

**STAFF REPORT: OCTOBER 8, 2025 MEETING**

**PREPARED BY: A. DYE**

**APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2025-00249**

**ADDRESS: 6325 W. JEFFERSON AVENUE, AKA FORT WAYNE**

**HISTORIC DISTRICT: FORT WAYNE**

**APPLICANT/PROPERTY OWNER: BRENNAH GRACE DONAHUE / DETROIT PARKS AND RECREATION / CITY OF DETROIT**

**DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: SEPTEMBER 15, 2025**

**DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: JULY 17 & SEPTEMBER 25, 2025**

**SCOPE: REPLACE HISTORIC FENCE, RENOVATE PRIMARY ENTRANCE, SITE IMPROVEMENTS, REPLACE PARK SIGN**

### **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

Fort Wayne is located in southwest Detroit, about three miles downriver from the Central Business District and just north of the confluence between the Detroit and Rouge rivers. It sits directly between West Jefferson Avenue to the north, and the Detroit River to the south. Most of the surrounding riverfront is devoted to industrial use; the newest neighbor is the Gordie Howe International Bridge GHIB), whose US Port of Entry is directly north of Fort Wayne on the north side of West Jefferson.

Fort Wayne consists of 96 acres, 83 of which are managed by the City of Detroit Parks and Recreation Department; the remaining 13 acres serve as a boatyard for the Detroit District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

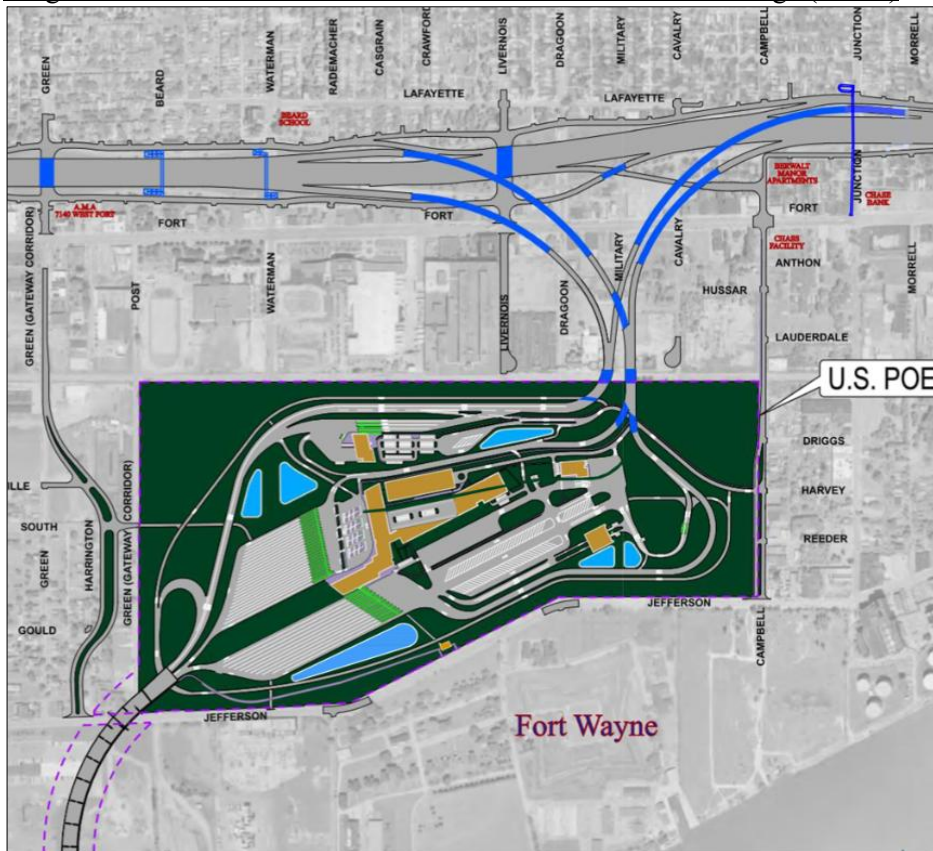
The entrance to Fort Wayne is Brady Street, which is centrally located within the property. To the east of Brady sits the original Star Fort (and ca. 1848 barracks that were erected within the fort), five late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings, as well as the Army Corp's facilities. The western portion of the site includes a burial mound, 1890s era service buildings and stable, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century detached residential buildings, a large parade ground, and several World War 2 era warehouses. Many of the historic buildings are in varying states of deterioration; however, in the past two years, the city has been completing rehabilitation projects (new roofs, repairs to wood windows, trim, etc.) of some of the buildings.

In addition to the highly recognizable historic contributing structures and burial mound, other historic-age and contributing features of the district are the collection of architectural components that enclose the property from W. Jefferson: the chain link fence (most notably the posts and toppers that hold barbed wire), stone entrance structures (east and west) and at least one concrete obelisk which might be a remnant from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century fence.



*Above: Aerial view of Fort Wayne - blue line denotes the full property boundary; the red line is Brady Street; EagleView image. Above right: Yellow boundary identifies the 13 acres run by the Army Corp of Engineers; Detroit Parcel Viewer image.*

Neighbor to the north and west – Gordie Howe International Bridge (GHIB)



Left: Map showing where the bridge enters the United States and the diagram of the U.S. Port of Entry (POE). Image from GHIB website.

Bottom Left: Comparison of W. Jefferson site enclosures – newly constructed POE security wall on left; Fort Wayne's historic security fence on right.

Bottom Right: Full view of newly constructed security wall facing W. Jefferson and Fort Wayne. Staff photos, September 25, 2025.

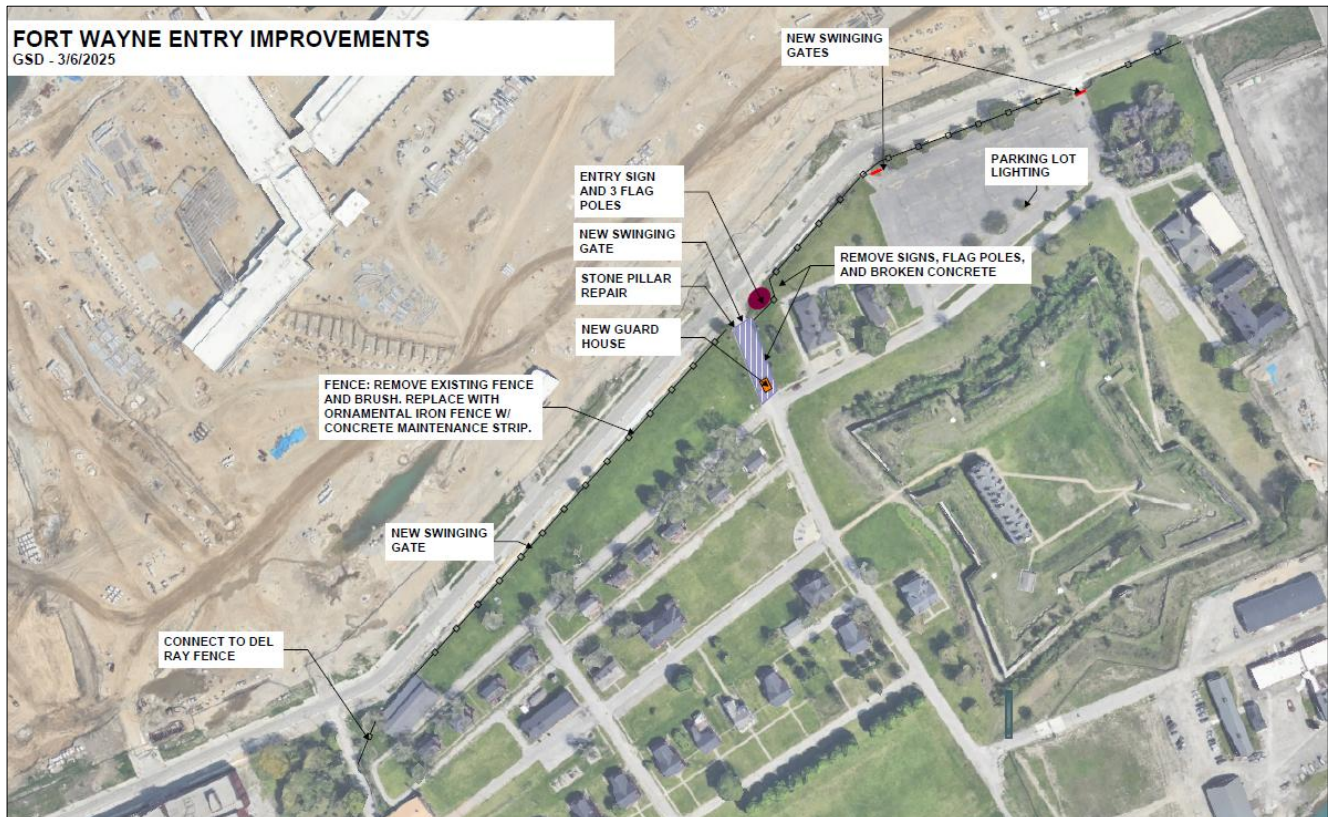




## PROPOSAL

According to the applicant's documents, the following work items are proposed for the Commission's review:

- Remove and dispose of existing chain link fence at W. Jefferson and install an aluminum "wrought iron style" fence, 6' high; finish: black gloss
- Install new gates at four entrances (Brady-main entry; parking lot east entrance (at Cram St.) and west parking lot entrance; and the Jefferson field to match design and finish of proposed perimeter fence.
- Install new lighting in existing parking lot between W. Jefferson and Meigs
- Primary entrance renovation
  - Demo existing guard house and surrounding concrete
  - Erect new guard house at main entrance – 6' x 10' steel prefabricated structure
  - Install new curb at guard house and roadway edges
  - Install new entry gate stop-arms
  - Resurface asphalt, replace concrete walkways
  - Remove existing flagpoles, "Historic Fort Wayne" overhead sign and W. Jefferson monument sign
  - Install three (3) flagpoles, 30-35' height, stainless steel
  - Install 6' General Services Department Fort Wayne Park sign
  - General maintenance/repair to stone pillars – masonry cleaning and repointing



*Applicant map. All of the work within this application takes place at the northern section of the property near W. Jefferson, extending from its east to west corners.*

## STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- Designated a Michigan historic site in 1958.
- Placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1971.  
The original period of significance (POS) was 1825 – 1849; in 2019 the POS was amended to 1845-1971.
- The Fort Wayne Historic District was enacted on August 3, 2016. The POS is 1100 A.D. – 1971.
  - The district's Final Report states the property meets:

### **HDAB's first and third criteria:**

1. *Sites, buildings, structures or archaeological sites where cultural, social, spiritual, economic, political or architectural history of the community, city, state or nation is reflected or exemplified;*
3. *Buildings or structures which embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural specimen, inherently valuable as a representation of a period, style of method of construction; AND*

### **National Register Criteria:**

- A - Events and Broad Patterns of Events: Due to its direct association with US military response (Canadian Rebellions of 1837, Michigan's involvement in the Civil War, the region's contribution of the World War II "Arsenal of Democracy").*
- C – Design, Construction and Work of a Master: An outstanding example of an American-built star fort representing the work of Montgomery C. Meigs, Thomas Jefferson Cram and Joseph Totten. A diverse range of architecturally significant structures to include the barracks (an outstanding example of Adam-style architecture)...and collection of military architecture.*
- D – Information Potential: Archaeological research at the site has yielded, and will likely continue to yield, insight into the Late Woodlands burial practices and pottery techniques, historic-era Potawatomi village life and its relationship with Euro-American settlement and 19<sup>th</sup> century social and military history. Staff's comment: The fort's 20<sup>th</sup> century social and miliary history is similarly discussed in the report.*



## **Brief History of Fort Wayne** - most of which was excerpted from the district's Final Report:

### 1800s

- The War of 1812 concluded with the Treaty of Spring Wells, a peace agreement signed at or near the future Fort Wayne site on September 8, 1815. This area was incorporated into Springwells Township in 1818.
- In 1841, Congress authorized the construction of Fort Wayne as part of a series of defenses along the US-Canadian border.
- Fort Wayne construction began in 1842; it is one of the few remaining examples of a star fort in the United States.
- Fort Wayne became an active military installation in 1861 and served as a "camp of instruction" for organizing and training recruits, specifically the Michigan Volunteer Infantry and Artillery Troops.
- Not long after the Civil War the design of the fort was rendered obsolete by advances in military technology and the reduced threat of war in the Great Lakes region. However, it continued to serve as an infantry garrison, and then a supply and logistics center.
- New buildings were erected west of the star fort, including a series of homes for officers (1880s).

