

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a).

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name Atkinson, Edmund, School  
Other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number 4900 E Hildale Ave.  not for publication  
city or town Detroit  vicinity  
State Michigan code MI county Wayne code 163 zip code 48234

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.  
In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:  
 national  statewide  local  
Brian D. Miley 10/17/11  
Signature of certifying official Date  
Michigan State Historic Preservation Officer Michigan State Historic Preservation Office  
Title State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Title State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register  
 determined eligible for the National Register  
 determined not eligible for the National Register  
 removed from the National Register  
 other (explain:)  
Signature of the Keeper Patricia Anderson Date of Action 12/12/2011

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

<input type="checkbox"/>	private
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal
<input type="checkbox"/>	private

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		Objects
		buildings
1	0	<b>Total</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Public Schools of Detroit

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/school

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**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

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**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Late Gothic Revival

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**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Brick

Stone

roof: Asphalt

other:

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### **Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

### **Summary Paragraph**

Edmund Atkinson School is a two-story, orange-brick and random range ashlar, Collegiate Gothic-style building that has two separate entrances facing north on Hildale Avenue and another entrance facing west on Healy Avenue. It occupies two entire residential blocks between Hildale Avenue on the north, Fenelon Avenue on the east, Stockton Avenue on the south, and Healy Avenue on the west. To the west of Healy Avenue is John Krainz Jr. Memorial Park, a city park, and to the south across Stockton Avenue is the Sojourner Truth Homes housing project.

Atkinson School began with its first unit erected in 1927 and its second unit added in 1931. Both units were designed together by the Detroit architectural firm of McGrath, Dohmen and Page. The school's exterior appearance is characteristic of other Detroit public schools designed by that firm in the Collegiate Gothic style. They exhibit face brick as the major building material, random range ashlar used for major elements such as towers, and limestone trim around windows, and for water tables and coping. Although it is presently vacant, it appears to be in good condition with a high degree of historical integrity.

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### **Narrative Description**

Atkinson School was built as two major units. The west-facing, five-bay, two-story façade of the 1927 unit facing Healy Avenue is symmetrically arranged. It contains a central, shallow gabled entrance bay with a single-story, projecting entrance vestibule on its first floor, and a pair of openings with transoms grouped above. Entered through a limestone compound Gothic arch below a limestone panel bearing the name of the school, "EDMUND ATKINSON SCHOOL," the spandrels bear the date of the building, "19" in one shield and "27" in the other. The entrance bay is flanked by large openings containing groupings of windows, and a single window opening per floor in its outer bays.

On the north-facing façade of this section facing Hildale Avenue are shallow gables over the end walls with large blind limestone niches supported on the corner wall buttresses. At this end's first story level is a metal conservatory resting on the brick foundation wall that follows around the building. The remainder of the Hildale façade of this first unit consists of a nine bay stretch broken by the seventh bay, which is another entrance bay identical to the entrance bay of the Healy Avenue façade except that it does not have the shallow gable above. Instead, the crenellated parapet wall begins with this bay and continues eastward, continuing over the 1931 addition.

The second unit, added in 1931, begins eastward of the nine bays of the first unit with a two story, three-sided random ashlar bay rising to a crenellated parapet wall and brick gable sandwiched between two tower-like projections rising up from the narrow wall sections that flank the bay. This bay contains groupings of windows in its center facet and single openings for windows in its angled facets. A projecting one-story entrance vestibule is located on the eastern end of the Hildale façade, identical to the previously mentioned two entrances, but with "19" and "31" in the shields within the spandrels identifying the date of construction. This unit also features the seal of the City of Detroit at the upper part of the entrance bay and the tower section.

Built to house the gymnasium and auditorium, the second unit has a two-story rear elevation facing south on Stockton that drops down a couple of feet to a single tall story before meeting with the two-story classroom section to its north again. The rear elevation, providing a separate entrance to the facilities so that they can be used in the evenings or weekends independent of the rest of the school, has spare Gothic styling.

