Urban Land Institute
Chicago

A TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PANEL REPORT

Old McHenry County Courthouse and Sheriff's House

Woodstock, IL
March 10-11, 2015

Urban Land Institute Chicago

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Technical Assistance Panel Program

The Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) allows local communities or government agencies an opportunity to access strategic advice from experts in development that they could not obtain through any other process. The goal of the panel program is to convene a multidisciplinary ULI-member team of experts to examine complex land use challenges and help sponsors find creative, practical and implementable solutions based on community realities and best practices.

The panel process brings together perspectives from current market, land use and design, financing and development strategies. TAPs are typically two-day intensive working sessions addressing land challenges proposed by the sponsoring organization, a local government, non-profit organization, or developer, about a specific development issue or policy barrier within a defined geographic area.

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Introduction

Woodstock Illinois, is a city with a storied past and a bright future. Located in farm country 55 miles northwest of Chicago, Woodstock is the seat of McHenry County and has a growing population of almost 25,000 residents.

Woodstock Square, a ring of charming, 19th century storefronts surrounding a central green space in the downtown, is the city's most visible asset. The geographic, commercial and symbolic center of the city, the Square is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and is a rare gem: A picturesque, significant attraction that supports retail, dining and entertainment establishments.

There are few vacancies in the storefronts around Woodstock Square, and the square hosts events throughout the year, from summer band concerts to a Christmas parade. The Woodstock Farmers Market, which runs May through October in the Square, was voted the #1 farmers market in Illinois by the American Farmland Trust.

Aerial View: Woodstock Square and Surroundings.
Photo Credit: City of Woodstock

Woodstock Demographic Snapshot

Total Population (2010):	24,770
Population Change (2000-2010):	23%
Median Age:	34.2 years
Race and Ethnicity:	83.5% White; 2.3% African American, 2.4% Asian 24% Latino
Average Household Size:	2.65
Median Household Income:	$56,446

Source: 2000 and 2010 Census, 2012 American Community Survey five-year estimates

The Woodstock Square is home to many unique shopping and entertainment destinations.

Built in 1858, the Old McHenry County Courthouse is listed on the National Register of Historic Landmarks, and along with the historic Opera House, it provides the Woodstock Square with grandeur and an architectural anchor.

Over the years, due to lack of proper maintenance, the Courthouse as well as the adjoining Sheriff's House that was added in 1887, have fallen into disrepair. Some of the spaces in the Courthouse remain closed off, and currently, the building remains underutilized as a location for a restaurant, an art gallery and a few artist studios. The Sheriff's House had been home to a local restaurant for the last ten years, which closed in April 2015, partly due to ongoing building challenges.

The City of Woodstock, the current property owner, would like to see the buildings preserved and reused in a way that reinforces civic pride, provides opportunity for public use, and strengthens downtown Woodstock and its businesses by enhancing the experience of visiting the square. Local stakeholders, including residents and business owners are also committed to rehabilitating the Courthouse – the community's strong commitment to historic preservation is evident in its well-preserved charming downtown.

Old McHenry County Courthouse and Sheriff's House.
Photo Credit: City of Woodstock

Damaged windows, failing ceiling and inadequate HVAC systems that also pose potential life-safety risks, are amongst the many immediate challenges that threaten the long-term viability of the buildings.

Bottom Right: A restaurant is currently operating in the lower level of the Old Courthouse.

Woodstock has more going for it than just the Square. In keeping with the vision set forth in its Vision 2020 Plan, the City of Woodstock has a strong arts-and-culture sector, including many galleries, stores and working artists. It continues to be a great place to live and raise a family because of its many assets including affordable housing, access to the regional transit network via the downtown Metra station, high-quality schools, as well as connections to higher education institutions such as Aurora and Loyola universities.

Woodstock attracts a steady flow of visitors. In addition to outdoor events in the Square, the programs and events at the Opera House can attract up to 100,000 visitors annually[1], and the recently restored and expanded eight-screen Woodstock Theater sells about 300,000 tickets a year. According to representatives from the McHenry County Convention and Visitors Bureau, Woodstock Square is amongst the top tourist attractions in McHenry County, bringing in even international tourists visiting Chicago looking to experience the American countryside and its small towns. As a classic Midwestern small town, Woodstock also provides a link to the region's agrarian heritage and, with a growing interest in farm-to-table dining, a gateway to local agriculture. Eco-tourism opportunities, including biking, hiking, and other nature-related experiences, are available with proximity to natural resources like the planned Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge.

New businesses, such as the winery expected to open in the next year, will bring in more patrons to the Woodstock Square, as would a planned new yard on Metra's Northwest line, which would mean more trains stopping at Woodstock.