### 1900s

- The City of Detroit annexes this part of Springwells Township in 1906.
- Construction of additional residential, administration and headquarters buildings was completed.
- Fort Wayne provided construction troops during WWI, including 1,300 African American soldiers.
- During the Depression, the site housed Civilian Conservation Corps works as well as people who had become homeless. Fort Wayne continued to expand with a row of duplexes for non-commissioned officers, erected in 1938.
- The Works Progress Administration invested in Fort Wayne through landscaping projects and the rehabilitation of many buildings. An additional million-dollar allocation funded the construction of a new gymnasium, theater, hospital and barracks, provided extensive tree planting, resurfacing of roads and the rehabilitation of officers' quarters.
- In 1940 it ceased serving as infantry garrison and transitioned to its new role "Fort Wayne Ordnance Depot" as it prepared vehicles and parts for shipment from the Port of Detroit. World War II was possibly the fort's most important military period; it was designated a "principal motor supply depot" and served as a supply center for war material, especially vehicles produced in the Detroit area.
- More buildings were erected at this time; some single-story concrete warehouse buildings remain at the southern corner of the property along the river.
- In the late 1940's ownership of a portion of the fort was transferred to the City of Detroit, and the Detroit Historical Society (DHS), which was then a division of the city's government, began supporting the operations of Fort Wayne.
- Fort Wayne served as a military induction center during the Korean and Vietnam wars; cold war era anti-aircraft guns were upgraded in 1957.
- The fort's residential buildings provided temporary housing for people displaced by the 1967 uprising; some of whom continued to reside there until 1971.
- Additional property was transferred to the city in 1971, leaving only six buildings and the Army Corps of Engineers boat yard (along the river at the eastern end of the site) under federal military control.
- In 1974, the DHS begins reconstruction work at the site (namely around the fort and western half of the property)
- In 1976, the most recent ownership transfer occurs through the federal Land to Park program. The remaining six buildings were now under city control, however the federal government retained deed restrictions.
- The DHS demolished two of the six buildings (both residential barracks) for the creation of a visitor parking lot, the largest of the WWII warehouses is demolished, as are WWII era barracks that were erected within the star fort (the 1848 barracks remain intact).
- The Detroit Historic Society continued to operate the facility; museum and interpretive functions were expanded, and several buildings were open to the public with staffed, interpretive exhibits.
- The Detroit Historical Museum ceased interpretive activities at Fort Wayne in the early 1990s, closing all buildings except for Warehouse 2C, which continues to be used for collections storage and is not open to the public.

## 2000s

- In 2006, DHS entered into an agreement with the City of Detroit at which time Detroit's Parks and Recreation Department took on the management of Fort Wayne.
- Local historic designation was enacted on August 3, 2016.
- The site is supported by volunteer organizations: Friends of Fort Wayne, the Historic Fort Wayne Coalition, and the All-Nations Veterans Council.
- On September 17, 2020, the City of Detroit General Services Department (in which the Parks and Recreation Department is located) put forth a request to City Council for the abrogation of then-existing deed restrictions (which were part of the federal government's previous transfer of ownership to the city) by way of the establishment of a Historic Preservation Covenant, which included:
  - No plans for any work, including ground-disturbing activity, would be undertaken without prior review and written approval of the Local Historic District Commission and the State Historic Preservation Office. The *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*, the *Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes*, and any other applicable National Park Service Guidance and Preservation Briefs will be used in project reviews.
  - Prior to submitting documentation to the HDC for a Certificate of Appropriateness, the applicant (i.e., the Grantee) shall provide the SHPO with all documentation regarding the Proposed Action.

*\*Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 requires federal agencies to consider the effects on historic properties of projects they carry out, fund, permit, license, or approve, throughout the United States. A complete review of the Section 106 process can be found [here](#):*



## Historic Images: 1860 – 1974 (prior to Detroit Historical Society alterations/demolitions)

### Entrance: West

Historic Use: Officer's Gate / Current Use: Primary entrance



Above: Aerial view of W. Jefferson, looking southeast. Star identifies location of the fort's west entrance. ConnectExplorer image.

Undated, but likely early 1900s, photo (looking south from W. Jefferson) of Fort Wayne's west entrance at then-named Artillery Avenue (more commonly known as Livernois). Once inside the fort, this street is called Brady. At the time of this photo, this was not the primary entrance; the back of the photo states "Officers Gate". The stone building on the right is a sentry house. Burton Collection



Early 1940s view of the same entrance, now the primary entrance, looking southeast from W. Jefferson. The gate/fence pillars and sentry office are of different designs, sizes, and stone material/pattern; however, the placement and physical relationship to each other and W. Jefferson remains essentially the same (single pillar on the east, two pillars on the west for pedestrian pass through which remains sitting forward of sentry structure). The roadway appears wider; however, this is due to the smaller sentry building and the filling of that space by the relocation of the pedestrian passageway onto the sidewalk (in the earlier photo the pillars/pass through was in the road). Note the wrought iron gates and chain-link fence with barbed wire toppers. (arrow). Detroit Historical Society.



Ca. 1950 Artillery/Brady entrance at W. Jefferson looking southwest. The wrought iron gates are gone, and this photo offers another view of the chain link with barbed wire toppers. A small guard house is now located at the northwest corner of Brady and Meigs and is visible near the center of the photo. The general size, massing, and design of this guard house has been used in the subsequent guard houses erected in the 1970s and 1990s; a similar design for the proposed new guard house is included in this application.



## Entrance: East

Historic use: Primary entrance / Current use - not in use



Above: Aerial view of W. Jefferson, looking southeast. Star identifies location of the fort's east entrance. ConnectExplorer image.

1861 photo of the east entrance which included two pedestrian entrances, a wrought iron gate enclosing the roadway, and gently sloping curved stone walls.



Undated photo, likely from the 1860s-1880s due to the army uniform and no buildings near this entrance (the first residential barracks at this entrance was erected in 1890). Taken from W. Jefferson looking south, this expanded view shows the full length of the stone walls, as well as a portion of a wood fence extending along W. Jefferson. A carved cannon is located on the top of each arched gated entrance (the small stone-arched entrances were identified on the back of the photo by the term "wicket").



Ca. 1974 photo, with writing "Original main gate W. Jefferson". It is not clear when the "wickets" were removed and the single rectangular piers erected, nor if the cannons were relocated elsewhere on the property. The barracks building at right was demolished by the DHS a few years after this photo was taken for the establishment of a parking lot; the replacement of the parking lot lighting is part of this application. Detroit Historical Society.



## Perimeter Fence – W. Jefferson



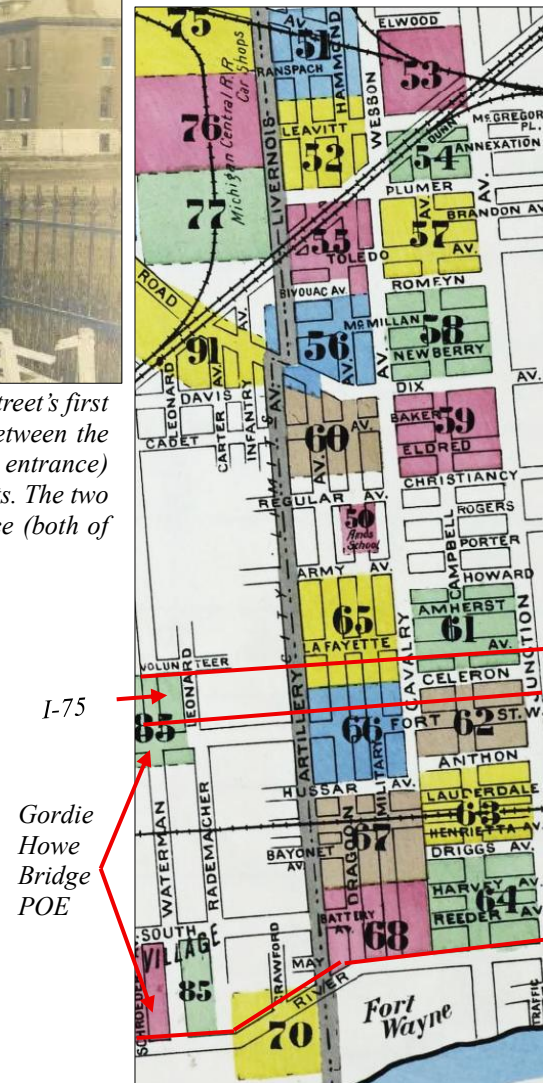
This 1898 photo is looking east down West Jefferson. A trench has been dug, and the street's first electrical conduit is being installed. The position of this picture is about half-way between the fort's east and west entrances. The wooden fence (visible in the 1861 photo of the east entrance) has been replaced with a wrought iron fence and obelisk-shaped concrete or stone posts. The two barracks buildings visible within the fort are on Cram, just south of the east entrance (both of which are shown in the 1974 image on the previous page).



This 1941 photo of Army privates is taken from within the fort on the "Jefferson Field" and looks out towards the residential neighborhood to the north. Standard chain link fencing along W. Jefferson is now place. Detroit Historical Society.



1943 interior fort photo of the primary "west" entrance looking (northwest) towards W. Jefferson. The chain link fence, visible to the left of the sentry structure now has thicker posts and "A"-shaped barbed wire toppers. Burton collection.



Above: The impact of Fort Wayne to the neighborhood to the north is evident on this Sanborn map as a number of streets have military names, including: Artillery, Dagoon, Military, Cavalry, Battery, Bayonet Ave., Army, Infantry, and Cadet (and maybe Volunteer?).

