

From: [Helen Broughton](#)
To: [Historic District Commission \(Staff\)](#)
Cc: justintrombly@detroitwaldorf.org; patriciaurda@detroitwaldorf.org
Subject: Support for Detroit Waldorf School permanent outdoor classrooms
Date: Tuesday, May 10, 2022 8:18:06 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Dear Sir or Madam:

On invitation from a long-time friend who teaches at the Detroit Waldorf School (DWS), I recently attended an outdoor storytelling event held by the school. I was impressed by the exterior learning environment which had been constructed to allow students to continue their education despite the Covid-19 epidemic and was surprised to learn that this clever use of space and natural materials, a physical reflection of the ethos of Waldorf education, was at risk of being dismantled.

I have been an east-side resident of Detroit for 30 years and have owned my home in 48224 for over 20 years. I first worked in the city at Pewabic Pottery, another beautiful historic property on the east side, and years later at the city's Next Detroit Neighborhood Initiative, as a Living Cities-funded advocate in the city's building department, and for 5+ years with the DEGC's Motor City Match program while I completed my master's in urban planning at the University of Southern California. I am now employed with General Services Blight Remediation Division working to improve adherence to property maintenance standards to move Detroit from blight to beauty. As a volunteer I was instrumental in the startup and development of People for Palmer Park and served for many years on the board of directors of Friends of the Alger Theater. While I am not formally trained in historic preservation, I am continually fascinated by the beauty and quality of historic Detroit architecture and believe in the importance of the work done by HDC to protect the character of our city.

There are several points of historic standards and guidelines which support approval of the DWS application for these accessory structures:

- The property at 2555 Burns continues its historic and legal use as a school
- The historic character of the school building remains and has not been altered
- The outdoor structures are compatible with the scale, massing, and style of the school without mimicry
- The erection of exterior shelters (and seating circles of tree stumps) for classrooms required by restrictions of a once-in-a-lifetime health epidemic are an example of a property change of acquired historic significance that should be retained and preserved as a record of our time
- If required, removal of the outdoor classrooms in the future would not negatively impact the form/integrity of the historic property or landscape

From a zoning perspective:

- The attendance at the storytelling event showed enthusiastic community support of extension of the DWS learning environment
- The structures are sited within the canopy of existing trees and hedges which provide a buffer for abutting residential properties to the south and west, and the school building is a barrier to the east
- The outdoor classrooms, as an alternate to the indoor spaces, do not affect access to the site nor do they increase traffic for the surrounding neighborhood

Thank you for your consideration of my comments,

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