



# **Request for Application (RFA) The District Detroit Neighborhood History Study and Report**



**Request for Application (RFA)**  
**The District Detroit**  
**Neighborhood History Study and Report**

**April 24, 2024**

**Schedule:**

Application opens: Wednesday, April 24, 2024 at Noon ET  
Application closes: Friday, June 21, 2024 at Noon ET  
Decision notification: Wednesday, July 17, 2024 (Subject to change)

**Questions and RFA Contact:**

Chimene Anderson, Community Relations Manager  
Olympia Development of Michigan  
[NeighborhoodStudy@TheDistrictDetroitOC.com](mailto:NeighborhoodStudy@TheDistrictDetroitOC.com)

**I. Introduction**

Related Olympia Predevelopment Company (“Developer”), a joint venture between ODM Real Estate Ventures, LLC and Related Detroit LLC, is developing hotel, residential, retail and office projects in The District Detroit, to among other things, help attract, develop and retain talent, and drive forward inclusive economic development in Detroit and Michigan. **(Exhibit B)**

Pursuant to City of Detroit Ordinance, No. 2021-4, effective as December 8, 2021 (the “Community Benefits Ordinance”), and codified in Chapter 12 Article VIII of the 2019 Detroit City Code (“Code”), certain development projects referred to as “Tier 1 Development Projects” are required to undergo certain community engagement procedures as set forth in the Community Benefits Ordinance, to permit members of the Neighborhood Advisory Council (as defined in the Community Benefits Ordinance) to make developers aware of concerns related to the Project and discuss methods of addressing concerns raised by the Neighborhood Advisory Council (the “CBO Process”).

Accordingly, a series of public meetings were held November 2023 – February 2024, resulting in approval by the Neighborhood Advisory Council (NAC) of The District Detroit Community Benefits Agreement (CBA). The CBA subsequently was presented to and approved by Detroit City Council.

The CBA includes a commitment for the Developer to commission a study to research, document, and memorialize the history of Detroiters in the Brush Park, Paradise Valley, Black Bottom, Cass Corridor and Cass Park neighborhoods. **(Exhibit A)** The study shall be commissioned from a local non-profit, historical, or educational institution using a competitive process intended to involve and incorporate diverse groups of voices and



