

City of Detroit

CITY COUNCIL

HISTORIC DESIGNATION ADVISORY BOARD

218 Coleman A. Young Municipal Center, Detroit, Michigan 48226

Phone: 313.224.3487 Fax: 313.224.4336

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June 27, 2023

TO: HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL

RE: 501 Third Avenue to be listed a site of the National Park Service/National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom

The property located at 501 Third Avenue was the former site of the historic Michigan Central Railroad (MCRR) Third Street Depot that was originally part of the Underground Railroad (UGRR) in Detroit. From 1848 – 1865 the MCRR was a hub for fugitive enslaved Africans and their descendants. Detroit was code-named “Midnight” and the Third Street Depot was an UGRR gateway to Canada. The MCRR Third Street Station was a block from the southern curve of the Detroit River, an international border, which was the closest distance from riverbank to riverbank, between Detroit, Michigan and Canada. Detroit was well known by UGRR operatives as a city where freedom seekers could find safe refuge not only for its proximity to Canada but also its strong and active abolitionist community. The site of the MCRR Third Street Station is now occupied by the City of Detroit property at 501 Third Avenue (also known as Steve Yzerman Drive), the West Riverfront People Mover Station.

Dr. Carolyn Carter, City of Detroit HDAB board member, professional historian, researcher and genealogist has prepared a National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Application for the Michigan Central Railroad Depot site. The Wayne County Community College/Detroit Underground Railroad local historic district was enacted on December 9, 2021, based on the research of Dr. Carter.

We are asking for City Council to support the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Application for the Michigan Central Railroad Depot site. Additionally for City Council to consent for the property at 501 Third Avenue to be added to the list of the National Park Service/Underground Railroad Network.

I've included a copy of the original map for reference and would be happy to provide additional historical documentation if helpful.

Please note that inclusion in this program will not result in any restrictions or regulations on this property, particularly as the historic former Michigan Central Railroad Depot

building is no longer extant. This designation does not impede any future development on the site.

The Historic Designation Advisory Board (HDAB) is in support of the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Application for the Michigan Central Railroad Depot site. We are asking for City Council to support the National Park Service/National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Application for the Michigan Central Railroad Depot as well as consent for the property at 501 Third Avenue to be included in the Network.

HDAB has provided a resolution for the inclusion of the site's listing in the National Park Service/National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom. If you have any questions regarding this matter, feel free to contact me or staff member, Rebecca Savage.

Respectfully submitted,



Janese Chapman, Director of
Historic Designation Advisory Board

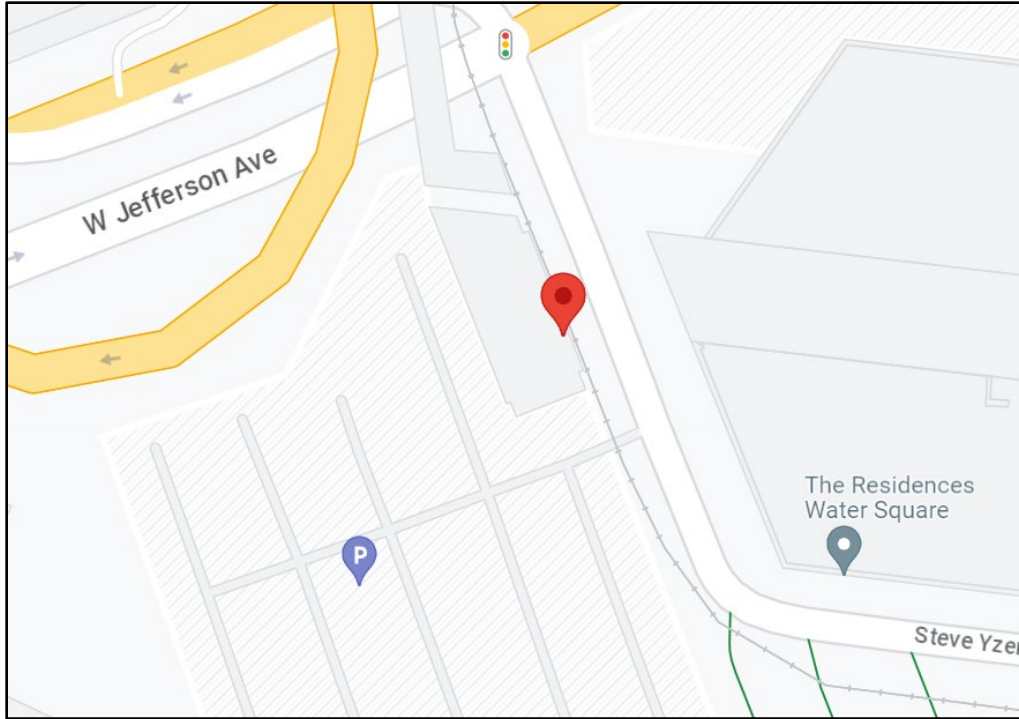
Attachment

cc: City Clerk
Gabriela Santiago-Romero, Detroit City Councilmember, District 6
Marcell Todd, Director, CPC
David Whitaker, Esq., Director, LPD
Antoine Bryant, NOMA Assoc., AIA, APA, Director, PDD
Russell Baltimore, Assistant Director of Design, PDD
David Bell, Director, BSEED

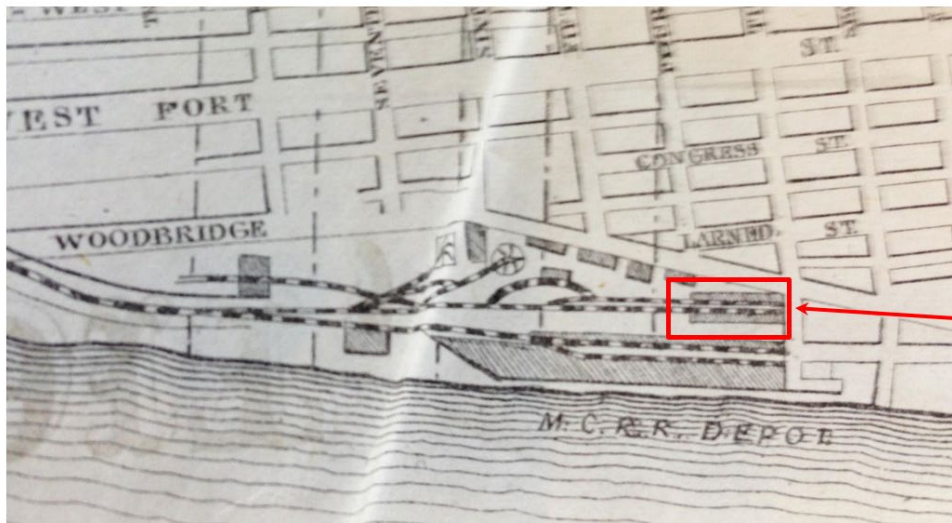
BY COUNCIL MEMBER _____ :

WHEREAS, The City Council supports the National Park Service/National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Application for the Michigan Central Railroad Depot, and the property located at 501 Third Avenue, the former site of the historic Michigan Central Railroad Depot;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the City Council consents to include the site at 501 Third Avenue in the National Park Service/National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program.



Map of 501 Third Avenue



Area of where
MCRR Depot
was located.

This is a page from the Detroit City Directory at the Burton Historical Collection.
Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Free Press Book. 1860-61 (inside advertisement insert).