

**PUBLIC POSTING
FOR 60-DAY REVIEW PERIOD**

**Historic District Designation Preliminary Report
PHDD20-0002 – McKinley School – 18330 George Washington Drive**

Purpose: The purpose of Historic District Designation is to secure and recognize properties that hold a unique place in Southfield history. The Southfield City Code states that the process is intended to: (1) Safeguard the heritage of the city by preserving areas in the city which reflect elements of its cultural, social, spiritual, economic, political engineering or architectural history or its archaeology; (2) Stabilize and improve property values in each historic district and the surrounding areas;(3) Foster civic beauty and community pride; (4) Strengthen the local economy; (5) Promote the use of historic districts for the education, pleasure and welfare of the citizens of the city, the state and of the United States of America.

Properties with local Historic District Designation that seek to undergo building changes that require a permit or a demolition must first report to the Southfield Historic Commission which reviews the proposed alterations.

Historic District Designation Process: Upon receipt of a Historic District Designation application, the Southfield Planning Department arranges an agenda item at a City Council Study Meeting and begins a preliminary study of the property. At the meeting, the City Planner or his/her designee outlines the Historic District Designation process and the subject property. At Council's consent, the item is then authorized for full study at their next Regular Meeting. The Planning Department completes a preliminary report for the property, which is given to the Historic District Advisory Board (HDAB) for review. This body consists of the City Planner, Building Official, Planning Commission Chair, a member from the Parks & Recreation Board, three (3) regular members, and 2 ad hoc members (usually the property owner(s) from the subject property). Once the preliminary report is approved by the HDAB, it is sent out to several organizations (such as the Planning Commission, the Historic Commission, etc.) and posted for a 60-day review. During this time the Planning Department prepares a draft ordinance for the property's approval. At the end of the 60-day review period, the HDAB holds a public hearing. The HDAB or its designee presents the Final Report to Council, who then grant the new ordinance.

Historic District Advisory Board Members

- Terry Croad, Director of Planning
- Mark Pilot, Building Official
- Jeremy Griffis, Planning Commission Chair
- Rosemerry Allen, Parks & Recreation Board Member
- Dale Gyure, Regular Member
- Corey Moffat, Regular Member
- Darla Van Hoey, Regular Member
- Kenson Siver, Ad Hoc Member
- Sheila Booker, Ad Hoc Member

Site Acreage: 4.53 acres

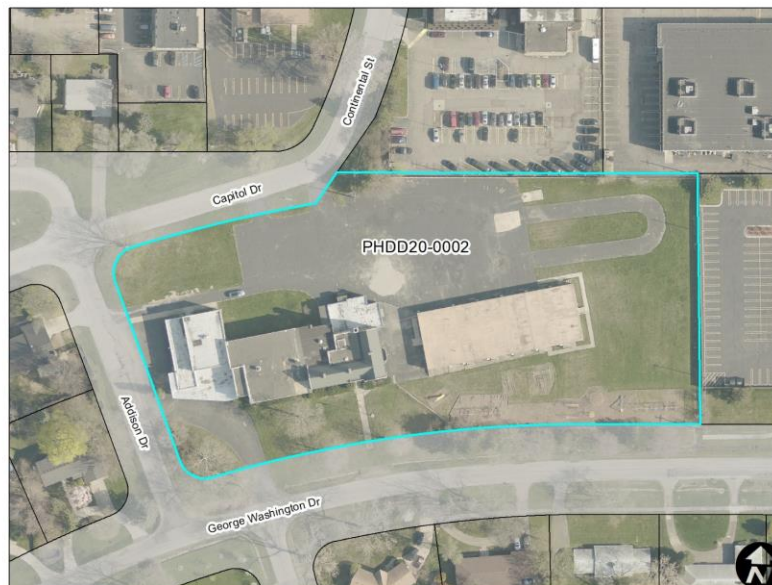
Gross Building Area: 35,225 square feet

Architectural Style: Collegiate Gothic (Revival)/International Style

Architect: J. Lee Baker Co.

