


Breaking Barriers by Preserving the Future: Fergus Falls Kirkbride







Breaking Barriers by Preserving the Future: Fergus Falls Kirkbride

A Design Thesis Submitted to the
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Figure 2 - Exterior of Fergus Falls Kirkbride in Autumn



The thought came to me over the Summer when I was visiting my hometown. There is a historical building called the Regional Treatment Center (RTC), and over the years, I have seen many attempts to repurpose it, but all have failed. We have visitors come from across the country and even other continents to see the RTC, and the city is losing out on potential profit for the community by not utilizing the RTC. Now, the city wants to tear the whole structure down (except the main tower), costing over 9 million dollars. Along with the great cost, loss of visitors, and loss to history, it is harmful to the environment by destroying tons of building material from a building that is still structurally sound. I know there must be a way to preserve this building while making it useful in the present and future. My goal is to break the barriers of past and present and the idea that new is always better by creating a design for the building that can benefit the community along with educating the public by informing and stopping the rumors associated with it's past. By looking at the few other rescued Kirkbrides as examples, I hope to create a design that will allow this one to thrive.



Figure 3 - National Register of Historic Places Plaque



Figure 4 - 1895 carved in stone on the front of the building



Context

The Fergus Falls Regional Treatment Center (RTC), also known as the Kirkbride, helped over 40,000 patients in the time it was open from 1890-2005. (nps.gov) This historic building is the third one to be built in Minnesota, but it is different than the first two by having a different layout than the original one designed by American psychiatrist Dr. Thomas Story Kirkbride. (kirkbridebuildings.com) In 1986, it was added to the National Register of Historic Places. (visitfergusfalls.com) I am not the only one who recognizes the historical value of this building; the Otter Tail County Historical Society, located in Fergus Falls, also recognizes the historical significance and has been providing tours during the nice weather months for years. These tours help generate funding for the museum's upkeep, which in turn helps our community.

Premise for Investigation

Since the building closed in 2005, there have been 18+ failed redevelopment attempts. With over 500,000sqft, the building has more than enough space for everyone's ideas such as a(n) senior center, library, Kirkbride specific museum, boutique hotel, restaurant, shopping strip, art gallery, apartment complex, lounge, and so many more ideas. (inforum.com) The city feels there is no hope left for the RTC since it drains money each year for upkeep, but does not bring in revenue. As of now, the city has already spent 1.9 million dollars to close the campus tunnels and tear down the kitchen, gymnasium, and administration buildings on the site as a part of the first and second phases of deconstruction. (twincities.com)

Design Solution

The solution I am looking for needs to preserve the building while serving the community with a similar idea as it's original purpose. With so many requirements to make the building worth saving, how can I create a solution that is reasonable and feasible, but also unique and fitting all the required needs of the community while combating the stigma associated with the building?

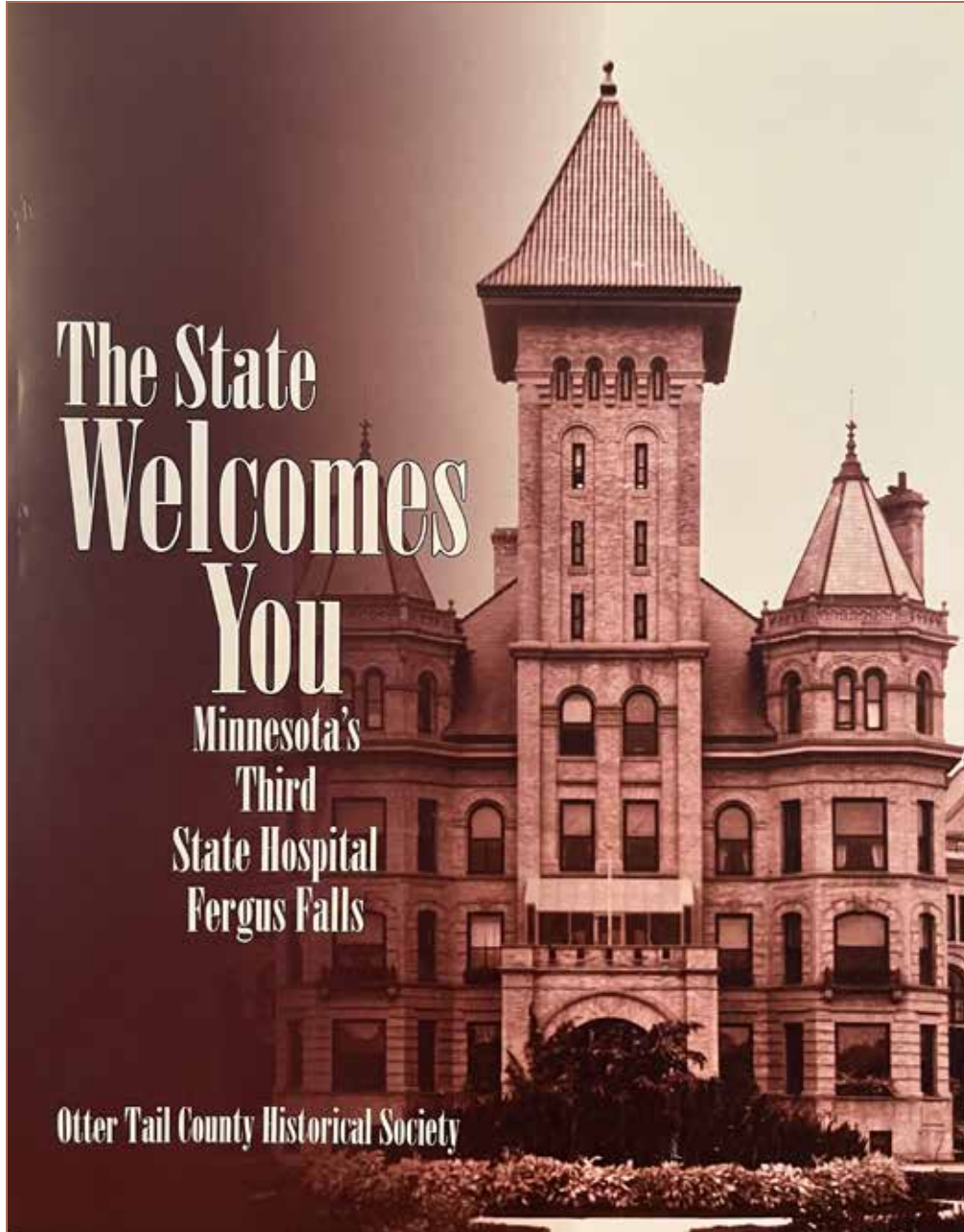


Figure 5 - Cover of a book published by the Otter Tail County Historical Society

Main Tower/Center Section

- 1st Floor - Visitor Center
- 2nd Floor - Historical Society Museum
- 3rd Floor - Library/Lounge
- 4th Floor - Gallery
- 5th-9th Floors - Preserve original design

West Wing

- 1st Floor - Shops, Boutique Hotel, and Event Center
- 2nd Floor - Boutique Hotel and Apartments
- 3rd & 4th Floor - Boutique Hotel and Loft Apartments

East Wing

- 1st Floor - Restaurants, Senior Center, Indoor Dog Park, Daycare Center, and Indoor Playground
- 2nd Floor - Artist Studio Apartments and Apartments
- 3rd & 4th Floor - Boutique Hotel and Loft Apartments

Outdoor Spaces

- Parking - Resident, Handicap, Event/Hotel, and Guest
- Vegetation - Original Plans from Landscape Architect
- Seating - Variety of seating options
- Community Garden and Park - Behind Central Tower
- Cottage - Air BnB

Typology: a classification according to general type

Original Typology of the Fergus Falls Kirkbride:

- Institutional
 - Asylum
 - Hospital
 - Administration

Proposed Typology of the Fergus Falls Kirkbride:

- Residential
- Educational
- Assembly
- Business/Hospitality



Building Residents:**Open to all, but prioritizes those in need**

- Senior Citizens
- Veterans
- Middle Aged Adults
- Young Adults
- Young Children

Building Visitors:**Open to all in public areas**

- Art Community/Artists
- Historians
- Librarians
- Students
- Shoppers
- Event Attendees
- Employees



Figure 6 - Outline of Minnesota marking the location of Fergus Falls

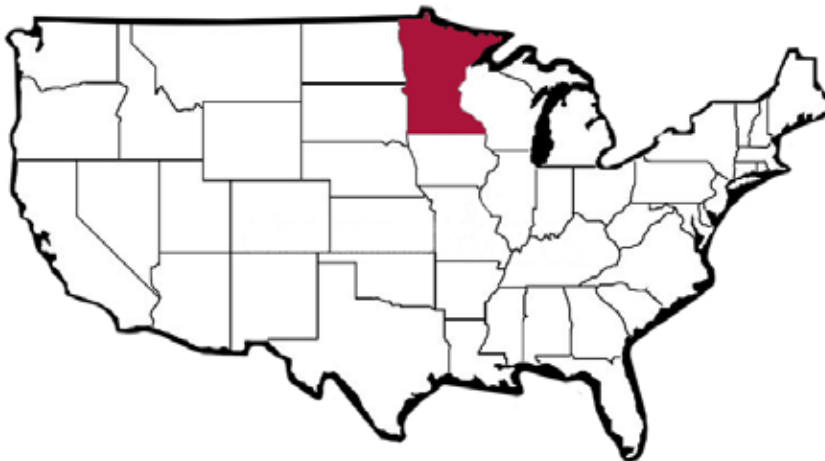


Figure 7 - Outline of the United States marking the location of Minnesota





Figure 8 - Site of Kirkbride

Site Notes:

- Located on the far North end of Fergus Falls
- Total area of campus is 120 acres
- Constrained to the area of land within the main roads around the horseshoe shaped building
 - Equal to 829,936sqft or 19.05 acres
- Focus will be on the horseshoe shaped building which consists of the main/center building and the two wings that are broken into 3 sections each
- Other buildings on campus have already been repurposed
- Landscaping is by original landscape architect
 - Alter as little as possible
- Need to address lack of parking

Project Emphasis

The reason this project is important stems from many directions. One being the historical significance of the building. There are very few attempts to do what I will be proposing, so a successful reuse design would increase the uniqueness of the building. The reason I chose to reuse this building is because of the history it has. The history of mental health has drastically changed over the years. The Kirkbrides were one of the first attempts to understand and help people with mental illness. Having been around mental illness, it is important to me for people to continue to understand how architecture can influence the mental well being of people. Kirkbride was one of the first people to represent that with his building design and research. I would like to continue to put his work to use. By turning the Fergus Falls Kirkbride into housing for people who need it, they can receive the benefits of the building design.