There is a pride among many residents in what Woodstock has been and what it is today. The city, home to many families who have lived in Woodstock for generations, is also attracting many new residents, including a growing Latino population. "The Square, the Courthouse, the Opera House—that's why I moved here to Woodstock," one community member told the panel. Woodstock has a strong base to build on, and it is ready for more.

Woodstock Opera House.

1. Total annual attendance for all programing including public and private events and meetings at the Opera House is approximately 100,000; ticket sales are approximately 25,000/year.

The Technical Assistance (TAP) Panel Process

The City of Woodstock engaged the Urban Land Institute Chicago (ULI Chicago) to evaluate and recommend opportunities for the reuse and ownership of the Old McHenry County Courthouse and the Sheriff's House. ULI Chicago convened an eight-member panel of experts in real estate development, financing, law, architecture and historic preservation to develop a realistic, implementable strategy to address four questions posed by the City of Woodstock (Figure 1).

Chaired by Raymond Hartshorne, partner at Hartshorne Plunkard Architecture, a Chicago-based firm with extensive experience in historic preservation, the panel reviewed detailed background briefing material in advance of the meeting in Woodstock on March 10-11. While on site, the panelists toured the buildings and surrounding area, heard from representatives of and consultants to the City of Woodstock, and met with almost 100 area stakeholders, including residents, business owners, and staff from the county, local nonprofits and educational institutions. With this information, the panelists worked together to develop a course of action that would ensure the Courthouse will be restored as an outstanding asset for Woodstock and the larger McHenry County community.

Figure 1: TAP Questions

1. What uses or combination of uses are realistic, financially sustainable, and make the property a destination and economic engine for the downtown?

2. What type of ownership is in the best long term interests of the City of Woodstock and in the best interests of the property?

3. Significant restoration still needs to be completed in the very near future. How does the City fund this restoration and recoup the cost until ownership and occupancy is resolved?

4. Should the City re-issue the RFP with a more defined focus and if so, how can it improve the process? What active steps can the City take to attract the best possible owners and financiers for this project?

ULI Chicago Panelists and City of Woodstock Representatives.

Current Status: Old McHenry County Courthouse and Sheriff's House

The Old McHenry County Courthouse and the adjoining Sheriff's House, both listed on the National Register of Historic Places, will require significant renovation to be fully returned to being useful, historic assets for Woodstock. Due to age and years of negligence, the two buildings face costs of approximately $5 million in repairs to the shell and core. They will also likely require another $1 - $2 million in renovations to suit the needs of the next tenant, depending on use.

Ownership and Use History

The buildings were owned and used by McHenry County until 1972 and purchased by investors a year later. During years of private ownership, the buildings housed a variety of uses including retail shops, restaurants, galleries and the now defunct Dick Tracy Museum. The private owners were unable to make a sufficient income from the property and invest in much-needed repair and maintenance. The Old Courthouse and the Sheriff's house were both deteriorating rapidly, and therefore in 2011, the City decided to acquire these iconic buildings with the intention of stabilizing them and then returning them to private ownership.

City of Woodstock Initiatives

Over the last three years, the City has invested considerably in restoring the buildings including installation of a new roof, new limestone steps at the main entrance to the Courthouse and the Sheriff's House, and cleanup and building maintenance. The extent of deterioration turned out to be far worse than anticipated, resulting in significant cost over-runs for the City. By FY2015, the City had spent approximately $1.7 million on the Courthouse and Sheriff's House, almost all of it coming out of the existing downtown TIF funds. According to the City's architectural consultant for the restoration work, "Structurally, the Courthouse is solid and in very good condition." However, more work remains to be done to complete stabilization.

Currently, the lower level of the Old Courthouse is being used as a restaurant – the City signed a ten year lease with the Public House restaurant, which completed interior renovations to build-out its restaurant space. Parts of the main and the second floor are being used as an art gallery and artist studios, but these spaces, including their HVAC systems, remain antiquated and could pose safety risks. The Sheriff's House was recently vacated by a local restaurant that had been operating there for the past ten years.

Recognizing that significant investments are still needed to re-invent these historic structures as thriving, modern-day anchors for the Woodstock Square, the City put out a request for proposal (RFP) in January 2014 for purchase, restoration and reuse of the property. The City received two formal proposals, neither of which adequately addressed the City's vision for the Old Courthouse. One of the proposals was solely for the Sheriff's House, the other focused on converting part of the buildings to residential units thereby severely limiting public access. After the RFP submittal deadline had passed, two additional, but very preliminary redevelopment concepts were submitted to the City by two nonprofit groups. The City Council characterized their response to these proposals as "lukewarm" and has continued to explore more options.

