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# City of Detroit

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**TO:** City Planning Commission

**FROM:** Roland Amarteifio, City Planner  
Christopher Gulock, City Planner, AICP

**RE:** **Request of City Planning Commission to amend Article XVII, Section 50-17-63, District Map No. 61 of the 2019 Detroit City Code, Chapter 50, Zoning, to show a R3 (Low Density Residential District) zoning classification where a R1 (Single-Family Residential District) zoning classification is currently shown on one parcel commonly known as 20119 Wisconsin Street generally bounded by Norfolk Street to the north, Cherrylawn Street to the east, Chippewa Street to the south, and Indiana Street to the west.**

**DATE:** July 18, 2023

On July 20, 2023, the City Planning Commission (CPC) will hold a 6:45 p.m. public hearing on the subject rezoning. The map showing the vicinity is located below:



## BACKGROUND AND PROPOSAL

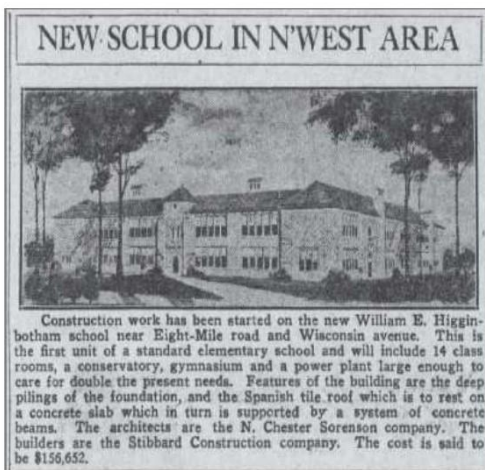
CPC staff has received a request from URGE Development Group to amend Article XVII, Section 50-17-63, District Map No. 61 of the 2019 Detroit City Code, Chapter 50, Zoning, to show a R3 (Low Density Residential District) zoning classification where a R1 (Single-Family Residential District) zoning classification is currently shown on one parcel commonly known as 20119 Wisconsin Street generally bounded by Norfolk Street to the north, Cherrylawn Street to the east, Chippewa Street to the south, and Indiana Street to the west.

The proposed map amendment is being requested to support the revitalization of the abandoned Higginbotham School building into approximately 40 new residential units, while utilizing the school's theatre space for nonprofits and community organizations. The development also proposes to construct two multi-family buildings. The proposed R3 District would conditionally permit the adaptive re-use of the school building and allow for the development of multi-family dwellings with fewer than 50 percent of the units in the structure being efficiency units by right.

At this point CPC is acting as the petitioner due to the site's current ownership by the City of Detroit Planning and Development, Care of Detroit Building Authority (DBA). The City and Developer are in discussions to finalize the purchase agreement and expect to do so in the near future.

### *History*

The William E. Higginbotham School Building was built in 1926 and expanded in 1944 and 1946 by the Detroit Public Schools to house African American kindergarteners through eight graders. A report by the Detroit City Council's Historic Designation Advisory Board stated that the building was deemed eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under the *Public Schools of Detroit Multiple Property Submission* in 2011 and included in the *20<sup>th</sup> Century Civil Rights in Detroit Reconnaissance and Intensive Level Survey, 2019*.<sup>1</sup> Higginbotham School meets multiple criteria for the National Register due to its local significance as a Detroit all Black elementary school for over eighty years and the unique Mediterranean Revival-style architecture. The school's namesake William E. Higginbotham was one of the partners of Malcolmson & Higginbotham, the architectural firm selected by the Detroit Board of Education as its architect from 1893-1923. Specializing in school architecture, the firm designed more than three-quarters of Detroit's public-school buildings built prior to 1923.



