



August 6, 2021

Adam Thompson, City Administrator  
City of Ely  
1570 Rowley Street  
Ely, IA 52227

Re: **City Hall Building Evaluation (Phase 1)**

Dear Mr. Thompson, Mayor Miller and Council,

**Introduction**

The City of Ely is evaluating the current and future use of the City Hall building located at 1570 Rowley St in Ely, Iowa. The building, constructed as a schoolhouse in 1923, is on the National Registry of Historic Places. MSA met with Administrator Thompson on February 23<sup>rd</sup> to discuss project expectations and performed a site visit on July 20<sup>th</sup>. It is anticipated that the building will require a number of repairs in the near future, including damage from last year's derecho storm, ADA & egress upgrades, existing masonry, HVAC and general safety.

MSA was hired to:

- Review any existing conditions information provided by the Owner
- Perform one (1) site visit to City Hall to visually observe:
  - ADA as they relate to Entry/Exits & Routes and Restrooms
  - Egress concerns as they relate to fire safety
  - Condition of existing masonry limited to what can be observed from ground level
  - Condition of HVAC limited to what can be observed by examining existing equipment
- Review additional information provided by Owner
  - Information and quote for replacement of windows
  - Previously created conceptual plans for reconfiguration of the second floor
- Prepare a report in letter format that includes:
  - Identified deficiencies in the observed areas
  - Potential conceptual corrective measures
  - Anticipated range of construction costs for corrective measures. Note that cost of work on historical buildings can vary widely based on the professional chosen and the type of work being performed.

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MSA's services did not include the following:

- Evaluation of Electrical, Plumbing or Fire Suppression services
- Building safety/security assessment
- Structural evaluation, analysis and calculations
- Asbestos, mold and/or lead inspection, sampling, testing and/or

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abatement

- Design & construction drawings and/or specification development
- Construction cost estimates, Bidding Services or Construction Services

On July 20, 2021, we visually observed the existing building and walked throughout to visually observe the lower level, first floor, second floor and exterior walls. Our general observation is that the building is in good relative condition and working order. We did not observe any active leaks, although there was evidence of previous moisture (or other) in the office area ceiling tiles. We did not observe any significant structural concerns or safety hazards in the areas we walked through.


### **Observed Deficiencies & Conceptual Corrective Measures**

- I. ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) Entry/Exit & Routes
  - a. Single entry point into the building is located on the northwest side facing Rowley St. It was noted that the transition strip at this entry had a height differential of more than  $\frac{1}{2}$ ". *Recommend future concrete stoop work include adjustment to address height. Cost anticipated less than \$500.*
  - b. Accessible parking spaces at the front of the building have signs but are not painted. An aisle, minimum 60" wide, must be provided next to ADA parking space for loading/unloading. This may be shared between two spaces. Stalls shall be 96" (8') wide minimum. Slopes were not checked as part of the inspection as it was not clear exactly where stalls would be located but should not exceed 2% in any direction for the parking space. See following photo for existing condition. *Recommend restriping (painting) ADA compliant stalls for parking. Cost anticipated approx. \$500.*



- c. Single user elevator was noted in the Foyer of the building. Although this was not tested, the placard inside indicated it was operational. Elevator provided access to the lower level and second floor. Testing of the opening force needed to operate the sliding door proved problematic. *Recommend replacing or repairing the door to bring operation into compliance. Cost anticipated approx. \$1500 per sliding door.*
    - d. All stairs, handrails and guardrails observed appear to be in compliance.

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- e. Front doors, as well as doors exiting from Assembly spaces, appeared to have functioning panic hardware and be in compliance.
  - f. Accessible exiting from the lower level or second floor is limited to the elevator. In an emergency situation, this could be problematic depending on the location of the emergency. *Recommend identifying areas of rescue assistance at all stairs. Cost anticipated approx. \$0.*
  - g. Exit & Emergency lighting appeared to be located appropriately and functional. However, we would *recommend further identifying accessible exits as such and adding signage for Areas of Refuge. Cost anticipated approx. \$50 per sign.*
- II. ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) Restrooms
- a. Drinking fountain was observed on lower level and second floor of the building. Per ADA, dual access is required for both people who use wheelchairs and for standing persons. Both observed locations provided single height only – the lower wheelchair accessible height. Drinking fountain on second floor lacked proper clear floor space for access. *Recommend evaluating location and providing dual access units (with water bottle filling) with future space reconfigurations. Cost anticipated approx. \$1,750 each.*
  - b. Grab bars were observed in both Men & Women accessible toilet stalls. Although an alternate configuration, both appeared to meet the intent of the code.
  - c. Accessible toilets and accessories in both Men's & Women's Restrooms were found to be in general compliance.
  - d. Lavatory height in both bathrooms was observed to be non-compliant at 36 inches above finish floor. *Recommend lowering height of sink and counter, as well as associated elements, in the future. Evaluate sink operation in conjunction with this work and consider automatic fixtures. Cost anticipated approx. \$2,000 each.*
  - e. Entry to both Men's & Women's Restroom lacked code required pull distance from inside the room. Men's Restroom lacked required turning radius in common space. *As both doors were observed in the hold-open position, recommend removing doors as a less expensive alternate to reconfiguring the room. Little to no cost to do so.*
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- III. Egress & Fire Safety
- a. As previously mentioned in this report, accessible entry and exit from the building is only obtained currently through the elevator. This presents as most problematic during an emergency situation.
  - b. Egress from the lower level is possible through the main entry/exit or through the assembly space on the west side of the building. Although both options require the navigation of stairs, these are generally acceptable in a historic structure.