1 | Save the Kirkbride

A long going goal of many in people in Fergus Falls that I agree with. This project, if successfully reused, should save the building from the planned demolition.

2 | Create a realistic and feasible solution

In the past, people have been overambitious in their ideas for what the Kirkbride should be used for, but I don't want my solution to be another number on the failed list that already exists.

3 | Debunk Kirkbride stereotypes

There is a stigmatism about the Kirkbride in Fergus Falls and others throughout the country. I want to create a solution that involves a history center to educate people on the true purpose and history behind the Kirkbrides.

4 | Emphasize the impact on mental health through architecture

This is my project emphasis. The most important thing to explore is how architecture influences mental health and how Kirkbrides are used to positively influence people compared to other options.

5 | Successfully synthesize ideas

People in the Fergus Falls community all have their own ideas of what the Kirkbride should be used for. I want to implement many of those ideas and community needs while not overcrowding the building or combining unmeshable uses.



Figure 9 - Fergus Falls Kirkbride in 2012



Figure 10 - Fergus Falls Kirkbride in 1940-50s



Research Methods:

- Case Studies:
 - The reuse Kirkbride Plans that include housing complexes and mixed-use solutions
 - The first Kirkbride - St. Elizabeth's hospital
 - The 18 failed redesign proposals
- Historic Research:
 - History of the physical building, the site, and people who inhabited the building through time
- Logical Argumentation:
 - Information on Kirkbride and how he came to the building solution that he did based on architecture and mental health
- Photo Documentation:
 - Gathering information about the current state of the site through first hand experience

Documentation:

- Research:
 - Tracking all sources for future reference and creditation
 - Notebook dedicated to research findings
- Design Process:
 - Saving copies of all digital files during each phase
 - Notebook for brainstorming ideas
- Site:
 - Original blueprints from the Fergus Falls City Hall
 - Photos of building in its current state

Next Steps:

- Complete Historical Research and Case Studies
- Site Analysis
- Detailed Programing
- Revit Model
- Final Solution
- Finalize Drawings and Renders
- Presentation/Book
- Creditation and Documentation



Figure 11 - St. Elizabeth's Hospital Central Tower



Case Study 1: St. Elizabeth's Hospital

- AKA Government Hospital for the Insane

Building:

- Architect: Thomas U. Walter
- Construction Start Date: 1852
- All patients had private rooms
- On National Register of Historic Places and National Historic Landmarks

Site:

- Location: Southeast Washington, DC
- 350 Arces
- Two natural springs on grounds for drinking water

History:

- First federally-funded mental hospital in the country
- First mental hospital to follow Kirkbride's designs
- Farm operated until 1965
- Patients helped care for the grounds and repair buildings
- A series of cottages were added in 1870's for more independent patients
- An auditorium was added in 1910
- A childrens center was added in 1964
- West Campus closed in 2003

Renovation Results:

- General Services Administration is redeveloping the West Campus to become the Headquarters of the Department of Homeland Security
- District of Columbia has been using the East Campus as a mental health facility since 2010
- Central Building is still federally owned and serves a monument to the beginning of mental health awareness



Figure 12 - Historical Interior of the Traverse City State Hospital



Figure 13 - Historical Interior of the Traverse City State Hospital



Figure 14 - Historical Interior of the Traverse City State Hospital



Case Study 2: Traverse City State Hospital

- AKA The Village at Grand Traverse Commons
- AKA Northern Michigan Asylum for the Insane

General Building Information:

- Architect: Gordon W. Lloyd
- Construction Dates: 1883-1885
- Opened: 1885; Closed: 1989
 - Vacant until 2002
- Typology: Administration, Hospital, and Residential
- Style: Victorian-Italianate

Architectural Building Information:

- Over 300,000sqft; Almost 1/4 mile long
- Over 70ft tall at roof ridge
- Over 8 million bricks from the local brickyard at Cedar Lake were used to construct the main building

Site:

- Location: Traverse City, Michigan
- 63 acre complex on 135 acre site



An aerial view of The Village at Grand Traverse Commons in autumn. The community was once Traverse City State Hospital, opened as an asylum in 1885. (Figure 15)



This before-and-after collage shows a renovated hallway in the former Traverse City State Hospital. Building 50 was vacant for decades before The Minervini Group began renovations to create The Village at Grand Traverse Commons. The hallway now holds a variety of shops. (Figure 16)



This before-and-after collage shows a restored portion of the former Traverse City State Hospital. The space now holds Trattoria Stella, considered one of the finest Italian eateries in the Midwest. (Figure 17)



This before-and-after collage shows one of the residential units in The Village at Grand Traverse Commons. The space was once part of Northern Michigan Asylum, later renamed Traverse City State Hospital. (Figure 18)



Case Study 2: Traverse City State Hospital Continued

History:

- Last Kirkbride in Michigan
- Housed 3,000 patients at it's peak
- Farm and grounds were closed around 1950
- Building's admin section was demolished in 1963 due to being a fire hazard
- Served 39 counties
- On June 19, 2000, a redevelopment agreement was signed for The Minervini Group to research and develop a proposal
- On April 26, 2001, The Minervini Group Proposal was approved after several months of negotiations

Renovation Results: 3 years and \$60 million later

- Complete campus renovation
- Historical tours are still offered on the grounds
- Spires became ventilators
- Laundry facility became a coffee roastery and winery
- Firehouse became a brick oven bakery
- Vegetable prep building became a cheesecake shop
- Living quarters range from 300sqft studios to 3,800sqft condos
 - Expected to house 1,000 people
- Expected to provide 800 jobs
- Cordia: Residential club for seniors
 - 110 private 2-bed, 1-bed, & studio units
 - 30,000sqft of common space
 - Amenities include: formal dining room, housekeeping, theatre, game rooms, spa and salon, artisan center, pub, fireplaces, covered porches, fitness center, unique floor plans, in-unit laundry, woodworking shop, valet parking, library, business center, tech support, piano lounge, 13ft ceilings, courtyard, gardens and tv room
- 630 Lofts & Cottage 36: Residential Living
 - Cottage 36 is leed certified
 - 630 Loft has many green features

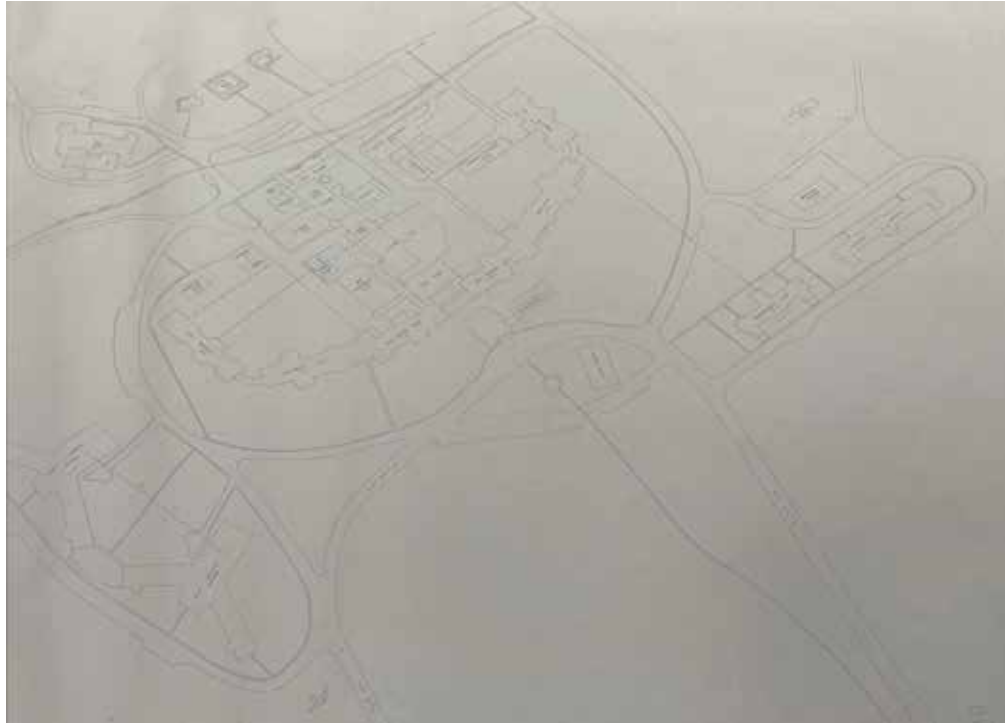


Figure 19 - Original Kirkbride Building Layout

Project Significance:

- Historical preservation
- Community contribution
- Disbanding stigma
- Personal connection
- Architecturally unique



The Kirkbride in Fergus Falls has a lot of historical significance and is very eye-catching. When I was younger, I was able to go on tours of the inside of the building before it was closed completely. I even got to go in the tunnels which are now closed permanently. I found the building fascinating, and I can already picture it being restored in my mind. There are so many things that our city would benefit from that the Kirkbride can provide a home for. Looking over the old blueprints of the building and seeing the changes over the years just increased my curiosity about the building. Usually, I do not get interested in history, but this building is something different. So many people have done research into it, yet there are so many more people who want to learn more. I was lucky to be exposed to it so much growing up. There are people who will never get to see the beauty on the inside if it is not restored, but I was able to go in quite a few times, and I was even able to go in buildings that are no longer standing.