Old Courthouse Challenges

The biggest challenge in rehabilitating the Courthouse is the high cost of renovation that cannot be supported by area market rents. Using preliminary cost estimates prepared by the City's architectural consultant, the panel estimates that while approximately $1 million are required to address immediate critical needs and stabilize the buildings (Figure 2), a complete renovation of the Courthouse and Sheriff's House could require a little over $5 million. An additional $1-2 million could be required for tenant improvements based on end-user requirements.

Even when the buildings are restored and up to code, they have notable limitations for use. Because the Courthouse and Sheriff's house were built for a very specific purpose, they do not lend themselves to adaptive re-use easily. Unique spaces, such as the courtroom with its high ceilings and architectural details and the jail-cells in the Sheriff's house have irreplaceable historic value and add to the charm and intrigue of these buildings, but pose significant limitations on the kinds of uses that can be supported. The Courthouse is approximately 22,000 square feet, gross, a relatively small space for such an imposing building, and the Sheriff's House is about 6,500 square feet, gross, including the basement.

Figure 2: Preliminary Cost Estimates for Stabilization

Category	Old Courthouse	Sheriff's House
Capital Expenses	$850,000	$50,000
Repair & Maintenance	$75,000	$25,000
Less Net Income	($15,000)	(0)
Total	**$910,000**	**$75,000**

Historic Significance

The Old McHenry County Courthouse, constructed in 1857, is one of the few remaining pre-Civil War courthouse buildings in Illinois. Designed by Chicago's first architect, John Mills Van Osdel, and his partner Frederick Bauman, many of the building's original features and details are still intact.

The Sheriff's House, added in 1887, included the Sheriff's residence in the front half and jail cells in the back. The jail's best known prisoner is Eugene Debs, who was sentenced to prison in Woodstock in1896 for his lead role in the American Railway Union's Pullman strike. The 19th and early 20th century jail cells are still intact, adding to the historic significance of the structures.

One of the many original hand-painted vault doors in the Old Courthouse.

Original jail cells in the Sheriff's House currently being used as storage.

Central Staircase in the Old Courthouse.

Recommendations: Overall

To date, the City of Woodstock has approached ownership of the Courthouse in an ad hoc way, addressing major maintenance issues as they arose and without a long term plan for its rehab or final use. In many ways this is understandable: The City inherited the building as a last resort to ensure it wouldn't fall into ruin, and it had used the RFP to explore if an outside entity would step up with a viable vision for the property.

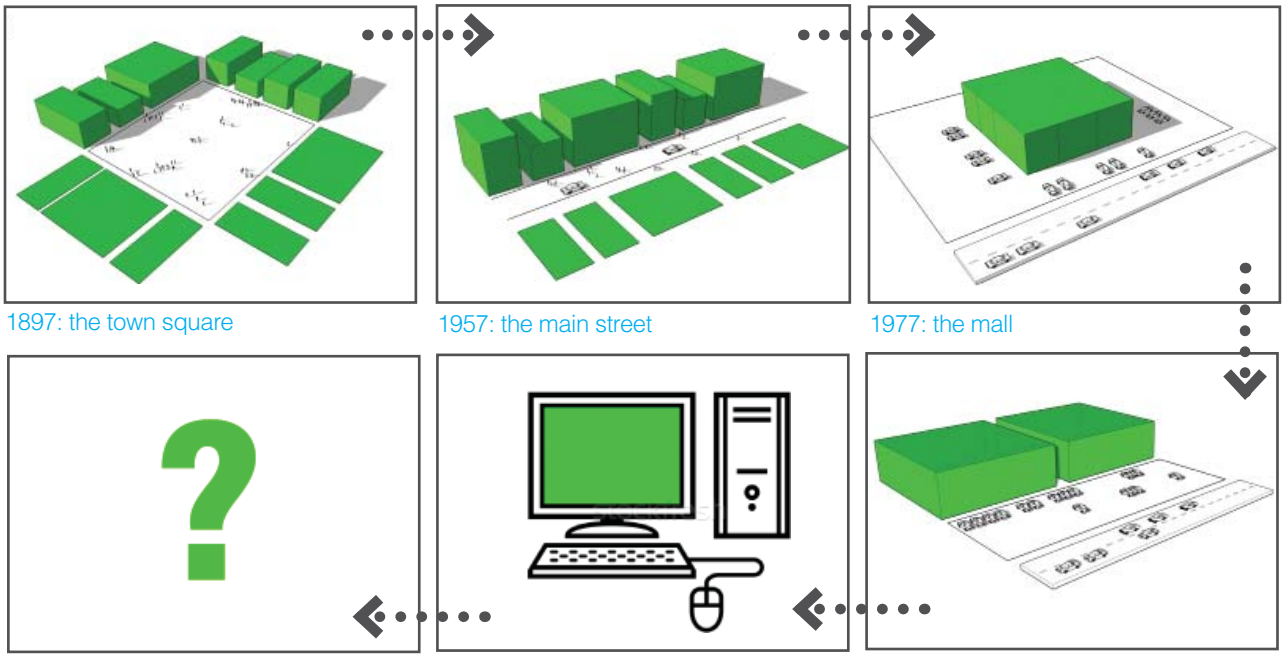
The fact that the RFP process did not yield any feasible responses, however—and that the building was on the market for years by its previous owner—confirms that the high costs for renovating and adapting the Courthouse compared to the local real estate market rates, keep the Courthouse from being profitable for a private owner. Furthermore, a private owner is unlikely to guarantee use in ways that provide maximum benefits to the Square, including a commitment to public use and long-term preservation.