1897 Sanborn Map, Vol. 5.

Many of these streets and street names remain intact above I-75 and the new bridge (denoted by red lines) but are now physically separated from the Fort in which the street names were inspired.



*October 16, 1965 Vietnam protest at Fort Wayne. Participants gathered on the W. Jefferson sidewalk; the WWII-era fence is visible in the background. Wayne State University collection.*



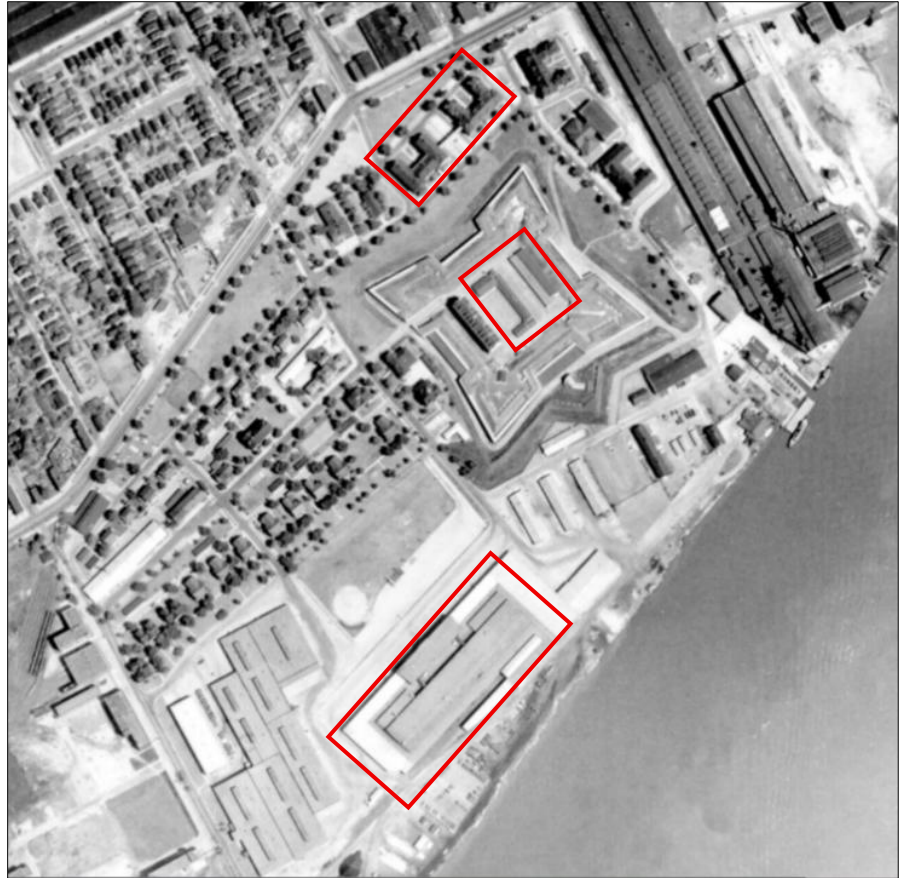
**Timeline, including documents and photos of 1970s-1980s work completed by the Detroit Historical Society (DHS), and highlights of the 2008 Memorandums of Understanding and 2025 Memorandum of Agreement.**

- 1974 The DHS begins reconstruction work at the site (namely around the fort and western half of the property)
- 1978 – 1986 DHS began further alters to the site in an effort to create a 19<sup>th</sup> century appearance (likely to correlate with the National Register listing's Period of Significance which was 1825 – 1849)\*.

Demolitions included two 19<sup>th</sup> century barracks buildings, housing structures within the fort (excluding the 1848 barracks structure), and a few WWII-era warehouses.

Further alterations to the site included the installation of a large lighted parking lot, new primary entrance, and signage.

\* A common practice in the 1970s was the re-creation of particular time periods at the expense/exclusion of later eras and their respective significance to a place, which is in contrast with contemporary cultural resources management (CRM) practice.



*DTE aerial image, 1961. The most impactful demolitions were of the two barracks buildings and the warehouse fronting the Detroit River.*

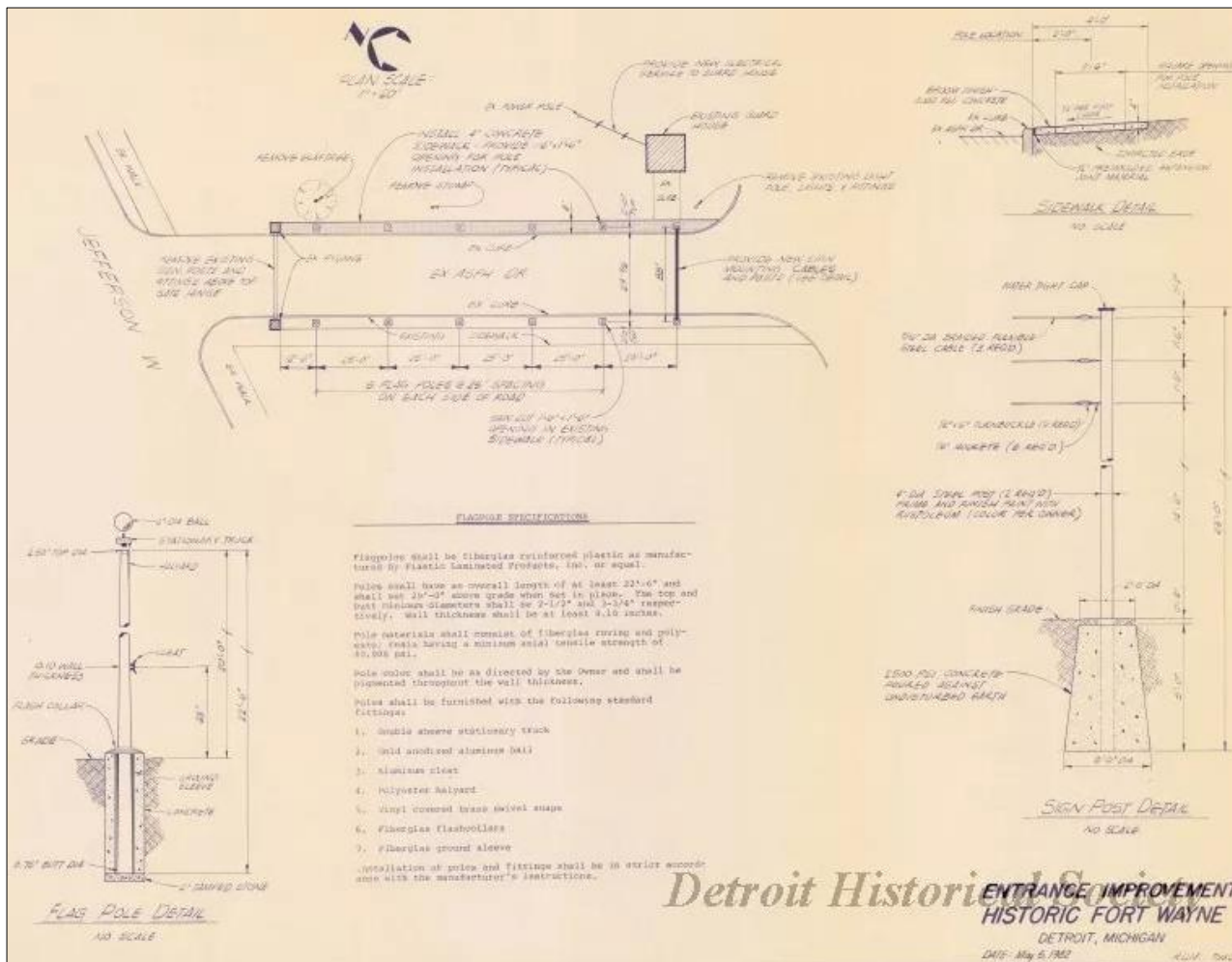


1974 site plan for renovation of site. Ghost lines of the demolished barracks at the northeast corner of the property buildings are visible within the parking lot; dotted lines of buildings in the southwestern quadrant of the site also denote demolished structures.

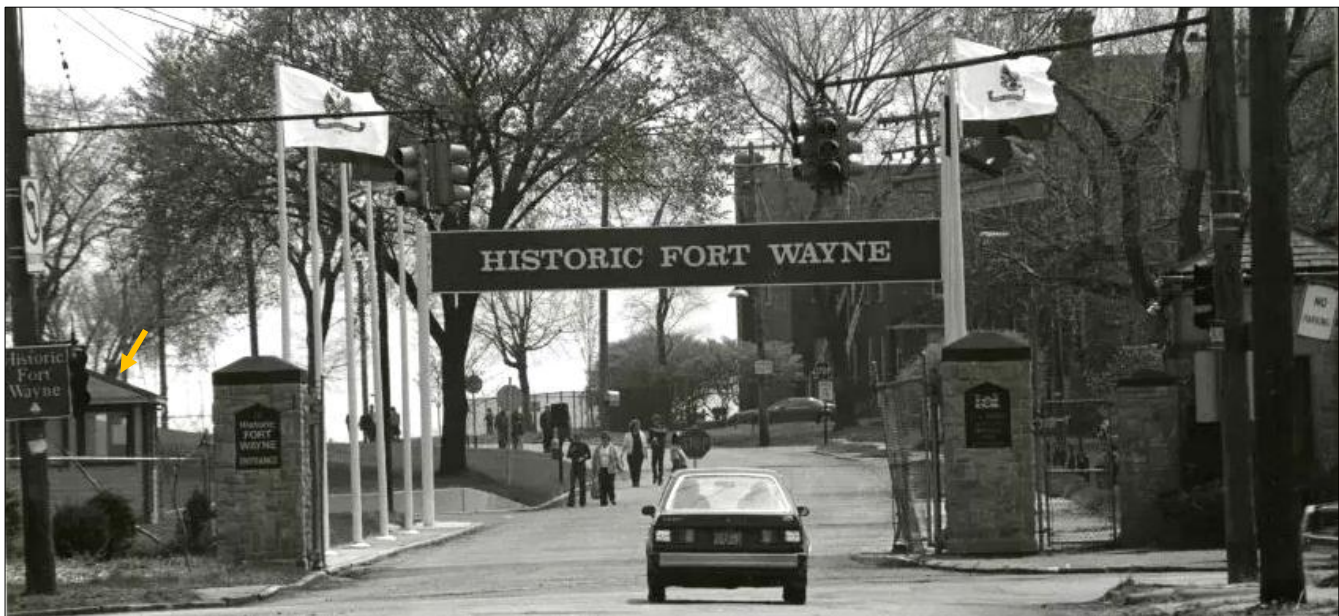


Ca. 1974 photo announcing work taking place at the fort.





"Entrance Improvements" drawing, showing locations of flagpoles, overhead sign and new sidewalks. Detroit Historical Society, May 1982.



Primary entrance at Brady Street, ca. 1980s, showing completed design. Chain link gates are in place at the road and sidewalk openings. The guard house is now positioned in the lawn on the left side of the entrance, as indicated in the drawing on the previous page. It is curious that the chain link perimeter fence with "A"-shaped posts, as well as the barbed wire, remained in place along E. Jefferson, as this design and material is counter to the aforementioned goal to recreate Fort Wayne to its 19<sup>th</sup> century appearance. Detroit Historical Society.