Common to all entrances and towers throughout the building are the limestone surrounds, quoining, the name panel and corner finials. Pilasters separate bays of windows across the entire façade, including the first and second units. Since the building is vacant, the windows are now covered with security screens throughout the building. Continuous masonry sills below the first story windows running the length of the visible elevations, the continuous belt course above the second story windows, and the coping at the top of the walls tie the structure together horizontally. The boiler room is located in a part of the building in the rear, and its matching brick chimney tapers up towards the top and utilizes modest stone banding at its apex.

Since Atkinson School was built along the unit plan, it was designed at one time so that it appears as a unified composition. The building appears to have been planned as a three-unit school, since there is space on its site for an eastern addition and its east-facing elevation has a wall that is mostly blank.

As noted above, Atkinson School has two main entries facing Hildale Avenue to the north, and two additional entries located at the end of the corridors facing west and south. The north and west entries have stairways, while the south entry does not. The original building, facing Hildale Avenue on the north-west side, has predominately classroom and office spaces on the first and second floor flanking either side of a central corridor.

The 1931 addition, located on the east side of the building, houses the kindergarten room, administrative offices and a few classroom spaces facing Hildale Avenue to the north. The kindergarten room is located on the first floor and has a protruding bay window. Below the bay window in the kindergarten room are built-in wood seats. The kindergarten room also has a fireplace framed by wood paneled wainscot, and a fireplace surround with a field of colorful square tile with a rectangular black tile border.

The gymnasium, auditorium, and lunchroom are located at the rear of the 1931 addition. The two-story auditorium, in the south wing of the building, has decorative plaster crown molding and trim around the stage opening. The ceiling beams are similarly decorated with a pattern of diamond and floral relief. Centered between the beams is a round metal air supply aperture, reminiscent of a wheel with the spoke terminating at the outer rim with a three leaf clover. The gymnasium is located across the hall from the auditorium. On the second story, a long narrow hallway with wood trimmed skylights leads past the upper levels of the auditorium and gymnasium and terminates at a lunchroom and adjoining kitchen. Typical bathrooms have marble dividing walls and frames, with wood doors. At present, Atkinson School retains the integrity of its original floor plan and addition.

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture \_\_\_\_\_

Ethnic Heritage \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1927-1959 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1927, 1931 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

N/A \_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

African American \_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

McGrath, Dohmen, & Page \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Period of Significance (justification)** The Period of Significance begins with the building's construction and includes the tenure of the surrounding neighborhood's significance to African American history.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

Edmund Atkinson School is significant under National Register *Criterion A* as a school accessible to the children of Conant Gardens, a neighborhood built predominantly by African Americans beginning in the 1920s. At the time, most other subdivisions in Detroit had restrictive covenants registered with the property deeds that prevented people of color from purchasing property. It is also significant under *Criterion C* as a handsome example of a Collegiate Gothic school building built in 1927 by McGrath, Dohmen, & Page, architects, that represents a building planned in accordance with the unit plan that was incomplete after two units were built.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance)

Edmund Atkinson School opened its doors to students for the first time in February 1928 with a capacity for 580 pupils. It was completed in June 1927 at a cost of \$165,745. Its namesake, Edmund Atkinson, was a Detroit lawyer who served on the Common Council from 1900 to 1904. In 1907, he was appointed to the position of Assistant Corporation Council and acted as a legal advisor to the Detroit Board of Education, to which he brought expert knowledge of municipal affairs and politics. He helped to acquire Atkinson Park, adjacent to the school, and was instrumental in bringing about the west side grade separation with the railroad.

African American students from Conant Gardens living west of Ryan Road comprised one-quarter of the student population. Courville School was the other elementary school that Conant Gardens children attended. Conant Gardens is an area of northeast Detroit bonded by Seven Mile Road, Ryan Road, Nevada and Conant Avenues. It was unusual in that there were no restrictive covenants forbidding people of color from purchasing lots in the property deeds. African Americans purchased lots and built new homes there, beginning in the early 1920s.<sup>1</sup> Other students attending Atkinson School were first generation white immigrants from Eastern European and Middle Eastern countries living east of Ryan.

