

## Dinkel, Jenna

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**From:** Mindel, Mackenzie  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 22, 2023 5:51 PM  
**To:** Dinkel, Jenna  
**Subject:** Fwd: Support historic designation for Lincoln Middle School

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
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Mackenzie Mindel, MA SISL  
District 8 Council Member  
Chair, Climate Action Plan Steering Committee  
Chair, Heritage Preservation Commission

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**From:** cvm <cvanmaren@protonmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 22, 2023 5:14:01 PM  
**To:** Acklin, Tim <Acklint@cityoflacrosse.org>  
**Cc:** Mindel, Mackenzie <mindelm@cityoflacrosse.org>  
**Subject:** Support historic designation for Lincoln Middle School

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Dear Commission Members,

I hope to attend tonight's HPC meeting online. I would like to encourage the Commission to approve the designation of the original building that is now known as Lincoln Middle School as a Local Historic Landmark. As the application notes, the building is a unique example of an important school of school-specific architecture. In addition, it is sound and usable.

My reasons for supporting this designation go beyond, but include, the building's historic value. Preserving our historic structures also means showing and teaching respect for the labor, materials, and skilled work that went into making it in the first place. Our throw-away culture is unhealthy, not economically feasible, and unsustainable. When we discard old buildings for new, I think, we demonstrate poor values and poor financial stewardship. The materials in these buildings-- floors, woodwork, tilework--are, in many cases, higher quality than replacements. Having old buildings brought back to life in our neighborhoods is an important thread that weaves our community together. Maintaining our old buildings helps us maintain our stories and our understanding of how communities evolve and change. Our history grows with us and within us; when we discard it, we discard parts of ourselves.

[Anyone who has traveled in Europe knows and understands the value and the possibilities of maintaining old buildings as historic sites and as modern useful parts of a community. There is a sense of wonder and connection when one is in a centuries old building that is still vital and useful.]

In addition, there is the carbon cost of destroying old buildings. The "embodied carbon" includes the emissions from logging, mining, manufacturing, processing, transporting, constructing, and maintaining the existing structure. Study after study has shown that in most cases, refurbishing existing buildings is better for carbon emissions than destroying and building new. Even if the new structure is built to the highest efficiency standards, the "carbon payback" is measured in decades. Given that our carbon budget runs out, at current "spending" rates, in about seven years, we must prioritize the

lowest carbon-footprint option for our buildings as possible, I believe. As one researcher says, “The greenest building is the one that already exists.”

If we are taking our city's carbon-reduction goals seriously, the carbon consequences of all decisions, but especially whether buildings are razed or not, must take top priority.

I won't go into my long Grandpa Simpson story about, as a high school student, exploring the old buildings on Second and Front Streets just before they were torn down for urban renewal, but knowing the value now of what was thrown away then is pretty heart-breaking.

We can and should preserve Lincoln for its historic value, for its beauty, to respect the materials and effort that went into its construction, and to adhere to our city's carbon-reduction pledge.

Cathy Van Maren

2815 Highland St.

La Crosse

<https://aecom.com/without-limits/article/refurbishment-vs-new-build-the-carbon-and-business-case/>

<https://www.buildinggreen.com/newsbrief/raze-or-retrofit-care-tool-has-answer>

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/jun/08/global-greenhouse-gas-emissions-at-all-time-high-study-finds>