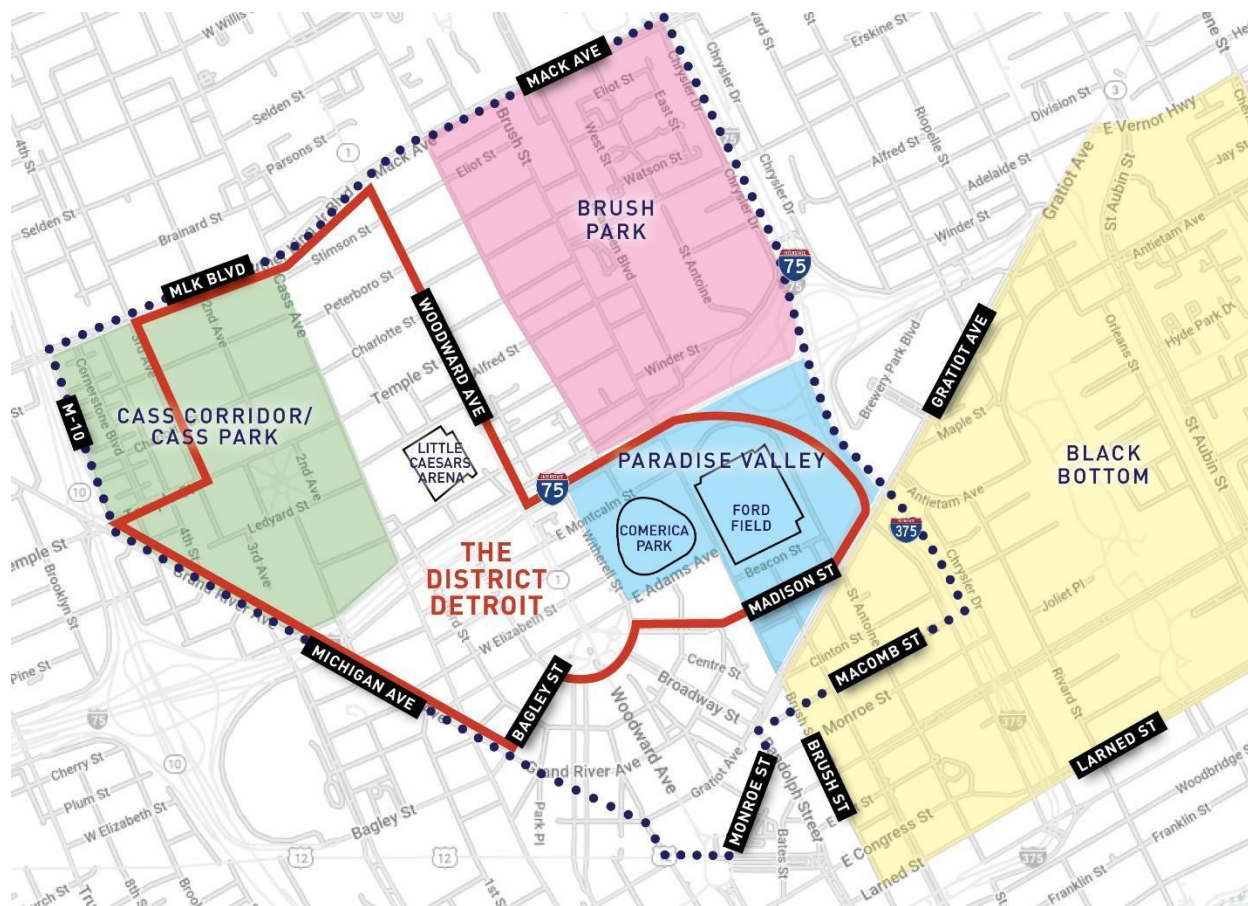
perspectives. The study's results shall be delivered to the City and to the NAC and be made freely available online to the public.

## II. CBO Impact Area and Historic Neighborhoods

The City's Planning and Development Department (PDD) defined The District Detroit project's impact area as depicted in **Figure 1**. The impact area is bounded by:

- Martin Luther King Blvd. and Mack Ave. to the north
- I-75 and I-375 to the east
- Macomb St., Monroe St., and Michigan Ave. to the south
- M-10 to the west

This area also includes The District Detroit neighborhood and all or part of the following historic neighborhoods: Brush Park, Paradise Valley, Cass Corridor/Cass Park and Black Bottom.



**FIGURE 1**

City of Detroit PPD District Detroit Impact Area Map .....

### III. Scope of Work

#### Goal

- With a focus on people, places (location of historic event), and experiences, the purpose of this study is to inform the Developer on a related series of culturally relevant, educational, and engaging memorials that commemorate the history of Detroiters in the Brush Park, Paradise Valley, Black Bottom and Cass Corridor/Cass Park neighborhoods. These memorializations are intended to continue telling the already documented stories and significance of these neighborhoods by integrating current memorials, with new and innovative dedications in the development area, with an emphasis in The District Detroit. Ultimately, Detroiters, Michiganders, tourists and others from near and far – especially families and children – will learn, understand and appreciate the collective history, cultures and sense of these communities.

#### Deliverables

- The Developer has publicly committed to a purpose-driven development around five core values and any work and deliverable shall be consistent with these values.
- Respondents identifying as a historical consulting or research firm, or both, can and will partner with a local non-profit, historical or educational institution.
- Results of this study will be presented by the respondent to the Developer, Neighborhood Advisory Council, the city, and will be made freely available online to the public.
- Research
  - Review historic reports already done and use them as an entry point to do more in depth research.
  - Provide documented evidence that demonstrates and substantiates the research.
  - Utilize and properly cite archives, library, database and primary sources as defined by the Michigan Historical Commission Utilize and properly cite archives, library, database and provide primary source documentation as defined by the Michigan Historical Commission (<https://www.michigan.gov/mhc/historical-markers/how-to-apply>):
    - primary sources—sources created by people who saw or participated in an event and recorded it at the time, or documents of legal transactions. Offer photocopies of secondary sources such as published county and community histories.
- Document
  - Generate a reader-friendly report in applicable formats (written, digital, etc.) with findings of the study, including photos and other relevant supporting documentation.
  - Create a presentation deck to complement the study that will be presented to the Developer, Neighborhood Advisory Council, the city, and will be made freely available online to the public.

