

**Elsen, Nikki**

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**From:** David Riel <driel1974@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, July 7, 2024 11:30 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members; ZZ City Clerk External; Acklin, Tim  
**Subject:** Reject Mayor's Appeal of Historic Landmark Designation

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Dear City Council Members,

I was told that Mayor Mitch Reynolds is appealing the Historic Landmark designation of the South Branch Library building. As the author of the Historic Landmark nomination, I urge you to uphold the HPC's decision to designate the South Branch Library a Historic Landmark and reject the Mayor's appeal.

It's vitally important for you to support the Holy Trinity-Longfellow Neighborhood Association's goal to repurpose the library building. The petition they created, which documents the public's desire to save the building from demolition, received about 540 signatures from members of this community. It's a publicly-owned building, paid for by them and multiple generations of residents, so their concerns should be paramount as you're making this decision.

I also want to encourage you to support the ECDC decision, allowing Willow Grove LLC to convert the library site into apartments and townhouses, creating a "pocket neighborhood". Their plan repurposes a financially valuable historic asset, while keeping hundreds of tons of demolition waste out of the landfill. Turning the library site into apartments and townhouses is a "win-win" for both housing advocates and preservationists. The Willow Grove LLC proposal should be celebrated.

That's why it's ironic the Mayor would seek an appeal after all this progress has taken place. That progress is one reason you should reject his appeal. The other reason you should reject his appeal is because of the multi-decade investment the taxpayers of this city have made in the library building. When the South Branch Library was built in 1952, it cost taxpayers \$128,000 (which adjusted for inflation is the equivalent of about \$1,490,000). Back in 1993, the library was remodeled for a cost to taxpayers of \$247,293 (which adjusted for inflation is the equivalent of about \$533,000). And just three years ago, a new roof was added which cost taxpayers \$74,710. Given the significant financial investment the city has made in this building, the Mayor's attempt to overturn the historic designation doesn't make good financial sense, nor does it align with his administration's emphasis on environmental stewardship.

If La Crosse wants to be seen as a city of the arts, we should preserve the work of our architects. If La Crosse wants to do its part in fighting climate change, we should prioritize a reduction in demolition waste. And if La Crosse is committed to upholding democracy, the wishes of its residents should not be ignored.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

David Riel

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