Mildred Benson Scott, one of the original fifty students enrolled in kindergarten who attended Atkinson through eighth grade (having skipped a couple of grades), reminisced that,

For several years, Atkinson was known to be the most beautiful school in the city, partially because it was a new building with several new innovative features. There was a playroom directly above the gymnasium, which also served as a lunchroom. The long, folding tables with benches attached could be stored in the walls until lunchtime. There was also a dumb waiter, (a small elevator used to transport heavy packages of food or other material between floors) which ran up and down the outside wall – a convenience for food vendors. However, most notable was the well-tended schoolyard with its neatly trimmed shrubs and evergreens framed by beds of pretty flowers. Decorative birdhouses added a rustic beauty to the landscape. Every student had a hand in this outdoor project. It was part of our Nature Study class.<sup>2</sup>

Also according to Ms. Scott, the African American students were verbally directed to follow Stockton Avenue to school, skirting the woodlands and ending up at the school playground where they would then enter through the two main entrances.<sup>3</sup>

Atkinson was designed as a platoon school for grades Kindergarten and one through eight on the Detroit Plan. Its second unit, containing an auditorium, gymnasium, practical arts room, three classrooms and a combination lunch/playroom was completed in 1931. New homes were built in the neighborhood in the 1940s after the end of World War II, adding to the demand for more classroom space by 1955, when a temporary building with two self-contained classrooms was brought to the site. By 1961, Atkinson School had a capacity for 880 pupils in kindergarten through sixth grades.

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<sup>1</sup> Conant Gardeners, 15

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 60

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 59

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of repository:

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 7  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	<u>17T</u>	<u>331022</u>	<u>4699465</u>	3	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	4	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

S HILDALE O L 20 E 241.64 FT OF O L 19 EXC STOCKTON, HILDALE, HEALY AND FENELON AVES AS DEEDED OAK L25 P85 PLATS, W C R 13/233

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The boundaries described above include the entire parcel historically associated with Atkinson School.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title Deborah M. Goldstein

organization City of Detroit Historic Designation Advisory Board

date March 25, 2009

street & number CAYMC, 2 Woodward Avenue, Suite 204

telephone (313) 224-3487

city or town Detroit

state MI

zip code 48226

e-mail cc-historic@detroitmi.gov

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**Additional Documentation**

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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**Photographs:**

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Submit clear and descriptive black and white photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

See continuation sheet.

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, PO Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9

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**Bibliography**

Conant Gardeners, *Conant Gardens, A Black Urban Community 1925-50*, Detroit, 2001.

Detroit, City of, Board of Education. *Histories of the Public Schools of Detroit*. Detroit: Board of Education, 1967.

Detroit, City of, Buildings and Safety Engineering Department. *Building Permit Card Index*. Permit #32516, July 21, 1927; Permit #77469, April 9, 1931

Sanborn Map Company. *Detroit, Mich.* Vol. 22, Sheet 2222. Pelham, NY: Sanborn Map Company, 2003.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

Section number 10

Page 1

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**Photographs**

Photographer: Timothy Boscarino (exterior), and Deborah Goldstein (interior)

Date: December 2008

Paper and Ink: HP Premium Plus Glossy Photo Paper, HP Vivera Ink

1. North and west elevations.  
(MI\_Wayne\_AtkinsonSch0001.tif)
2. South elevation.  
(MI\_Wayne\_AtkinsonSch0002.tif)
3. East elevation.  
(MI\_Wayne\_AtkinsonSch0003.tif)
4. Auditorium.  
(MI\_Wayne\_AtkinsonSch0004.tif)
5. Fireplace in Kindergarten Classroom.  
(MI\_Wayne\_AtkinsonSch0005.tif)
6. Bay window in Kindergarten Classroom.  
(MI\_Wayne\_AtkinsonSch0006.tif)
7. Skylight.  
(MI\_Wayne\_AtkinsonSch0007.tif)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Atkinson, Edmund, School  
NAME:

MULTIPLE Public Schools of Detroit MPS  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MICHIGAN, Wayne