Revise the Framework and Process

1. Recognize Value

Although the costs associated with full repair and repurposing of the Courthouse are high, the benefits must be assessed beyond the building itself. Woodstock Square is a strong platform for today's retail environment. The town square, which more than a century ago was the height of modernity and a place where residents could shop, meet and engage in civic activity, had been replaced over the decades by, successively, main street, the mall, big box stores and the computer (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Evolution of Retail Space



To battle the current, ongoing rise of online shopping, the leading candidate today to invigorate local retail sales is a sense of place. Across the country, developers are establishing commercial centers that frame the shopping and dining experience as entertainment. These locations are mixed-use and walkable. They use public space and cohesive programming to attract visitors and get them to stay longer. They make the shopping experience a pleasant destination with unified architectural details and a human sense of scale.

One panel member mentioned Chicago's Millennium Park, which was an extremely expensive project that has become one of the city's premier tourist attractions and sparked what has been estimated as more than $2 billion dollars of real estate development. Certainly that is a project and impact on an entirely different scale—but the core idea of a cost/benefit calculation that goes beyond the four walls of the building itself holds true.

In the opinion of the panel, Woodstock Square is an asset that is rare and valuable—a genuine, historic version of a retail environment that developers in other municipalities nationwide are trying to recreate. Investment in the Courthouse should be viewed within that context: The calculus on what is financially sustainable for the property can and should be rethought in terms of the full cost-benefit to the square. The success of the Courthouse and the success of Woodstock Square are tightly linked—that fact should inform all decisions about the property.

Pedestrian plazas, a popular place-making tool for centuries is being increasingly used in new developments across the country. Top: Lucca, Italy; Bottom: Bryant Park, New York City; Right: New City, Chicago.

Photo Credit (Bryant Park): ASLA Award recipient, OLIN, photos by Peter Mauss/Esto and Felice Frankel

What creates a sense of place?

ULI's 10 principles for reinventing suburban business districts[2]

1. Understand your position in the market
2. Build community support
3. Develop a vision and a plan
4. Stress results over regulation
5. Break up the superblocks and optimize connectivity
6. Embrace mixed use
7. Honor the human scale by creating a pedestrian-friendly place
8. Think transit—think density
9. Create a public/private partnership
10. Share and manage parking

2. Booth, Geoffrey, et al. Ten Principles for Reinventing Suburban Business Districts. Washington, D.C.: ULI–the Urban Land Institute, 2002.

ULI's 10 principles for rebuilding neighborhood retail[3]

1. Great streets need great champions
2. It takes a vision
3. Think residential
4. Honor the pedestrian
5. Parking is power
6. Merchandise and lease proactively
7. Make it happen
8. Be clean, safe, and friendly
9. Extend day into night
10. Manage for change

3. Beyard, Michael D., Michael Pawlukiewicz, and Alex Bond. Ten Principles for Rebuilding Neighborhood Retail. Washington, D.C.: ULI–the Urban Land Institute, 2003.

Photo Credit (New City Development): Structured Development LLC, rendering by OKW Architects

2. Connect the Community

Through interviews and conversations with almost one hundred community members during the TAP process, it became clear that there is very strong community support for preserving and renovating the Courthouse. At the same time, there is very little consensus on what the future use should be - the panel heard widely varying opinions including a new City Hall, mixed retail shops, gallery space for the visual arts, a brewery, restaurant, and an upscale bar and grill.

Additionally, there is a lack of confidence in the process and decisions around the buildings in the last few years, in large part because the City's decision-making process to date has largely been ad hoc and closed to the public. The panel found that many community members and business owners want to be involved, but don't feel they have had a role to play or a voice in the process.