I know I am not the only one interested in this building, but the city has not been able to find the right solution that they can fund. I want to change their opinion on this. If this thesis project goes as I would like it to, I would like to take it to the city council as another solution that could be done in phases. That was one of the issues with the other plans, not enough money to do it all at once.



Figure 20 - 2012 Aerial View




Figure 21 - 2018 Aerial View



Figure 22 - 2021 Aerial View





1888	Construction began
1890	First two patients arrived on July 29
1890	Officially opened on July 31
1893	First women were admitted
1906	Construction completed
1971	Became a Regional Treatment Center
1985	Official name change to RTC
1986	Added to the National Register of Historic Places
2005	Building closed
2007	City took ownership from the state
2009	Main tower was struck by lightning on June 16
2015	2 renovated apartments opened in the nurses cottages
2018	Administration building was demolished
2019 - 2020	Back buildings were demolished and tunnels were filled-in



Figure 23 - Window on first floor of the central main tower



Figure 24 - Floor tile pattern



Figure 25 - Corinthian Column Capital



Historical Context: Fergus Falls Kirkbride

- AKA Regional Treatment Center
- AKA Third State Hospital for the Insane

General Building Information:

- Architect: Warren Dunnell
- Construction Dates: 1888-1906
- Opened: 1890; Closed: 2005
- Original Cost: c. \$1 million
- Typology: Administration, Hospital, and Residential
- Style: Roman, Renaissance, and Gothic

Architectural Building Information:

- Designed as a single unit following the architectural concepts of Dr. Thomas Story Kirkbride
- Main tower and wings stretch over 11 acres
- Original structure was 500,000sqft
- Facility is 1,500ft in length
- Angles of the wings are over 90 degrees unlike other Kirkbrides, giving it a rounder appearance
- Grand staircase and mosaic tiles are original features
- Main entrance was bricked over
- Building is composed of 7 sections
 - 3 in each wing plus the main tower
- Ceiling tiles had to come down due to asbestos
 - Left glue dots all over the ceiling
- Estimated \$60-80 million to refurbish entire campus
 - Would be less now that some buildings have been redone and some have been demolished
- 73 total kirkbrides were created between 1845-1910
 - 40/73 have been completely demolished
 - 33/73 still exist to some degree
 - 9/33 have been adaptively reused
 - 24/33 are preserved in some way
 - The Fergus Falls Kirkbride is one of the 24



Figure 26 - Grand taircase in central main tower

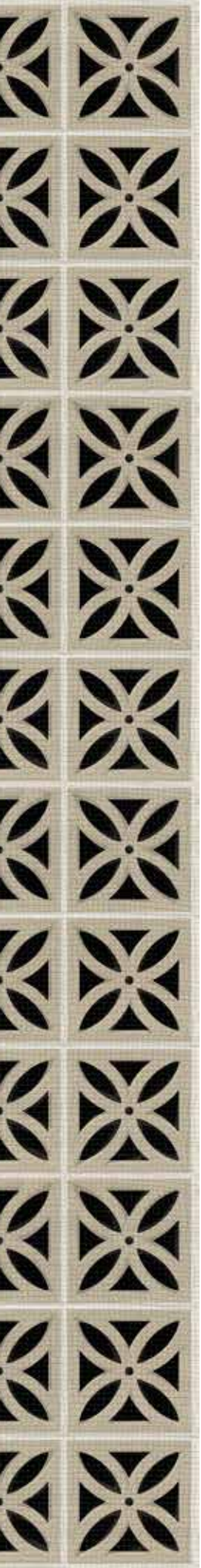


Figure 27 - Grand staircase railing detail





Figures 28, 29, 30, 31 - Collection of unique fireplaces in central main tower



Historical Context: Fergus Falls Kirkbride Continued

Past Changes:

- 18+ failed redevelopment attempts
 - Most current was to turn the Kirkbride into an elementary school
 - 2015 plan was to turn the complex into restaurants and a boutique hotel for \$40 million
- City Council voted 7-0 for a phased deconstruction
 - Requested \$8.9 million to demolish all structures except the main tower in a 5 phase plan
 - Phase I cost \$1.38 million to demolish buildings 2 (Administration), 11 (Garage), 30 (Garage), three gazebos and the campus tunnels in 2017-2018
 - Phase II cost \$3.5 million to demolish the kitchen, incinerator, dining room, and gymnasiums
 - Around 200,000sqft of space removed so far
- Real Estate Investor, Jeff Schlossman opened 2 renovated apartments in 2015 in the nurses cottages

Future Planned Changes:

- Phase III
 - Fix leaky roofs in West detached wing
 - Clean up main tower enough to open for tours
 - Board up broken windows
- Phase IV
 - Details unknown
- Phase V
 - Separate buildings to be taken down when convenient