- Both the report and deck should offer clarity of written communication that should be simple, concise and inform future memorialization decisions of the Developer.
- **Memorialize**
  - Inform the developer on various unique and innovative ways to memorialize people, places and experiences, including companies that specialize in specific types of memorialization and the associated costs.
  - If a Michigan Historical Marker is recommended, complete the Michigan Historical Marker application (**Exhibit C**) and hand over to the Developer. All applicable submission fees will be paid by the Developer.

### **Reporting**

- A regular cadence of project updates will be required and determined in concert with the selected respondent.

### **Study Funding**

- The study will be funded with a \$50,000 grant from the Developer.

## **IV. Submission Requirements and Process**

All submitted applications will be considered confidential and proprietary to the Developer. The respondent must submit a completed application package that includes the following:

### **Cover Letter**

- Who you are - whether a local non-profit, historical, or educational institution?
- Include the makeup of organization, board, staff, volunteers, etc.
- A description of your understanding of the project.
- \*Are you or are you collaborating with a Detroit-based respondent?
- Willingness to collaborate with another proposal respondent.

*\*Note: Preference is for a Detroit-based respondent(s).*

### **Section 1 - Project Approach**

- Offer a detailed description of your approach to the project including the role of each relevant contributor to complete the scope of work.
- Show a detailed description of your method for conducting historical research and ways to document findings.
- Justify why the chosen methods are appropriate and suitable for your research.
- Include at least three relevant examples of past completed work that are of a similar scope of the proposed project. Please include the client name, your role and summary of the completed project.
- Discuss any ethical issues that may arise during your research and explain how you plan to address them.
- If your research involves oral histories or in-person interviews, explain how you will ensure informed consent and privacy.

- Identify whether your organizations, or any of your sub-consultants, is a minority- or woman-owned business enterprise and/or whether your firm, or your subconsultants, are registered with a national historical research organization, or the City of Detroit Civil Rights, Inclusion and Opportunity Department Office (CRIO). Proof of certification is required and must be submitted with the application.

## **Section 2 - Project Personnel**

- Provide a project organization chart, including consultants and collaborative partners.
- Include as an attachment, a one-page resume for each project team member specifically identifying relevant historical research experience, if applicable.

## **Section 3 - Project Budget and Completion Timeline**

- Respondent will provide a timeline for completion of the study and other scope of work deliverables.
- Outline a project budget that identifies costs associated with completing this study. This includes direct costs such as travel, materials, labor, etc. and indirect costs such as overhead and administrative expenses.

The application should be no more than 10 pages (not including attachments), portrait layout, single space, size 12 font (Calibri or Arial), justified alignment and on 8.5x11 paper. All submissions must be uploaded at [TheDistrictDetroitOC.com/NeighborhoodRFA](https://TheDistrictDetroitOC.com/NeighborhoodRFA) in a PDF format and are due at **Noon ET on Friday, May 31, 2024.** Submissions received after this deadline will not be accepted.

If desired, supplementary hardcopy submissions may be delivered to: The District Detroit Opportunity Center, Attn: Chimene Anderson, 2277 Woodward Avenue, Detroit, Michigan 48201.

## **V. Evaluation and Selection Process**

During the selection process, proposals may be considered by an Advisory Committee (AC) comprised of individuals selected by Developer or may be considered solely at the discretion of the Developer.