To make a comprehensive decision about the future of the property, the panel recommends the City take advantage of institutions and community members who are interested in preserving the Courthouse. Engaging a broad array of local stakeholders—from businesses to nonprofits and community groups to residents, including a growing Latino population—will both build consensus and bring in resources, ideas and energy to the process.

3. Build the Context: Improve Merchant Coordination in the Square

As much as 85 percent of the revenue on Woodstock Square comes from visitors to the town. The panel heard repeatedly, though, that marketing for Woodstock has been fragmented, the Chamber of Commerce is not effective, and some stores on the Square are closed on Sundays or during festivals or keep irregular hours.

To reach its potential, the "sense of place" model to support shopping and dining requires coordination, planning and consistency. Locations like The Grove in Los Angeles and North Michigan Avenue in Chicago are highly successful in part because organized, collaborative events and promotions bring in visitors who find a mix of dependable, interesting options.

As outlined in this report, the Woodstock Square already has an admirable number of assets for this model, such as special events throughout the year and retail, dining and entertainment options. Initiatives such as Promote Woodstock and Woodstock Celebrates are steps in the right direction, but developing a cohesive brand and marketing plan, and identifying a dedicated person or entity that can secure the cooperation of businesses around the Square, is critical for the long-term success of the Square and the Courthouse.

Woodstock community members share their vision for the Old Courthouse with the ULI Chicago panel.

Recommendations: Four Steps to a New Courthouse

To find the best available long-term use for the facility, the panel recommends a four step process that allows the City of Woodstock to address the immediate needs for the buildings and bring in crucial advisors and partners to identify the uses that best meet the needs of the community.

Step One: Issue a New RFP Limited to Stabilization

It is critical to complete the stabilization of the Courthouse and the Sheriff's House as soon as realistically possible to limit further damage to the buildings. The City of Woodstock would retain ownership during this period and could potentially use revenues from the existing downtown TIF and other available funds to finance the stabilization repairs.

To achieve this, the City should issue a new RFP that is focused solely on finishing stabilization of the buildings. The timeframe for completion should be six to eight months, and the cash outlay should be kept tight to minimize potential cost overruns and scope creep. Any restoration work done during this period should be use-independent, i.e. no modifications should be made that would limit options for a final tenant.

Step Two: Form an Advisory Board and Create a Common Vision

Recognizing that restoring the Courthouse and finding a sustainable use for it is a challenging task that will require support from many stakeholders in and beyond Woodstock, the panel recommends that concurrent with the stabilization effort, the City should form an advisory board.

The primary purpose of the advisory board will be to facilitate collaboration at the community and regional level and help define a common vision for the Courthouse. To get input and buy-in from a broad swath of allies, the advisory board should have a diverse set of representatives, including:

- City of Woodstock
- McHenry County
- Educational Institutions: Local School District, Community Colleges, and Universities
- Philanthropies such as the McHenry County Community Foundation
- Major Employers and Local Businesses, including Downtown Retailers
- Residents and Neighborhood Groups

The advisory board will also assess the community's needs and leverage existing assets to identify suitable future use(s) for the Courthouse. The panel recommends that the advisory board identify a project leader who can take charge of the rehabilitation process and implement the board-endorsed, community vision for the Courthouse. The project leader should be dedicated full-time to this task and have the following key qualifications:

- Fundraising expertise
- Real estate and development expertise including marketing and tenant (user) sourcing
- Management and teambuilding skills with demonstrated ability to leverage relationships at all levels

Step Three: Transition Ownership To A Nonprofit Organization

The Panel recommends that once building stabilization is complete, the advisory board should work with the City to establish a nonprofit organization dedicated to the long-term ownership and stewardship of the Courthouse.

Given that the Courthouse restoration is not internally profitable, private ownership of the building is extremely unlikely. Moreover, a private owner would likely restrict public access to the buildings in a way that will be unacceptable to the community. Therefore the panel does not recommend pursuing private ownership.

While the City could continue to maintain ownership, the panel believes that transitioning to a nonprofit ownership structure brings several advantages:

1. The City has many competing priorities to fulfill its core functions such as police, safety and transportation, whereas the nonprofit can focus exclusively on the Courthouse.
2. A nonprofit can make decisions about the site without entanglements in local politics or municipal operational restrictions.
3. Finally, the Courthouse is an asset for McHenry County as a region, not just the city, and decisions on its behalf should reflect that fact.