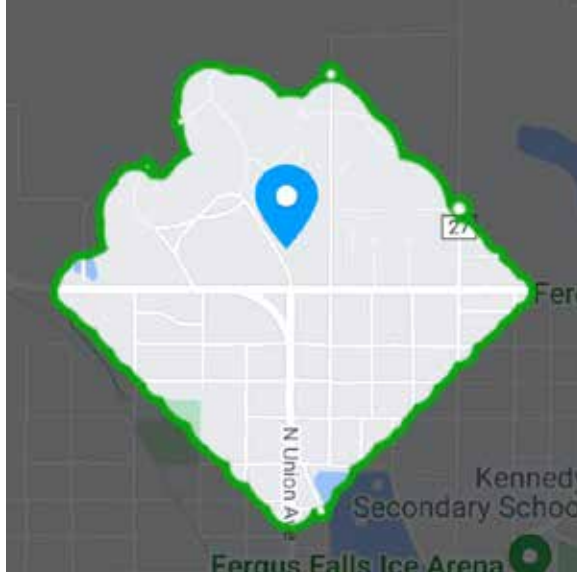


Figure 34 - 10 Minute Walk Radius

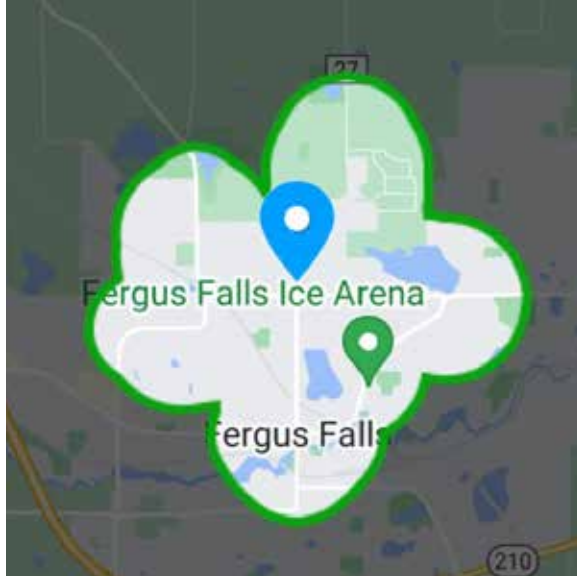


Figure 35 - 10 Minute Bike Radius

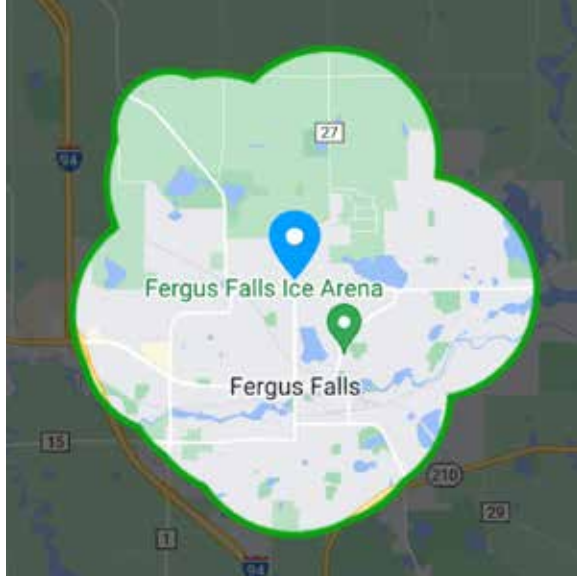


Figure 36 - 10 Minute Drive Radius



Site Analysis

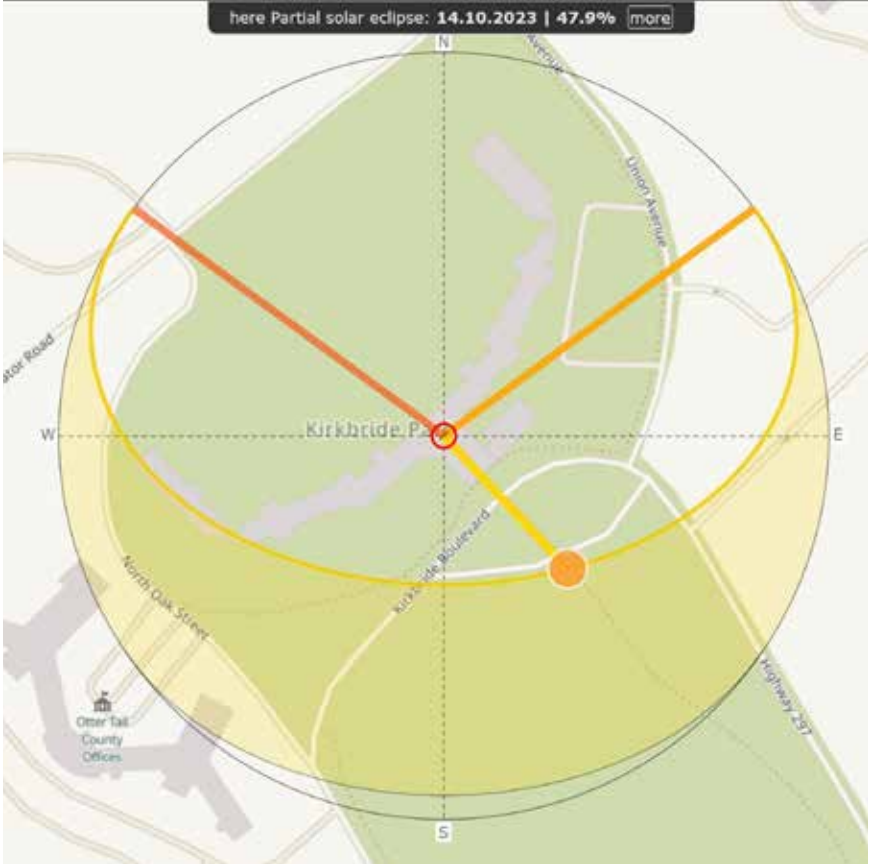


Figure 37 - Summer Stolstice Sun Path

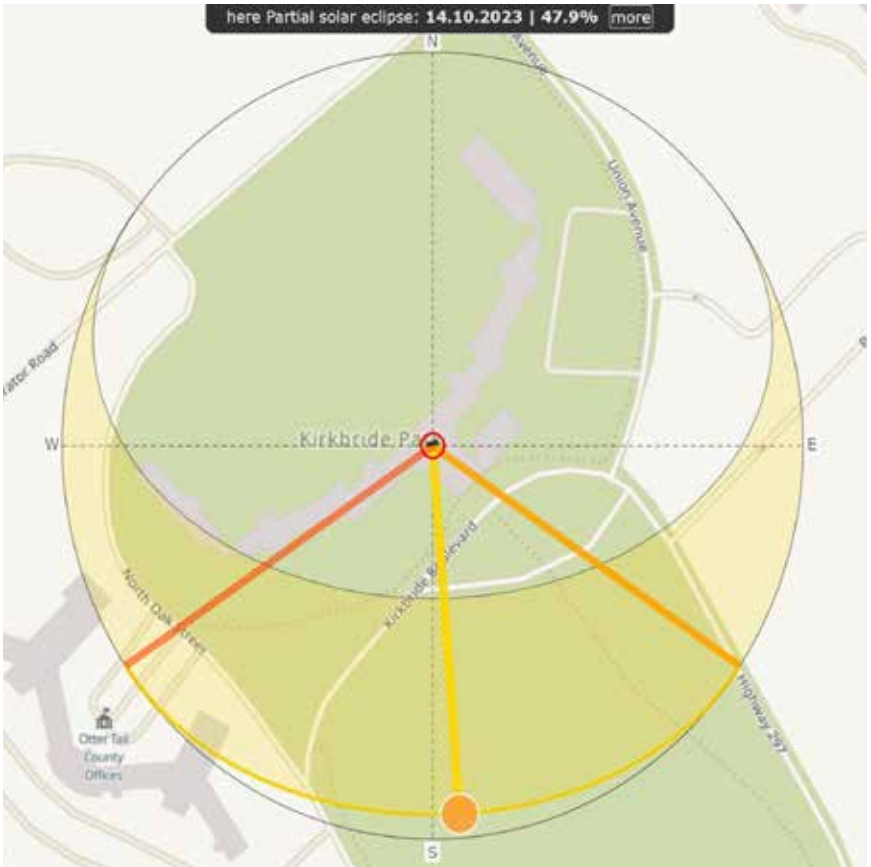
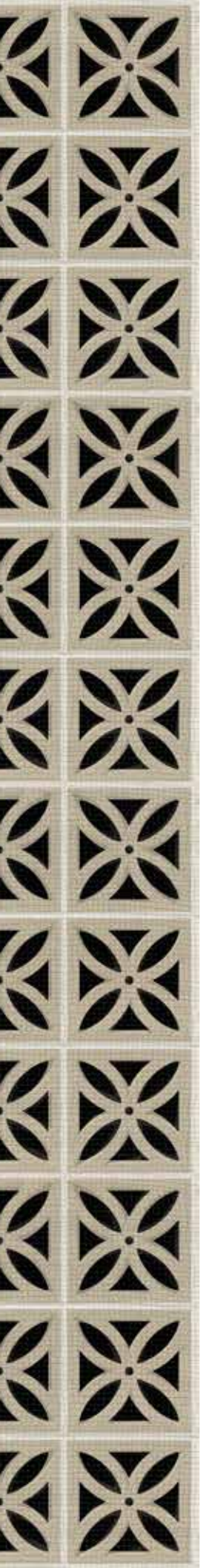


Figure 38 - Winter Stolstice Sun Path



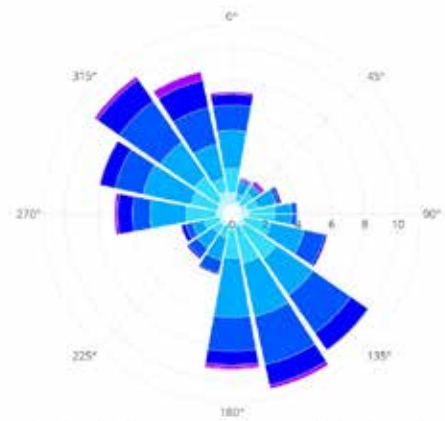


Figure 39 - December to February Wind Rose

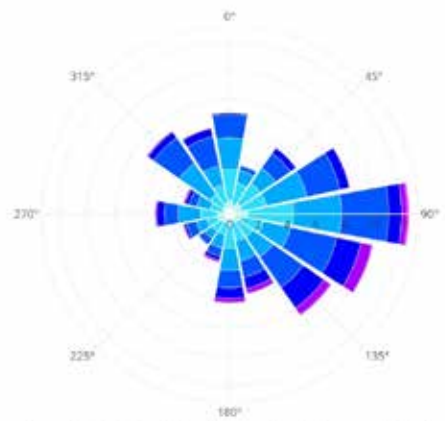


Figure 40 - March to May Wind Rose

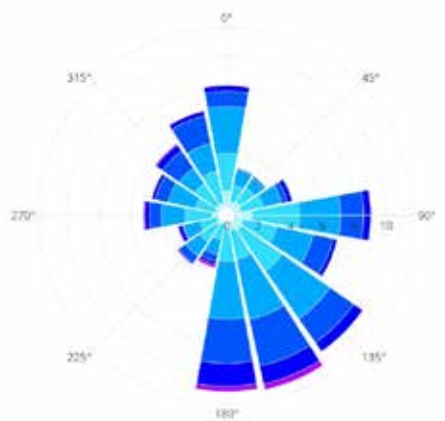


Figure 41 - June to August Wind Rose

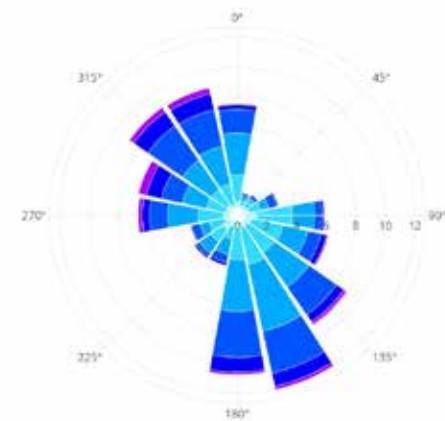


Figure 42 - September to November Wind Rose

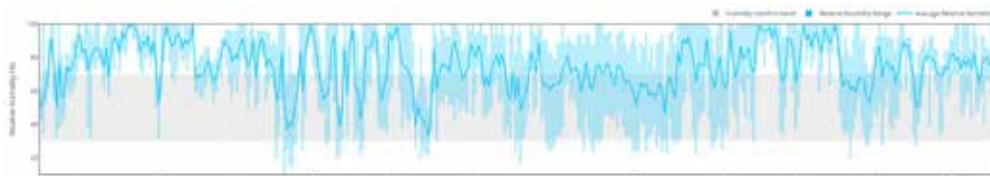


Figure 43 - Humidity Chart

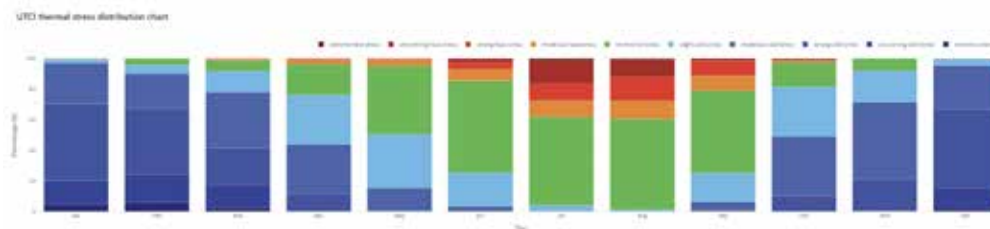


Figure 44 - Thermal Stress Distribution Chart



Site Analysis Notes:

