



Preservation Alliance of La Crosse, Inc.
119 King Street
La Crosse, WI 54601

2/8/2021

La Crosse Common Council
400 La Crosse Street
La Crosse, WI 54601

Dear Council Members,

The Preservation Alliance of La Crosse would like to recommend alternatives to the proposed demolition of Fire Station No. 4, a publicly-owned asset symbolic of La Crosse's innovative history. We agree that the La Crosse Fire Department requires modern facilities and additional space. However, we don't have to destroy our past to build our future. When Gundersen Lutheran Hospital needed to modernize, they built new facilities next to the original 1923 structure on South Avenue, they didn't destroy it. History has proven beyond doubt that buildings much older than Fire Station No. 4 can be successfully repurposed, the Gund Brewery Lofts a notable example.

With the amount of land already purchased for expansion, a modern fire station could be built next to the historic one. It would require the architects to draw new plans, the cost of which would be off-set by avoiding the costs of demolition. With minor investment, historic Fire Station No. 4 could become a Community/Senior Center, saving money as the city already owns the building. Fire Station No. 4 has a lounge, a kitchen, and engine bay that could be used for large gatherings. With multiple ground level entrance points, it would easily meet ADA compliance.

Alternatively, rather than spending money to demolish the building, the city could sell the building for redevelopment, making money from the sale, as well as making money indefinitely from the property taxes the building would generate. It could be redeveloped into housing, a restaurant, an event venue or other possibilities, and the taxes generated could help fund other neighborhood improvements. The building is an economic asset as much as an historic asset, one potentially eligible to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Please review our attached proposal that demonstrates how a 21st Century fire station would complement our ever important and uniquely historic Fire Station No. 4. Preserving our history is more important than ever, not just for civic pride, but also to protect the environment. When we've faced similar challenges in the past, the community has regretted destruction of our heritage when feasible alternatives were available.

Respectfully,

The board and members of the Preservation Alliance of La Crosse, Inc.



Concept art portraying historic Fire Station No. 4 (left) with a modern 21st Century Fire Station (right).



Map showing the amount of land already purchased for expansion (in red).