Only those proposals that satisfy the requirements described in this RFA, will be considered for evaluation. The AC and/or Developer reserves the right to request oral presentations or additional information from any Respondent. These presentations provide an opportunity for the Respondents to clarify the application. The Developer will schedule these presentations, if required.

The Developer also reserves the right to reject any application with or without cause, to negotiate with any source it has selected as qualified, to not award a grant, or to award one or more grants.

Only those proposals receiving a score of 80 points or more will be considered for an award. Organizations will be notified of selection by June 26, 2024.

### **Weight**

Responses to this RFA will be evaluated using the following criteria and point allocation:

Understanding RFA <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Demonstrates understanding of deliverables.</li></ul>	10 points
Historical Research Experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide 3 examples with detail.</li></ul>	35 points
Project Approach <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Primary research</li><li>• Community engagement approach</li><li>• Collaboration</li><li>• Creativity, innovation and uniqueness shown with series of memorialization recommendations, e.g. markers, interpretive panels and displays, tribute or historic wall displays.</li></ul>	50 points
Detroit-based and registered with CRIO	5 points
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100 points</b>

## **VI. Ownership of Confidential Information**

The recipient acknowledges that any concept, discovery, material, or information developed from submission of application is and shall remain the sole and exclusive property of the Developer (collectively the “End Product”). Furthermore, recipient agrees that Developer shall hold all right, title and interest in and to the End Product including all patents, copyrights, trademarks, registrations and such other intellectual property rights therein, whether developed solely by Recipient for Developer or jointly by Recipient and Developer. The recipient further agrees to execute all instruments or documents required or reasonably requested to perfect or record the right, title or interest of Developer in or to an End Product.

## **Exhibit A: Community Benefits Agreement - Arts & Culture - Neighborhood History Study and Report Requirement**

### Section L. Arts and Culture

**Neighborhood History Study and Report:** Within one (1) year of the final approval of the TBP, Developer will commission a study, and fund such study with a grant of at least fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000), to research, document, and memorialize the history of Detroiters in the Brush Park, Paradise Valley, Cass Corridor, Black Bottom and Cass Park neighborhoods. Such study shall be commissioned from local non-profit, historical, or educational institution using a competitive proposal process intended to involve a diverse group of voices and perspectives in such study. Developer shall involve the City of Detroit Office of Arts, Culture, and Entrepreneurship (“ACE”) and a NAC Liaison to assist in creating the study proposal and to select the entity or entities from whom such study is commissioned. The results of such study shall be delivered to the City and to the NAC and be made freely available online to the public. Developer will work with a NAC Liaison to coordinate and determine the appropriate number of and location of markers memorializing the history of the Brush Park, Paradise Valley, Cass Corridor, Black Bottom and Cass Park neighborhoods, consistent with the results of the neighborhood history study, the costs of which markers are included a part of Developer’s construction budgets.



## Exhibit B: Developer Core Values

### About Olympia Development of Michigan and Related Companies

Olympia Development of Michigan, an Ilitch company, is a real estate development firm dedicated to improving the lives of people who live, work, and play in Detroit and beyond. Through catalytic developments, innovative design and construction, and inclusive placemaking, Olympia Development continues to create jobs, produce needed housing, increase tax base, and grow businesses in Detroit while steadily creating one of the world's most dynamic sports and entertainment destinations, The District Detroit.

Related Companies is widely recognized as one of the most innovative and prolific developers in the U.S. today. We are dedicated to the highest standards of all aspects of the real estate equation and one of the largest developers of privately-owned affordable housing in the U.S., with a portfolio of 60,000 affordable and workforce apartments. To ensure our vision is realized, we offer in-house expertise that spans every discipline including site identification and assembly, zoning and entitlements, financing, master planning, design, construction, marketing, leasing and sales.

The Developer has publicly committed to a purpose-driven development around five core values listed below, and any work and deliverable shall be consistent with these values. Our purpose-driven development will prioritize prosperity for Detroiters through inclusion, equity and the environment.

