to the east, and the city limits to the north.²⁹ The Burbank School was situated directly within this hotbed of residential construction. Construction was dominated by houses the cost between \$5,000 and \$10,000. As more and more families moved to the east side, the area was in need of new schools. In 1925, ninety "up-to-date" schools were located on Detroit's east side with the capacity to enroll just over ninety thousand students.³⁰ Detroit was one of the country's fastest growing urban centers into the mid-twentieth century, and by 1960 had the fourth largest school system in the country.³¹

The Luther Burbank Elementary School was constructed largely because of a "change in population density," alluding to the fact that existing schools were largely overcrowded. The site was chosen specifically because it was central to major thoroughfares and in the midst of numerous new residential developments.³² Construction of the Burbank School was approved in October of 1930, and originally planned to serve 580 pupils. At this time, the architects were also identified as Van Leyen, Schilling, and Keough who would construct the school for \$169,136.³³ The blocks immediately adjacent and surrounding area were developed in the 1940s.

Typical of most elementary schools, the Burbank School was built in a largely residential area to facilitate access of neighborhood children to their local school. From the start, the Burbank School was integrated into the community. It even hosted what was called an "unusual frolic" for students, teachers, and parents during its opening months that featured a picnic, refreshments, and music.³⁴ In 1944, as part of the federal Office of Price Administration's Victory Garden

²⁵ "500% Jump in Realty Values Not Unusual."

²⁶ "500% Jump in Realty Values Not Unusual."

²⁷ "East Side Investors Reaping Large Profits from their Investments," *Detroit Free Press*, December 13, 1925.

²⁸ "New East Side 'Sub' Planned," *Detroit Free Press*, December 13, 1925.

²⁹ "New East Side 'Sub' Planned," *Detroit Free Press*, December 13, 1925.

³⁰ "East Side Now Boasts 90 Up-to-Date Schools," *Detroit Free Press*, December 13, 1925.

³¹ Goldstein, *Public Schools of Detroit*, Section E Page 1.

³² Board of Education, *Histories of Detroit Public Schools*, 131.

³³ "Board Orders 6 New Schools," *Detroit Free Press*, October 11, 1930.

³⁴ "Burbank School Plans Frolic Tuesday Night," *Detroit Free Press*, May 31, 1931.

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program, more than three hundred gardens were advertised as being available south of the Burbank School for use by local residents.³⁵

In the 1950s and 1960s the surrounding neighborhood experienced many of the same demographics changes that were seen in throughout Detroit and the country as a whole. Many long-term residents moved out to the suburbs in an exodus of “white flight” seen in cities throughout the country. The relationship between the city and its suburbs and the roles they played changed drastically, with the suburban population surpassing the population of the city by 1960.³⁶ A large segment of this exodus came from Detroit’s middle class including those who held manufacturing and white-collar jobs. Those who left were described as “young families in their prime earning years.”³⁷ This was the segment of the population that had traditionally supported the growth and demand for public schools in Detroit. With the movement of people to the suburbs, their wealth and resources followed them and left the city. This, coupled with the so-called “baby boomers” come to grade school age, enrollment in public schools rose sharply between 1950 and 1960. While enrollment numbers can sometimes be seen as a healthy sign of the school system, in this case it was only to further stress the public school system. Most of these children came from minority and/or disadvantaged socio-economic families who were left to carry the tax burden of Detroit’s public school system while the suburbs grew. For many reasons, this was a weight they could not bear. Over the following decades the Detroit school district was burdened with the opposite problem of continuous declines in enrollment as more and more families left the city.

One of the causes of the exodus from the city, among other social and political factors, was yet another bust cycle for Detroit’s manufacturing sector. While the suburbanization of Detroit metropolitan area, as with other cities around the country, helped bolster a strong demand for automobiles and therefore strengthened Detroit’s manufacturing sector for a time in the 1940s, the demand for updated industrial infrastructure within the city proved problematic. This caused many of the factories to leave Detroit for more spacious and affordable suburban communities.³⁸ For those that did not move to the suburbs, other changes were afoot. Less dominant companies like Packard and Hudson closed, and the larger companies (General Motors, Ford, Chrysler, American Motors) introduced sweeping changes to factories including the elimination of many jobs through automating tasks previously done by individuals. Combined, these massive shifts in population and technology eliminated leaving large segments of Detroit’s population without access to stable employment. The eventual closure or consolidation of the less dominant companies further eroded the number of middle-class-wage jobs in the city.

³⁵ “Big New Site,” *Detroit Evening Times*, April 9, 1944. The so-called Burbank Gardens may have been located on the site what is now the Fisher magnet schools. That site was also home to one of the city’s anti-aircraft installations in the post-World War Two era.

³⁶ Jeffrey Mirel, *The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System*, (University of Michigan Regional: September 1999), 218.

³⁷ Mirel, *The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System*, 220.

³⁸ Mirel, *The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System*, 218.

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CONSTRUCTION AND HISTORY OF THE LUTHER BURBANK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Talks of a new Burbank Elementary school were reported as early as 1928 as the neighborhoods of the east side quickly developed.³⁹ A few years later, the Burbank School was established in 1930 in a temporary structure, replaced by the present school upon its completion in 1931. The first unit of the Burbank School, a rectangular building, was designed by Van Leyen, Schilling & Keough, architects and was completed in 1931 along with an associated, detached boiler house connected to the school building through an underground tunnel. The contractor for the Burbank School was E.T. Saikowski, electrical work was completed by Gray Electric company, and heating to Ralph P. Peckham. There was some controversy about these contractors at the time with concern over awarding contracts to bidders from unions to ensure that school builders were being paid a fair wage, speaking to larger labor tensions at the time in Detroit.⁴⁰ The school was constructed at a cost of \$130,253 and named for famed American horticulturalist Luther Burbank (1849-1926). Many public schools throughout the country were named for Luther Burbank and his most relevant connection to Michigan appears to be tied to Henry Ford, who moved the Luther Burbank Home (where Burbank was born) and Burbank's California garden office to Dearborn, Michigan where they are part of the larger Greenfield Village, an outdoor living history museum filled with a diverse collection of historic buildings.

By 1938 the Burbank School served 379 students ranging from kindergarten to eighth grade. Prior to the ability of the school to physically build on permanent additions, it appears the Burbank School was home to several temporary buildings that were utilized to accommodate the growing number of enrolled students.⁴¹ The surrounding residential area experienced a population boom and the number of school aged children grew steadily. For this reason, a one-story addition to the school was constructed in 1944, which resulted in a "U" shaped configuration with an open courtyard to the west. It was built at the cost of \$85,500 and added capacity for 360 students.⁴² This addition contained more classrooms, two first floor kindergartens, and rooms for "manual training" and the "practical arts." Until the addition was completed, the school switched to half day sessions to accommodate all the enrolled students.

The second story of the addition was added in 1946 and added eight new classrooms, a music room a speech room, a staff rest room, and homemaking room. The homemaking room was one of the first in the city to have "unit kitchens" for teaching. This addition was completed at the cost of \$416,731.⁴³ A third addition containing the gymnasium and auditorium, designed by architect Edward A. Shilling, was added to the rear of the 1944-1946 addition in 1949. The addition also contained a health education room that had built in folding tables. The gym could therefore serve as both a gymnasium and a lunchroom if needed.⁴⁴

³⁹ "School Budget is \$33,448,953," *Detroit Free Press*, December 27, 1928.

⁴⁰ "21 New Schools Create Problems," *Detroit Free Press*, December 17, 1930.

⁴¹ Detroit (Mich.). Board of Education, *Proceedings of the Board of Education of the City of Detroit, 1933*, accessed June 16, 2021, https://www.google.com/books/edition/_/gzXWAAAMAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&bsq=burbank

⁴² "Houses 240 Pupils," *Detroit Times*, August 25, 1943.

⁴³ *Detroit Times*, December 28, 1946.

⁴⁴ Board of Education, *Histories of Detroit Public Schools*, 132.

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In 1961 the school was designated as a junior high school, which incorporated grades six through nine into its curriculum. This reorganization reflected the changing needs and redistribution of graded school children in the city. By the late 1960s as Detroit's demographics were increasingly changing, Burbank was known as an "all-white" school until a bussing program was introduced to integrate Detroit Public Schools. The program only lasted two years before it was cancelled.⁴⁵ In 1976 court ordered integration attempted again to desegregate Detroit's public schools. The city's busing plan at the time required 27,524 of the city's nearly 250,000 (107 of 280 neighborhood schools) students to change schools via busing. The integration plan was met with protests and organized anti-busing groups, who attended the affected schools, even though Detroit was reported as having one of the country's least extensive busing programs.⁴⁶ Some reports also indicated that parents from both Black and White families alike were opposed to the busing orders throughout the city either because they believed their children already had access to an adequate school or to avoid the inconvenience sending their child across the city for school.⁴⁷ Due to the turmoil of both social and economic conditions felt throughout the city, families began to leave Detroit. By the 1980s, as a result of declining enrollment and the erosion of a once large tax base, Detroit Public Schools began close and consolidate schools, as they could no longer afford to operate the infrastructure that had taken over a century to build.