DATE RECEIVED: 7/22/10 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 8/13/10  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 8/30/10 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 9/05/10  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 10000635

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: Y SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: Y NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT  RETURN  REJECT 9/7/10 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

*See attached Return Sheet for detailed comment.*

RECOM./CRITERIA Return

REVIEWER Patrick Andrus

DISCIPLINE Historian

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE 9/7/2010

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



# United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1849 C Street, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:

## United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

### National Register of Historic Places Evaluation/Return Sheet

Property Name: Atkinson, Edmund, School (Wayne County, MI)

Reference Number: 10000635

Multiple Property Submission: Public Schools of Detroit MPS, Wayne County, MI

#### Reason for Return:

The nomination is being returned for additional information. The Public Schools of Detroit Multiple Property Submission includes 87 individually nominated schools. None of the National Register registration forms describe or evaluate the integrity of the interiors of the nominated school buildings. The National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form*, stipulates that the registration form for a building must describe significant interior features.

The multiple property submission form describes the registration requirements for public schools in Detroit (Section F, pages 3-4) and one requirement is that the building must retain integrity of design. The National Register defines design as the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property. For a school building, the description of the interior should provide information on the major character defining spaces, such as the entryways, stairways, hallways, classroom arrangements, auditoriums, offices, cafeterias, and gymnasiums. In addition, significant interior decorative features should be described.

Please provide a description of the school building's interior, an evaluation of the interior's integrity and representative interior photographs.

UTMs: The nominated area includes 14.12 acres, but only one utm point is provided in section 10 of the form. Please provide at least three utm points, as stipulated in National Register guidance.

Patrick Andrus, Historian

National Register of Historic Places

9/7/2010

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: RESUBMISSION

PROPERTY Atkinson, Edmund, School  
NAME:

MULTIPLE Public Schools of Detroit MPS  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MICHIGAN, Wayne

DATE RECEIVED: 10/28/11 DATE OF PENDING LIST:  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 12/13/11  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 10000635

DETAILED EVALUATION:

ACCEPT  RETURN  REJECT 12/12/2011 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

*On resubmission the state has provided a description and photographs of the interior and has clarified that the correct acreage figure for the nominated area is seven acres.*