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- c. Egress from the second floor is possible through the main entry/exit or through the chamber room via the exterior fire escape stair. Although both options require the navigation of stairs, these are generally acceptable in a historic structure. However, both means of egress from the second floor are located on the eastern half of the building. This poses potential problems for users on the western part of the building (offices) should there be an emergency situation between them and the exits. *One recommendation would be to consider an additional means of egress from the western office areas. Cost anticipated approx. \$15,000. Additional recommendations will be discussed later in the report and involve reconfiguration of space.*



#### IV. Existing Masonry

- a. Staining was observed in multiple locations on the exterior of the building. Most of this appears to be from roof or sill drainage that carried dirt and debris in its path. If the path of water travel has not been remedied and excessive wetting in these areas of staining is still present, this should be addressed first.
- b. Overall, the condition of the masonry was found to be acceptable for a building of this age. No signs of structural distress were observed. There were a few areas where mortar had begun to chip/crack and a few window heads where lintels could be observed. *Recommend engaging a contractor experienced with treatment of historical buildings to perform a cleaning of the overall building exterior followed by tuckpointing or repointing, as appropriate. As part of this work, it will be important the contractor utilize materials and techniques*





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*appropriate for a historical masonry structure and compatible with the existing materials. Cost anticipated \$4,000-\$5,000 for cleaning. Approx. \$60,000 for tuckpointing & repointing, depending on extent. Note that costs for work on this nature vary widely for historic buildings based on materials, treatment and availability of qualified masons. Highly recommend obtaining an evaluation and bid from a qualified mason.*

- c. A few cracks of various sizes were observed in the exterior of the foundation on multiple sides of the building. Although we observed no interior evidence of cracking or damage related to these locations, the Owner should watch for any evidence of this in the future. *Recommend watching the smaller cracks and taking action should they grow. For the larger cracks, recommend excavating surrounding soils as needed to expose the extent of the crack, removing loose concrete material, and injecting/infilling with epoxy grout crack repair or cementitious polymer modified concrete mix. A contractor experienced with treatment of historical buildings is recommended for this work. Cost anticipated*



- d. *Recommend extending downspouts to direct water a minimum of three feet from the building. One such extension was observed on site, but not connected. Cost anticipated approx. \$150.*

#### V. HVAC

- a. The existing building was observed to be served by four separate systems with the second floor divided into two zones and the lower level divided into two zones. Further observation and conversations with the users revealed that the majority of the furnaces and condensing units are nearing the end of their expected life span, with some of them past that range. As uses and configurations have changed, the balancing of the systems and what areas they serve has caused temperature differentials in multiple user occupied areas. *Recommend engaging with an experienced contractor to replace all systems with higher efficiency units where possible and perform necessary air balancing after installation. Contractor should also evaluate how the current systems are zoned and make adjustments as needed to better match the current use of space. Cost anticipated \$40,000-\$75,000 based on upgrades desired.*

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- b. *When planning for new windows, consider adding glazing with a low emissivity (low-e) coating to help reduce heat gain in the summer and heat loss in the winter, particularly on the west side of the building. There are other options for reducing heat gain as well – these should be discussed with your contactor and chosen window manufacturer prior to accepting any bids for window replacement.*

### **Review of Provided Documentation/Information**

#### **VI. Window Report**

- a. Prior to the building observation, MSA received and reviewed the Forensic Engineering Report and the Cost Estimate from McGuire Construction for the window replacement. In general, we would agree with the statements made in McGuire's proposal and estimate as they relate to the window condition and integrity. *Recommend full replacement of windows.*
- b. It was noted that many of the windows in the lower level may not require operability and should be replaced as stationary units. The owner also noted some security concerns which would also be remedied by the use of stationary units. *Consider stationary units in the lower level.*

#### **VII. Existing Conceptual Floor Plans & Future Use**

- a. On the day of the building observation, the Owner representative shared conceptual floor plans that were previously created for the second floor. Users also discussed concerns regarding emergencies on the second floor and lack of access to egress. Future use of the second floor, and the building overall, should consider the anticipated growth the City of Ely over the upcoming years. The concepts listed below are solely for consideration based on our observations and conversations with users.
  - i. Consider moving Council Chambers to the Lower Level and converting the space to be used for a dual purpose: Community Room & Council Chamber. We see this as a commonly used approach in communities where space is at a premium. A reconfiguration of chairs/tables would allow the space to serve both functions and allow the restrooms to be on the same floor as the community functions. Note that the Council Chamber and Community Room are both assembly spaces. As such, clarifying and resolving means of egress should be considered a high priority.
  - ii. Consider allowing the second floor to become office and administrative space. For security reasons, we would recommend creating a secured entry at the top stairs to separate the offices from the public space. This could be incorporated into similar layout at the top floor landing so a waiting area could be maintained.
  - iii. Consider reconfiguring the office/administrative space on the secured side of the second floor to better serve your current needs as well as the future. This would also allow better, and more secure, access to the second means of egress on that floor – the fire escape.

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It is our commitment to you to bring our expertise together with your needs and assist the City in developing the best and most appropriate solutions. We truly believe in making partners and not just making projects. Please feel free to contact us at any time with questions you may have on this report.

Sincerely,  
MSA Professional Services, Inc.



Maranna Binder, AIA, LEED AP BD+C  
Team Leader



Joe Elsinger P.E.  
Team Leader

JRE