



Legislation Text

File #: O-505-22, **Version:** 1

Zoning & Planning Committee

Accepting the City Plan Commission's recommendation for local landmark designation for the Building known as the Thurgood Marshall Building located at 424 E. Manhattan Street, in accordance with Toledo Municipal Code Section 1111.1002; and declaring an emergency.

SUMMARY & BACKGROUND:

This request is for the review of the landmark designation for the Thurgood Marshall Building, originally named the Webster School for Toledo Public Schools, located at 424 E. Manhattan Boulevard. The City of Toledo currently has three locally designated historic districts: Old West End, Vistula, and Westmoreland. Eight other properties in the City of Toledo have been locally designated in the last six years; the Fiberglas Tower/Levis Square Park, located at 200, 435 North Saint Clair was the first locally designated landmark structure. This subject site is not located in the downtown vicinity and will be the second locally designated structure outside of the downtown area. This site is located in the Lagrange neighborhood and is located two miles away from the Vistula Historic District.

The applicant is seeking the designation in order to obtain State Historic Tax Credits and they are also seeking to list the building in the National Register of Historic Places for its historic significance so it will qualify for Federal Tax Credits. The building is considered historically significant since it was constructed circa 1921 and is Collegiate Gothic in style.

The building located at 424 E. Manhattan Boulevard, formally called Webster School, is a rectangular, brick and stone, flat roof structure. It has a symmetrical layout, in Collegiate Gothic style. The building was constructed in 1921 and received interior renovations in 1948 and 1974. The building measures 162 feet wide (east/west) and 162 feet long (north/south), has approximately 97,969 square feet and is sixty-four feet tall.

The building is three levels with a garden-level basement with a height of sixty-four feet from grade to top of parapet wall. The building is a symmetrical composition on all four elevations. 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. Past modifications 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 is 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 building consists of its original school building footprint with the symmetrical plan and a boiler

room appendage on the back (south) side. The front façade is north facing, on Manhattan Boulevard. The front features dark red brick in Flemish Bond pattern with wide mortar joints. There is stone detailing throughout the façade. A large stone base is featured across the entire front façade as well as stone banding at the first-floor line and the third-floor ceiling line. The façade is nine bays wide, delineated by brick pilasters with stone capitals below the top stone banding. The outer bays are wider than the 4 of 21 other seven. The second and eighth bays are the projected entrance bays and the inner bays feature window fenestration. The east and west outside bays feature a window opening at grade and a large brick tablet spanning the three floors above the first-floor stone banding which is framed with the same red brick in projected soldier course. The second and eighth bays, the projecting entrance bays, feature the majority of the gothic detailing made of stone.

The entrances feature Gothic arched porticos with tracery above. The tracery feature shields in bas-relief and the bays include additional stone banding. The entrances have been replaced with aluminum systems. Window openings at the second and third floors are infilled with glass block. At the parapet there is additional stone shield detailing within a central tablet. The middle five bays feature glass block filled window openings with stone sills. At the second-floor windows the headers feature soldier courses. At the third-floor windows stone headers are featured. The center bay features two narrower window openings in lieu of the larger single openings in the middle bays.

The east and west facades, along Chestnut and Elm Streets, are identical that feature dark red brick in Flemish Bond pattern with wide mortar joints. Large stone bases are featured across the entire façades as well as stone banding at the first-floor line and the third-floor ceiling line. The façades are eight bays wide, delineated by brick pilasters with stone capitals below the top stone banding. The outer bays are wider than the other six. Each bay features window openings at each level. The openings feature stone sills.

At the second-floor windows the headers feature soldier courses. At the third-floor windows stone headers are featured. The second and seventh bays feature two narrower window openings in lieu of the larger single openings in the remainder of the bays. The south façade, on Lake Street, is almost identical to the front façade and features dark red brick in Flemish Bond pattern with wide mortar joints. A large stone base is featured across the entire façade as well as stone banding at the first-floor line and the third-floor ceiling line. The façade is nine bays wide, delineated by brick pilasters with stone capitals below the top stone banding. The outer bays are wider than the other seven. The second and eighth bays are the projected entrance bays and the inner bays feature window fenestration. The east and west outside bays feature a window opening at grade and a large brick tablet spanning the three floors above the first-floor stone banding which is framed with the same red brick in projected soldier course. The second and eighth bay, the projecting entrance bays, feature the majority of the gothic detailing made of stone.