### CORE VALUES

- **Education:** Increase access to education and expanded opportunities for Detroiters.
- **Employment:** Expand entrepreneurship, career and job opportunities for Detroiters.
- **Economic Inclusion:** Intentional inclusion of historically disenfranchised businesses, coupled with a commitment to fostering generational wealth and addressing societal needs such as affordable housing.
- **Environmental Justice:** Build The District Detroit with a sustainability framework that improves the lives of Detroiters.
- **Engagement:** Create an inclusive environment where all Detroiters can take part in the programming and activations in The District Detroit

## Exhibit C: Michigan Historical Commission Marker Application

### MICHIGAN HISTORICAL MARKER APPLICATION

Michigan Historical Marker Program  
Michigan History Center  
Michigan Department of Natural Resources  
P.O. Box 30740  
Lansing, MI 48909-8240

PROPOSED MARKER INFORMATION		
Marker Topic <div></div>		
Proposed Marker Title <div></div>		
Address of Site <div></div>	City <div></div>	ZIP Code <div></div>
Local Government Unit <div></div>	State <div></div>	County <div></div>
Proposed marker will be about: <input type="checkbox"/> A historic person <input type="checkbox"/> A historic building or historic site <input type="checkbox"/> A historic event <input type="checkbox"/> Other: <div></div>		
MARKER TYPE		
After referring to the <b>Marker Price List</b> , please indicate marker size preference. A marker must be mounted in one of the following ways: using a single post (small markers), double posts (large markers), or wall-mounted (without any post). A written request for any other type of mounting must be submitted with this application.		
Small Marker (24" x 36") <input type="checkbox"/> with one post* <input type="checkbox"/> wall mounted		
Large Marker (42" x 54") <input type="checkbox"/> with two posts* <input type="checkbox"/> wall mounted		
In order to provide as much information as possible to the public, the Michigan Historical Commission recommends that post mounted markers contain different text on each side.		
*If you chose a post mounted marker, do you want <input type="checkbox"/> same text    OR <input type="checkbox"/> different text on each side?		
SIGNIFICANCE OF SUBJECT		
Briefly state why this subject is significant and worthy of being recognized by the State of Michigan. Significance may be local, regional, statewide, or national. Additional pages may be added. <div></div>		

*The Michigan Historical Marker Program is authorized by the Governor John B. Swainson Michigan Historical Markers Act, Act 10 of 1955, MCL 399.151-159.*

If the marker involves a historic building, please fill out this section.

Type of Structure:

☐ Commercial ☐ Industrial ☐ Public/Recreational ☐ Residential ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Indicate the materials used in the construction of the roof of the structure:

☐ Ceramic Tiles ☐ Composition Shingles ☐ Metal ☐ Organic ☐ Slate/Stone ☐ Wood Shingles  
(asphalt, bitumen, tar, etc.)

Indicate the materials/building techniques used in the construction of the structure.

☐ Adobe Brick ☐ Fired Brick ☐ Concrete Block ☐ Reinforced Concrete  
☐ Stone ☐ Synthetic Stone ☐ Aluminum Siding ☐ Asbestos Siding  
☐ Vinyl Siding ☐ Wood Cladding ☐ Metal Siding ☐ Stucco  
☐ Mail Order ☐ Modular ☐ Pre-Fabricated

How would you evaluate the physical integrity of this property? Does it retain most of its original building materials? Has the property been altered, either through additions or through the removal of original elements? Explain the changes, whether historic or recent, and provide documentation of these changes with dated primary sources.

Has the structure been moved from its original location? If moved, indicate when, why, and where it was originally located.

**Architect/Builder:** Enter the full name of the person(s) responsible for designing and/or constructing the resource, the name of their firm and the city and state where they were based. Include a copy of the source of that information.

#### CEMETERY INFORMATION

Does the site include a cemetery? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please attach the "Michigan Historical Marker Cemetery Supplement Form."