- 2003 Fort Wayne Master Plan – *This was completed prior to local historic designation, and the National Register district’s period of significance at this time was 1825 - 1849*  
Pg. 41 – Site Design, Pt. 2  
*All chain link fencing should be removed and replaced with brick pillars and wrought iron fencing.*  
Pg. 72 – West Riverfront Park at Fort Wayne – Phasing Strategy  
1. *Add brick and wrought iron fence along Military Village and Fort Parking sections, along Jefferson Boulevard*  
Pg. 75 – Conclusion & Next Steps – Phase I Improvements  
A. Make Historic Fort Wayne easy, safe and enjoyable  
a. *Add brick and wrought iron fence along Military Village and Fort Parking sections along Jefferson to establish “new face” to the public.*

2008 MOU created between FHWA and MI SHPO related to “The Detroit River International Crossing” as part of Section 106 procedures.

2016 Local Historic District enacted with a vastly expanded Period of Significance: 1000 A.D. - 1971  
NRHP significance *plus* NRHP Criteria A & C – Associated with military history and architecture, significant at local, state and national levels

*Aerial view of Fort Wayne, April - May 2016, at time of local historic district designation. The W. Jefferson commercial district is mostly gone, and many residential houses have also been demolished. Between 2016 and 2025, the surrounding area has seen seismic change due to the development and construction of the Gordie Howe bridge. ConnectExplorer image.*



- In 2019, 2023 and 2024, Historic staff reviewed and approved scopes of work at various buildings within Fort Wayne, consisting of the installation of new asphalt shingle roofs (replacing asphalt shingle roofs) and the repair of wood windows, trim, installation of gutters/downspouts, and other in-kind work.

CITY OF DETROIT  
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

2 WOODWARD, SUITE 808  
DETROIT, MICHIGAN 48226

8/4/2023

**CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS**  
**(ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL)**

Logesh Rajendran  
DMC Consultants  
13500 Foley St.  
Detroit, MI 48227

RE: Application Number 23-8496; 6301 W. Jefferson, AKA Fort Wayne; Fort Wayne Historic District  
Project Scope: Restore/Replace Roofs, Windows, Siding


Dear Applicant,

Pursuant to Section 5(10) of the Michigan Local Historic District Act, as amended, being MCL 399.205 (10) and Sections 21-2-57 and 21-2-73 of the 2019 Detroit City Code, and Detroit Historic District Commission (“DHDC”) delegation of administrative authority via Resolutions 97-01, 97-02, 98-01, 20-03, 21-04, and/or 21-07, as applicable, the staff of the DHDC has reviewed the above referenced application and hereby issues a Certificate of Appropriateness (“COA”) for the following work, effective on 8/4/2023, as it meets the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation and the district’s Elements of Design:

*Repair or replace roof and associated features on buildings 314B, 111, 117, and 207, repair siding and windows of building 110, per the submitted application materials and correspondence.*

Please retain this COA for your files and post it at the subject property until work is complete. It is important to note that approval by the DHDC does not waive the applicant’s responsibility to comply with any other applicable ordinances or statutes. If you have any questions regarding the foregoing, please contact staff at 313-224-1762 or hdc@detroitmi.gov.

For the Commission:

  
Benjamin Buckley  
Detroit Historic District Commission



*Left: Staff issued COA for rehabilitation work for select buildings at Fort Wayne.*

*Above: Completed roof project at Building 314B. Staff photo, September 25, 2025.*

- 2019 SHPO amended NRHP nomination to expand the period of significance: 1845 – 1971
- 2020 Abrogation completed – MI SHPO and DHDC are granted the authority to review and make decisions on all work (including underground disturbances) proposed at Fort Wayne.
- 2024 – 2025 MOA Coordination meetings between FHWA and MI SHPO as related to the ongoing construction of the Gordie Howe bridge. Meetings were held with the City of Detroit on 9/24/24, 01/15/25, and 02/24/25.

### **Elements of Design**

The coordinating elements of design that relate to this proposal include:

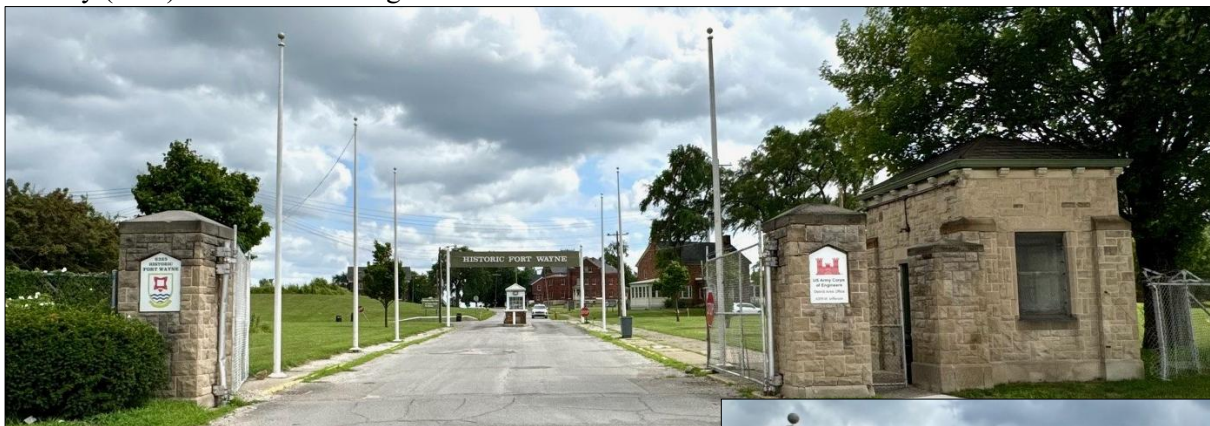
**#13 - Relationship of significant landscape features and surface treatments.** The designed landscape of Fort Wayne is highly significant. The original star fort is situated on a gentle rise in the landscape and overlooks the Detroit River. Linear streets and sidewalks provide circulation throughout the districts; street widths are relatively narrow. Although residential buildings are surrounded by open spaces, the open spaces do not read as individual lawns. Streets are asphalt and sidewalks are concrete. Existing parking lots are generally created by building demolitions and, therefore, not significant landscape features... Shrubbery, foundation plantings, and ornamental trees are not common, but exist around some buildings, including Buildings 110, 207, 303, 311, and 312...

**#20 - Orientation, vistas, overviews.** Orientation, vistas, and overviews are an essential feature of the district, reflecting the history of the facility as a military installation, and its prehistory as a burial location...In general, orientation of buildings contributes to a sense of place, with buildings of Officer's Row facing the river, buildings of NCO Row facing West Jefferson Avenue, and buildings clustered around the star fort facing inwards towards the fort...

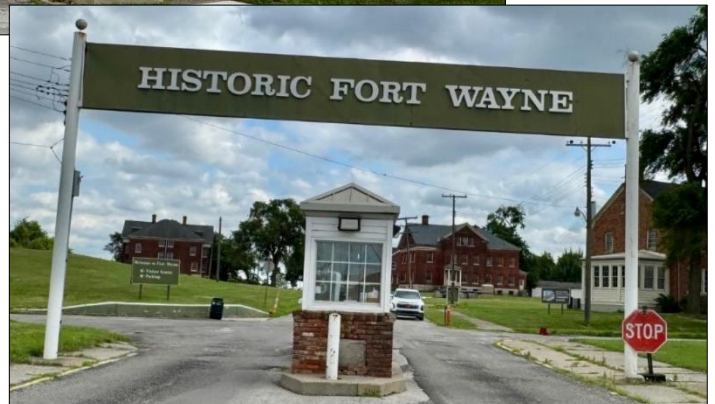
**#22 - General environmental character.** Fort Wayne is a 96-acre district of structures of various scales and functions which, due to orientation, design and historic use, exist visually as a cohesive unit. Although some buildings on the Parade Ground were demolished in the 1970s, buildings known as Officer's Row and NCO Row form an intact streetscape. Generally, infill construction would be inappropriate, as open spaces, landscaping, and roadways are significant to the history of Fort Wayne and sense of place in the district. Visually, Fort Wayne is distinct from its surroundings, which consist of the Detroit River and adjacent industrial areas.

### **Staff Analysis of existing conditions**

Primary (west) entrance - existing entrance erected ca. 1938



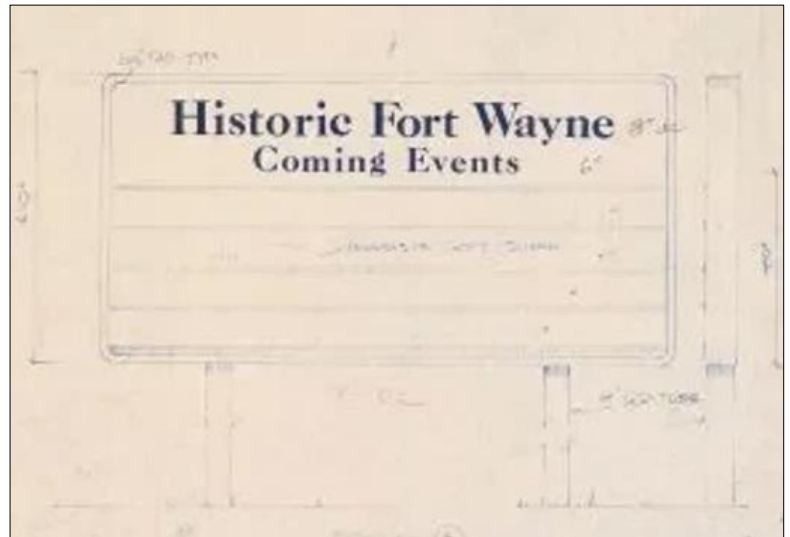
*Current design of the primary entrance. The 1938 stone elements and most of the design elements from the 1980s entrance redesign remain intact. The existing guard house is now centrally located on Brady Street; the proposed new guard house will be erected in the same location. Staff photos, July 17, 2025.*







*Exterior sign facing W. Jefferson east of the main entrance. DHS has a copy of a “sign package” dimensioned drawing in which various types/sizes of signs, are shown). Staff photo, September 25, 2025.*



