



HARBOR HISTORY MUSEUM



REPURPOSING PROPOSAL SUMMARY

~ FORMER MASONIC LODGE ~

“[The Schoolhouse design] speaks to the structure’s history as the school and to its long tenure as the Masonic Lodge, and to the building that has existed there for as long as I can remember. It is a signature historic structure for Gig Harbor and Crescent Valley.”

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Overview

The Masonic Lodge building as we know it today originated as the Crescent Valley School. Built in 1915 as a two-room, two-story structure, it served as a school for four decades.

It was purchased by the Masons in 1949 and renovated to the floorplan we know today. It served as a Masonic Lodge for nearly six decades. Numerous prominent community members were active Masons, instrumental in the shaping of our city as we know it today.

The City of Gig Harbor bought the Lodge and surrounding property in [2017] with the intention of adding the property to Crescent Creek Park. This will involve annexing the property into the city and rezoning it to PI (Public Institution).

The building has a long history of being a public gathering place, from its days as a school to its home for the masons (and other community groups). **It is the goal of the Community Advocacy Group to see it once again serving the community as a Community Recreation Hall, a use for which it is already zoned and the primary preferred use identified by survey respondents.**

Community Advocacy

During a study session in 2023, the Gig Harbor City Council discussed the demolition of the Lodge and appeared to conclude that that direction was the preferred path of the council. Community outcry by neighbors, historic preservationists, and past masons and school students put demolition on hold and activated an MOU between the city and the Harbor History Museum (HHM)/Gig Harbor Peninsula Historical Society. This all-volunteer group assembled by HHM, consisted of approximately 20 participants representing various backgrounds and interests. They met in monthly public meetings over the last year to secure public input and provide community members with the opportunity to provide input into potential uses, designs, and funding strategies.

After two public surveys and nearly a year of review and discussion, the committee is proud to put forward the following recommendation to City Council.

Summary Recommendation

In short, the group--with considerable public input (1000+ responses to Survey #1 and 223 responses to Survey #2)--recommends that the old Masonic Lodge be repurposed as a Community Recreation Hall on the upper floor and museum-quality storage on the lower floor. These two uses complement each other, are in existing code compliance, and accommodate the mandated ratio of occupants to parking spaces (4:1).

This use scenario and design solution also accomplishes a number of important services to the community:

1. Repurposes a well-built building for much-needed community use
2. Retains our local history and provides an avenue for interpreting said history in an active and engaging way
3. Provides secure, climate-controlled space for both city and museum collections
4. Provides much-needed parking and restrooms in the upper area of the park
5. Follows a well-established pattern of community hall/structural rehabilitation in our area
6. Answers the demands of numerous community arts, heritage, science, and public groups who need year-round indoor gathering space

Cost Summary

The Community Advocacy Group met with Washington Patriot Construction who graciously agreed to provide a construction estimate based on the “schoolhouse” design (as selected by survey). This cost estimate assumed that the building would be re-roofed and sided, an addition for restrooms and catering kitchen would be added, ADA compliances addressed, and all asbestos and lead paint sites would be remediated.

Construction Estimate – Building rehabilitation and addition: \$4,583,077 (incl \$354,558 tx)

Further review with Washington Patriot Construction determined that a tear-down and rebuild would be approximately \$1million more.

A rehabilitation of the building alone with no new addition (hence no park restrooms or a community catering kitchen) would be about \$1 million less.

Survey Summary ---

Overall, **Survey 1** was intended to determine the level of community need and desire for saving the building and repurposing it for arts, heritage, science, and general community use. The response was a surprising 1001 replies with significant support for a community theater and/community recreation hall. No images were used in this survey because use and need were the primary items to be measured. Many other potential uses were identified in the survey, but almost all could be accommodated via the community recreation hall designation.

Building on the previous survey, **Survey 2** used images and scenarios to gauge interest in particular styles of renovation and their associated costs. Of the 208 responses, the “schoolhouse” conceptual design ranked an average of 72 out of 100, with WPA and “Basic” ranking 35 and 33 respectively. Respondents ranked the need for an addition including kitchen and restrooms an average of 71 out of 100.

When it came to the bottom line, in terms of design, cost, and useability, 63.76% of respondents felt that repurposing the Lodge with the new addition for restrooms and kitchen was the best option, trailed by 16.51% for the most basic rehabilitation, 11.01% preferring demolition for parking and freestanding restrooms, and finally 8.72% opting for a brand-new building.