*The Michigan Historical Marker Program is authorized by the Governor John B. Swainson Michigan Historical Markers Act,  
Act 10 of 1955, MCL 399.151-159.*

DOCUMENTATION SUMMARY	
<p>All information on a marker must be documented with <b>primary sources</b> (items that were created at or near the time an event occurred, such as historic newspaper articles or obituaries, tax records, property deeds, blueprints, maps, photographs) <b>with dates clearly shown</b>. Secondary sources may be submitted as supplemental documentation. Books are generally secondary sources and useful only if they help you locate primary source documentation.</p>	
<p><b>Instructions:</b> Use this table to identify each fact you want on your marker and the primary source(s) of documentation for it. <b>You will need to attach copies of the actual documentation.</b> Under "Sources," include authors, titles, dates of publication, pages where applicable, and where the information was found (archives, library, website URL). Multiple copies of this form may be used.</p>	
Facts	Sources
List each important fact that is relevant to this marker. All places, dates, sites, names of people involved must be documented.	List the sources that verify each fact. Remember to copy the sources and include them with the application.

*The Michigan Historical Marker Program is authorized by the Governor John B. Swainson Michigan Historical Markers Act, Act 10 of 1955, MCL 399.151-159.*



<b>IMAGES</b>
Submitted photographs and images will be considered property of the State of Michigan and available for use in reports, presentations, websites, or other purposes.
<p><b>For all applications include:</b></p> <p>The proposed location of the marker</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An aerial map, such as Google Earth, clearly marking the location. The map should include legible crossroads, major streets, a north arrow, and GPS coordinates if possible.</li> <li>• A photograph of the site, for example the building, landscape, or park.</li> <li>• Two or three historic photos where possible and relevant.</li> </ul> <p><b>For applications with a historic building or site, include current photographs of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each visible facade of the property's exterior (frontal and oblique views)</li> <li>• Two or three primary spaces in the property's interior (if possible)</li> <li>• Two or three details of historic architectural elements, both interior and exterior</li> <li>• The property in the context of its immediate neighborhood</li> </ul>
<b>MARKER DEDICATION:</b>
<p>Is there an anniversary or other special date appropriate for this marker dedication?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No    <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, specify date: <span style="background-color: #e6f2ff; border: 1px solid #ccc; display: inline-block; width: 200px; height: 1.2em; vertical-align: middle;"></span></p>
<p><b>Please do not schedule the marker dedication until your marker is delivered. The entire marker process, including fabrication, can take more than a year.</b></p>
<b>NOTES</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Application submission information is on the Application Checklist.</li> <li>• Use the Application Checklist to be sure your application package is complete.</li> <li>• Prices are determined at the time the marker is ordered from the manufacturer and are subject to change.</li> <li>• Applications that are missing information, primary source documentation, images, or the application fee will be delayed in processing or possibly returned.</li> </ul>

## MICHIGAN HISTORICAL MARKER PROGRAM PROPERTY OWNER AGREEMENT

Michigan Historical Marker Program  
Michigan History Center  
Michigan Department of Natural Resources  
P.O. Box 30740  
Lansing, MI 48909-8240  
mhcmarkers@michigan.gov

Proposed Marker Title			
Property Owner's Name (Please Print)			
Organization Name (if applicable)			
Property Owners Mailing Address	City	State	ZIP Code
E-mail	Telephone Number		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I agree to the placement of a historical marker on my property in a location accessible to the public.</li><li>• I make no claim to the ownership of the marker and recognize that the historical marker is the property of the State of Michigan, and it must remain at the historic site.</li><li>• If the marker subject is a historic building or site, when making alterations to the exterior of the building, I agree to consult with the Michigan History Center and follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.</li><li>• I understand that washing the marker with a clean cloth and warm soapy water (nothing abrasive or with wax) every six months will prolong its life and will endeavor to see that this happens.</li><li>• I will promptly notify the Michigan History Center if the marker is temporarily moved, missing, damaged or stolen.</li><li>• I understand that photographs, location information and address of the marker will be published on the Michigan History Center website and held in the permanent marker file.</li><li>• Should I sell or otherwise relinquish ownership of the property, I will alert the Michigan History Center and the new owner(s) so that arrangements may be made to continue this agreement.</li></ul>			
Property Owner's Authorized Signature		Date	

