

**SOCIETY OF
ARCHITECTURAL
HISTORIANS**

1 March 2018

Mayor Ben Schierer
City of Fergus Falls
112 W Washington Avenue
Fergus Falls, MN 56537
ben.schierer@ci.fergus-falls.mn.us
Re: Support for preservation of Fergus Falls State Hospital, Fergus Falls, Minnesota

Dear
Mayor Ben Schierer,

The Society of Architectural Historians (SAH) expresses strong support for the preservation of the Fergus Falls State Hospital, Fergus Falls, Minnesota.

Fergus Falls State Hospital is Minnesota's third state-supported mental hospital (following St. Peter in 1866, and Rochester in 1878). Opened in 1890, it remained in operation until 2005. The facility includes 120 acres of landscaped grounds crowned by the main hospital complex, a memorable composition based upon the design principles of nineteenth-century physician Thomas Kirkbride. Kirkbride promoted a plan that featured centralized, shared patient facilities connected to a series of long, staggered wings to maximize fresh air and daylight, all of which was supported by a designed ornamental landscape to encourage contemplation and healing. The complex includes hospital buildings, staff quarters, a hospital farm, and an eight-acre cemetery. Designed by architect Warren Dunnel of Minneapolis, Minnesota, construction began in 1888 and was completed in 1906. Fergus Falls State Hospital fully embraced the Kirkbride approach to the design of hospitals for the insane, in a manner that is particularly graceful and accomplished. While much of the interior has been renovated over time to adapt to patient and treatment needs, character-defining features such as the ornate central staircase and extensive mosaic tile floors survive, as does much of the exterior of the complex. Patient population has decreased over time, however, and the building was declared surplus by the State of Minnesota in 2005. In 2007, the hospital was purchased by the city of Fergus Falls, and has been marketed for new uses since.

We recognize the challenges presented by adaptive reuse of enormous hospital complexes like Fergus Falls. If there is any way that members of the SAH Heritage Conservation Committee, or members of the SAH, may be of assistance we would be pleased and honored to work with the city of Fergus Falls toward the preservation of this significant American landmark.

The Society of Architectural Historians expresses strong support for the preservation of Fergus Falls State Hospital, an architectural landmark of national distinction. SAH strongly encourages the preservation of and appropriate adaptive reuse of the Fergus Falls State Hospital to insure that future generations are able to experience this monument of American architecture.

Sincerely,



Bryan Clark Green, Ph.D., LEED AP BD+C
Chair, Society of Architectural Historians Heritage Conservation Committee

cc: Mr. Jim Fish, Mr. Darren Appert, Mr. Tom Rufer, Mr. Scott Rachels, Mr. Justin Arneson, Mr. Anthony Hicks, Members, Fergus Falls City Council; Ms. Pauline Saliga; Ms. Deborah Slaton; Mr. Kenneth Breisch, Ph.D.; Mr. David Fixler, FAIA; Mr. Jeffrey Cody, Ph.D.; Mr. Ken Oshima, Ph.D., Mr. Anthony Cohn, Members, SAH Heritage Conservation Committee