



June 11, 2026

City of La Crosse Historic Preservation Commission

La Crosse, Wisconsin 54601

Dear Commission Members and La Crosse City Council:

On behalf of the La Crosse Area Chamber of Commerce, we appreciate the City's longstanding commitment to preserving the historic character and cultural heritage of our community. Historic preservation plays an important role in shaping La Crosse's identity and remains a value shared across our business community.

We are writing to respectfully encourage the City Council to consider reviewing the current historic preservation and designation process to ensure it continues to serve the City of La Crosse in the most effective and balanced way possible.

In recent years, the designation process has come into focus through several projects, including those involving local institutions and evolving urban campuses. Most recently, Mayo Clinic ran into issues with the designation of its Professional Arts Building, with leaders concerned about how they'll be able to properly adapt the building for modern patient care. We've seen what happened in Eau Claire with the loss of the Sacred Heart Hospital. As healthcare systems evolve to better fit the needs of their patients, we should be making it easier for them to work in La Crosse instead of getting in their way.

Experiences like these have prompted broader discussion within the business community about how the current process functions and whether it fully aligns with today's conditions and priorities.

As currently structured, the process may benefit from re-evaluation in a few key areas:

- **Alignment with modern city planning realities.** The City and community needs have evolved significantly, with increasing complexity around land use, housing needs, institutional operations, and economic development. It may be worth considering whether the ordinance appropriately reflects these broader dynamics.
- **Consistency with the stated purpose and intent.** The ordinance outlines important goals, including strengthening the economy, supporting community welfare, and promoting responsible growth. A review could help ensure the current criteria and decision-making process consistently support these outcomes in practice.
- **Clarity, predictability, and collaboration.** There may be opportunities to improve how the process encourages early dialogue, reduces uncertainty for property owners and

stakeholders, and supports more collaborative outcomes rather than reactive or time-sensitive decisions.

- **Consideration of long-range planning and institutional needs.** Several recent situations have highlighted the importance of balancing preservation with the ability of organizations to adapt their facilities to meet changing demands. Evaluating how the process accounts for these long-term considerations may be beneficial, especially with respect to institutions that have a thorough internal review process when reviewing their property needs.

We want to emphasize that this request is not about diminishing the importance of historic preservation. Rather, it is about ensuring the process remains thoughtful, transparent, and aligned with the broader goals and future direction of our community.

We believe a workshop or study could be a productive step in evaluating whether adjustments to the ordinance or process would better reflect current conditions while still honoring the City's commitment to preservation. We would be willing to collaborate with the City on facilitating such a process.

Thank you for your leadership and your willingness to engage in conversations that strengthen La Crosse for the future. We appreciate your consideration and would welcome the opportunity to participate in further discussion.

Respectfully,



Sam Scinta

CEO, La Crosse Area Chamber of Commerce