*The Michigan Historical Marker Program is authorized by the Governor John B. Swainson Michigan Historical Markers Act, Act 10 of 1955, MCL 399.151-159.*

## MICHIGAN HISTORICAL MARKER PROGRAM SPONSOR AGREEMENT

Michigan Historical Marker Program  
Michigan History Center  
Michigan Department of Natural Resources  
P.O. Box 30740  
Lansing, MI 48909-8240  
mhcmarkers@michigan.gov

Proposed Marker Title			
Sponsoring Individual or Organization Name (Please Print)			
Contact Person (Please Print): This will be the sole point of contact with our office by phone, email, and U.S. mail.			
Mailing Address	City	State	ZIP Code
E-mail	Telephone Number		
<p>I or my organization:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Have reviewed the "Marker Price List" and understand the responsibility for payment for the manufacture of the Michigan Historical Marker for the above-named site.</li><li>• Understand that the enclosed \$250 is the application fee and is not included in the cost of the marker, nor is it normally refundable.</li><li>• Understand that the final step in this process is review by the Michigan Historical Commission.</li><li>• Commit to donating funds for the purchase of the marker.</li><li>• Recognize that the marker is owned by the State of Michigan and make no claims to ownership of the marker.</li><li>• Understand that washing the marker with a clean cloth and warm soapy water (nothing abrasive or with wax) every six months will prolong its life and will endeavor to see that this happens.</li><li>• Will promptly notify the Michigan History Center if the marker is temporarily moved, missing, damaged or stolen.</li><li>• Understand that photographs, location information and address of the marker will be published on the Michigan History Center website and held in the permanent marker file.</li><li>• Understand that I or we are responsible for installing the marker and ensuring it complies with any applicable local or state regulations.</li></ul>			
Sponsor's Signature		Date	

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## MICHIGAN HISTORICAL MARKER APPLICATION CHECKLIST

- ☐ Site owner (owner of property where the marker will be placed) has signed the Property Owner Agreement.
- ☐ Sponsor (person responsible for payment of the marker) has signed the Sponsor Agreement.
- ☐ Copies of primary source documentation, with dates clearly shown, are sent electronically, or enclosed with the application fee (see page 3).
- ☐ Historic and current photographs are labeled and attached (see photo requirements on page 4).
- ☐ Map, including where the marker will be placed, is included (see instructions on page 4).
- ☐ If the site includes a cemetery, the "Michigan Historical Marker—Cemetery Supplement" page has been completed and included. This is a separate document that is also on our website.
- ☐ The application fee of \$250 in the form of a check made payable to the "State of Michigan."

To submit your application **ELECTRONICALLY**, please contact:

mhcmarkers@michigan.gov  
517-331-7374

To submit your application **BY MAIL**, be sure to include all of the items listed above along with your application fee. Mail the \$250 application fee (plus the application and other items if sending by mail) to:

Michigan Historical Marker Program  
Michigan History Center  
Michigan Department of Natural Resources  
P.O. Box 30740  
Lansing, MI 48909-8240

After the center receives the application and fee, an acknowledgement will be emailed to the sponsor.

**Thank you for participating in the Michigan Historical Marker Program!**

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Act 10 of 1955, MCL 399.151-159.*



## Exhibit D: Example of Historical Research



### Brewster-Wheeler Recreation Center

SUMMARY BY JAMON JORDAN,  
OFFICIAL HISTORIAN,  
CITY OF DETROIT

## The Ginsburg Library



The Ginsburg Library was on Hastings Street & Brewster. This picture is from 1919.

In 1913, the Detroit Public Library opened a temporary library branch in a storefront location at Hastings & Wilkins.

The branch – Branch 11 – was meant to provide library access to a low-income, working-class community, including Black Bottom and Poletown.

In 1917, a brick structure was built at Brewster Street, southwest of the Hastings & Wilkins storefront site.