A large, noncontributing, one-story addition was built to rear of the school in 1992. Attached at the northwest corner of the 1931-1949 school, the 1992 addition created a central courtyard between the two, containing the 1931 boiler house. It is somewhat unusual that the Burbank School received this early 1990s addition, as it was constructed during a time when large scale closures of Detroit's public schools had begun. Nine schools closed in 1990, and almost thirty schools had closed in the preceding two decades.⁴⁸ This likely reflects the central location of Burbank School and the fact that it still served a large enough number of students to remain open and receive funding for additions. In 2001 the name of the school was changed to Dorothy Fisher Magnet School. In 2002 the Heilmann middle school was built just west of the Burbank School, part of a wave of new school construction that the school system had not employed in over two decades. Seven years later, in 2009, the Burbank School closed its doors. The exact reason for the closure of the Burbank School is unclear, but many common reasons at the time included underperformance in academics, consistently low test scores, poor condition of older buildings, or underutilized buildings that were simply too large to operate at their current enrollment.⁴⁹

ART DECO ARCHITECTURE

The Luther Burbank Elementary School is an excellent and intact example of an Art Deco style Detroit public school. As stated in the *Public Schools of Detroit* MPDF, "the Art Deco

⁴⁵ "Pamela D. Jones," Detroit Historical Society Oral History Archive, accessed June 16, 2021, <https://detroit1967.detroithistorical.org/items/show/12>.

⁴⁶ "Buses Roll Today for 15,000 Pupils," *Detroit Free Press*, January 26, 1976.

⁴⁷ Sarah Alvarez, "3 Things to know about the history of Detroit busing," Michigan Radio, November 12, 2013, accessed August 9, 2021, <https://www.michiganradio.org/post/3-things-know-about-history-detroit-busing>.

⁴⁸ Grover and Yvette van der Velde, *A School District in Crisis*.

⁴⁹ Grover and Yvette van der Velde, *A School District in Crisis*.

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movement swept the country in the late 1920s and 1930s.”⁵⁰ Detroit’s public schools were no exception to this trend and movement. Twenty-six schools were identified as Art Deco in the *Public Schools of Detroit* MPDF and were designed by various firms showing the range of Art Deco from the late 1920s into the 1940s. Despite the financial constraints put upon the city by the Great Depression, several new schools were built and still serve as examples of Art Deco architecture.⁵¹

Art Deco style has its roots in late nineteenth century Europe with the Art Nouveau moment born in France. The origin of the name can be traced to 1925 in Paris at the Exposition *Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes*. Meant to be a modern and original expression of style that could meet the needs of a world that was changing rapidly, the idea of the future and modern influences were at the core of the style. By the late 1920s these design aspirations had crossed the Atlantic Ocean and began to manifest in cities across the United States. It was one of the first popular American styles not entirely reliant on the period revival styles of the past.⁵² It was also heavily intertwined with the American Jazz Age, a period that began c. 1920 and extended to the early 1930s,⁵³ and served a visual representation of the modern American artform when transported to American cities, particularly booming cities like Detroit.

Building materials were generally smooth faced stones or metal veneers with simple or rich ornamentation worked into terra cotta, glass, or limestone. These materials were strategically paired to emphasize a polychrome façade, often seen in Art Deco designs. Hallmarks of the style include low-relief geometrical designs including zigzags or parallel lines, chevrons, and stylized floral or animal motifs. The ornament took on different forms depending on the country of origin. For example, European Art Deco was more influenced by the Cubism movement happening concurrently, while American Art Deco was known to draw more from Native American influences alongside Egyptian, Mayan, and Moorish influences. Most of these characteristics are seen in the Burbank School including a polychrome brick work, low-relief geometrical designs, and floral and animal motifs throughout the sculptural program of the building.

In Detroit’s public schools as elsewhere in the city, architects began to experiment with the Art Deco vocabulary in the mid- to late-1920s. Detroit Art Deco schools are generally characterized by “symmetrical fronts, stylized floral and geometric ornament and parallel lines around windows and doors.”⁵⁴ In Detroit, these were mostly built between 1930 and 1940, while Burbank’s later 1940s additions are also representative of the style. Other examples of Art Deco

⁵⁰ Goldstein, *Public Schools of Detroit*, Section F, Page 2.

⁵¹ Goldstein, *Public Schools of Detroit*, Section F, Page 2.

⁵² John C. Poppeliers and S. Allen Chambers Jr., *What Style Is It?*, (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2003), 120.

⁵³ The term, “Jazz Age,” is typically credited to F. Scott Fitzgerald, whose work, *Tales of the Jazz Age*, was published in 1922. The common use of the term predates Fitzgerald’s use by about three years (according to newspapers). No doubt, Fitzgerald popularized the term.

⁵⁴ *An Honor and an Ornament*, 23.

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educational buildings found throughout the state are typically those schools that were built with Public Works Administration funding during the Great Depression.⁵⁵

The City of Detroit at large is equally saturated in Art Deco architecture. It is fitting that the so-called Paris of the Midwest so thoroughly embraced a style born in Paris itself. It was often implemented in new building types springing up around the country including movie palaces and public buildings. Buildings like the Fisher Building (National Historic Landmark, completed 1928), a symbol of the city's prosperity and forward-thinking attitude, exemplified the energy of Detroit during this period, while other less elaborate forms of Art Deco began to populate Detroit's streets and skylines. With the onset of the Depression however, these designs became more restrained than elaborate and the more streamline Art Moderne took precedent over Art Deco. In Detroit however, only two Art Moderne Schools were documented in the *Public Schools of Detroit* MPDF versus twenty-six Art Deco schools, which can be seen as confirmation of the popularity of the style.

The Burbank School was built during a global depression. Spurred by New Deal funding of the Roosevelt administration, new public architecture during the depression era was a catalyst in the evolution of Art Deco architecture in America. The formerly lavish style associated with the splendor of the Jazz Age was in contrast with the malaise of the Depression era and the financial constraints that came along with it. This largely gave way to more industrially produced Streamline Modern buildings in the 1930s, with simplified ornamentation and streamlined silhouettes including rounded corners and the use of inexpensive and easily produced materials.⁵⁶ The Burbank School is rich with Art Deco ornamentation and is perhaps one of the last vestiges of this style of architecture seen in Detroit's public schools. Further, it embodies the ideals of Art Deco architecture as applied to Detroit's public schools. Art Deco went beyond simply being an architectural style. It is an iconic design and artistic movement, that brought together architects, sculptors, engineers, and designers. It was a modern movement for a modern age largely detached from classical influences of the past and one that pushed toward forward thinking, modern, architecture and the Burbank School is an embodiment of this spirit of Art Deco.⁵⁷

ARCHITECTS AND SCULPTOR

Van Leyen, Schilling & Keough, Architects (1914-1931)

The firm of Van Leven, Schilling & Keough was initially founded by Edward C. Van Leyen in 1886, Edward A. Schilling joined the firm in 1902 with Henry J. Keough to follow in 1910. The firm designed schools throughout the state starting in the 1920s, but were better known for their work in church architecture between 1900 and 1940. By 1920 the firm had already completed over a dozen new school buildings in the state.⁵⁸ However, they were not a regular firm for

⁵⁵ *An Honor and an Ornament*, 23.

⁵⁶ Mark Gelernter, *A History of American Architecture*, (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 1999), 252.

⁵⁷ Poppeliers and Chambers, *What Style Is It?*, 126.

⁵⁸ Heather DeKorte, "Durand High School, 100 West Sycamore Street, Durand, Shiawassee County, Michigan," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2009), Section 8 Page 2.

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Detroit Public Schools during this time period. The three began working together as partners in 1914 and practiced until 1931 following Van Leyen's death.

Edward C. Van Leyen (1867-1931) was a native Detroitier who started his architectural career with Willam Scott & Co. Van Leyen started his own firm in 1886. He was president of Van Leyen Realty Co. Ltd. He also served as commissioner of Detroit Department of Parks and Boulevards from 1898 to 1901. Edward A. Schilling (1871-1952) joined the firm in 1902 and later served as president of Michigan Society of Architects in 1918 and 1919. He was member of Detroit City Plan Commission from 1919-194 and served on Detroit Zoning Board of Appeals. Schilling left the firm after the death of Van Leyen and started his own firm in 1931 and was later part of Parkside Architectural Associates. Other notable projects he participated in were Parkside Homes Addition and the Newberry State Hospital just before his death in 1952. Parkside Homes was the first federally funded low-income public housing project built in the state of Michigan. The final member of the firm was Henry J. Keough (1884-1957). Keough was native of New York where he studied at Syracuse and graduated in 1909. He started work with the firm in 1910 and became a partner 1914. Keough was member of Michigan Society of Architects and Detroit Engineering Society.⁵⁹ For a brief period of time, the firm was known as Van Leyen, Schilling, Keough and Reynolds with the inclusion civil engineer Robert Reynolds.