A nonprofit can also bring in resources not typically available to a municipal government, such as foundation grants, corporate giving, individuals' tax-deductible contributions, and pro bono or reduced price craftsman contractor participation. These potential funding sources can be added to a funding stream that could include naming rights or sponsorship opportunities, county, state or federal programs, TIF funds and municipal bonds.

The panel notes that historic tax credits (available only to a private owner or tenant) are not likely to be a viable financing mechanism for the Courthouse, because the high cost of obtaining tax credits will likely offset the financial benefits. To be eligible, all building changes must meet the exceedingly high standards of the State of Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. Not only will this add costs above and beyond "normal" preservation, it will also severely limit the ability to make changes to the buildings to accommodate future uses.

Some or all the members of the advisory board can transition into the nonprofit's active, professional working board and the project leader could potentially take on the role of the executive director. The nonprofit should have a well defined mission to follow the community's vision and historic preservation, and remain accountable by providing stakeholders and partners with solid cost accounting.

Step Four: Implement the Vision

The nonprofit and its executive director will have the following primary responsibilities for the Old Courthouse and the Sheriff's House:

- Finding the right end-user(s)
- Identifying and securing capital and operating funds
- Ongoing maintenance
- Finding the right design team to create a master floor plan
- Managing longer term rehabilitation and occupancy

Its work would be informed by other developments in Woodstock, such as the possible outdoor pavilion, new housing development and marketing and business coordination for the Square.

While searching for a final tenant, the nonprofit might continue the restoration of the Courthouse beyond the initial stabilization work. Because work will already have been done to safeguard the buildings from any ongoing damage, this is not strictly necessary. However, creating a "vanilla box" that is ready to be turned over to the tenant for interior build-out, would allow potential partners to have a clearer vision for what the Courthouse offers than in its current state.

This "vanilla box" option should not limit options for final use but should include improvements that will be necessary regardless of the end-user: these could include installing new HVAC systems, upgrading plumbing, bringing electrical wiring up to code and installing an elevator. Improvements such as re-painting areas with flaking paint, repairing or replacing severely damaged flooring could also be completed before a tenant and use is finalized.

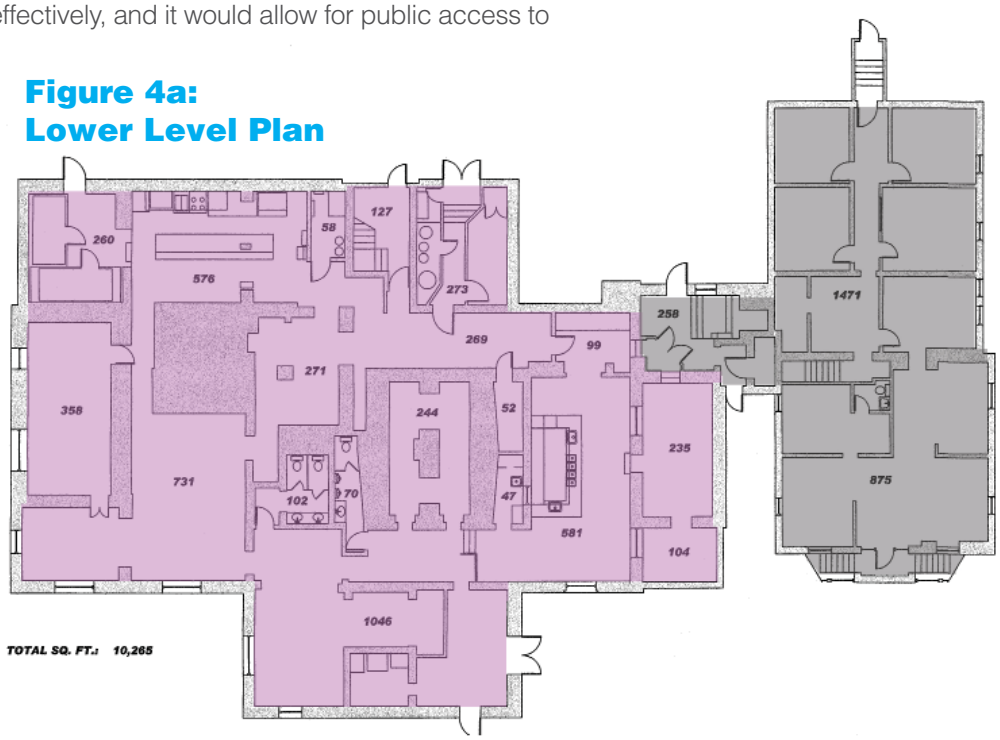
Recommendations: Final Use

Considering the importance of the building to Woodstock Square and the inherent limitations in the site, the Panel recommends that the question of end-users should be answered collaboratively by the newly established nonprofit and its partners.