- Landscape Architect: Horace Cleveland
 - Most of the original design remains to this day
- Longitude: -96; Latitude: 46
- Elevation: 361m above sea level
- Land owner: City of Fergus Falls
- Yearly Average Rainfall: 25in
- Yearly Average Snowfall: 47in
- Average High Temp in June: 81.4F
- Average Low Temp in January: -0.2F
- Festivals and history tours held on the grounds



Figure 45 - Contour Map of Site

The Design Solution

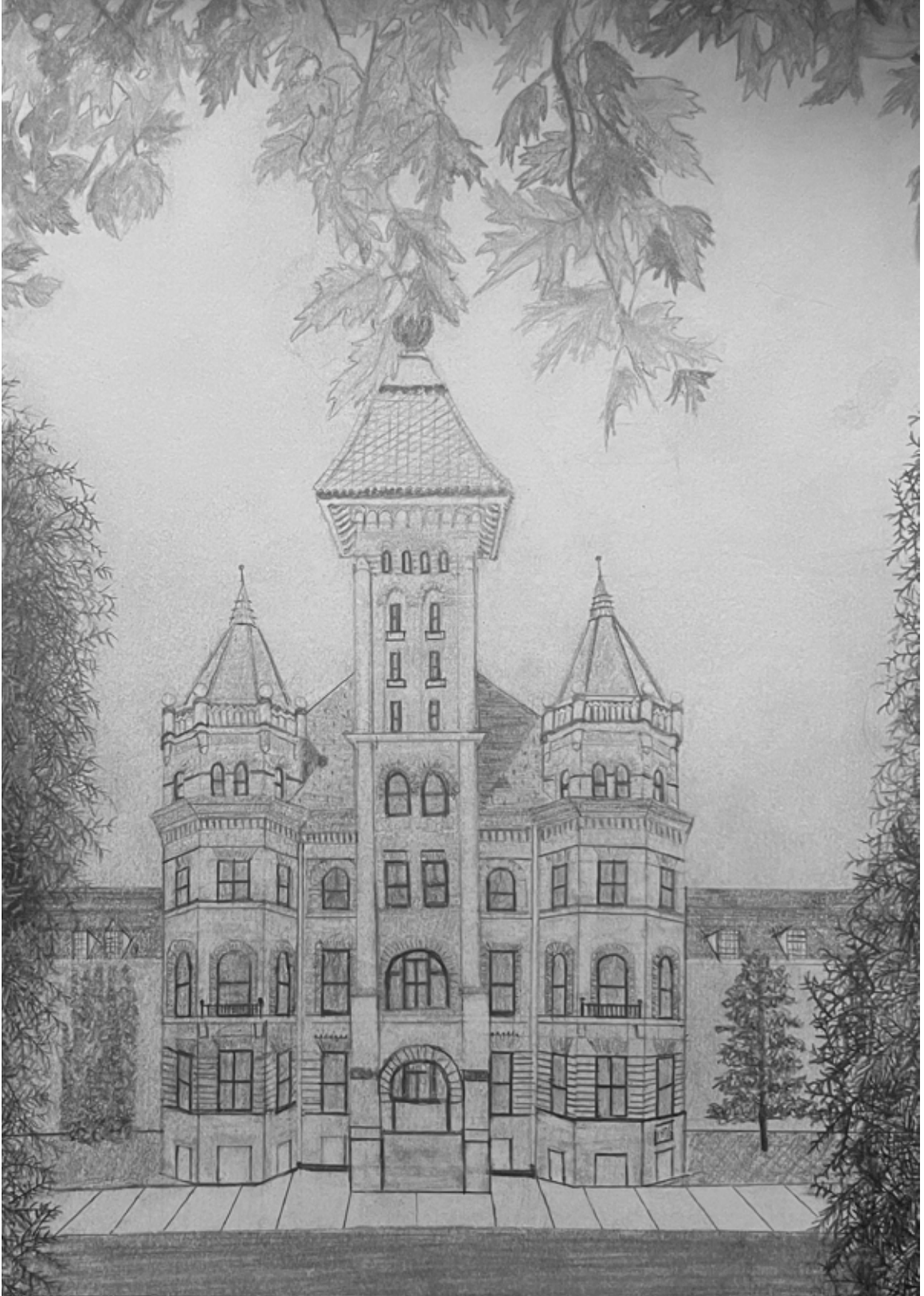
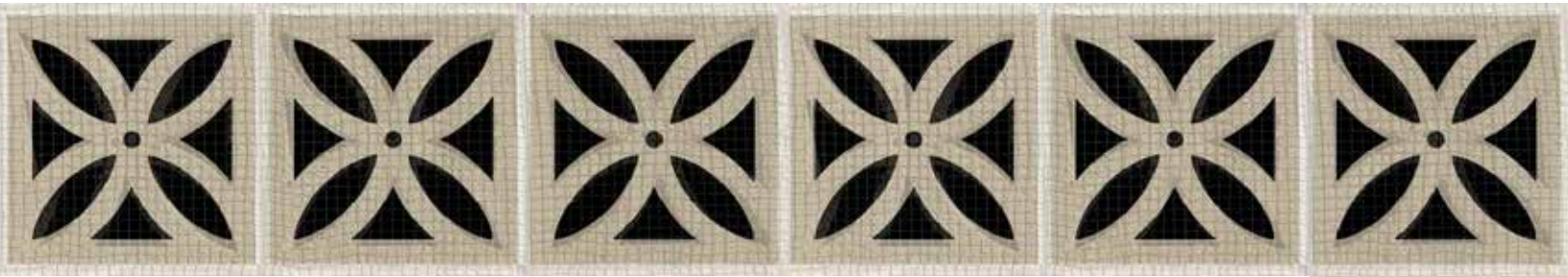