*Right: Entrance sign from elevation drawing, 1984. Detroit Historical Society.*

### Street layout

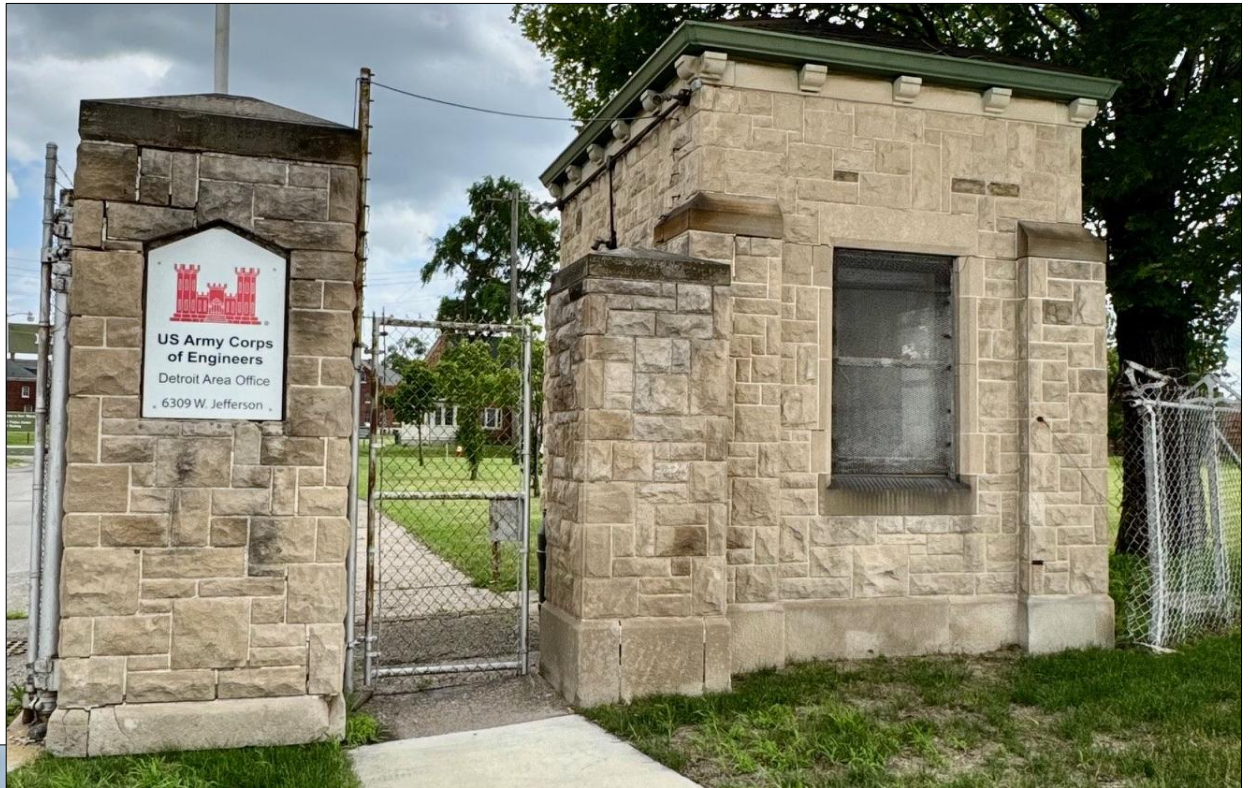
- According to the 2020 Historic Resource Survey, the street grid was established in the 1860s. This is substantiated by the streets visible in the 1861 photo of the east entrance (shown on page 5) which appears to match the current street layout. The streets that are roughly parallel to West Jefferson are Meigs, Signal, Harrison and Gibbs. Intersecting these at right angles are Edison, Shelby, Brady and Cram streets. The two primary entrances off W. Jefferson retain the historic materials, physical features and decorative details, and siting, which combine to create their historic character and appearance.



## West Entrance

### Entry gate and stone structures

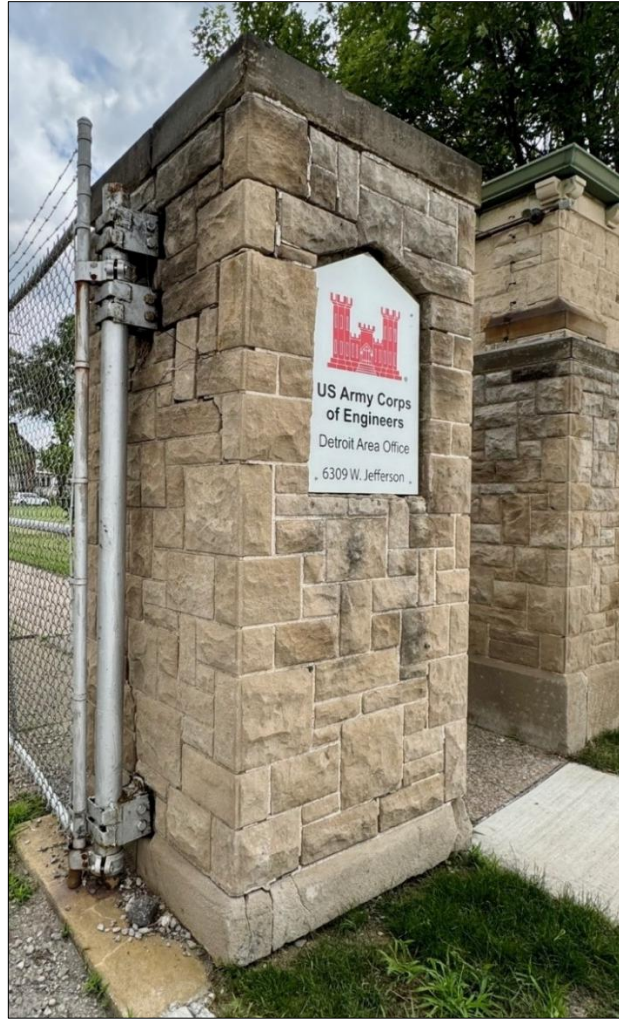
- The piers and sentry house were erected in 1938 and replaced the original sentry house and gates, whose placement of the pedestrian entrance in the road, could not accommodate large vehicles.
- The design of the stone structures are an example of “stripped classicism”, a popular architectural style of the interwar period in which classical details and massing are “stripped down”, i.e., flatter surfaces and reduced ornamentation, as a reaction to, or embodiment of, the emerging modern design movements, such as Art Deco and the International Style.
- Each pier has areas of missing mortar, cracked, dirty and/or stained stone. The applicant’s drawing, specifically Page A1.0, states the masonry cleaning and repointing of all failed masonry mortar joints will be consistent with the NPS briefs: “Cleaning and Water-repellent Treatments for Historic Masonry” and “Repointing Mortar Joints for Historic Masonry Buildings.”



*Staff photos, July 17, 2025.*

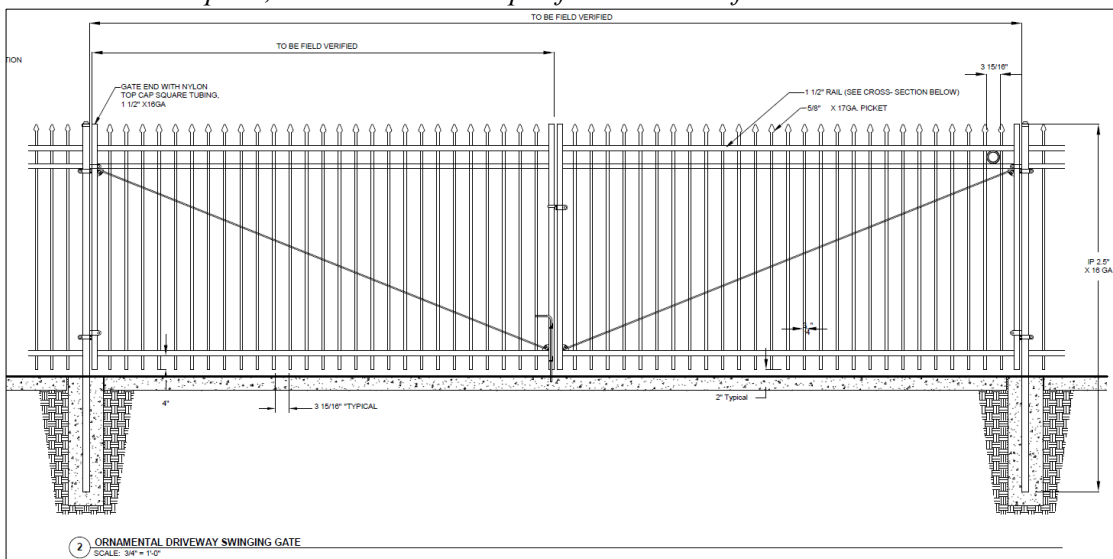


- The existing chain link gates are not historic age and can be replaced. The selected iron gates offer a compatible design, material and color for this primary entrance. However, an installation drawing for the proposed iron gates is needed to confirm that additional holes will not be created to hang the new gates.



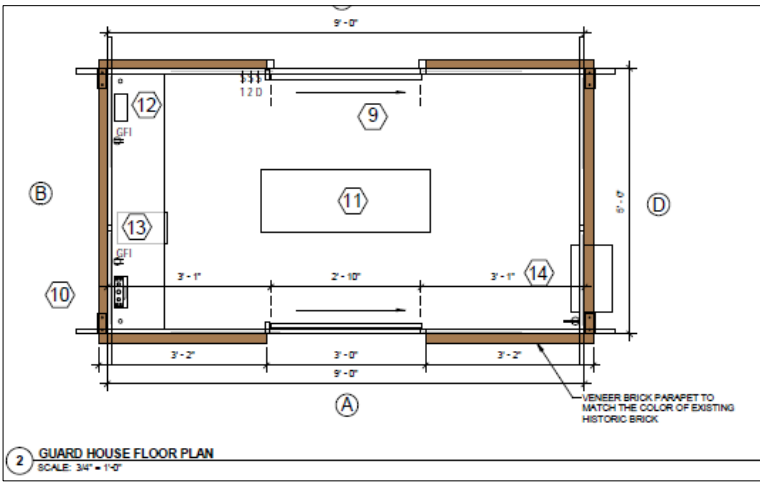
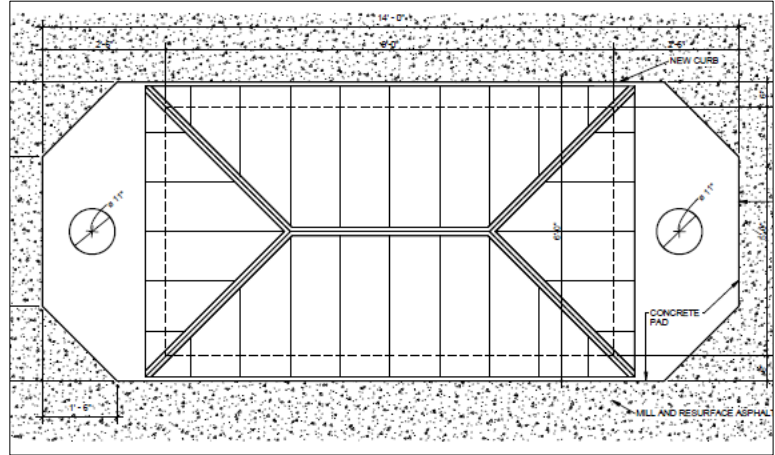
*Above: The entry gate piers and sentry house have areas of missing mortar, cracked and discolored stone, as well as existing holes used for the installation of the chain link gates. Staff photos, July 17, 2025.*

*Below: Applicant drawing of proposed gate. This drawing is for reference only as it doesn't show installation at either entrance's stone piers, nor does it list the specific dimensions for installation. Color: black.*



## Guard House

- The existing guard house, pictured below, was likely erected in the late 1990s or early 2000s as the location was moved to the center of Brady Street. The previous guard house had been placed in the lawn area, close to where the arrow is positioned. This guard house has no historic significance and can be replaced.
- The new guard house will be in the same location and will rest on a similarly designed/sized concrete pad with a bollard at the front and rear walls. Its design is similar to the existing structure - the brick base, mostly transparent glass upper walls and metal hip roof is a compatible, unadorned utilitarian design that will not visually conflict with the surrounding historic masonry structures.