Given Woodstock's strong focus on education and culture, the panel recommends that the Courthouse's stewards explore partnerships with institutions for higher learning as a potential anchor use for the Old Courthouse. Options could include schools that already have a connection to Woodstock and/or McHenry County, including School District 200, Aurora University, McHenry County College and Loyola University, or schools like Northern Illinois University or the University of Illinois with larger extension programs. Using the Courthouse as an educational space would address many of the Courthouse and Square's needs and assets. An educational institution can use the variety of spaces in the Courthouse effectively, and it would allow for public access to the building—even a possible Woodstock visitor center/student center/art gallery on the first floor. The students would bring energy and additional foot traffic to the Square creating a more robust business environment for the local merchants. An educational institution would likely have more long-term staying power than a for-profit business, and its mission would be more likely to attract foundation and other philanthropic support.

Furthermore, the educational purpose could be tied to Woodstock's strengths. Workforce training and flexible educational programming based on study areas such as hospitality, landscape architecture and agricultural sciences could be connected to and take advantage of Woodstock's many working farms, institutions such as the farmer's market, as well as the growing eco and agri-tourism industry. These conceptual uses are illustrated in Figures 4a-c. Whatever the end-use might be, the panel

Figure 4a:
Lower Level Plan



feels strongly that by working together and partnering with local and regional institutions, the City has the best possible chance of re-inventing the Old Courthouse as a community anchor for another 150 years.

Figure 4b: First Floor Plan

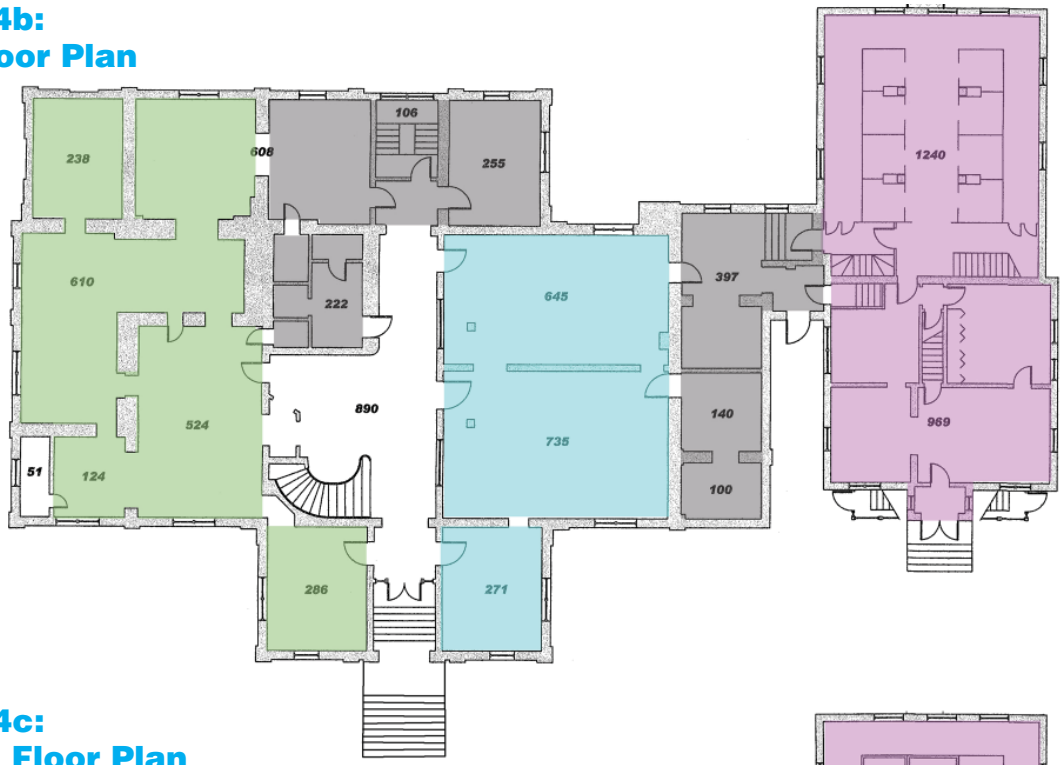
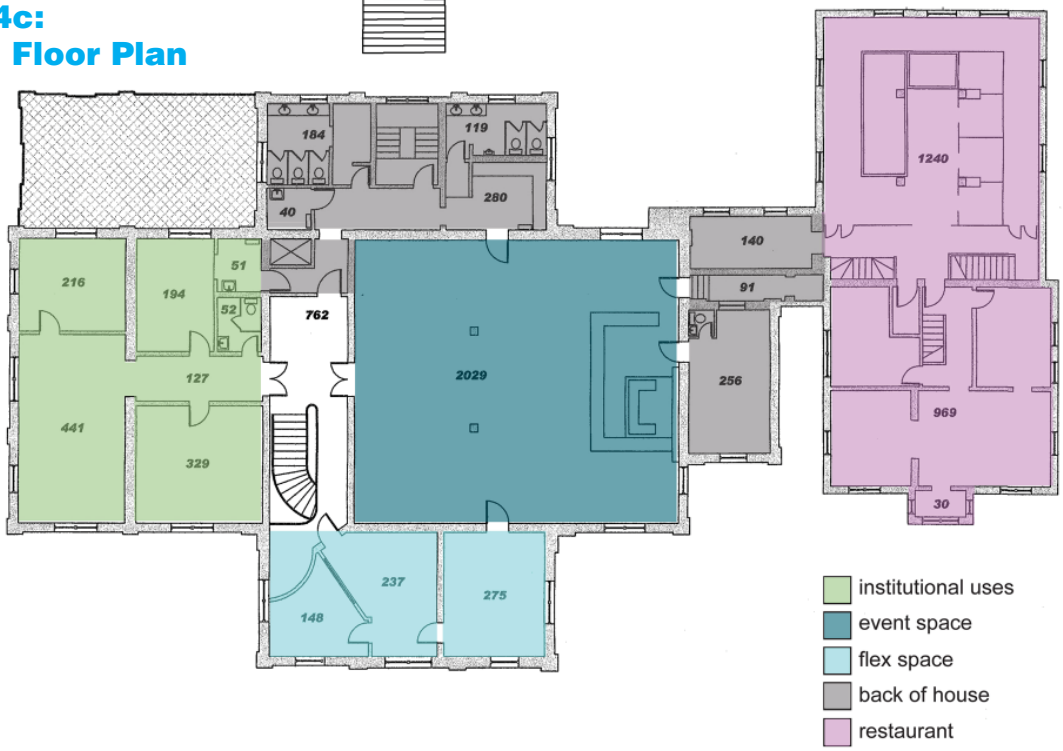


