

**Subject:** URGENT: happening now - Thurston South Prairie  
**Attachments:** IMG\_2150.jpeg

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**From:** Allison Carey  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 12, 2025 10:04 PM  
**To:** Mallek, Jon <JMallek@a2gov.org>; Watson, Chris <CWatson@a2gov.org>; Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>; NAP Natural Area Preservation <NAP@a2gov.org>; Delacourt, Derek <DDelacourt@a2gov.org>; Bennett, Michelle <MBennett@a2gov.org>; Manor, Courtney <CManor@a2gov.org>; Lenart, Brett <BLenart@a2gov.org>; Dohoney Jr., Milton <MDohoney@a2gov.org>  
**Subject:** URGENT: happening now - Thurston South Prairie

Dear Officials:

Please see today's MLive: <https://www.mlive.com/news/ann-arbor/2025/06/lawsuits-aim-to-halt-2-ann-arbor-school-rebuilds-over-environmental-input-concerns.html?outputType=amp>

Neighbors are concerned because portable restrooms have just been placed this evening (6/12) by the Thurston South Prairie (See attached picture).

Citizens are concerned that AAPS/Gilbane is going to seize this City-owned land tomorrow (Friday 6/13) before any court hearings. Many neighbors have written to City officials about what is happening here and the response we have received is that they are still awaiting a response from the City attorney.

This sets a bad precedent for the Ann Arbor Comprehensive City Plan if the City allows developers, including AAPS/Gilbane, to seize City lands whether through overt bullying or do-first-and-pay-the-fines-later tactics.

Protecting the Thurston South Prairie and Millers Creekshed/Huron River Watershed is absolutely in alignment with City goals and the Natural Features Resolution that the City Environmental (Sustainability) Commission adopted on 5/22/25. Detroit is planting trees to prepare for the future while Ann Arbor is cutting trees down:

<https://www.arbdetroit.org/sequoiaforest>

Other forward-thinking examples are the United Kingdom's Environment Act of 2021 and Singapore's One Million Trees Movement.

Preservation and incorporation of green spaces in urban environments is essential and healthy - an especially important consideration with climate change. Trees absorb heat and stormwater and mitigate flooding and erosion. Green spaces make a city more attractive and appealing, and provide places for outdoor recreation and overall greater psychological well being for its citizens - no matter your income.

While Thurston is just one Ann Arbor neighborhood, the decisions now will have long term consequences.

Please consider that the Thurston opposition, Lawton opposition, and no permanent stages/teacher opposition all share the same root problem in AAPS: poor planning and execution of this once-in-a-lifetime \$1B bond. The level of dissatisfaction is astronomical. Trust and confidence are on the line.

If you can please look into this urgently

Thank you!!

Allison Carey

Ward 2/Georgetown Blvd



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## Lawsuits aim to halt 2 Ann Arbor school rebuilds over environmental, input concerns

Updated: Jun. 12, 2025, 11:24 a.m. | Published: Jun. 12, 2025, 11:22 a.m.



A protest sign saying, 'We speak for the trees,' is leaned up against a sign at the Thurston Nature Center on Monday, March 24, 2025. Jackie Smith | MLive



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By Jackie Smith | [jsmith@mlive.com](mailto:jsmith@mlive.com)

ANN ARBOR, MI – A Washtenaw County judge is being asked to pause the rebuilds of two Ann Arbor schools in separate lawsuits filed this month, alleging the destruction of natural areas and a lack of public feedback on the projects.

An initial complaint [against Ann Arbor Public Schools was previously tossed out](#) of circuit court in early April as site preparations, including some tree removal, got underway for the new Thurston and Logan elementary buildings.

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The allegations said the district didn't gather input from residents before plans for school constructions funded by [2019's \\$1 billion bond](#) were finalized, which Circuit Judge Patrick Colin said lacked standing.

However, parent Catherine Archibald, who filed the initial lawsuit in March, said they're now hoping to better argue the district violated state statute — this time with more families listed as fellow plaintiffs.


“(The district) told the community that there would be multiple opportunities for engagement and feedback,” Archibald, a mother of two, said. “And in fact, it didn't do that specifically as to the location of schools.”