Detroit Free Press, July 17, 1927

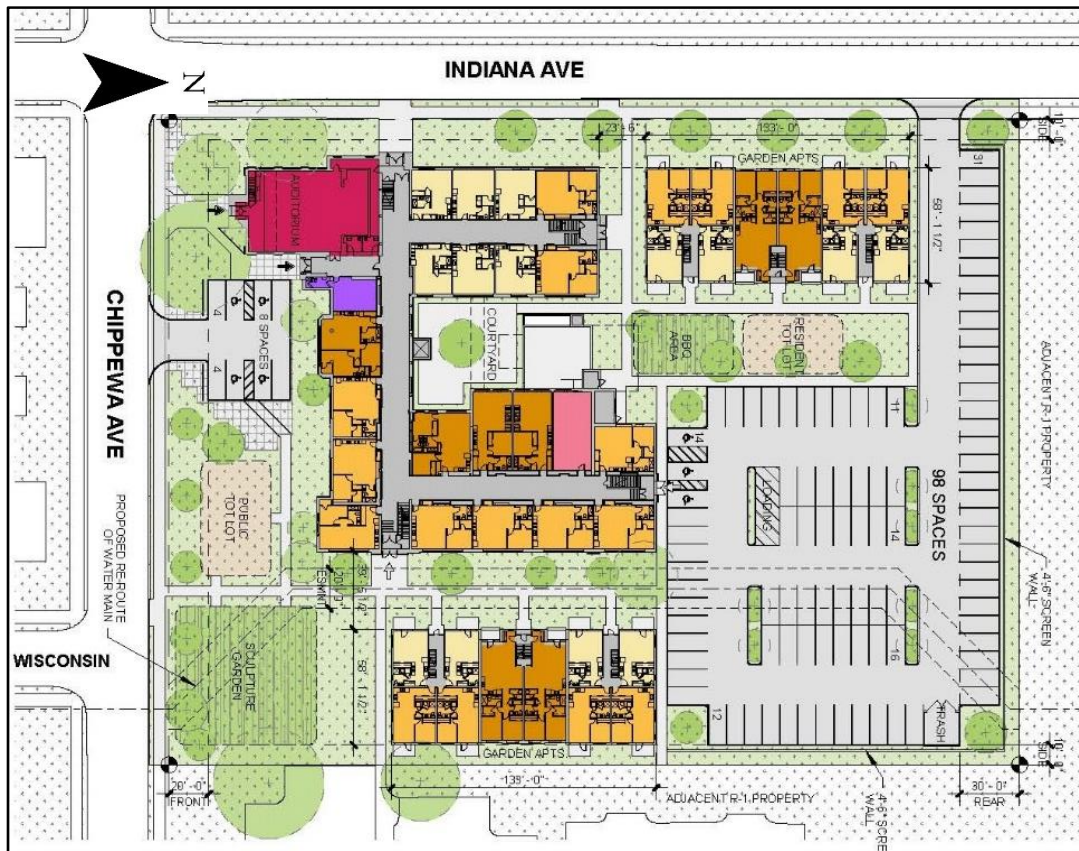


<sup>1</sup> <https://detroitmi.gov/sites/detroitmi.localhost/files/2021-03/Higginbotham%20Final%20Report.pdf>

For additional information about the Higginbotham School Historic District, please visit <https://detroitmi.gov/document/william-e-higginbotham-school-historic-district>

### ***Development Detail***

As mentioned in the proposal the developer URGE Development plans to develop the Higginbotham School Building into a multi-family residential building with approximately 40 units. In addition to the adaptive re-use of the school building, URGE also plans to construct two multi-family buildings of approximately 60 total units, that would be allowed either by-right or conditionally depending on the percentage of efficiency units. The proposed unit mix for the school building includes 10 studio, 24 one bedroom and 6 two-bedroom units. The multi-family building includes 24 studio, 24 one bedroom, and 12 two-bedroom units. The proposed development includes 106 parking spaces for the 100 total units. Below is a site plan for the proposed development.



Higginbotham Garden Apartments | Source: McIntosh Poris Architects

## **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

### ***Current Zoning***

#### **R1 – Single-Family Residential District**

The R1 Single-Family Residential District is designed to protect and preserve quiet, low-density residential areas now primarily developed and those areas which will be developed with single-family detached dwellings and characterized by a high ratio of home ownership. The regulations for this district are designed to stabilize and protect the essential characteristics of the district and to promote and encourage a suitable environment for activities associated with family life. To these ends, development is limited to a relatively low concentration and uses permitted by right are limited to single-family detached dwellings which provide homes for the residents of the

area. Additional residential uses such as religious institutions, neighborhood centers, and utility uses necessary to serve the immediate area may be permitted on a conditional basis.

### ***Proposed Zoning***

#### **R3 – Low-Density Residential District**

The R3 Low Density Residential District is designed as a low-density multi-family district. The regulations are designed to promote and encourage town and terrace house development, courts, and garden apartments. It is intended that this district be used primarily on local thoroughfares thereby encouraging a suitable environment for family life. Among others, uses permitted by right include single- and two-family dwellings, townhouses, multi-family dwellings, and community facilities necessary to serve a residential district.

### ***Surrounding Zoning and Land Use***

The zoning classification and land uses surrounding the subject area are as follows:

North: R1 – Single-Family Residential

East: R1 – U of D Jesuit Johnson Recreational Center

South: R1 – Single-Family Residential

West: R1 – Single-Family Residential

### ***Master Plan Consistency***

The subject site is located within the Pembroke area of Neighborhood Cluster 10 of the Detroit Master Plan of Policies. The Future Land Use map for this area shows Institutional (INST) in the Master Plan. The Planning & Development Department (PDD) provided a Master Plan Interpretation and stated that the proposed rezoning is generally consistent with the Master Plan Designation.

### ***Community Input***

URGE Development has conducted 6 community engagement meetings in 2023 related to the proposed development of the Higginbotham School building. These meetings include a presentation with City Council District 2 in February and Garden Homes Community Group in March and May. There were also online virtual open houses held by the development team to provide additional opportunity for residents to speak directly with the development team and express their thoughts on the proposed development.

Staff will provide a complete analysis and recommendation including the results of the Public Hearing at a subsequent meeting.

Attachments: Public Hearing Notice  
Application for Zoning Change  
Higginbotham Schematic Site Plan

cc: Antione Bryant, Director, PDD  
Greg Moots, PDD  
Dave Bell, Director, BSEED  
Conrad Mallett, Corporation Counsel  
Bruce Goldman, Law  
Daniel Arking, Law