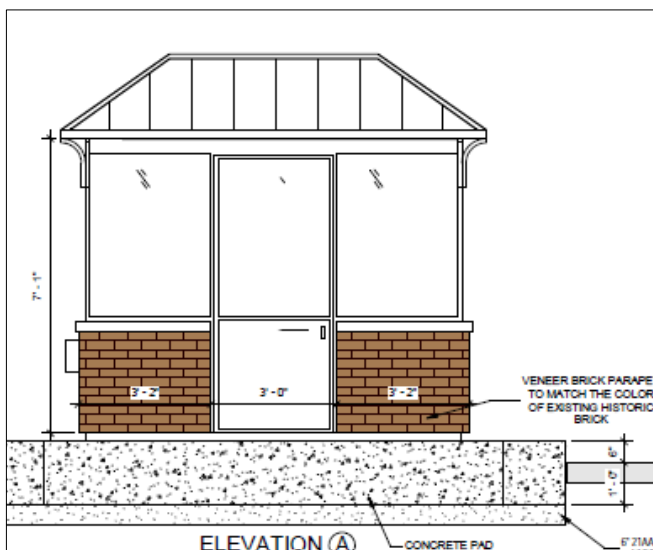
Above left: Existing guard house. Staff photo, July 17, 2025.

Above: Plan view of new structure and concrete base.

Left: Floor plan of new structure.

Below: Photo of comparable installation.

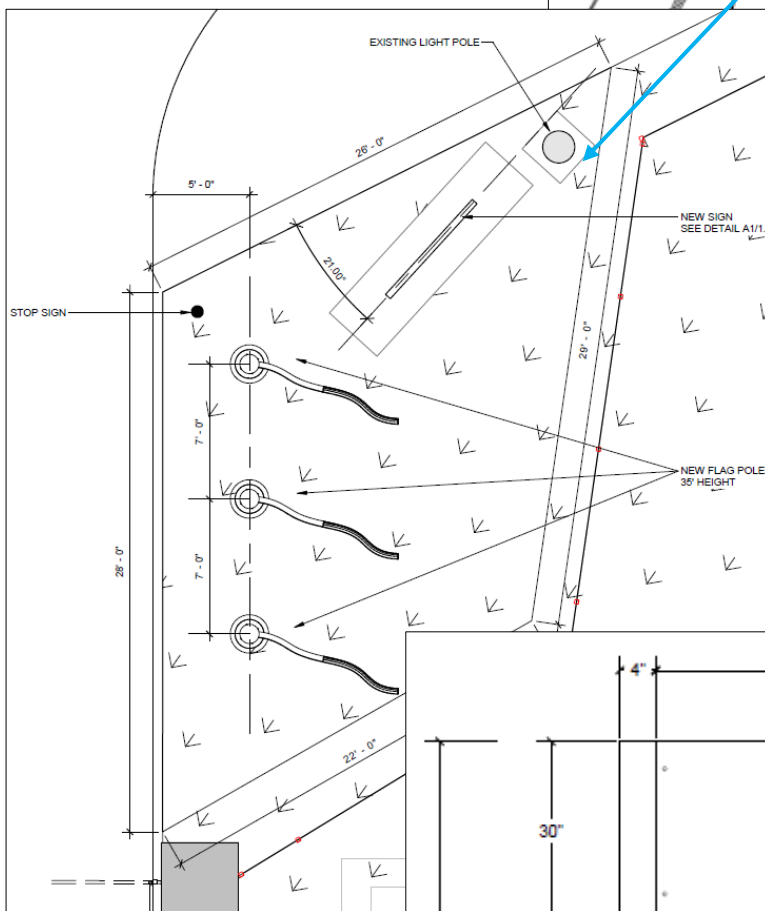
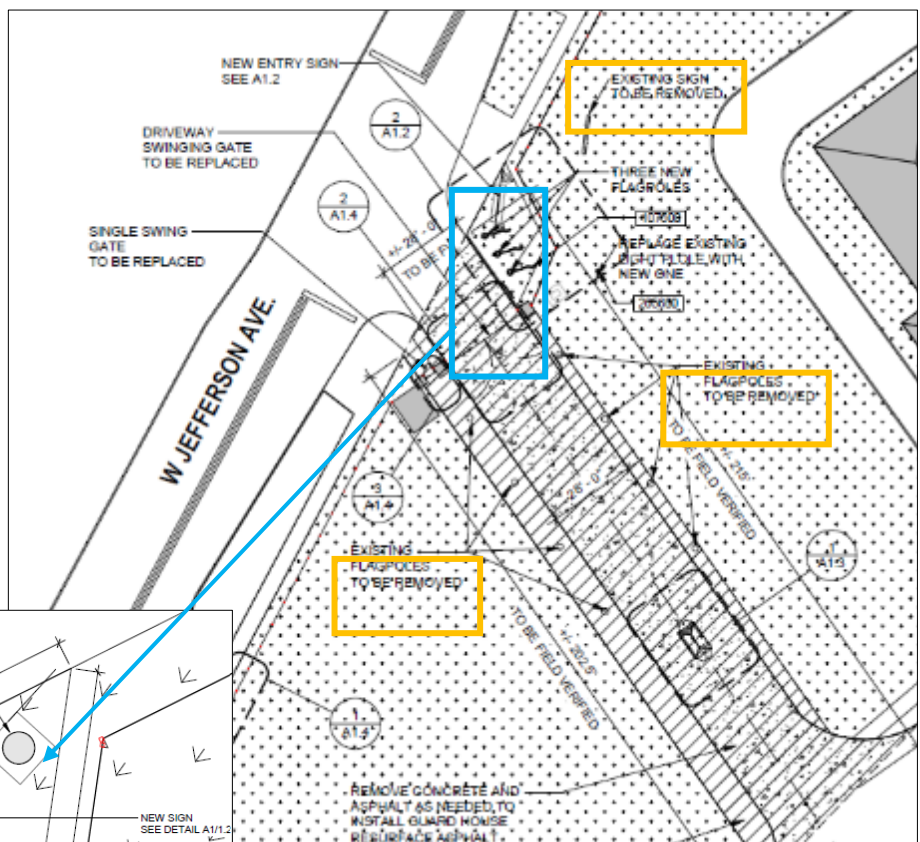
Below left: Elevation drawing of the east or west wall. Note states: "Veneer brick parapet to match the color of existing historic brick."



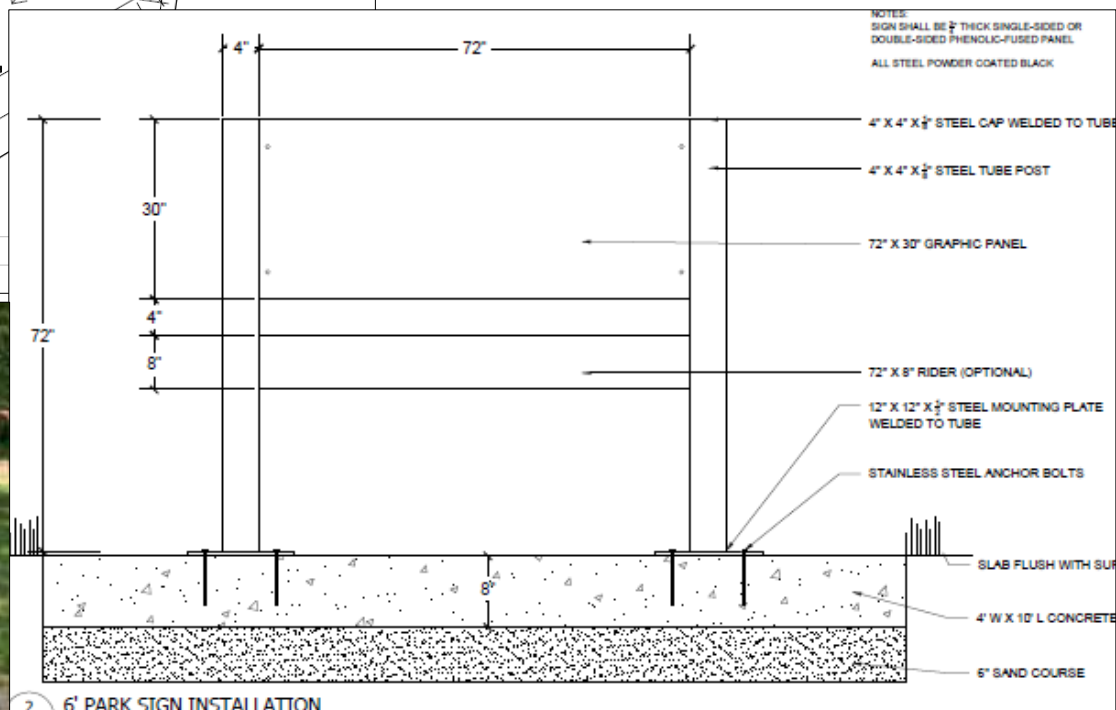


Removal of existing sign and flags /  
Installation of new sign and flags

- The existing flag poles, flanking Brady Street will be removed. They are not historic age and were installed in the late 1970s-early 1980s.
- The existing entrance sign, installed ca. 1984, will be removed.
- The concrete drive and walkways will be replaced with new concrete drive and walkways.
- A new sign and set of three (3) flags will be located outside the entrance and perimeter fence.



### *Applicant drawings*





## East Entrance

### Stone entrance walls



Staff photo, July 17, 2025.

- This is the most public-facing element that remains from the first phase of the fort's construction and was in place no later than 1861. The existing stone curved walls and lower piers remain intact; staff doesn't know when the original pedestrian passageways were replaced with the tall stone piers, but can confirm this took place during the property's period of significance and are historic elements. The walls and piers are in need of cleaning (both dirt and plant material) and re-pointing. The chain link fencing is in place atop the stone walls.
- The applicant included NPS Preservation Brief #1 "*Assessing Cleaning and Water-Repellent Treatments for Historic Masonry*" with their application materials, however the HDC's *Masonry Cleaning Guidelines* should be used as they offer specific instructions/review process for completing this work in a local historic district.



West side wall. Staff photo, July 17, 2025



East side wall. Staff photo July, 17, 2025. This view clearly shows the different design and surface texture of the ca. 1860 pier (right) in contrast with the smooth surface texture of the taller pier (likely installed early 20<sup>th</sup> century, or when the chain link fence was installed on the stone wall).



## Parking lot lighting

- Existing single pole/lamp parking light fixtures, a “historic” reproduction design, installed in the late 1970s, will be replaced. The existing concrete and masonry pads will remain.



