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PRESS RELEASE

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FWCS TO TRANSFER WARD BUILDING TO NEIGHBORHOOD HEALTH

Fort Wayne Community Schools announced today its intent to transfer the former L.C. Ward Education Center, located at 3501 Warsaw St., to Neighborhood Health.

The building had been slated for demolition after sitting vacant for more than three years, but an alternate use was found after neighbors and elected officials representing southeast Fort Wayne objected. Neighborhood Health operates healthcare facilities in Allen County and will use the former Ward building to expand and operate healthcare and educational facilities and programs for the community.

“We are pleased with this turn of events,” Superintendent Dr. Mark Daniel said. “Not only does this prevent the structure from being demolished, it provides residents of the neighborhood with much-needed access to healthcare.”

The FWCS Board of School Trustees will consider a resolution at a future meeting to transfer the property to Neighborhood Health at no cost, saving the District \$243,000 in demolition expenses.

“We are incredibly grateful to Fort Wayne Community Schools and everyone who came together to ensure the survival of this historic structure and, more importantly, that it will transform into a hub of healthy resources very much needed by the community,” said Angie Zaegel, CEO of Neighborhood Health. “This building will play a critical role in expanding and strengthening our ability to deliver comprehensive, quality health care regardless of socioeconomic status. It is well positioned to fulfill our vision of building healthier communities, closing the gaps in health disparities, and inspiring hope, healing, and encouragement to the lives we touch.”

Neighborhood Health has staff and services prepared for the space almost immediately as it expands medical, dental, vision and behavioral health care to the area. Neighborhood Health is also exploring options to add pharmacy services and serve as a healthy food resource. The organization plans to work closely with neighborhood and community groups to determine other potential uses for the remaining space.

“We appreciate the efforts of ARCH, the Allen County-Fort Wayne Development Trust and the Oxford Neighborhood Association in seeing the historic and neighborhood value of the building,” Dr. Daniel said. “While FWCS no longer needs this building, we are happy to see it gain a new purpose in serving the community.”

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Background on L.C. Ward Education Center

Ward Elementary School, which opened in 1931, was named for Louis C. Ward, who was FWCS superintendent from 1920-1931. Decades later it became the district's Theatre Arts Magnet School as part of FWCS' Summit Arts Program. In 2001, the elementary school closed, and the site became the home of FWCS' alternative program for students in sixth through 12th grades. The school was permanently closed in 2017 as the building required extensive repairs and renovations to remain an adequate learning space. FWCS had a newer facility in better condition that could be used to house the district's alternative learning program (the former Nebraska Elementary, now the Center for Academic Success at Nebraska).