

## Sixth Judicial Circuit Court Halts Demolition of Historic Roosevelt School

**West Bloomfield, Michigan, March 22, 2024** — Sixth Judicial Circuit Court Judge Hon. Phyllis McMillen has issued a temporary restraining order to stop West Bloomfield School District from demolishing the historic Roosevelt school building, located in the heart of Keego Harbor, Michigan. The nonprofit Heart of the Lakes Community filed the injunction to allow WBSD to instead sell and repurpose Roosevelt, which would provide the greatest benefit to the district, its students and the community.

On March 21st we amended the motion because the defendants have started demolition immediately rather than April 8 as they previously stated. We are disturbed by the district's brazenness in commencing demolition before the Court even ruled.

HOTLC conducted a months-long investigation, including internal WBSD documents obtained by FOIA, independent expert opinions, and the district's own words, revealing that the district has repeatedly made false claims and hidden important information from the Board of Education and the public for many years to justify demolition:

**Claim: Demolition is a financially sound decision.** WBSD wants to demolish and sell the building for a net gain of \$558,000, but unforeseen abatement costs could turn this into a loss. By rejecting a \$1.7 million offer by a reputable firm, they are **depriving at least \$1.1 million from the students' education**. The board treasurer called the demolition decision "fiscally irresponsible" and an act of "malfeasance."

**Claim: Roosevelt is unsafe and irreparable.** WBSD **purposely hid** an engineering study indicating Roosevelt is structurally sound and could easily be repaired. Instead, the district closed Roosevelt, failed to collect insurance and wasted funds, moving students to another building.

**Claim: Charter schools are a threat.** Overwhelming evidence and pending legislation prove that charter schools are not a threat. **No charter or private schools have bid** on Roosevelt, but many reputable developers have made bids to repurpose the building for needed housing, bringing **new students and tax revenues** to the district.

**Claim: Demolition is safe for the environment.** The district chose an abatement firm with a history of safety violations. Demolition could contaminate the air and nearby lakes. Preserving and repurposing Roosevelt provides environmental sustainability and community benefits.

**Claim: WBSD is open and honest.** The board has repeatedly **violated the Open Meetings Act** by simply rubber-stamping decisions made behind closed doors without public deliberations. They have **charged exorbitant fees for FOIA's and have apparently withheld documents**.

The Roosevelt school building, designed by Henry Ford's favorite architect, Robert O. Derrick, faces the threat of demolition despite widespread community opposition. More than 1,300 individuals have voiced their support to save the building through a petition. Additionally, in a recent community forum, over 100 citizens, local leaders, and developers, discussed various potential repurposing strategies for Roosevelt, affirming its value to the community.

Jen Vasquez, president of Heart of the Lakes, explains "We joined in the lawsuit because our mission is to support community preservation and encourage renovation, not to demolish a structurally sound, architecturally sensitive building that could once again be the centerpiece of our city."

A TRO motion hearing will be held on March 27, 2024 at the Sixth Judicial Circuit Court. The firm Doerr MacWilliams Howard PLLC (DMH Law) of Bloomfield Hills is representing HOTLC.

### Contacts

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