In addition to a Detroit office the firm had a branch office in Flint, Michigan, where they designed several schools (including Stevenson School, 6th Avenue, constructed 1911, Flint, Michigan, demolished), and Flint City Hall (Demolished in 1955 and replaced by the Flint Municipal Center, NRHP Listed). Examples of their ecclesiastical work include Holy Family Catholic Church at 641 Chrysler Drive in Detroit (constructed 1910, Michigan Historic Site) and St. Charles Borromeo rectory and school at 1491-1515 Baldwin Street (constructed 1912, NRHP Listed). They began designing school buildings in the mid-1920s with examples in Dearborn (Fordson High School, 1922), among others in Monroe, Dowagiac, and Wyandotte, all in Michigan. They also completed several industrial commissions including Huron Milling Company (Harbor Beach, Michigan), Star Watch Case Company in Ludington, Michigan, (constructed 1905, demolished 1995) and the 1916 Peters Cartridge Company in Kings Mills, Ohio (NRHP Listed). The firm also designed the Casino on Belle Isle in Detroit (Van Leyen & Schilling, constructed 1908).⁶⁰

The firm designed an array of building types under their belt, primarily in the picturesque or classical inspired styles, the Burbank School appears to have been one of their few endeavors into the application of Art Deco.

The only other known example by the firm is the Henry A. Chaney Elementary School, 2750 Sheldon Street School, also built in 1931. Van Leyen, Schilling & Keough designed several other public schools including several that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places:

⁵⁹ DeKorte, "Durand High School," Section 8 Page 2.

⁶⁰ George B. Catlin, *Historic Michigan Land of The Great Lakes*, (Dayton, OH: National Historical Association, Inc., 1928), 273.

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Greenfield Union School, 420 West 7 Mile Road, Detroit

This Colonial Revival/Georgian Revival Style School was constructed between 1914 and 1916, with several expansions occurring in 1931 and 1971. The original blocks of the building were also designed by Van Leyen, Schilling & Keough. The school is listed in the National Register for its significance under Criterion A: Community Planning & Development and Criterion C: Architecture. Built originally for Greenfield Township which was eventually annexed by the City of Detroit in 1916 when it was completed. The school is representative of the growing expansion of the city limits of Detroit in the early twentieth century.

Durand High School, 100 West Sycamore Street, Detroit

This Tudor Revival/late Gothic Revival style school was constructed in sections between 1920 and 1958. The school was identified as significant under Criterion A: Education as a reflection of larger statewide trends occurring at the time and for its association with the history of Durand, northwest of Detroit and southwest of Flint.

Corrado Parducci (1900-1981), Ornament

The sculptural ornament for the Burbank School was completed by Detroit's most prolific architectural sculptor, Corrado Parducci. Parducci was born in 1900 in a small town just outside of Pisa, Italy. When he was only four years old, he came with his father to the United States and settled in the Greenwich Village neighborhood of New York City. This location in particular had an impact on Parducci, exposing him to the nearby "hub" of the American sculptural scene at the time. He was identified in elementary school as having a particular talent and potential for sculpting and was put into lessons at the Richmond Settlement House under the direction of Albin Polasek (Art Institute of Chicago). He continued his studies in New York into the early 1920s where he attended classes at the Beaux-Arts Institute of Design (BAID) in Manhattan and the Art Students League of New York, about two miles south of the BAID. Parducci came to Detroit in 1924 under the direction of his employer at the time, Anthony DiLorenzo. His name and reputation for his work in New York preceded him, and coupled with Detroit's building boom, Parducci was soon inundated with commissions in Detroit. He established his own studio in Detroit in 1925.⁶¹

Notable Detroit works include the Penobscot, Guardian, and David Stott buildings, as well as the home of Edsel and Eleanor Ford, and the Detroit Masonic Temple, all listed in the National Register of Historic Places.⁶² He worked closely with Albert Kahn, known as one of the most prolific architects of Detroit.⁶³ His Detroit commissions include a variety of building types in various styles dating from the mid-1920s to 1980.

⁶¹ Dale A. Carlson, Einar E. Kyaran, *Corrado Parducci: A Field Guide to Detroit's Architectural Sculptor*, (Berkley, MI: Dale Carlson, 2020), 8-11.

⁶² In addition to the National Register, the Guardian Building and the Edsel and Eleanor Ford House are both listed as National Historic Landmarks.

⁶³ Jennifer Baross, "Corrado Parducci," Historic Detroit, accessed June 2, 2021, <https://historicdetroit.org/architects/corrado-parducci>.

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According to records provided in the text *Carrado Parducci: A Field Guide to Detroit's Architectural Sculptor*, the Burbank School was one of fourteen documented Detroit public schools where Parducci was commissioned to provide sculpture. Others included:

- Benjamin A. Nolan School, 1926, French Regency
- Calvin Coolidge School, 1925, Neo-gothic
- Charles Oakman School for Crippled Children, 1929, Art Deco
- Edward Cervený School, 1924, Romanesque Revival
- Edwin Denby High School, 1930, Art Deco
- Ella Fitzgerald School, 1925, Late Gothic
- Gabriel Richard School, 1928, Art Deco
- Henry A. Chaney School, 1931, Art Deco
- Isaac Crary School, 1939, Art Deco
- John C. Marshall, 1928, Late Gothic
- John J. Pershing, 1929, Art Deco
- John R. King, 1931, Art Deco
- Marion Law School Addition, 1945, Gothic Revival

COMPARABLE SCHOOL BUILDINGS

The Burbank School is an excellent and well-preserved example of Art Deco architecture as applied to Detroit's public schools. In order to place the Burbank School in a clearer architectural context, several schools in the region were selected as comparable to show the Burbank School's significance among its National-Register-listed and otherwise documented peers in Detroit. Architectural style, date(s) of construction, architect, and location were all taken into consideration when selecting comparable school buildings. Numerous Art Deco school buildings were built throughout Detroit (at least twenty-six were included in the *Public Schools of Detroit* MPDF) and at least seven other Art Deco school buildings have sculpture and ornament design by Carrado Parducci, almost half of the documented work Parducci completed for Detroit Public Schools during his career. In preparation of the 2010 Public Schools of Detroit MPDF, a survey of public schools was undertaken by city staff. The following schools, with the exception of the Higgins School, were evaluated as eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at that time. Information about the following schools was collected from the *Public Schools of Detroit* MPDF unless otherwise noted.

Gabriel Richard Elementary School, 13840 Lapin Street

This school is also located on Detroit's east side and was built in c.1928. The school was designed by architect George D. Mason with ornamentation by Corrado Parducci. The Richard School is strikingly similar to the Burbank School in its architectural ornamentation. The same rounded brick piers found on the Burbank School frame prominent corners of the Richard School. Additionally, rounded stringcourses wrap almost continuously around the building and round arch window openings rest above the primary entryways framed by intact square piers with carved limestone eagles. Originally built as an elementary school, it closed and later reopened as Adult Community Education East Campus in 2009.

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John J. Pershing Junior High School, 18875 Ryan Road

The John J. Pershing School was built in 1929 and designed by the firm Smith, Hynchman, and Grylls. It features more restrained Art Deco detailing, with an emphasis on parallel lines and verticality. Its brick exterior is largely monochrome with sculptural work by Corrado Parducci. It now operates as Pershing High School.

Edwin Denby High School, 12800 Kelly Road

Built in 1930, just one year before the first block of the Burbank School, the Denby School was completed by the architecture firm of Smith, Hinchman & Grylle. The school was listed on the National Register of Historic Places for its significance under Criterion A in the area of education and Criterion C in the area of architecture. Like the Burbank Elementary School, Denby High School was an example of the Detroit public school system's response to the booming population growth in school aged children in Detroit in the 1920s and 1930s. It was constructed as a modern high school complete with an auditorium and gymnasium and was designed by a notable architecture firm along with architectural sculpture by Corrado Parducci. Denby High has a slightly more restrained application of Art Deco detailing than Burbank with a more monochromatic palette with the exception of limestone surrounds around the entryways.

Frederick W. Higgins Elementary School, 9200 Olivet Street

The school opened in 1930, became vacant in the 2006-2007 school year, and was demolished in 2014. It featured prominent limestone entryway surrounds and geometric arrangement of attached piers and capitals emphasizing the verticality and parallel lines of the prominent Art Deco exterior.

Henry A. Chaney Elementary School, 2750 Sheldon Street

This school opened the same year as the Burbank School in 1931 and is also an example of an Art Deco Detroit Public School. Described as an "extreme" version of its style in the *Public Schools of Detroit* MPDF, Art Deco, the Chaney School has vibrant polychromed terra cotta capitals and relief work carved by Corrado Parducci. It was also designed by Van Leyen, Schilling, and Keough. Located on Detroit's northwest side, it was repurposed as a charter school in the 1980s. The Chaney School and the subject property have remarkable similarities and both represent fine executions of Art Deco public schools. Burbank School matches the deep level of architectural detailing without the use of polychrome elaboration, particularly on capitals and other sculptural reliefs found throughout the exterior of the Chaney School. The sculptural reliefs themselves are very similar to those found on the Burbank School including floral motifs and acanthus leaves on capitals. The Chaney School has a more linear form, while the Burbank School has a clear U-Shaped plan showing the variations used with similar styles and different implementations. For these reasons, both schools are significant expressions of the style in Detroit.