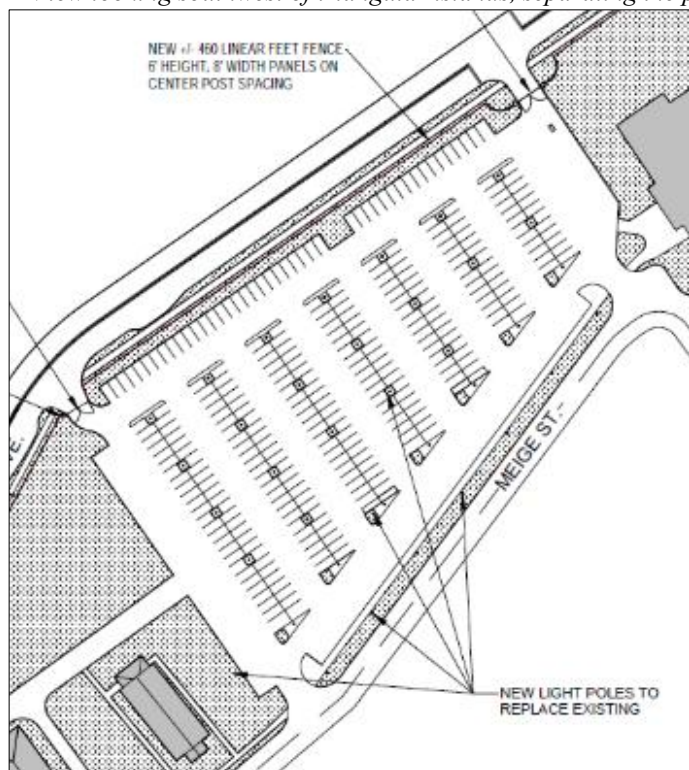
*Left: Triangular concrete and masonry pads separating the parking lot (on right) and Meigs Street (on left).*

*Right: Square pads placed within the parking lot. These foundational items will remain – only the lamposts/lights will be replaced.*

*Staff photos, July 17, 2025.*



*View looking southwest of triangular islands, separating the parking lot (on right) from Meigs Street (on left)*



*Applicant drawing and supplied rendering of proposed lampposts.*





- Four gates are proposed for replacement in this application – the gates at the east and west entrances (2), one at the west entrance to the parking lot, and one at the west entrance to the “Jefferson Field” (the large grassy area that extends between Brady and Rademacher Street. The same aluminum “wrought iron” style gate, as discussed at the entrances, and to match the proposed new perimeter fence, is proposed.



Parking lot gate ★



Jefferson Field gate. ▲



### Perimeter Fence – W. Jefferson and Rademacher Street

- The fencing installed along the north (E. Jefferson) and west (Rademacher) property lines is called a “non-climbable” fence. The earliest catalog staff located advertising this product is from 1910, and an early manufacturer of cyclone fencing (an early name for chain link) and non-climbable fencing was the Cyclone Fence Company, founded in 1891 in Holly, MI. Upon incorporation in 1906, the headquarters were located in Waukegan, IL, and in 1924 it became a division of US Steel Company.

**CYCLONE WAUKEGAN**

**Non-Climbable Fence, 96-inch, with 84-inch Style "S" Fabric**

**THE** United States Government erected about 2 miles of this 96-inch Non-Climbable fence with Style "S" Fabric around its new five-million-dollar Naval Training Station at Great Lakes, Illinois. Some of the hills and ravines over which this fence is placed slope on an angle of at least 60 degrees. Photographs showing this fence going down into deep ravines and over high banks will be mailed on request. This fence has already given two years of perfect satisfaction, and is absolutely non-climbable from either side. Spacing between pickets in this style of fabric is 1½ inches, giving an exceedingly close mesh that is serviceable anywhere. Styles "L-Extra," "F," "S" and "T" Fabrics are extensively used in this construction.

**Specifications**

End, gate and corner posts, "N," are of extra-heavy 3-inch nod intermediate posts, "I," are of extra-heavy 2½-inch tubular iron. Rail and braces are 1½-inch tubular iron. Post tops and fittings are heavy malleable iron. Five heavy barbed wires are held firmly by post tops. Bottom wires overhang 8½ inches each way from center. The next two are 6 inches from bottom wires and overhang 4 inches from center of post tops. The top wire is 6 inches from intermediate wires and 9 inches above the center of bottom wires. Furnished all-galvanized or with framework painted a glossy black, as desired.

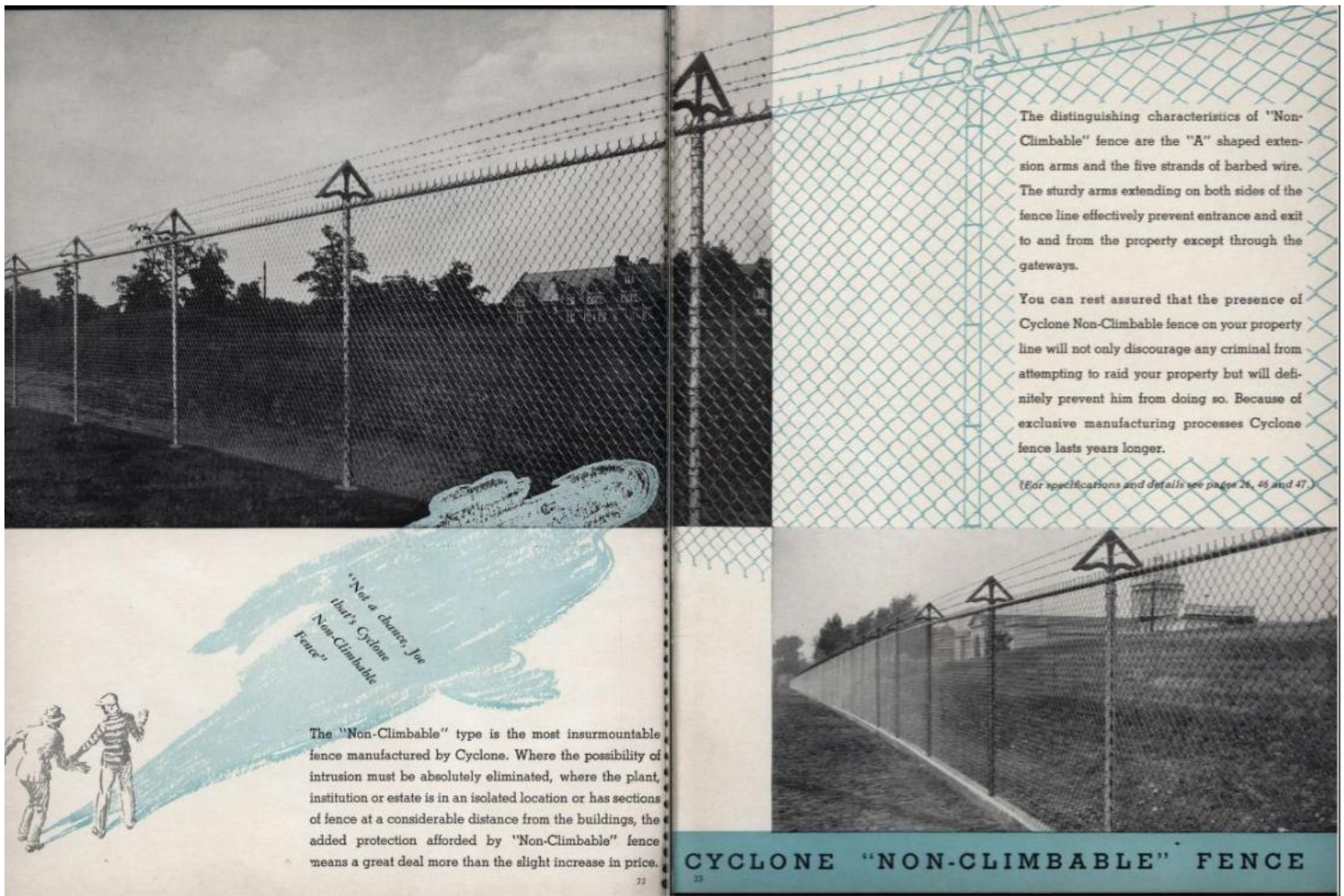
See page 12 on how to figure complete fence.  
For prices see page 33.

**N** **I**

Page 32

1913 Cyclone Fence Company catalog touting the US Government's use of this fencing at the Naval Training Station at Great Lakes, IL.





*Excerpt from a 1950 Cyclone Fence Company catalog.*



*The non-climbable fence at W. Jefferson Avenue. Staff photo, September 25, 2025.*



- [illegible]

1941 Army log, City of Detroit Parks and Recreation Department.

- 26



*Fairgrounds and the Port of Detroit. Many more buildings were constructed to support the needs of this operation (few of which, however, remain) ... Three smaller, single-story concrete warehouse buildings (2A, 2B, and 2C) at the southern corner of the facility along the river, remain. Existing structures were also modified at this time, most notably the entrance to the fort, which was enlarged to accommodate vehicle entry...*

*Late in the war, the fort served as a training facility for the Red Ball Express, a predominately African American mobile force that supplied the advancing allied front in Europe in 1944. The fort also housed Italian prisoners of war captured in North Africa, many of whom immigrated directly the US after the war and settled in Detroit.*

- It is staff's opinion the non-climbable chain link gate with "A"-shaped extension arms, originally installed in 1941-1942, is a distinctive and historic character-defining feature of this site. Its placement (including on top of the ca. 1860s stone walls) and design directly link the fort to the United States' involvement in WWII and the then-current methods for enclosing property vital to the country's war effort.
- The fence remains a visceral, physical, visual and emotional link to a time of the fort's history that otherwise is not present within the site.
- It remains mostly intact and retains its seven aspects of integrity characterized by the National Park Service: location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.
- The fence is in repairable condition and offers a striking contrast to the 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings, star fort, burial mound and the property's currently dominant quiet and contemplative sense of place. It is staff's opinion that the barbed wire can be removed without severely altering its integrity, as the "A"-shaped extensions offer the visual clue to the fence's design and security measure.
- The fence fabric (i.e., the chain link itself) is likely non-historic and a later replacement, and thus eligible for replacement.
- Additionally, there was some discussion during the creation of the MOA work plan that suggested painting the existing fence black. Staff believes this could be done without altering the fence's historic and architectural integrity.

#### *Existing conditions of fence*



*Interior view (looking northeast towards W. Jefferson) of the 1860s entry walls shows how the non-climbable fence was installed on top of the stone walls at the east entry gate, and the existing chain link gate retains barbed wire at the top. Staff photo, July 17, 2025.*





*Fence between Cram and Brady streets; the visitor parking lot is visible through the fence.*

- However, there are occasional areas where the fence needs attention due to missing or leaning posts, as well as one instance in which a tree grew into and ultimately around/through the fence. Also, some of the toppers have surface rust, which could be eliminated by gentle surface repairs/scribbling/refinishing.