This second lawsuit, which names six adults on behalf of 11 minors as complainants, once again claims the district didn't abide by the Revised School

Code when it presented plans in fall 2024 - when many community members heard about designs for the first time.

“Really, the community on the north side of Ann Arbor really felt blindsided by this sort of announcement in September,” Archibald said.

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The statute says levied taxes can't be used for anything but what was greenlit by voters.

Thurston, 2300 Prairie St., is slated to be rebuilt immediately north of the current school in an area abutting the Thurston Nature Center. Meanwhile, Logan, 2685 Traverse Blvd., will be rebuilt across Nixon Road next to Clague Middle School.

Both projects were to break ground this year, requiring some tree removals as part of site preparations.

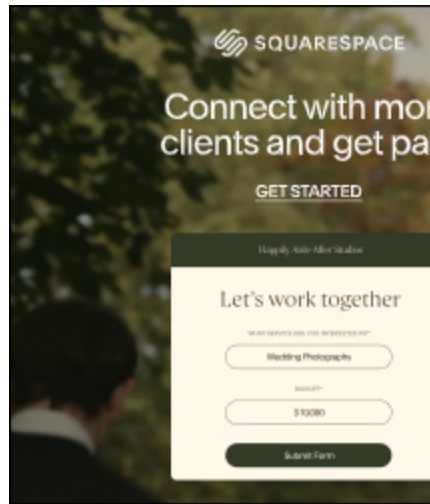
**Read more:** [How Ann Arbor schools could turn felled trees into new buildings](#)

Friends of TNC, a nonprofit supporting the nature center, alleges in a separate lawsuit that the district violated Michigan's Environmental Protections Act. It alleged construction specifically for Thurston would “result in irreparable harm” to the beloved, decades-old nature reserve.

The group declined to comment on its complaint.

Archibald has said previously that tree felling around Clague that began in March, as well as planned removals and tree transplants at Thurston, were detrimental to kids' outdoor learning environments.

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Although more significant site preparations have been made around Clague, she said much of the work around Thurston had not begun. According to district notices, the relocation of smaller trees within the work zone at Thurston would begin in mid-June with site excavation starting at the end of the month.

Families hope the district will be ordered to get more input before moving forward at Logan and Thurston.

“What we’re asking for is a halt to the construction projects, for the judge to give us the preliminary and permanent injunction of the construction projects and appoint a special master who will oversee the process of getting proper community feedback and input,” Archibald said.

“I think it’s better to slow down and do this properly,” she added, “rather than spending a whole bunch of money on things that are not what the community wants or needs.”

The Friends of TNC and parents’ complaints were set for a hearing at 1:30 p.m. Tuesday, June 24. Conlin will rule on separate motions for a temporary restraining order and a preliminary injunction.

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District spokesperson Andrew Cluley said the district does not comment on litigation.

## Additional allegations

Each complaint, both filed June 2, also allege a conflict of interest from school board member Susan Baskett, who chairs the board's bond committee.

During a December bond meeting, Baskett and bond committee member Susan Schmidt asked Stephanie Corona of Gilbane Building Co., which oversees AAPS bond projects, about construction managers tapped for upcoming work.

At the time, Baskett said her nephew worked for that contractor.

"They've hired a few of our graduates. I mean, I had nothing to do with it, but my nephew was ... so looking forward to working on 'his schools,' as he calls it," she said. "... I'm really looking forward to that opportunity to have everybody who wants to be a part of this be a part of this."

**Read more:** [Ann Arbor schools' recreation programs seeing post-COVID bounce back, new director says](#)

The friends' group also claims the district's wetland delineation study for the new school was not completed in compliance of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' standards. Construction directly on or immediate adjacent to the nature center will impact an oak savannah, the south prairie and rain gardens, the group alleges.

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The group cites the oak savannah and rain garden as assets implemented to support hydrology of the Thurston Pond in the wake of water quality issues found in 2004.

The pond connects to Millers Creek, which feeds into the Huron River, according to the group. The area itself is referenced as a habitat for amphibians, waterfowl, turtles, small mammals and birds.

“I just feel like AAPS and the (school board) bond committee needs to be held accountable for the harm being done by their plan,” said Regina Schneider, a plaintiff in the complaint with Archibald.

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