Isaac Crary School – 16164 Asbury Park

The school opened in 1939 and is a later example of an Art Deco public school building, which shows a more restrained detailing. Funds for the Crary School were provided by the Federal Emergency Public Works Administration and was designed by McGrath & Dohmen. It is similar

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to the demolished Higgins School in its emphasis on vertical and parallel lines and also contains sculptural work by Corrado Parducci. Particularly of note are the large, sculpted eagles resting on top of a limestone parapet above each entryway.

At the time the school board approved funding for the Burbank School, six other new school buildings were also approved ranging from elementary, intermediate, and high school buildings. A number of additions to existing buildings were also approved in the same year. At least two of the new schools were designed as Art Deco school buildings. Mason Elementary School, designed by Detroit architect J. Ivan Dise, opened in 1931 and closed in 2012. It is similar to the Burbank School in style, form, and massing. The school has hallmark Art Deco facades with geometric parallel lines and decorative sculpting and was also designed over a series of building campaigns rather than all at once. The second Art Deco school approved at that time was the Pasteur School. Pasteur School was designed by architect Frank Eurich and also opened in 1930. The school was design with tan colored brick and limestone exterior cladding. The school contains several later 1930s and 1940s additions and is still an active public elementary school today.

Based on the survey conducted for the *Public Schools of Detroit* MPDF, a total of 16 schools were constructed between 1928 and 1932. Of those, twelve were designed as Art Deco school buildings, firmly establishing it as the dominant style of the late 1920s and early 1930s. Other styles employed at the time include Classical Revival (John J. Bagely School, 1930), Late Gothic (P. J. M. Halley School, 1928; John C. Marshall School, 1928), Renaissance Revival (Andrew Jackson Intermediate School, 1928), and Tudor Revival (Alexander Macomb School, 1928).

The Luther Burbank Elementary School stands out among its peers as a fine example of a primary graded school in Detroit and as an excellent example of Art Deco architecture by the prominent Detroit firm of Van Leyen, Schilling & Keough with ornamentation sculpted Corrado Parducci. As seen in the examples provided above, Detroit's public schools have a variety of applications of Art Deco architecture, ranging from more restrained to the elaborate. The Burbank School stands out among them due to its extensive decorative brickwork and intact sculptural detailing. This is a particularly good example of the "U" -plan formalized in school building codes at the time, while many others designed with Art Deco detailing were completed with the application of different alphabet plans. Particularly as more and more of Detroit's public schools are lost to closures and demolition, the lasting examples of what was once an integral part of Detroit's urban fabric become all the more significant.

CONCLUSION

The Luther Burbank Elementary School is locally significant under National Register Criterion A in the area of Education and Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an excellent and well-preserved example of an Art Deco elementary school in Detroit that exemplifies the growth of Detroit Public Schools in the early 20th century. The school is eligible for listing under the *Public Schools of Detroit* Multiple Property Documentation Form. Additionally, the school contains ornamentation by Detroit's most well-known architectural sculptor, Corrado Parducci. The period of significance for Criterion A begins in 1931 when the school opens and extends to

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1960, which is closing date of the "Development of Public Education in Detroit" context in the MPDF. The period of significance for Criterion C begins in 1931 with the construction of the original building and ends in 1949, when the fourth addition was completed on the southeastern corner of the school. Although large in size, the overall appearance and siting of the 1992 addition do not prevent the historic school from conveying its historic or architectural significance.

The Burbank School retains excellent overall integrity, with only minor alterations to the exterior including the introduction of steel security panels which, on the whole, retain historic multi-light steel windows below. Minor interior alterations include installation of modern finishes including acoustic ceiling tiles, modern lighting, vinyl tile flooring in some areas, and various forms of vandalism and deterioration due to deferred maintenance. The school remains a fine and intact example of an Art Deco Detroit Public School built in one of the most defining moments in the city's history with the major construction campaigns bookended by the Great Depression and World War II. For these reasons, the Burbank School is a notable example of Detroit Public School Architecture.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

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_____ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☒ State Historic Preservation Office

☐ Other State agency

☐ Federal agency

☐ Local government

☐ University

☐ Other

Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 3.796

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 44.442304 Longitude: -82.959802

2. Latitude: Longitude:

3. Latitude: Longitude:

4. Latitude: Longitude:

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Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☒ NAD 1983

1. Zone: 17	Easting: 338821.96	Northing: 4700744.15
2. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
3. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
4. Zone:	Easting :	Northing:

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

S E STATE FAIR ALL THAT PT OF SW 1/4 SEC 6 T 1S R 13E LYG BETW STATE
FAIR & TACOMA & BETW REX & CRUSADE 21 /--- 596.77 X 277AV

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The National Register boundary coincides with the current legal parcel boundary of the Burbank School, which encompasses all of the historic and significant resources of the school.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Shannon Winterhalter and Chris Usler
organization: MacRostie Historic Advisors,
street & number: 53 West Jackson Boulevard, Suite 1142
city or town: Chicago state: IL zip code: 60604
e-mail swinterhalter@mac-ha.com
telephone: 312.488.1682
date: June 24, 2021

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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Luther Burbank Elementary School

City or Vicinity: Detroit

County: Wayne

State: MI

Photographer: City of Detroit; MacRostie Historic Advisors (Melissa Arrowsmith)

Date Photographed: June 2020; June 2021

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

01 of 35

North Elevation, 1931 block - looking southwest.

MI_Wayne County_Luther Burbank Elementary School_0001

Burbank, Luther, Elementary School
Name of Property

Wayne County, MI
County and State

02 of 35

North Elevation, 1931 block - looking southwest.

MI_Wayne County_Luther Burbank Elementary School_0002

03 of 35

North Elevation, 1992 Addition - looking southeast.

MI_Wayne County_Luther Burbank Elementary School_0003

04 of 35

West Elevation, 1931 block - looking southeast.

MI_Wayne County_Luther Burbank Elementary School_0004

05 of 35

West Elevation and courtyard, 1931-1946 block - looking east.

MI_Wayne County_Luther Burbank Elementary School_0005

06 of 35

South Courtyard Elevation and Conservatory, 1931 block - looking north.

MI_Wayne County_Luther Burbank Elementary School_0006

07 of 35

Courtyard Elevations, 1931-1946 block - looking east.

MI_Wayne County_Luther Burbank Elementary School_0007

08 of 35

West and South Elevations, 1944-46 block - looking northeast.

MI_Wayne County_Luther Burbank Elementary School_0008

09 of 35

South Elevation, 1944-49 blocks - looking northwest.

MI_Wayne County_Luther Burbank Elementary School_0009

10 of 35

South and East Elevations, 1992 addition - looking northwest.

MI_Wayne County_Luther Burbank Elementary School_0010

11 of 35

East Elevation, 1992 Addition - looking southwest.

MI_Wayne County_Luther Burbank Elementary School_0011

12 of 35

1931 Powerhouse - looking northeast.

MI_Wayne County_Luther Burbank Elementary School_0012

Burbank, Luther, Elementary School
Name of Property

Wayne County, MI
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13 of 35

1949 Block detail - looking north.

MI_Wayne County_Luther Burbank Elementary School_0013

14 of 35

Entryway Detail, 1944-46 block - looking north.

MI_Wayne County_Luther Burbank Elementary School_0014

15 of 35

1st Floor, 1931 block, Corridor - looking west.

MI_Wayne County_Luther Burbank Elementary School_0015

16 of 35

1st Floor, 1931 block, Corridor Alcove, looking north.

MI_Wayne County_Luther Burbank Elementary School_0016

17 of 35

1st Floor, 1949 block, Gym-Kitchen, looking east.

MI_Wayne County_Luther Burbank Elementary School_0017

18 of 35

1st Floor, 1944-46 block, Southwest Entrance Vestibule - looking west.

MI_Wayne County_Luther Burbank Elementary School_0018

19 of 35

1st Floor, 1931 block, Typical Classroom - looking northwest.

MI_Wayne County_Luther Burbank Elementary School_0019

20 of 35

1st Floor, 1931 block, Typical Classroom - looking southeast.

MI_Wayne County_Luther Burbank Elementary School_0020

21 of 35

2nd Floor, 1944-46 block, Corridor - looking west.

MI_Wayne County_Luther Burbank Elementary School_0021

22 of 35

2nd Floor, 1944-46 block, Corridor, Historic Lockers - looking northwest.

MI_Wayne County_Luther Burbank Elementary School_0022

23 of 35

2nd Floor, 1931 block looking into 1944-46 block, Corridor - looking south.

