



# Waukesha County

## Former Health and Human Services Building Fact Sheet

**Background:** Waukesha County acquired the Moor Downs property in 1972 at the urging of the City of Waukesha, and with the understanding that the property would be used for future County facilities.

In 2001, without the request or support of Waukesha County, the City of Waukesha Landmarks Commission unilaterally designated the former Health and Human Services (HHS) building and its grounds a local landmark. This designation subjects the property to local regulations controlling the maintenance and existence of the structure.

In 2013, a new HHS building was funded and built. The old building remains vacant.

**Historic Value:** The property has been significantly altered since 1950. The building has gone through multiple renovations to function as a seminary, a college, and county offices.

**Property Value Assessment:** A 2013 Building Assessment Report concluded an expenditure of \$24 million would be needed to renovate the vacant former HHS Building. An appraisal of the property placed the market value of the property at \$1,300,000.

It was determined by the County that it was not be fiscally responsible to renovate the building, even for temporary use.

**Future Property Use:** The vacant former HHS building is in an optimal location for potential future County use in a consolidated government center. The County has been actively placing property near the government center back on the tax roll with the desire to consolidate operations for cost savings.

**Attempts to Sell the Property:** The County under took two separate processes to find a buyer willing to preserve the landmark.

In 2014, the County hired a broker to market the property for lease or sale of the building. In addition to listing the property on multiple websites, the broker reached out by both mail and phone to over 850 different companies

from various fields who might be interested in the property. No offer to purchase was received.

In 2015, the County released a Request for Proposals for the sale and development of the vacant former HHS building. The County received a proposed offer with a purchase price of \$400,000. However, this offer did not meet RFP condition of sale requirements, including parking and access requirements, and other conditions that would have exposed taxpayers to additional un-necessary cost. Inability to meet condition of sale requirements rendered the value of the purchase price at \$0, with the potential of incurring additional costs to taxpayers.

**Landmark  
Designation:**

Consistent with City codes, the County approached the City to rescind the landmark designation and allow the County to proceed with taking down the building, which is a cost and safety liability.

The City, desiring to preserve the history associated with this building, denied the County's request stating the County has not acted in good faith to find a buyer for the property.

**Safety Concerns:**

The vacant former HHS property is associated several safety hazards. The building is full of hazardous building materials, including lead paint and asbestos. Asbestos remediation alone is estimated to cost \$800,000.

Additionally, the vacant building has attracted multiple instances of illegal activity, including trespassing, vandalism and theft attempts.