

Subject:

Construction Concerns - Thurston Elementary School

From: William Hanna**Sent:** Wednesday, June 4, 2025 9:09 AM**Cc:** William Hanna <cray9508@hotmail.com>**Subject:** Construction Concerns - Thurston Elementary School

I am writing in regard to the construction of a new Thurston elementary school on Prairie St.

There is a legal action to prevent the construction of a roadway for the new school over what has been historically a part of the Thurston Nature Center. A tenet of this action is that the property being used for the roadway is owned by the city, not the school system. This gives the city both a stake in the upcoming construction and a say in it.

The city of Ann Arbor has been foolishly and perilously avoiding any interaction with the school system as AAPS begins its 2019 bond project all over the city. The city cannot flourish without families and without good schools, families will not choose to live in Ann Arbor. My 4 children received an excellent education attending Ann Arbor schools (K-12) yet now seeing what this bond project will create I'm not confident in that quality still being there. Look beyond Thurston at what is happening at Lawton and other sites.

The narrative of the Thurston school project goes far beyond the divisions that arose from the site plan AAPS is implementing. Numerous aspects of the construction phase of the project show negligence and a lack of planning on the part of AAPS and its design partner Gilbane.

This started with **no community involvement** in the bond project planning. There was **no transparency** about documents pertaining to the construction site until a FOIA request to have them released was issued. Just one example are the contradictions in the released geotechnical report about soil strength and permeability of the soils with respect to the building foundations and increased area flooding. This is just one example of how poor, from an engineering aspect, the AAPS plan is. Presentations by Gilbane at AAPS board meetings contained contradictory statements about aspects of the engineering work done for the school.

Concerning the road in question in the legal action, there is a fire hydrant on Prairie street that will be in the way of the new road. How will removal of this hydrant ensure that the nearby houses are adequately protected in the case of a fire? AAPS put in portable classrooms adjacent to the current Thurston school years ago after deciding that adding on to the school would be too expensive considering the cost of installing a fire suppression system in the new classrooms. Subsequently AAPS found out that they were in violation of fire code and had to pay tens of thousands of dollars to run a water main along the north side of the school and install an additional hydrant. This water main is slated to be removed for this new road making that additional hydrant useless.

At the northeast corner of the Thurston parcel is the dead end of Yorktown Avenue and the neighborhood pool. This is completely parked up with pool patrons during the summer and there is heavy pedestrian traffic,

especially children. This is close to the construction site however this dead end should not be used in any way by construction vehicles. Do the construction companies understand this?

Along the south edge of the Thurston parcel is a blacktop roadway that contains basketball courts and is used by children and families to access the playgrounds at Thurston. This roadway turns the corner around the school and it is blind as far as seeing traffic coming from the other side. This should not be used by construction vehicles given the danger of interacting with pedestrian traffic, again children. If this roadway is blocked to pedestrian traffic and used for construction traffic then it effectively closes down a fire lane to the back of the current school.

Numerous times by Email and at public meetings it was asked for AAPS to appoint a safety coordinator for the construction site given the location is next to a school in session (construction will be active during the 2025-2026 school year) and the site's location deep in a neighborhood. AAPS has yet to provide information about resolving this request.

What I'm driving to is the city's role in reviewing and permitting the construction plans and forcing changes so as to permit a proper design. This is all that stands between safe and sound construction of a new school versus months/years of problems. These problems will probably extend into legal action against the city. AAPS will have the counter argument that a permit was granted so they have done nothing wrong and will put all blame/responsibility on the city.

I have engaged with the city concerning flooding since my property is adjacent to the Thurston parcel. The building department sent me to the school system for answers. The school system sent me to their contractor for answers. The contractor sent me back to the school system for answers. What I was hoping for was a dialog with the city engineers who are overseeing permits for this work to confirm that my concerns are part of the review/permitting process. Instead, I got sent to the parties that have a huge stake in seeing the construction work is not delayed. I wonder what my tax dollars are doing for me.

If a new shopping center were being built and residents came to the city asking questions and requesting help about problems I feel the city would be a lot quicker to take an active role.

Don't let inaction now lead to continually occurring problems in the future.
Bill Hanna