Figure 46 - Historic Panorama of Fergus Falls Kirkbride



Figure 47 - Digital Model of Fergus Falls Kirkbride
by Ray Staten



Design Solution

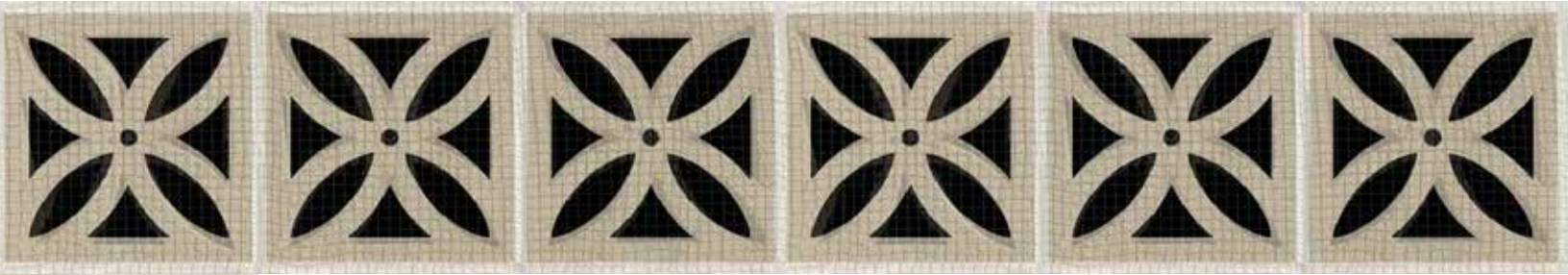
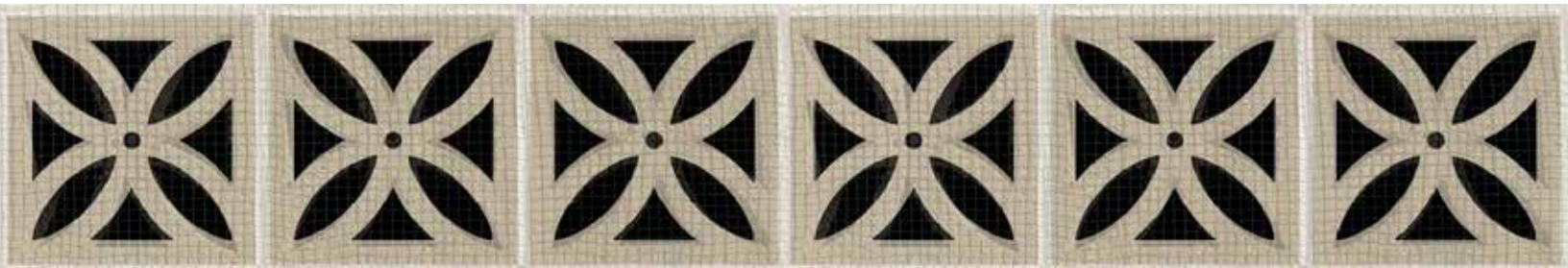
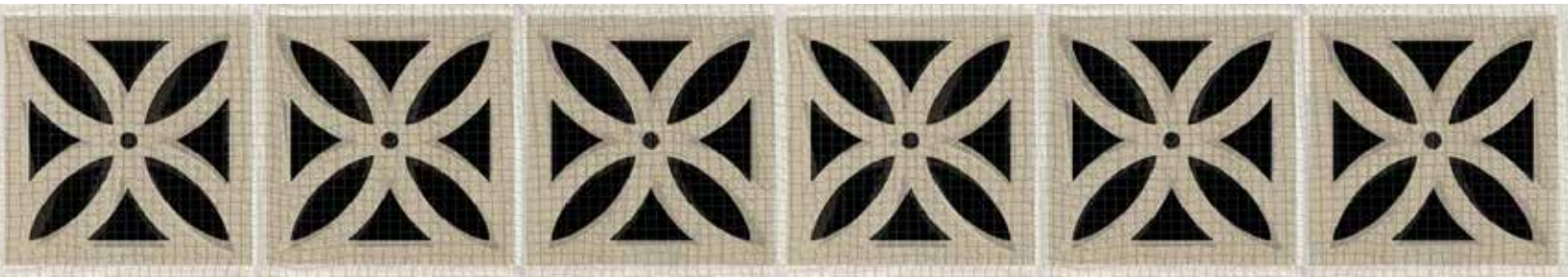
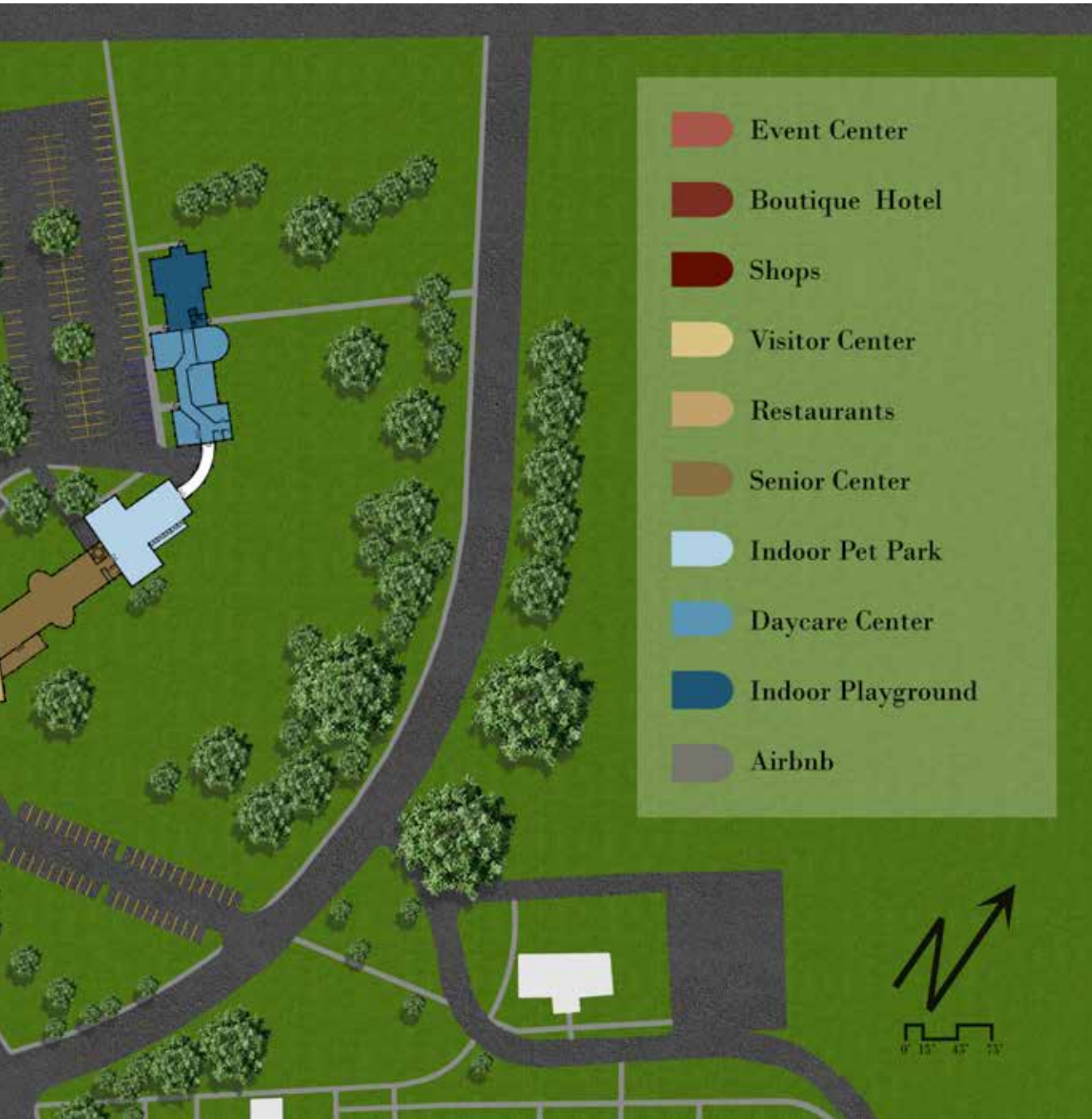




Figure 48 - Site Plan with Key



Design Solution



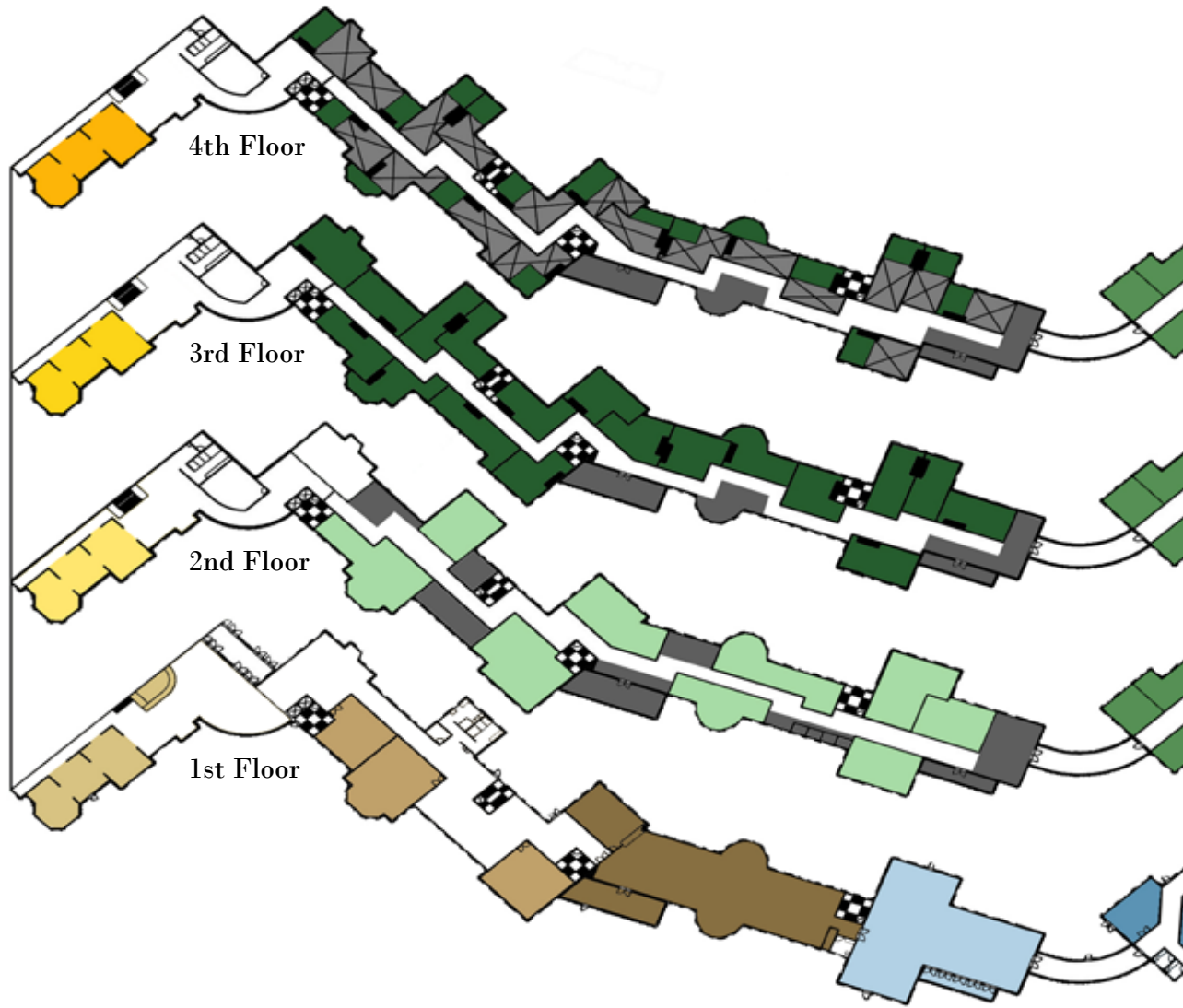
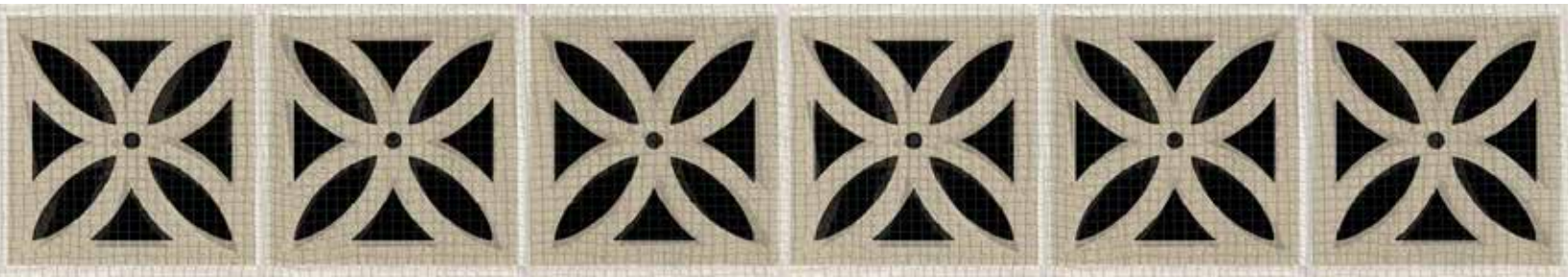
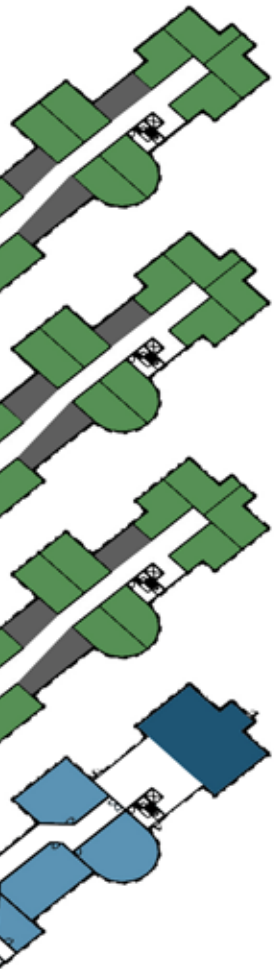