*Staff photos, July 17 and September 25, 2025.*



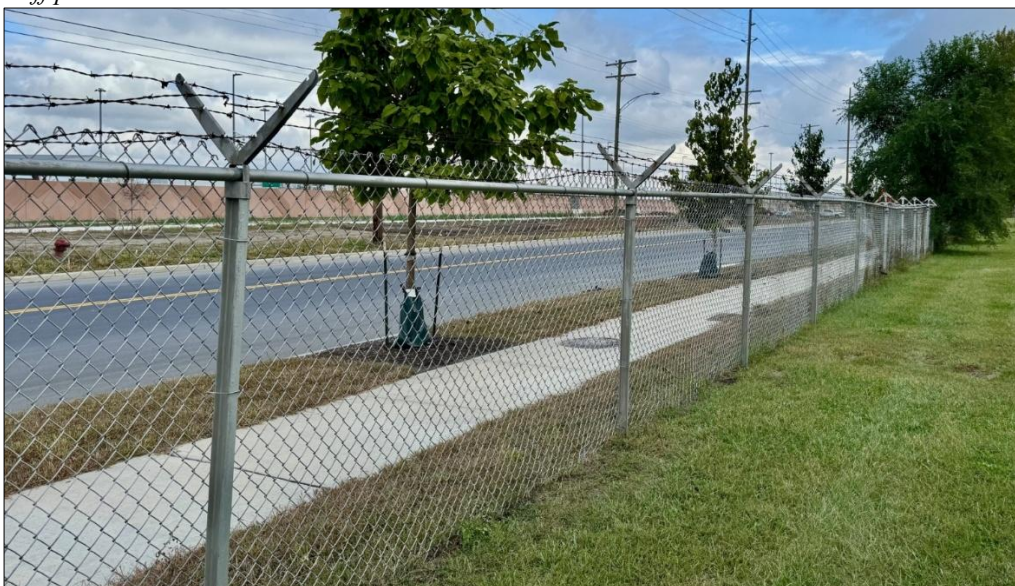


*This view looks southwest into the western section of the property; the Gordie House bridge is visible in the background.*

- The photos attest to the “invisible” nature (as described in the company’s catalog) of the chain link fence, offering an almost unobtrusive view into and out of the fort. The extension arms, which hold five strands of barbed wire, also “blend” into the surroundings which makes for a quiet yet formidable security fencing (especially in contrast to the new bold security wall erected across the street).



*Closer to the western property line, there are sections of the fence at “Jefferson Field” that have different “arms”, likely replacements installed while still serving as a federal military site. Above: looking west. Below, look east. Staff photos.*







*This section of fence is new; it was installed between 2011 and 2013 due to the destruction of the historic fence likely caused by a car or truck (below photo). The new fence has sat incomplete for over 12 years, as it is missing a top rail. It must be noted that the installation of this section of new fence took place before Fort Wayne was designated a local historic district – however it should be completed.*

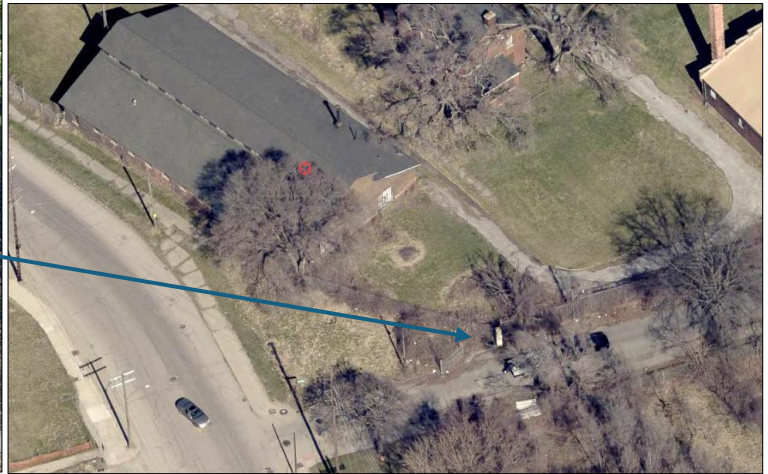


*The northwest corner of the fence returns to the corner of the stable building. Visible is the “Jefferson Field” gate that is proposed for replacement.*





*Staff photo*



*ConnectExplorer*

- During staff's recent site visit, a remnant from the 19<sup>th</sup> century fence was identified at the corner of W. Jefferson and Rademacher, just west of the stables. This element, even as a solo structural item, is a distinctive and historic character-defining feature. This application doesn't include any reference to this feature, so staff doesn't believe its removal is imminent.
- Staff also identified, when reviewing different Google street view images, another concrete or stone obelisk adjacent the stable. Staff will visit the site to confirm if it is still there.
- When overgrowth is removed from this area, additional historic elements of the fort may be identified.
- Removal of historic features cannot be completed without the Historic District Commission's approval.



*November 2023*



*August 2024 – it appears hidden behind the overgrowth.*



- The non-climbable fence along Rademacher Street is taller and has “V” shaped extensions, and likely installed at a later time.



*Staff photos, September 2025.*



## **Gordie Howe International Bridge**

During the early planning stages of the bridge design, the Federal Highway Authority went through a Section 106 process to determine if the construction of the bridge and associated elements would create an adverse effect on historic properties. In short, it was determined the bridge would affect Fort Wayne, so consulting parties came together to create a Memorandum of Understanding in 2008. As the work was underway, an additional Memorandum of Agreement was created, from which a Mitigation Work Plan was created as an addendum to the 2025 MOA. The work items that are within this application all stem from the 2025 Mitigation Work Plan. Excerpts below relate to this application:

*Item #6: MDOT shall construct a new decorative and historically appropriate fence along the West Jefferson property line of the Fort.*

Work Plan: MDOT and HFW agreed on replacing the existing chain link fence with a new wrought iron fence that is aesthetic but also respects the historic nature of the Fort. Initial input from SHPO has been provided to the City. The City of Detroit is working with local vendors to get a quote for the fence. MDOT will transfer funds to the City of Detroit HFW office through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to construct the new fence with MDOT providing the appropriate level of oversight.

*Item #7: MDOT shall construct an entryway treatment for Fort Wayne on Fort's West Jefferson Avenue frontage or on other, adjacent City-owned property to improve wayfinding and visibility as identified in the updated Historic Fort Wayne Master Plan. MDOT shall pay for the reconfiguration of those portions of existing Fort Wayne streets specifically needed to connect the new entryway.*

Work Plan: The City of Detroit HFW office does not contemplate relocating the entrance to Fort Wayne. Improvement to the existing entrance with masonry repairs and additional landscaping will be made by HFW, and MDOT will include funds to cover the work through the MOA agreement.

*Item #11: MDOT shall submit work plans and specifications for all of the above provisions relative to Historic Fort Wayne to the City of Detroit Recreation Department and the SHPO for review and approval.*

Work Plan: This is ongoing. MDOT and the City of Detroit will continue to coordinate with SHPO for concurrence on items above.

- During the development of the work plan, SHPO found the chain link fence not to be important and that it could be replaced (Item #6). Listed below are excerpts from emails sent by Scott Slagor, SHPO Cultural Resource Protection Manager:
  - In an email to PDD historic staff on 10/1/25, Scott stated, *"I can certainly see an argument for the current fence being historic, but looking at the fort in its entirety, we did not feel the perimeter fence critical to the historic integrity of the district and understood the reasons why the park wanted it replaced."*
  - And in an earlier 2024 email to City of Detroit Parks and Recreation staff, Scott stated, *"While the current fence is certainly interesting and conveys the history of Fort Wayne as a military base, we understand the current needs of the park and that a more aesthetically pleasing fence would be more encouraging for the public to visit."*
- As discussed extensively in this report, the additional research completed for the development of this report confirmed that the fence is a distinctive and important feature that dates to the period of significance and Detroit's vital involvement in the United States' WWII efforts.
- Staff finds the transparency of the historic fence and the thinness of the chain link fabric and decorative post toppers to be a welcoming design as it almost fades away, unlike the spear-shaped pickets and bold/dark/glossy finish of the proposed aluminum fence. As stated earlier, the one component of the existing fence that is not welcoming, barbed wire, could be removed without impacting the fence's historic or architectural integrity.
- Staff also notes that the original direction for a true wrought-iron fence has been replaced with a wrought-iron style aluminum fence, a reduction in historic appearance and quality.
- SHPO's analysis is not binding on the HDC and the Commission can take into consideration the factors and features of the historic fence and staff's recommendation that the fence should remain in place.
- Furthermore, the 2025 MOA has not been signed, as it is predicated on the approval from the Commission for the proposed work. Staff has inquired with GSD staff on the next steps relative to the MOA should the Commission deny the replacement of the fence. We hope to have an update to your body at the time of the meeting.



## ISSUES

- The non-climbable chain link fencing with “A”-shaped extension arms, installed in 1941-1942, is a distinctive character-defining feature of this site. Its placement (including on top of the ca. 1860s stone walls) and design directly link the fort to the United States’ involvement in WWII and the then-current methods for enclosing property vital to the country’s war effort.
- The fence remains a visceral, physical, visual and emotional link to a time of the fort’s history that otherwise is not present within the site.
- It remains mostly intact and retains its seven aspects of integrity characterized by the National Park Service: location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.
- The fence is in repairable condition and offers a striking contrast to the 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings, star fort, burial mound and the property’s currently dominant quiet and contemplative sense of place. The barbed wire can be removed without severely altering the fence’s integrity, as the extensions offer the visual clue to the fence’s design and method to secure the property.
- The fence’s removal would destroy historic materials that are tied to a specific era of this property’s significance as well as alter the features and spaces that characterize the property.

## RECOMMENDATION

Section 21-2-78, Determinations of Historic District Commission

### **Recommendation 1 of 2, Denial: Removal and replacement of the historic chain link fence; and gates at west parking lot and Jefferson Field**

Staff recommends that the proposed work will be inappropriate according to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation and the Fort Wanye Historic District’s Elements of Design, specifically:

*Standard 1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.*

*Standard 2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.*

*Standard 4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.*

*Standard 5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.*

*Standard 6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.*

*Standard 9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.*

And

*Elements of Design #s 13, 20 and 22.*

For the following reasons;

- The non-climbable chain link fencing with “A”-shaped extension arms, originally installed in 1941-1942, is a distinctive character-defining feature of this site. Its placement (including on top of the ca. 1860s stone walls) and design directly link the fort to the United States’ involvement in WWII and the then-current methods for enclosing property vital to the country’s war effort.
- The fence remains a visceral, physical, visual and emotional link to a time of the fort’s history that otherwise is not present within the site.
- It remains mostly intact and retains its seven aspects of integrity characterized by the National Park Service: location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.
- The fence is in repairable condition and offers a striking contrast to the 19<sup>th</sup> century military buildings, star

fort, burial mound, and the property's currently dominant quiet and contemplative sense of place.

- The fence's removal would destroy historic materials that are tied to a specific era of this property's significance as well as alter the features and spaces that characterize the property.

**Recommendation 2 of 2, Certificate of Appropriateness: Remaining work items**

Staff recommends that the proposed work will be appropriate according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the Fort Wayne Historic District's Elements of Design, with the conditions that:

- Dimensioned drawings for the proposed gates at the east and west entrances will be submitted to accurately reflect their installation methods and locations at the stone piers.
  - Additional holes will not be created to hang the new gates, and
  - The drawings should show how any remaining holes will be addressed relative to the gate installations.
- Regarding masonry cleaning, the applicant/contractor will follow the HDC *Masonry Cleaning Guidelines* and a detailed scope of work, as identified in the guidelines, will be submitted to staff for review and approval prior to work taking place.