

From: [Linda Williams](#)
To: [Historic District Commission \(Staff\)](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Outdoor Classrooms at the Detroit Waldorf School
Date: Wednesday, May 11, 2022 2:05:44 PM
Attachments: [image.png](#)

Dear Commission,

My name is Linda Williams and I am a veteran teacher at the Detroit Waldorf School.

The community of the Detroit Waldorf School -- teachers, parents, and friends, built outdoor classrooms in the Summer of 2020 in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. This historic move allowed the school to hold outdoor classes during the pandemic, thus continuing the education of students during a time when many other schools were closed. We thank the Commission for approving these structures on a temporary basis.

Now consideration is given by the Commission to make these outdoor classrooms permanent. Here are some reasons why the Commission should do so. The structures were designed to fit with the intended design of the original building -- classrooms and gathering spaces for groups of children that incorporated an abundance of light and air. In fact, when Albert Kahn designed the original building that became the Detroit Waldorf School, he was undoubtedly influenced by the Open Air School movement that was popular at the time. The Open Air School Movement grew as a response in Europe and North America to combat the tuberculosis crisis.

Outdoor schools were constructed in the woods and in urban spaces. Buildings -- like this innovative one Albert Kahn designed for the then Liggett School -- featured many windows and an expansive terrace to help mitigate the spread of respiratory illness. It is my opinion that Albert Kahn himself would be pleased to see the school grounds expanded to include the recently constructed classrooms outside -- taking advantage of air and sunlight to support the health of the children. The design and placement of the outdoor classrooms fit well with the landscaping of the building, while also providing a space for healthy respiration and exercise.

The pandemic we are presently facing is not the first, nor will it be the last. The Detroit Historic District Commission did the right thing for the students of the City of Detroit when it approved the outdoor classrooms at the Detroit Waldorf School. By approving the permanent structures, the Commission accomplishes two goals: It supports the historical legacy of Albert Kahn and Indian Village, and perhaps even more importantly, it supports the health of our children and the greater community.

Warmly,



Linda Williams, PhD
Class Teacher

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Linda Williams, PhD
Class Teacher - Eighth Grade
Detroit Waldorf School
2555 Burns
Detroit, MI 48214
313-822-0300
Cell: 248-346-6643

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