



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** R-308-22, **Version:** 1

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The Clerk Reports

### **Declaring the intent to designate the building located at 424 E. Manhattan Blvd., Toledo, Ohio a historic landmark; and declaring an emergency.**

#### SUMMARY & BACKGROUND:

Architectural Significance of the Building for consideration to become a Designated Landmark.

The building at 424 East Manhattan Boulevard was built by the Toledo Public Schools in 1921 and is a rectangular, brick and stone, flat roof structure. It has a symmetrical layout, in Collegiate Gothic style. The building received interior renovations in 1948 and 1974. The building measures 162 feet wide (east/west) and 162 feet long (north/south). The building is three levels with a garden-level basement with a height of sixty-four feet from grade to top of parapet wall. It features two slightly projecting entrance bays on the front (north) façade which feature gothic detailing. Between the projected bays are intervening bays with glass block enclosed windows. The south elevation is identical to the front except for the single-story boiler room between the entrance bays. The west and east elevations feature glass block enclosed windows in each bay and lack the gothic detailing. On all elevations, each bay is separated by brick piers with masonry capitals. At the first-floor line and the bottom of the parapet are masonry belt courses. Modification of the exterior of the structure include replacement of the original windows with glass blocks and the entrances with modern aluminum storefront systems. The interior of the building has wood flooring, exposed on the third floor and covered in sheet vinyl on the first and second floors, plaster walls, and drop ceilings with the original plaster ceilings above. The wood trim and corridor doors remain as does the original first floor fireplace.

The Webster School was built due to the increase in population of Toledo and the citizens approval of a bond issue to build new schools. At this time Toledo's population was increasing due to the success of the manufacturing industry which attracted thousands of workers to the area. Concurrently, new child labor laws meant there was a dramatic increase in the number of children seeking education through the public-school system. At the time the city was looking to spend over \$11,000,000 (over \$175m in today's dollars) on forty new schools. The Webster School was one of the schools included in the bond levy.

The school was built by the TPS Department of Architecture under the direction of Edwin M. Gee. Edwin M. Gee was the supervising architect for the Toledo Board of Education for 28 years. He originally came to Toledo in 1912 to be a consulting architect for Scott High School and shortly after was awarded the position with the Board of Education to oversee design and construction of all schools built between 1912 and 1939.

The school was named for Daniel Webster, an American lawyer, orator, and politician who served in the US Congress and as Secretary of State under Presidents Harrison, Tyler, and Fillmore.

The school was used for "early beginners" through eighth grade. At its largest the school enrollment was 1,100 students.

While used for schooling the building also housed the first Lagrange branch of the Toledo Lucas County Public

Library. Additionally, the school housed the Family Life Education program, which was an experimental program at the time, providing early education for children two to four years old. The program also provided Parent-Education for the high school students in the area.

By 1940, with an enrollment of 450 students, there was discussion of possibly merging the Webster School and an adjacent, Hamilton School. At the time of discussion, only fifty percent of the Webster School building was used for classrooms. The entire third floor was occupied by a WPA newspaper indexing project and the remainder of the fifty-percent vacant. No merger was performed in 1940 due to strong opposition from the neighborhood.

By 1942 the Webster School enrollment had declined to 195 students and the Board voted to close the Webster School for economic measures. The neighborhood students were sent to Hamilton, Parkland, and Spring Schools.

The declining enrollment was tied to movement in the neighborhood, with families moving to other parts of Toledo, seeking the more rural subdivisions built by the real estate industry. Additionally, the federal changes in immigration reform decreased the population of the foreign labor force, leaving the neighborhoods in the industrial fed neighborhoods with less population influx.

At this same time the Board of Education was dealing with budget constraints and needed cost saving measures. The Board closed Webster School along with two others during this time to save \$29,716 in the 1942-1943 school year.

During the six years of vacancy the school considered a few options for use of the building. In 1943 there was discussion of the building being converted to a hospital should the army take over the County Hospital. In 1947 there was discussion about remodeling the building for the Child Study Institute. Neither of these options moved pass preliminary stages.

In 1948 renovations were designed for the building to be converted to the TPS Headquarters for the school administration, continuing to serve the Toledo community in other capacities. The renovations included subdividing the classrooms into offices. Additional renovations occurred in 1972 to upgrade building systems and subdivide the basement spaces for more offices. It remained the administration building until 2015 when the administration moved to their current location on North Summit Street. The building still houses the IT computer server systems.

In 1993 the building was renamed the Thurgood Marshall Building to honor the first Black United States Supreme Court Justice, a few months after his passing. The renaming was an effort to thank Justice Thurgood for his civil rights efforts that improved public education. NOW, THEREFORE,

Be it resolved by the Council of the City of Toledo:

SECTION 1. That this matter be referred to the Toledo City Plan Commission and the Toledo City Historic District for its review, recommendation and appropriate hearing date.

SECTION 2. That this Resolution hereby is declared to be an emergency measure and shall be in force and effect from and after its adoption. The reason for the emergency lies in the fact that same is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, safety and property, and for the further reason that this Resolution must be immediately effective so that the historic property will be eligible for the federal and/or

state historic tax credit as soon as feasibility possible.

Vote on emergency clause: yeas 12, nays 0.

Adopted: June 7, 2022, as an emergency measure: yeas 12, nays 0.

Attest:

Gerald E. Dendinger  
Clerk of Council

Matt Cherry  
President of Council

Approved:

June 8, 2022  
Wade Kapszukiewicz  
Mayor