Figure 4c: Second Floor Plan



Successful Examples

Although the Woodstock Square and the Courthouse are unique, many municipalities have faced similar situations. ULI compiled a list of several courthouses from around the county that underwent an adapted reuse, including federal and county buildings that were converted into residential housing, hotels and office space. Notable examples of conversions to cultural or educational reuse include:

Ada County Courthouse
Boise, Idaho

This 1930s federal courthouse was converted to the Idaho Law and Justice Learning Center for the University of Idaho. The $6 million renovation includes classrooms and work spaces for law students, offices for personnel for the nearby Idaho Supreme Court and a state law library.

Jackson County Courthouse
Sylva, North Carolina

After serving as a courthouse for 80 years, this building, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, was converted into office, meeting and program space for local non profit organizations, and a two-story addition was added to house the Jackson County Public Library.

Old Harrison County Courthouse
Marshall, Texas

Located at the center of Whetstone Square in Marshall, Texas, this three-story Neo-Classical/Beaux Arts cross plan courthouse was built in 1900 and served as the County seat until 1964. In 2010, the old courthouse was renovated to house the Harrison County Historical Museum, on the first and second floors, and government offices on the third floor.

Old Federal Building
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Ferris State University spent $31 million to renovate this 91,000 square feet building into a high-tech educational facility for its Kendall College of Art and Design. The century-old federal courthouse had also been reused as an art museum in the past.

Additional resources on reusing old courthouses can be found in the following report: "Federal Courthouses: Better Planning Needed Regarding Reuse of Old Courthouses," United States Government Accountability Office (GAO), November 2013.

Also, neighborhoods and municipalities, many in the Chicagoland area, have been very successful in creating vibrant business districts. As the City of Woodstock looks to strengthen its historic square and thereby the context for the Courthouse, it should consider reviewing the choices and operations, and interviewing representatives from these examples. Options include but are not limited to:

- Business promotion by Main Street Libertyville in the historic downtown of Libertyville, Illinois
- Coordinated retail in the River North Design Center in Chicago
- Coordination of historic preservation and planning in the Pullman District in Chicago by the nonprofit Neighborhood Development Initiatives
- Stores and marketing in historic Merchants Square in Williamsburg, Virginia
- Community commercial revitalization strategies for business districts by CORO in New York City

The Old Federal Building in Grand Rapids, Michigan renovated into a LEED-Gold certifed educational facility for the Kendall College of Art and Design.

Photo Credit: Kendall College of Art and Design of Ferris State University; photo: Matt Gubancsik

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