It was named the Bernard Ginsburg Branch, after one of the library commissioners.

In 1927, it closed.

# Central Community Center

However, after WWII, and the rise of the auto industry, many immigrants were coming to Detroit.

Also, thousands of African Americans were coming to Detroit from the South.

Large numbers of both immigrants and African Americans were living in the area near the former library.

The Detroit Parks & Recreation Department converted the former brick Ginsburg Library site into a new recreation and community center.

A new wing was designed by George Graves, and built along with a gym, a swimming pool, classrooms, and an auditorium.

The renovation cost the city \$500,000.

The Central Community Center opened to the public on October 28th, 1929, and was dedicated on November 1st with a crowd of over 5,000.

The center was run by Leon Wheeler, who in 1919, became the first African American employee of the city's recreation department.

Speaking at the ceremony, Mayor John C. Nagle addressed the issue of Detroit's racism and Jim Crow in his dedication speech:

- ***"I dedicate this building for the people of the city of Detroit, regardless of race, color or creed. I realize that much prejudice exists in Detroit, but a building of this kind will wipe it out."***

Under Wheeler's direction, the center established programs in billiards, swimming, woodcraft, glee club, tap dancing, ukulele, track, tennis, drama, and dancing.

81 different clubs met every week in the center's 6 club rooms. On Thanksgiving Day in 1932, the Harlem Globetrotters basketball team played their first tour game at the center against the "Detroit AA," a team assembled by Leon Wheeler.

The most well-known program established at the center was its boxing program. And it attracted the attention of a young man living in Black Bottom, Joe Louis.



## Brewster Homes

The Great Depression took hold of the nation in 1929, and many progressive thinkers began to work with the Roosevelt Administration to find ways to alleviate some of the symptoms of unemployment and poverty.

As a result of these progressive ideas, federally subsidized housing projects for working class and poor people is established as part of the 1933 National Industrial Recovery Act under Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal.

The 1933 Act created the Public Works Administration (PWA) and gave them the duty to build schools, hospitals, dams, and bridges.

It also charged them to build low-income housing.

The first housing projects built under this act were the Techwood Homes in Atlanta, Georgia. The first families move into the Techwood Homes in 1936.

After Techwood in Atlanta, the Brewster Homes join the early group of housing projects built in the country. Construction begins in 1935, and the first families move into the Brewsters in 1938.

## Brewster Recreation Center

After the Brewster Homes were constructed, Central Community Center became the Brewster-Recreation Center.

Leon Wheeler managed the center until 1945.

After Wheeler left, the recreation center, the whole neighborhood suffered, and urban renewal destroyed neighborhoods like:

- Black Bottom (1949-1963)
- Hastings Street (1959-1964)
- Paradise Valley (1957-1967)
- Sugar Hill (1963-1970)



The Brewster-Wheeler Center at  
637 Brewster near Hastings.

## Brewster-Wheeler Recreation Center

The Brewster Homes, now joined by the Frederick Douglass Towers to form the Brewster-Douglass Housing Projects, had become known for violence and drugs by the late 1960s-early 1970s.

Due to depopulation in Detroit, the city was unable to provide sufficient upkeep for many parks and recreation centers.

Former residents and people who used the center raised funds to keep it open.

In the early 70s, the center was renamed the Brewster-Wheeler Center to honor Leon Wheeler, the first director of the center.

In 1991, the low-rise apartment blocks north of Wilkins Street, the original Brewster Homes, were demolished.

By 1994 were replaced with 250 townhomes.

In 1995, NBA player and Detroit basketball star Chris Webber donated the funds for a new gym inside of the Brewster-Wheeler Center.

Two of the six 14-story Frederick Douglass Towers were demolished in 2003.

In 2006, the center was closed.

In 2008, the remaining Frederick Douglass Towers were destroyed.

Due largely to the work of community organizer Donyetta Hill, the Brewster-Wheeler Recreation Center was not destroyed, as was planned, in 2014.

There are now plans to convert it into a community center with neighborhood clubs using the space for their offices, meetings and programs.