MI_Wayne County_Luther Burbank Elementary School_0023

Burbank, Luther, Elementary School
Name of Property

Wayne County, MI
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2nd Floor, 1944-46 block, Typical Classroom - looking northwest.
MI_Wayne County_Luther Burbank Elementary School_0024

25 of 35

2nd Floor, 1944-46 block, Typical Classroom - looking southwest.
MI_Wayne County_Luther Burbank Elementary School_0026

26 of 35

2nd Floor, 1944-46 block, Typical Classroom - looking east.
MI_Wayne County_Luther Burbank Elementary School_0026

27 of 35

2nd Floor, 1944-46 block, Typical Classroom - looking northwest.
MI_Wayne County_Luther Burbank Elementary School_0027

28 of 35

Auditorium, 1949 block, 1st Floor - looking southwest.
MI_Wayne County_Luther Burbank Elementary School_0028

29 of 35

Auditorium, 1949 block, 1st Floor - looking northeast.
MI_Wayne County_Luther Burbank Elementary School_0029

30 of 35

Northwest Stair, 1931 block, 1st Floor - looking southwest.
MI_Wayne County_Luther Burbank Elementary School_0030

31 of 35

South Stair Detail, 1944-46 block, 1st-2nd Floor - looking northeast.
MI_Wayne County_Luther Burbank Elementary School_0031

32 of 35

Main Corridor, 1992 Addition - looking east.
MI_Wayne County_Luther Burbank Elementary School_0032

33 of 35

Corridor, 1992 Addition - looking west.
MI_Wayne County_Luther Burbank Elementary School_0033

34 of 35

Gym, 1992 Addition - looking south.
MI_Wayne County_Luther Burbank Elementary School_0034

Burbank, Luther, Elementary School

Wayne County, MI

Name of Property

County and State

35 of 35

1st Floor, Gym-Kitchen – looking north

MI_Wayne County_Luther Burbank Elementary School_0035

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

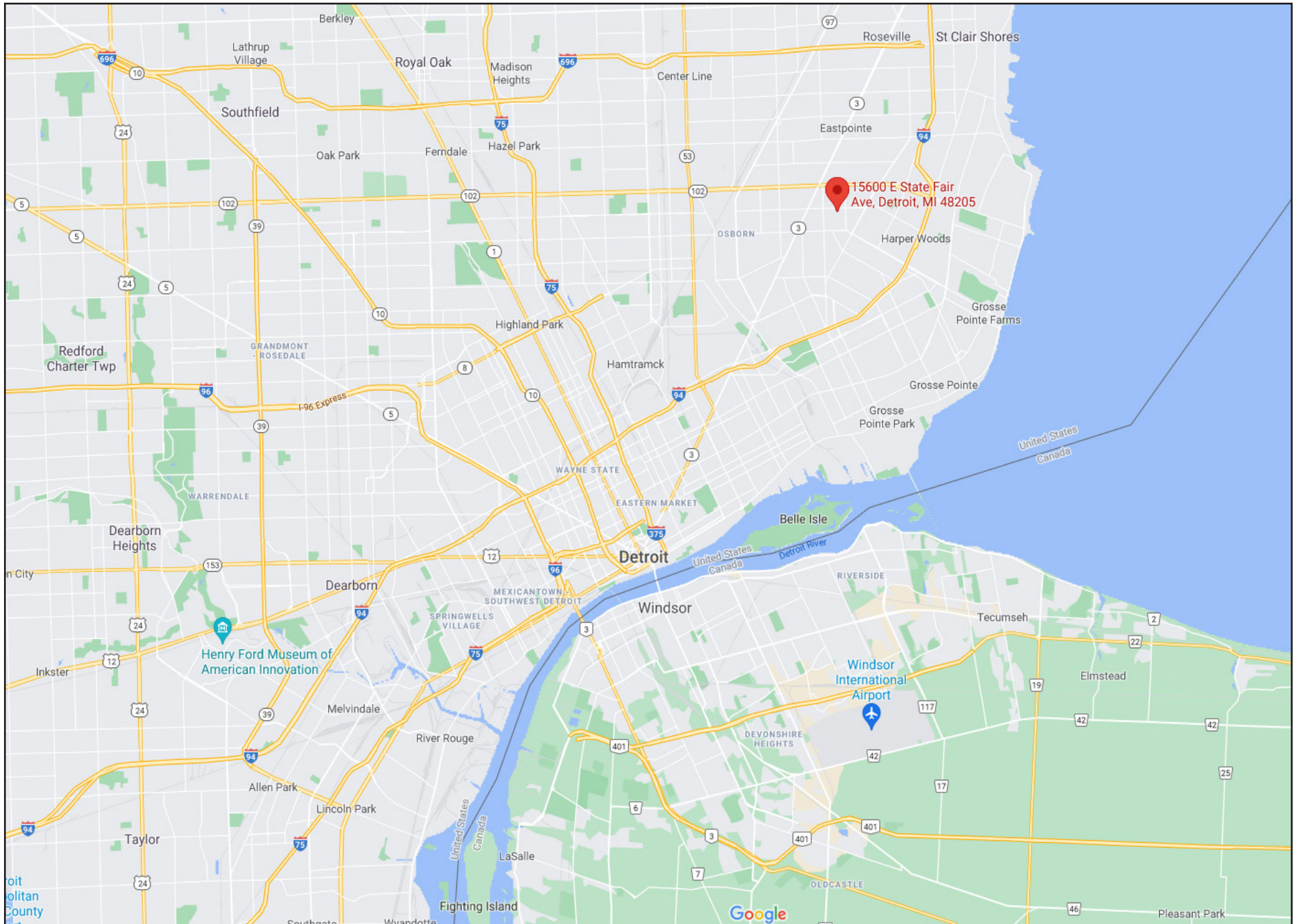
Tier 1 – 60-100 hours

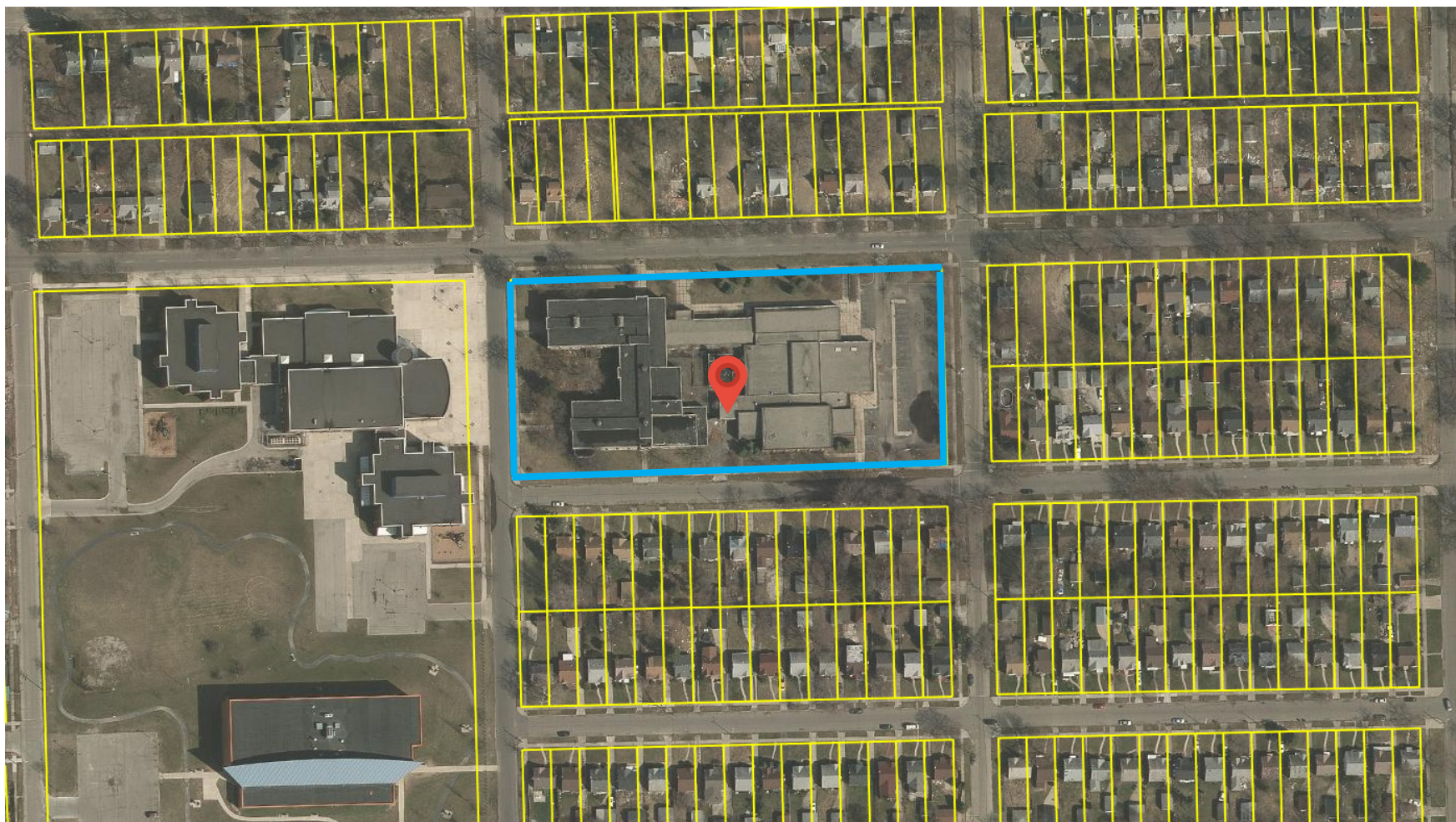
Tier 2 – 120 hours

Tier 3 – 230 hours

Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.