Constructed: 1929

Boundaries: Sidwell Parcel 2426-226-004, T1N,R10E,SEC 26 210-5 A P J L BAKERS WASH HTS SUB LOTS 210 & 211 ALSO LOTS 213, 214 & 215 ALSO THAT PART OF LOT 212 & 278 & VACATED CHESTER BLVD LYING W OF LINE DESC AS BEG 2 FT WOF PT OF TANGENCY OF LOT 278& IN N LINE OF GEORGE WASHINGTON DR, TH N 00-52-50W TO PT DIST W 14 FT FROM PTOF TANGENCY OF LOT 212 & S LNE OF ADDISON DR 4.53A 000000, on the northeast corner of George Washington Drive and Continental Street, Section 26, City of Southfield, Oakland County, State of Michigan.



History: Oakland County was established in 1819, and within it Southfield Township was established in 1830. For the next century, the township was primarily rural and agricultural, but nearby Detroit's significant industrialization and population growth changed the entire region. Detroit's prodigious annexations pushed its boundary to 8 Mile Road, directly bordering Southfield Township. As new residents arrived to the region and as existing inner city residents moved outwards, developers eyed farmland in the suburbs to accommodate them.

Real Estate Developer J. Lee Baker visited the southern end of Southfield Township, just across the street from Detroit, and envisioned the area in the Picturesque style. This aesthetic design rejected the gridded streets that had been built en masse throughout Detroit and instead favored curved avenues, irregularly-shaped lots, and significant vegetation to create a park-like

atmosphere. Baker platted the subdivision, named Washington Heights, in 1926, with the first home under construction in 1928.

In the 1920s, the local school district was served by a one room school house—not exactly the type of modern living that Baker was trying to sell to prospective homebuyers. Therefore, in an unusual fashion for a home developer, Baker himself financed the construction of a new school building to attract families to the area. The school, built in a then-popular Collegiate Gothic Revival style, was named for U.S. President William McKinley and completed in 1929. McKinley School features architectural enhancements such as terrazzo floors and custom tiled drinking fountains and fireplaces.

With only a few completed homes in the area, the school initially had low enrollment. Within months of its opening the stock market crashed, starting the Great Depression, which effectively halted further home construction in Washington Heights: McKinley School closed soon after. As economic conditions slowly recovered, the school reopened in 1937 and saw increasing enrollment.

Southfield Township, and later as the City of Southfield after its incorporation, experienced significant post-WWII suburban development. The district's enrollment tripled in the 1950s alone. Due to overcrowding, in 1956 the school district constructed an addition to the building in the modern International Style.

Just as in the 1920s, growth projections of the 1950s were overestimated and the population boom slowed, and in time the school found itself underused and outdated. McKinley School closed in 1971, but was given additional uses throughout the 1970s and early 1980s via special education, Southfield Schools staff offices and as a community center. The school district leased and later sold the building in 1984 to the Academy of Detroit North, who at some point added portable classrooms to the property. The Academy of Detroit North closed in 2015 and the site has been vacant since.

The Southfield Non-Profit Housing Corporation purchased the property and seek to find a new use for the school while keeping the historical integrity intact.

Significance: McKinley School is significant for its Collegiate Gothic style—it is the oldest of this type in Southfield and retains many of its original and unique architectural elements. The school is also noteworthy for its place in Southfield history as part of the area's early growth.

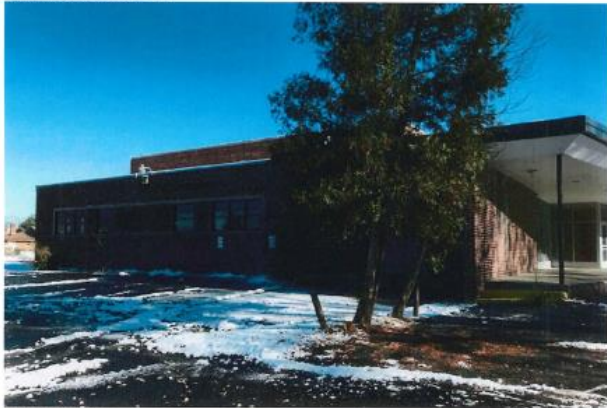
McKinley School meets the criteria for exceptional significance under Criteria Consideration A: it is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to Southfield history; and C: it embodies a distinctive characteristic of construction due to its creation to attract families as part of a neighborhood development.



Southeast Elevation



Southwest Elevation



West Elevation



North Elevation