

Worksheet for UW-Dairy Barn

Goal:

To preserve the Dairy Barn in its current character and context as “the barn that made Wisconsin the Dairy State.”

The Key Preservation Tool:

Finding an appropriate adaptive re-use option for the Dairy Barn that creates interest and energy.

Adaptive Re-Use Opportunities in University Settings

Numerous colleges and universities across the country have found that public barns and other agricultural buildings can be used for alternate uses that bring value and attention to the academic setting. Here is a partial list:

- The University of Georgia moved and reconstructed a two-story barn for use as an alumni center for the School of Agriculture.
- At Mississippi State University in Starkville, the School of Architecture incorporated an old dairy barn into their complex to house studio, office, and library space.
- A campus barn at Middle Tennessee State University has been the “Art Barn” for many years.
- The former Agricultural Experiment Station barn on the University of Maine campus at Orono was moved a couple of hundred feet and then converted into a farm/home museum.
- Sweet Briar College, Amherst County, Virginia, took an old barn and converted it into a 30,000-square-foot complex that eventually became the Virginia Center for Creative Arts.
- The University of New Hampshire in Durham took an old barn that housed sheep and shorthorns and made it into the campus parking office/bus terminal. They also converted their old horse barn into the campus visitor center. The former dairy barn is used for 4H offices and equine staff.
- Washington State University at Pullman converted a 24,000-square-foot dairy barn into an alumni center which has become the landmark meeting location on campus. No public funds were used to renovate the building. Keith Lincoln, Alumni Director, is available to talk about the conversion at 509-335-2586.
- UC-Davis has saved two barns and one silo complex. The silo is used as an eatery, coffee shop, and administrative offices. One barn houses the Architecture and Engineering Departments along with some additional offices. Bob Strand, Campus Architect, is available to talk about the preservation plan at 530-752-1956.

Adaptive Re-Use Considerations for the Dairy Barn

Two broad questions are worthy of initial contemplation:

- 1) What natural re-use opportunities are provided by the barn, and
- 2) What campus or College of Agricultural and Life Sciences needs could be satisfied by the barn?

To question 1, because of the Dairy Barn's size, layout, integrity, and previous uses, any number of new uses are possible. To question 2, one broad weakness on the western end of campus is the lack of a quality visitor/reception center for staff and students. Union South does not fill this need. The Dairy Barn could make for a superb visitor/reception center. Moreover, it is large enough that related uses (e.g., offices, meeting rooms, food services) could also be placed there with minimal imposition.

What else is possible? At least two other ideas are worthy of preliminary discussion. Since mid-1997 the Barn has been under consideration as a site for a proposed Museum of Living Sciences to welcome people to campus every day in an organized way to experience science as a way of exploring the unknown. Actions taken included a structural assessment of the Barn, a historical review documenting its role in research and extension, and several public meetings to plumb the possibilities. Obtaining support and funding for a business plan to project the costs of conversion and operation is a key challenge facing this vision for an inspiring reuse of the Barn.

A new idea is gaining traction in the State Legislature and elsewhere: a "Dairy Heritage Center." The Center would commemorate the people, the equipment, the research, the cows, etc. that made this "The Dairy State." The University played a key role in making Wisconsin "The Dairy State," and it should certainly stake out its interest in this unique opportunity, suggesting that the Dairy Barn can be used to highlight campus teaching, research, and outreach activities over the past 120 years.

What Barns N.O.W! and the Madison Trust Can Bring to This Project

Barns N.O.W! and the Madison Trust for Historic Preservation are uniquely equipped to help assure the success of the Dairy Barn Preservation Project. First and foremost, we bring a highly motivated and energized membership to create awareness and positive publicity through newsletters, workshops, and websites. This brings the College and University an extended network of contacts and friends throughout the Midwest. Secondly, should the preservation project require outside financial assistance, we would be very pleased to help in whatever ways were deemed appropriate. Thirdly, we have access to an array of contractors/consultants experienced in barn preservation projects of all kinds across the country. Numerous contractors just served as instructors at our recently completed workshop in Sauk County. Finally, we remain willing to support the project upon its completion, perhaps getting involved in barn tours along with hosting various events in the completed structure.

In sum, we are very interested in remaining a positive force for the preservation of the Dairy Barn in all that this entails. To the extent that we, as interested and highly motivated citizens and organizations, can be considered partners in this unique preservation project, we would like to be so.

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