 = boundary

 = Lat/Long: 42.442304°, -82.959802°

0 45 90 180 ft



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Bringing strategy, equity, and experience
to historic building development

Luther Burbank Elementary School
15600 East State Fair Avenue
Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan

Michigan State Historic
Preservation Office
NRHP Nomination - Exhibits



East State Fair Avenue

Crusade Street

Rex Avenue

1931

1931

1992

1944-1946

1949

Tacoma Street

Site Plan



MacRostie Historic Advisors LLC

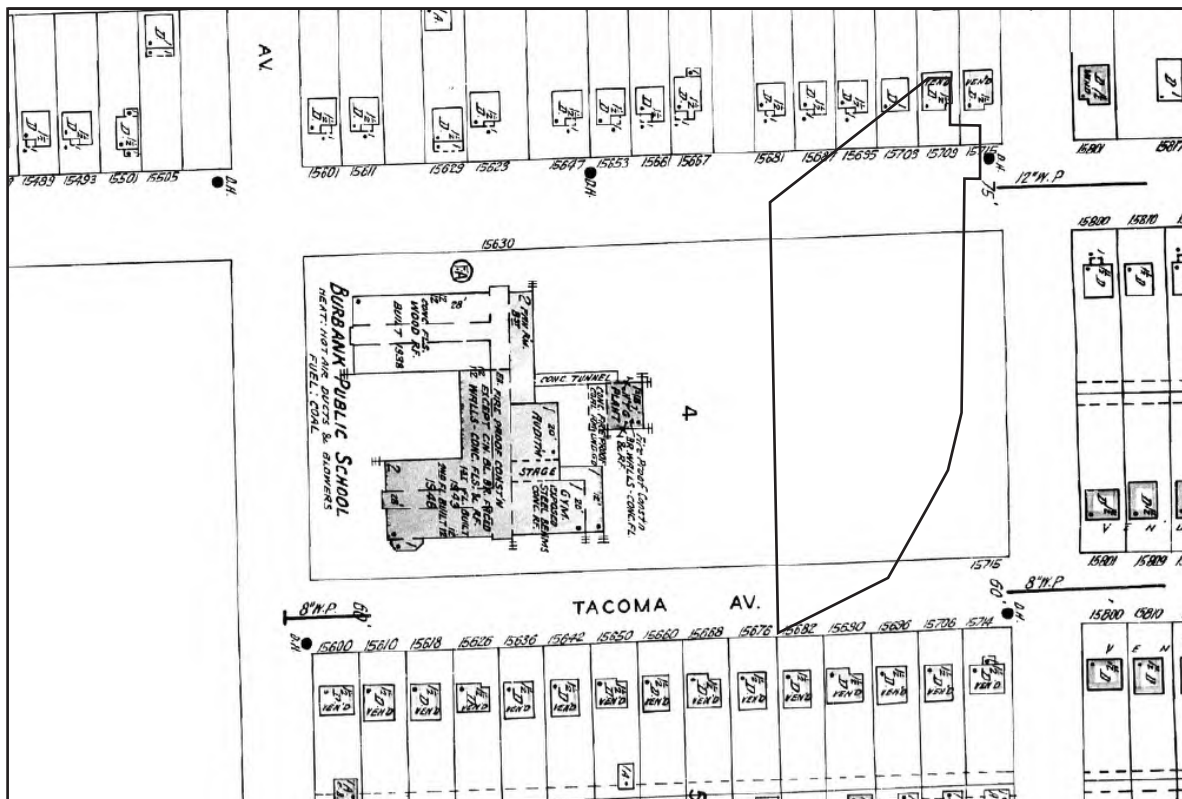
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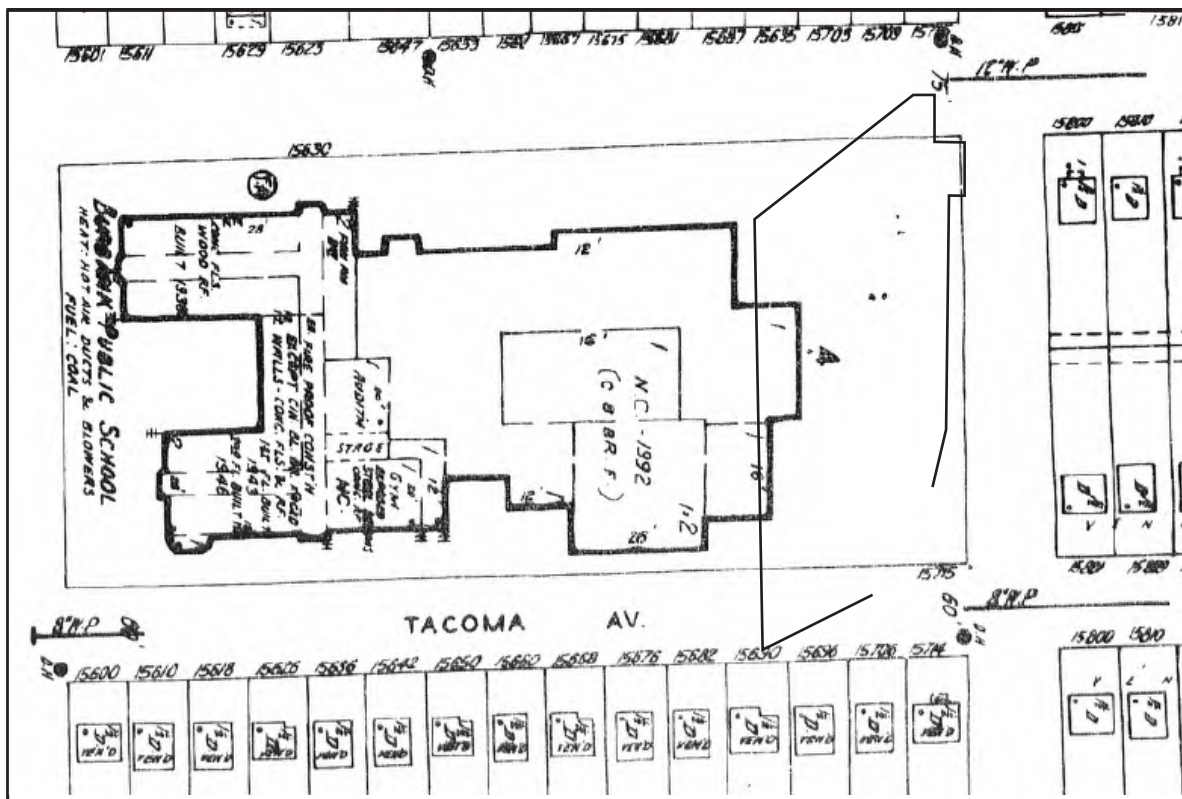
Michigan State Historic
Preservation Office
NRHP Nomination - Exhibits



Michigan State Historic Preservation Office
 NRHP Nomination - Exhibits
 Luther Burbank Elementary School, Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan



Historic Image 1. 1950 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, vol. 24.



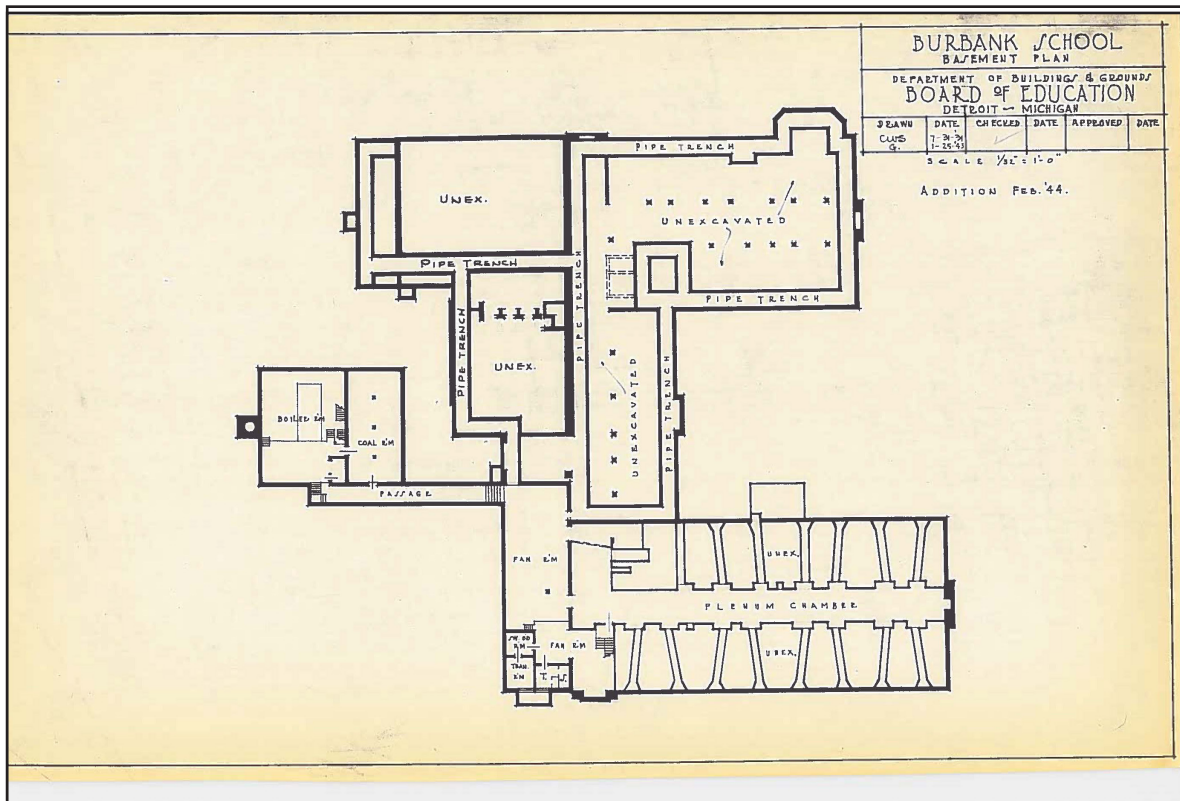
Historic Image 2. 1993 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, vol. 24