The entrances feature Gothic arched porticos with tracery above. The tracery feature shields in bas-relief and the bays include additional stone banding. The entrances have been replaced with new aluminum systems. Window openings at the second and third floors are infilled with glass block. At the parapet there is additional stone shield detailing within a central tablet. The middle five bays feature glass block filled window openings with stone sills. At the second-floor windows the headers feature soldier courses. At the third-floor windows stone headers are featured. The center bay features two narrower window openings in lieu of the larger single openings in the middle bays. A single-story appendage at grade projects south to encompass the boiler/coal rooms. The appendage also features Flemish Bond dark red brick, a large stone base, a stone band course that aligns with the first-floor line, and a stone wall cap. Window openings have been infilled with glass block. The parapet on each façade is capped in stone and features embattlement with thin crenels. A large chimney resides on the roof for the coal boilers. Two interior court wells between the corridors and auditorium provided daylight into the interior spaces.

The historical significance surrounding the Webster School is that it 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 scholar and the compiler of the Webster's Dictionary. 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 Library 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.

The subject property is a 4.6-acre site that is located on the south side of East Manhattan Boulevard, between Lagrange to the west and Stickney Avenue to the east with Manhattan Shopping Center Plaza to the north. The closest designated historic landmark structure or historic overlay district is approximately two miles away from the site and that is the Vistula Historic District.

The subject property is zoned Residential Single-family (RS6) and to the north is a single-family neighborhood, to the west is a residential neighborhood with a low impact commercial store, to the south is single-family neighborhood with another low impact commercial store, and to the east is single-family neighborhood with a shopping center.

The overall condition of the property is average on the exterior and interior. The structure appears to stable with no major damage. The interior spaces as viewed in the photos show the interior is stable with only slight variations in the floor plan.

The future use of this structure is for apartments. The intent is to create senior housing by providing 86 apartments to seniors with limited income to be split between the main structure with an additional two-story building in the rear of the property. The developers have proposed adding the additional units in a newly built two-story annex that will be attached to the main building. All of the units at Thurgood Marshall Senior Apartments will be rent-restricted. Thurgood Marshall Senior Housing will serve a need for high quality housing for the most vulnerable senior population in Toledo and Lucas County.

This project will take an underutilized, currently vacant building and make it an anchor for the community, providing affordable housing for older adults who want to stay in the neighborhood. Solar renewable energy will be installed on the annex building in order to integrate green energy into the project through a power purchase agreement.

The Toledo 20/20 Comprehensive Plan identifies this site for Neighborhood Commercial future land uses. The subject site is adjacent to single-family homes on all four sides fronting on a major thorough fare. The future use of apartments will require a Zone Change to a more intense residential zoning classification and the re-use of historic, contributing building will provide stability to the neighborhood.

At this time, there is not an active neighborhood organization surrounding the subject site. The Toledo City Historic District will be responsible for overseeing future environmental changes to the building and the building site.

The Toledo City Historic Commission reviewed and approved this case during their monthly meeting on July 25, 2022. The applicant was provided adequate time to explain the historic significance of this structure and how it has been identified as a contributing structure to the Manhattan.

Staff supports designating the Thurgood Marshall Building at 424 E. Manhattan as a local landmark because of its historic and architectural significance and the rehabilitation of the structure will allow the structure to remain a contributing building in the community. The significance of the building will be preserved and this designation enhances the ability of the Toledo community to preserve a part of the City's history. NOW, THEREFORE,

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

SECTION 1. That "Landmark Designation" for the Building located at 424 E. Manhattan Boulevard, in Toledo is hereby approved.

SECTION 2. That this Ordinance hereby is declared to be an emergency measure and shall be in force and effect from and after passage. The reason for the emergency lies in the fact that same has had Public hearings and approval from the Historic District Commission, the Toledo Plan Commission and the City Council Zoning and Planning Committee and is necessary for the immediate preservation and property.

Vote on emergency clause: yeas _____, nays _____.

Passed: _____, as an emergency measure: yeas _____, nays _____.

Attest: _____
Clerk of Council

President of Council

Approved: _____

Mayor

I hereby certify that the above is a true and correct copy of an Ordinance passed by

Council _____

Attest: _____
Clerk of Council