

To the Special Facilities Committee:

I'd like to thank the committee for advocating plans that continue to use the existing Central High School building. This decision is in line with the position of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, which recently stated it is "...absurd to argue that a school's age *automatically* means it cannot be preserved and adapted to meet modern educational program needs..." and that neighborhood schools "...were once thought of as important civic landmarks...that inspired civic pride and participation in public life." In 2002, the National Trust published a document titled *Why Johnny Can't Walk to School: Historic Neighborhood Schools in the Age of Sprawl*, which addresses the distressing issue of the increased abandonment of historic neighborhood schools in favor of new "mega-school" construction, usually on agricultural land on the edge of the community. The document emphasizes the positive role such neighborhood schools have in a community.

Unfortunately, I'm disappointed that various "options" proposed to expand the school on-site also involve the potential demolition of very historic buildings in the immediate neighborhood, recognized this year by Landmarks Illinois as among the most endangered historic places in the state. Prominent among these are the Burnham and Bailey houses and the Phillippe mansion and carriage house, more recently known as the McKinley YMCA. The buildings are associated with some of the most significant families from Champaign's history, such as the Burnham and Harris families.

The National Trust also advocates that development of schools in historic neighborhoods should be carried out "...without undue damage to surrounding homes..." as well as establishing "...agreements with city park agencies, nearby churches, public transit agencies and other institutions to share playing field, parking spaces, transportation services and other things that schools need". Our historic buildings are non-renewable historic and architectural resources; once they're gone, they're gone for good and the unique character they impart to our community is lost forever. I humbly request that you reevaluate plans for expansion that threaten these historic treasures with demolition. Thank you.

Brian Adams
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Link to the **National Trust for Historic Preservation** publication *Why Johnny Can't Walk to School: Historic Neighborhood Schools in the Age of Sprawl*:

atfiles.org/files/pdf/whyjohnnywalkschool.pdf