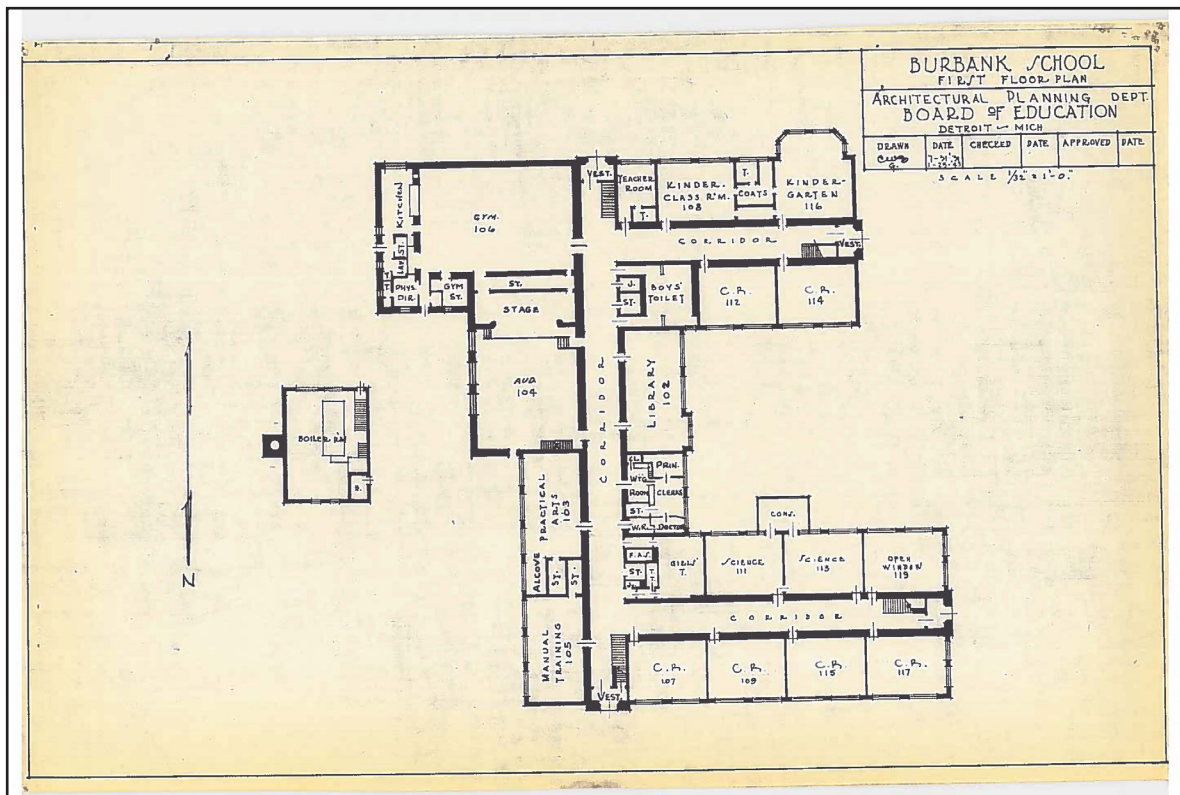
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 NRHP Nomination - Exhibits
 Luther Burbank Elementary School, Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan



Historic Image 3. Historic Plan, Basement, Board of Education.



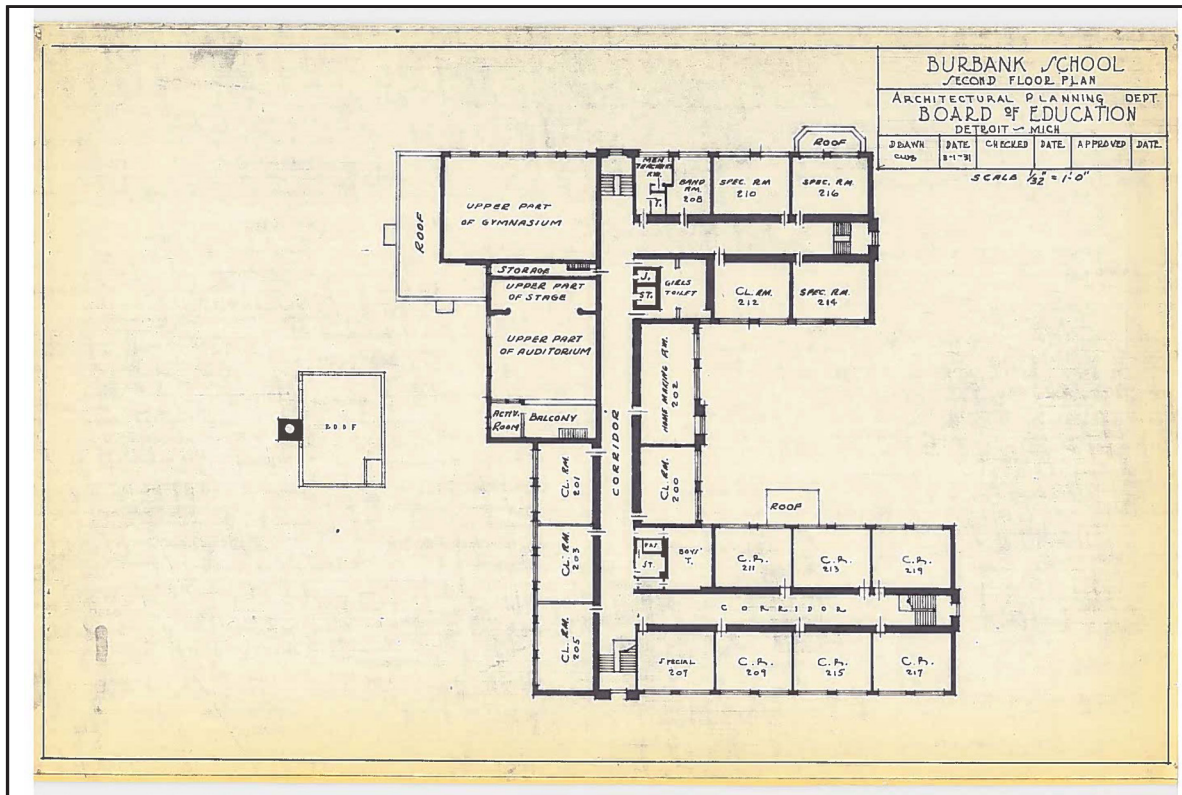
Historic Image 4. Historic Plan, First Floor, Board of Education.



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 NRHP Nomination - Exhibits
 Luther Burbank Elementary School, Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan



Historic Image 5. Historic Plan, Second Floor, Board of Education.



Historic Image 6. Historic View of Burbank School, c.1950, Wayne State University Walter P. Reuther Library.