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept A & C

REVIEWER Patrick Andrews

DISCIPLINE Historian

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE 12/12/2011

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N



ATKINSON SCH  
DETROIT WAYNE MI



ATKINSON SCH

DETROIT WAYNE MI

2



ATKINSON SCH  
DETROIT WAYNE MI

3



MI - Wayne County - Atkinson School - 004



MI - Wayne County - Atkinson School - 005



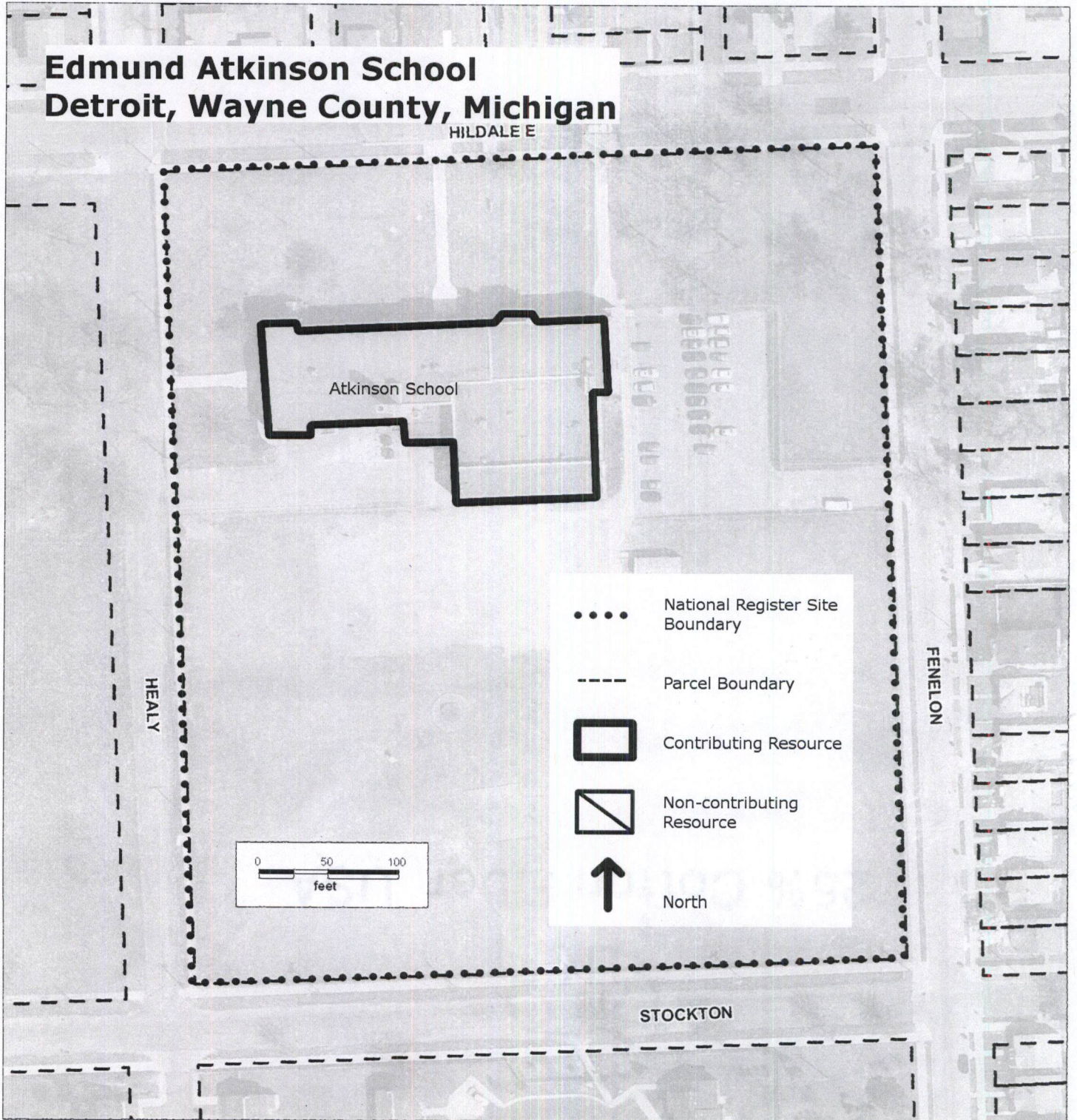
MI - Wayne County - Atkinson School - 006



MI - Wayne County - Atkinson School - 2007

# Edmund Atkinson School Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan

HILDALE E



Please refer to the map in the  
Multiple Property Cover Sheet  
for this property

Multiple Property Cover Sheet Reference Number: 64501081



STATE OF MICHIGAN

RICK SNYDER  
GOVERNOR

MICHIGAN STATE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

GARY HEIDEL  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

September 30, 2011

Ms. Carol Shull, Interim Keeper  
National Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service  
1201 Eye Street, NW, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed is a national register nomination forms for the Atkinson School, Sidney D. Miller Junior and Senior High School, Cooley School, and Doty School in Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan. These properties form parts of the Detroit Public Schools multiple property nomination previously submitted to the register. The register accepted and retained the multiple property form with the accompanying USGS mapping, but returned to us the nomination forms for the individual nominated schools because of the lack of interior descriptions and photographs. We have added interior description and interior photographs to the nominations and provided new CDs that for each school contain all the exterior and interior photos.

For the Atkinson School, we note that the acreage was incorrectly stated as 14.12 in the original submission, but is now corrected to about 7 acres.

These properties are being submitted for listing in the national register. No written comments concerning this nomination were submitted to us prior to the submission of this nomination to you.

Questions concerning this nomination should be addressed to Robert O. Christensen, national register coordinator, by phone at 517/335-2719 or by email at [christensenr@michigan.gov](mailto:christensenr@michigan.gov).

Sincerely yours,

Brian D. Conway  
State Historic Preservation Officer

BDC:roc