Figure 49 - East Wing Floor Plans with Key





East Side Key:

- 1, 2, & 3 Bed Apartments
- Artist Studio/Apartments
- Open plan
- Loft Apartments
- Fully furnished
- Long term and short term living
- Open to area below
- In Loft Apartments
- Visitor Center
- Historical Society Museum
- Library/Cafe
- Art Gallery/Event Space
- Restaurants
- 3 Spaces for rent
- Senior Center
- Includes a kitchen, restroom, and porch
- Indoor Pet Park
- Daycare Center
- Includes 3 age-range rooms, main office, restrooms, and a storage room
- Indoor Playground
- Circulation, Restrooms, Mail Room, and M/E Space
- Apartment Amenities
- Includes studyrooms, lounges, work rooms, porches, movie showing room, and exercise room

256,000 sqft
Redesigned

West Side:

East Side:

5 Single
Bedroom
Apartments

5 Single
Bedroom
Apartments

3 Double
Bedroom
Apartments

3 Double
Bedroom
Apartments

2 Triple
Bedroom
Apartments

2 Triple
Bedroom
Apartments

33 Hotel
Rooms

33 Artist
Studio
Apartments

18 Loft
Apartments

18 Loft
Apartments

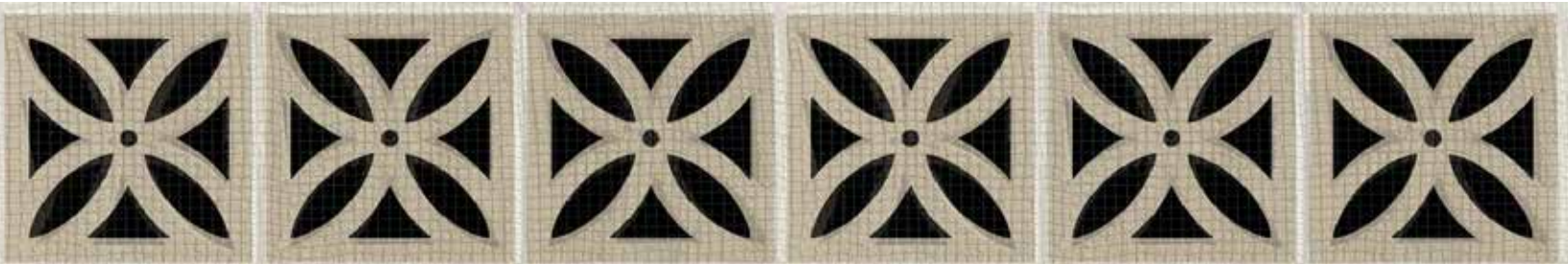




Figure 50 - Library/Cafe Before



Figure 51 - Visitor Center Before



Figure 52 - Art Gallery Before



Design Solution



Figure 53 - Visitor Center After



Figure 54 - Visitor Center After



Figure 55 - Art Gallery After

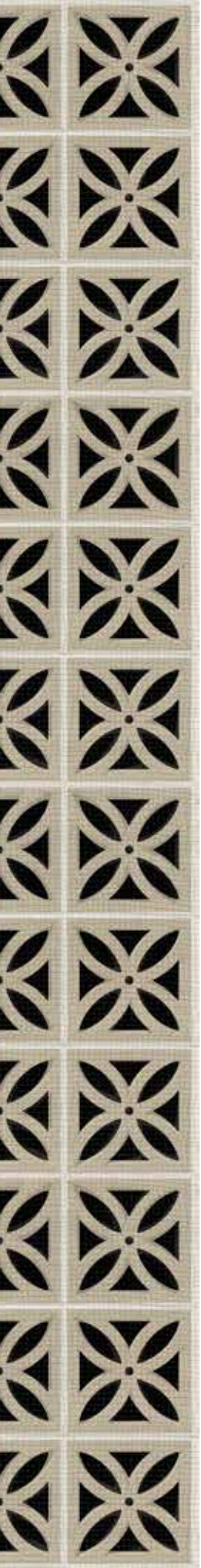




Figure 56 -Lounge Space Before



Figure 57 - Residential Space Before



Figure 58 - Sample 1-Bed Apartment





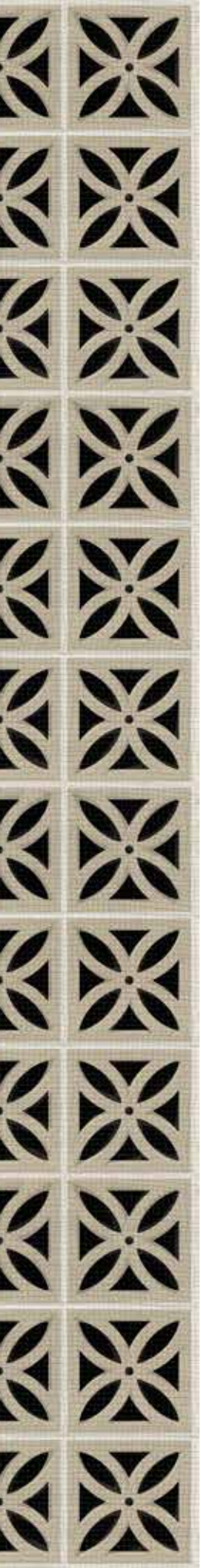
Figure 59 - Residential Space After
(Bedroom)



Figure 60 - Residential Space After
(Living Room and Kitchen)



Figure 61 - Lounge Space After

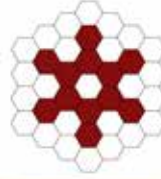


Board Sections



Single Bedroom Apartment Sample

- Bathroom into original tile pattern
- Bricks on exterior wall are retained
- Between 750-800sqft for each single-unit
- All units are completely unique

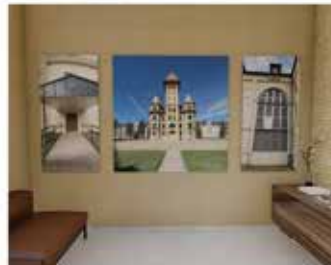


A Kirkbride is a mental asylum design that uses architectural concepts developed by psychiatrist Thomas Kirkbride. Two of the main concepts are to have more natural light and fresh air by adding additional windows and keeping patients occupied by making the building self-providing which give the patients responsibilities. There were 73 kirkbrides built across the United States, but of those 73, only 33 still exist to some degree. The Fergus Falls Kirkbride is among those 33 left. Of those 33, only 24 are partially preserved. The Fergus Falls Kirkbride also known as the Regional Treatment Center, fits in this select section as well. Historically, the building was categorized as a hospital/asylum, but with the new reuse design, the building will be categorized as residential, business, and educational. The goal is to keep the intended purpose of helping people and the importance of mental health in mind while repurposing the building. This reuse design takes many ideas from the community into consideration while adding much needed parking. The Kirkbride is a building that attracts tourists from all around and could highly benefit the community if repurposed successfully. Some of the elements included in this reuse design are: visitor center, library, day care, gallery, shops, and apartments.



Visitor Center

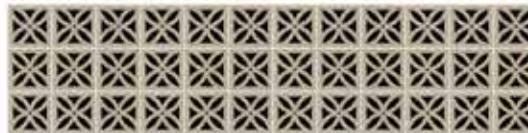
- Displays story and history of the Fergus Falls Kirkbride
- Bricks on exterior wall are retained
- Original fireplace are restored
- Utilize most of original layout
- Main entrance in back of main tower
- Welcome desk under grand staircase
- Grand staircase restored
- Updated windows that reflect the original window design



What it was:



The Fergus Falls Kirkbride has been around since 1890 and has helped over 40,000 people in the 115 years it was open. The building has over 500,000 sqft that has been sitting empty since 2003 when it closed. Since then, the city has initiated a 2 phase demolition plan that has already started. Having completed Phase 1 and 2, the building's square-footage has been reduced to around 300,000sqft. There have been multiple solutions offered, but none have been able to go through. However, that doesn't stop people from still trying to save the building. A local group called Friends of the Kirkbride has been raising awareness about the building for years which has increased the public's interest in the building. In fact, the Otter Tail County Historical Society currently raises money by giving walking tours around the exterior of the building while talking about the history. While the debate on what to do with the Kirkbride continues, the city will continue to move ahead with the next phase in their plan unless something changes.