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Exterior Photo Key



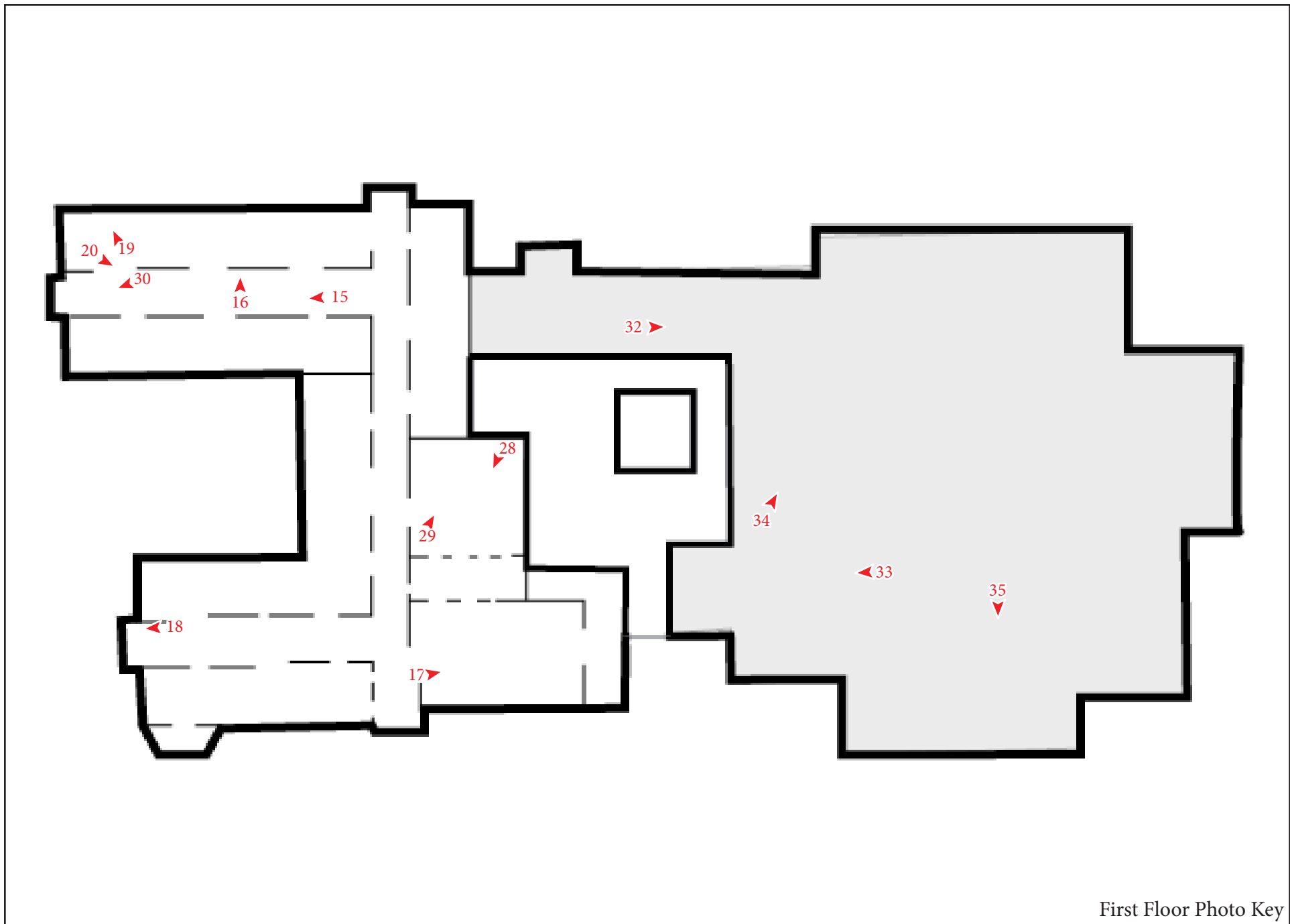
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Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan

Michigan State Historic
Preservation Office
National Register Photo Key





First Floor Photo Key



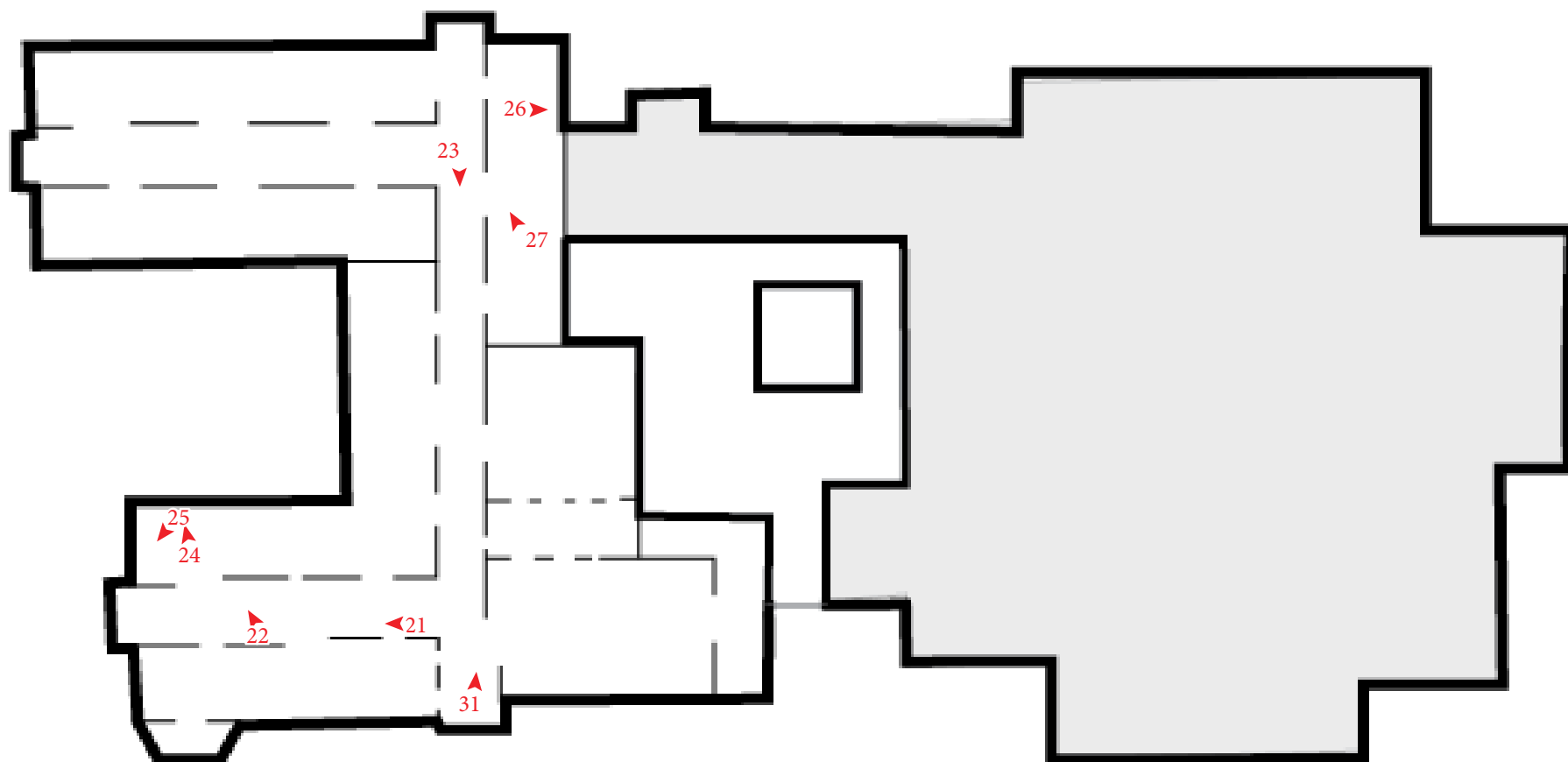
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National Register Photo Key





Second Floor Photo Key



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MI_Wayne County_Burbank, Luther, School_0001



MI_Wayne County_Burbank, Luther, School_0006



MI_Wayne County_Burbank, Luther, School_0007



MI_Wayne County_Burbank, Luther, School_0008



MI_Wayne County_Burbank, Luther, School_0015







MI_Wayne County_Burbank, Luther, School_0028



MI_Wayne County_Burbank, Luther, School_0030



MI_Wayne County_Burbank, Luther, School_0032

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:	Nomination	
Property Name:	Burbank, Luther, Elementary School	
Multiple Name:	Public Schools of Detroit MPS	
State & County:	MICHIGAN, Wayne	

Date Received: 2/7/2022 Date of Pending List: 2/24/2022 Date of 16th Day: 3/11/2022 Date of 45th Day: 3/24/2022 Date of Weekly List:

Reference number:	MP100007521
Nominator:	SHPO

Reason For Review:

<input type="checkbox"/> Appeal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PDIL	<input type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue
<input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape	<input type="checkbox"/> Photo
<input type="checkbox"/> Waiver	<input type="checkbox"/> National	<input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary
<input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission	<input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource	<input type="checkbox"/> Period
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> TCP	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years
	<input type="checkbox"/> CLG	

☒ Accept ☐ Return ☐ Reject 3/15/2022 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments: Meets the registration requirements of the MPS. Locally significant school that served a growing section of east Detroit, Constructed in phases as the area grew and new ideas of education came into common use - the additions included auditorium space and a gym, as well as classrooms. Good example of stylized classicism (art deco). Overall POS 1931-60. Large addition from 1992 is considered noncontributing; it is only attached at one small portion of the historic building.

Recommendation/
Criteria Accept / A & C

Reviewer Jim Gabbert Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2275 Date _____

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
MICHIGAN STRATEGIC FUND
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

QUENTIN L. MESSER, JR.
PRESIDENT

Friday, February 4, 2022

Ms. Joy Beasley, Keeper
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1849 C Street, NW, Mail Stop 7228
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Ms. Beasley:

The enclosed files contain the true and correct copy of the nomination for the **Luther Burbank Elementary School, 15600 East State Fair Avenue, Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan**. This property is being submitted for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. This nomination is a X New Submission Resubmission Additional Documentation Removal.

- 1 Signed National Register of Historic Places Registration Form
- 2 Locational maps (incl. with nomination file)
- 10 Sketch map(s) / figures(s) / exhibits(s) (incl. with nomination file)
- 1 Pieces of correspondence (incl. with nomination file)
- 10 Digital photographs (incl. with nomination file)
- Other (incl. with nomination file): _____

COMMENTS:

- Please ensure that this nomination is reviewed.
- This property has been approved under 36 CFR 67.
- The enclosed owner objections constitute a majority of property owners.
- This nomination has been funded by the following NPS grant: _____
- Other: _____

Questions concerning this nomination should be addressed to Todd A. Walsh, National Register Coordinator, at (517) 331-8917 or WalshT@michigan.gov.

Sincerely yours,

Mark A. Rodman
State Historic Preservation Officer