In short, there was marginal support for demolition in either survey, despite a stated desire for more volleyball and pickleball courts. For reference, the lodge footprint is the equivalent of just one volleyball court, and any Lodge parking installed (54 spaces are required) would also serve other park uses.

Our takeaway from the Survey and Review process was that the vast majority of our community respondents were in favor of the building's adaptive reuse--including a new addition for restrooms and kitchen, as well as a design that echoed the Crescent Valley School and Masonic Lodge--even if it fell in the \$4.5 million dollar category.

Additionally, there was a high level of support for nomination of the building to the city historic register; a recognition that can assist with grant funding as well.

Funding Strategy

The city has a responsibility and general desire to care for and make functional for public use the historic properties it purchases. Certain challenges exist, as they always do with historic public properties, but they are not insurmountable. The city has demonstrated this desire with the successful rehabilitation of Ancich Netshed, the Andrew Skansie House, and the Gig Harbor BoatShop and Brick House.

The easiest route to funding is through a Building for the Arts grant, the model for which would look like this:

Project Budget: \$4.5 million

BFA Grant* funds = \$1.5 million (applications open in 2026, 2:1 match req)

City Funds = \$2,956,000 (up to \$2+ million can be committed via Hospital Benefit Zone)

Community Funds Already Committed: \$44,000 (for catering kitchen and Geotech testing)

*Grant writing and project management services may be contracted for via HHM.

Additional Public Funds may be secured through:

Pierce County Landmarks and Historic Preservation Building Fund IF the building is placed on the city and/or county historic register.

Washington State Heritage Capital Projects Fund (applications open 2026)

Maritime Washington National Heritage Area

State Appropriation

Cultural Access Funding IF designated for use by arts and cultural organizations who provide educational programming.

Federal Sources such as:

National Endowment for the Arts: Our Town Grants (up to \$150,000)

National Park Service: Competitive Grants and HPF Formula Grants for Historic Preservation

National Trust for Historic Preservation

Lease-Management Model

Management and funding must work in partnership in order to be successful. The management model proposed as a result of the investigations of the community advocacy group are as follows:

- **A single non-profit entity leases the building as both “manager” and “occupant”** for a nominal fee (equitable to other NP-City managing leases). They assume the responsibility for booking and cleaning the community recreation hall and catering kitchen. Community renters are responsible for set-up and clean up per signed rental agreements. Rental payments are processed through the leasing organization to cover the cost of recreation hall basic cleaning, maintenance, and management overhead.
- **The managing organization is the occupant of the lower-level storage space.** They will be responsible for collections-storage “tenant improvements” such as shelving and specialty storage containers separate and apart from building renovation. However, basic improvements to the work/storage space will be part of the building renovation plan.
- **The city, as owner of the building, shall be responsible for** upkeep of the grounds, parking areas, general building maintenance, trash removal and park restroom cleaning/upkeep.
- **Capital improvements**, if and when needed, would be planned, approved, and funded in league with the city/property owner.
- **Equipment for Community use/rentals** (tables, chairs, and AV) **is estimated at \$35,000** for tables, chairs, AV equip (microphone, stand, and cables), minimal linens, and misc kitchen trays. Funding for this element of the project would be done via community groups who would be likely to use the space. Basic kitchen equipment (sink, oven, cabinets, refrigerator, dishwasher) would be part of the renovation fixtures budget line.

Conclusion

Overall, there is significant community support for repurposing the building as a community recreation hall. Funding sources are available with a required city match. Management of the building would require minimal city involvement if leased to a managing non-profit.

Improvements to the building/site also provide much-needed services (i.e. restrooms & parking) to other park activities. The existing city comp plan includes goals for an Arts & Culture facility, and this is an ideal site for that. The building should be added to the city’s Capital Facilities Plan as a strategic priority central to the Crescent Creek Park master plan.

Community Support

From the Board of the East Gig Harbor Association, an organization of East Side homeowners dedicated to preservation and improvement of the immediate area, including Crescent Creek Park and the Lodge:

The Directors of the East Gig Harbor Association, at its May 16, 2024, Board meeting voted unanimously to support repurposing the Crescent Valley Grade School/Masonic Lodge, for community use, as opposed to demolition of the building. Reuse should include a new addition for a kitchen and restrooms that would serve inside use as well as the volleyball players. An indoor year-round space would provide a venue for cultural, heritage, arts, senior activities, youth activities and private parties.

Respectfully submitted,

Carole Holmaas

Carole Holmaas, Secretary



The recommended concept design addresses user needs for ADA, upper park restrooms, parking, and preservation of open space. Special thanks to John McMillian for developing the concept renderings.