Breaking Barriers By
Preserving The Future:
Fergus Falls Kirkbride



Definition

An architectural concept for mental asylums designed by American psychiatrist Thomas Story Kirkbride with the key ideas of having more natural light and fresh air and creating a self-providing structure to keep patients occupied.

3

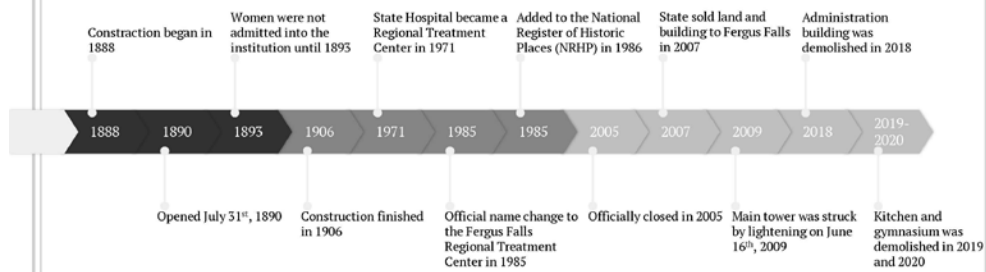
The History Behind The Fergus Falls Kirkbride

About

- ▣ Architect: Warren Dunnell
- ▣ Typology: Administration, Hospital, and Residential
- ▣ Style: Roman, Renaissance, and Gothic
- ▣ Cost: c.\$1,000,000
- ▣ 3rd State Hospital in Minnesota

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Timeline



6

Numbers



Site

- ▣ Northern Fergus Falls, MN
 - 1400 Union Ave N
- ▣ Tower and wings stretch over 11 acres
 - Around 1,500sqft long
- ▣ 120 Acre property
 - Focused on land surrounding the horseshoe
 - Entire grounds planned by a landscape architect

Digital Presentation



The Present Situation of The Fergus Falls Kirkbride

Demolition

Five Phase Demolition Plan:

- ▣ Phase 1 – Administration Building (2018)
- ▣ Phase 2 – Gymnasium, Kitchen & Tunnels (2019-2020)
- ▣ Phase 3 – Fix leaking roof & cover broken windows (2023)
- ▣ Phase 4 and Phase 5 - Future

Redevelopment

- ▣ 18+ failed redevelopment attempts
- ▣ Many ideas: senior center, library, historical center, boutique hotel, restaurants, shops, gallery, lounges, apartments, artist studios, daycare center, movie screening room, indoor playground, greenhouse, indoor dog park, therapist office, etc...

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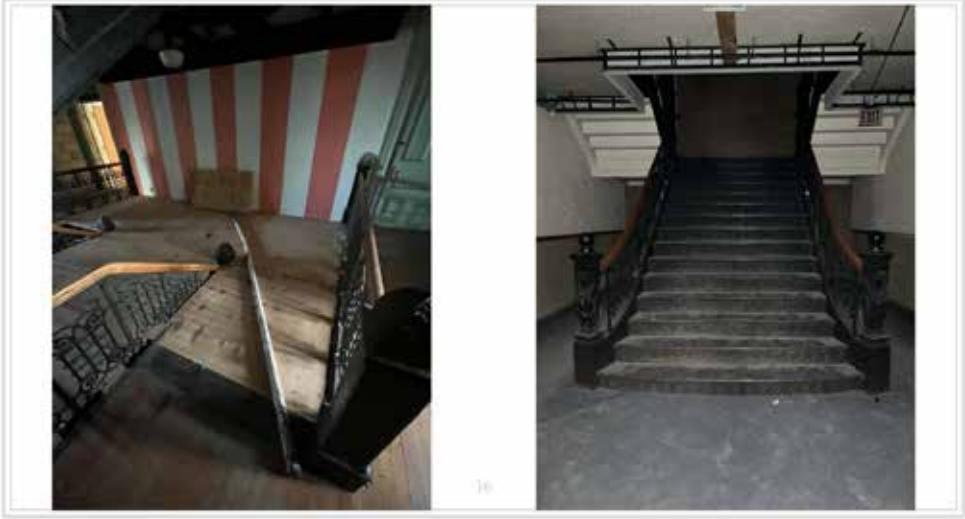
Importance

- ▣ Historical preservation
- ▣ Community contribution
- ▣ Disbanding stigma
- ▣ Personal connection
- ▣ Architecturally unique

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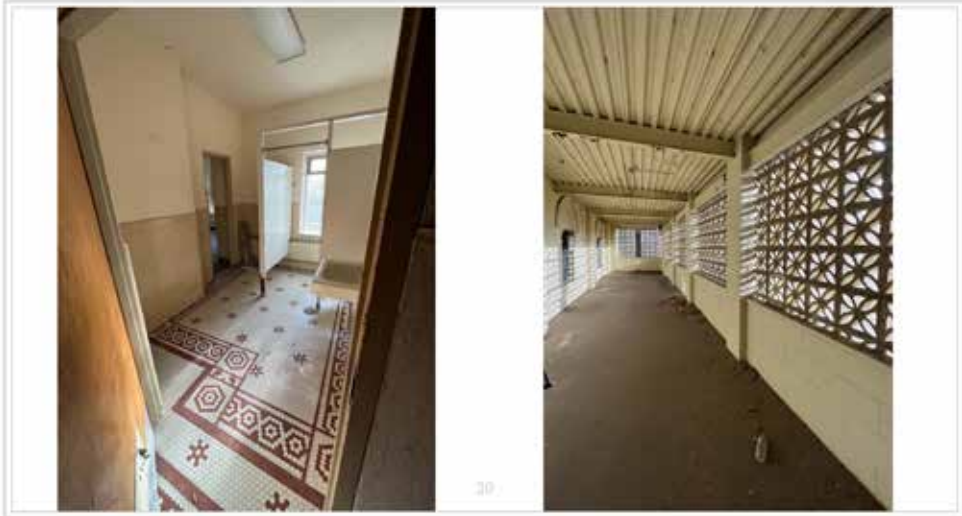


Digital Presentation



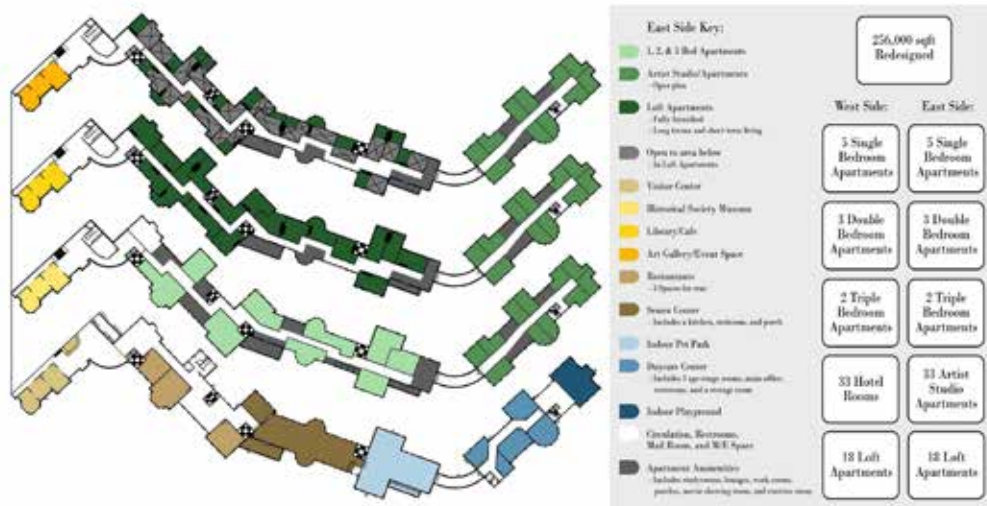
Digital Presentation



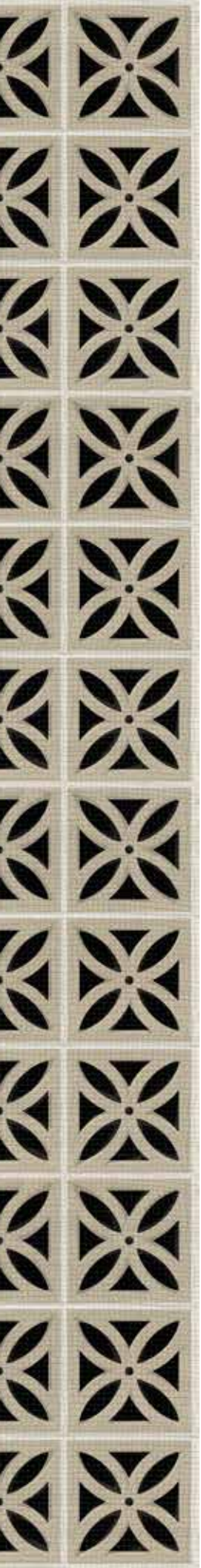


The Future Solution of
The Fergus Falls Kirkbride

Digital Presentation



Digital Presentation



Digital Presentation





Digital Presentation





Thank you

Any Questions?

Presentation by DeAnna Hurley

May 2, 2023

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Ron Ramsay

Ben Schierer

Chris Schuelke

Len Taylor

Cindy Urness

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Fall 2018: Heather Fischer

Spring 2019: Heather Fischer

Fall 2019: Charlott Greub

Spring 2020: Milton Yergens*

Fall 2020: Regin Schwaen

Spring 2021: Paul Gleye

Fall 2021: David Crutchfield

Spring 2022: David Crutchfield

Fall 2022: Cindy Urness

Spring 2023: Cindy Urness

*A special thanks to Milton Yergens (1949-2022).
I hope he is proud of all of our projects. He will be missed.