



PROJECT PROFILE

Detroit Vacant Public School Assessment

Building Envelope and Structural Assessment for Reuse Viability | Detroit, MI



CLIENT

City of Detroit through Interboro Partners

BACKGROUND

Established in 1842, the Detroit Public School District is Michigan's largest. Its school buildings display a wide array of architectural styles within a diverse portfolio of sites. As the population of the City decreased in the late twentieth century, so did the need for schools, resulting in the shuttering of many of the properties. The City of Detroit, as part of its current renewal, was tasked with developing future use of the vacated properties.

LINKS

The [After School Detroit website](#) is an online study guide for the City of Detroit's school properties. The [City of Detroit Planning and Development's vacant school property study website](#) contains reports of the assessment of the sixty-three vacant schools.



WJE performed visual assessments of the structural systems and building envelopes of sixty-three vacant historic properties to recommend viability for reuse or repurposing. To complete the assessment, WJE created and implemented a strategic assessment method that allowed for holistic review of each property and for quantitative comparison and prioritization among the properties. WJE recommendations addressed anticipated redevelopment challenges and identified opportunities of preserving, rehabilitating, and reusing the historic school buildings.



SOLUTION

WJE completed a visual assessment of the accessible structural, roofing, and facade building systems of each of the sixty-three properties. The project team observed the buildings in varying conditions, ranging from little-to-no damage or deterioration to full deterioration of the finishes and select portions of the building systems.

WJE identified structural and building envelope issues that would significantly impact the viability of future reuse and provided conceptual repair recommendations. Using WJE's Plannotate® software and a cloud-based application, the WJE team assigned an order-of-magnitude, quantitative metric that was calculated into a total building risk index for each property. This data was shared with the project team—including a cost estimator familiar with historic building rehabilitation—in the cloud-based application throughout the project. From this data, the cost estimator developed repair and grey box estimates for the renovation of each of the properties.

WJE's technical input provided the project team with characterizations of the existing conditions of the properties. The full project team considered this information with the findings from a market study, historic preservation assessment, community input, and design visions to determine redevelopment recommendations and viability for reuse.