



## ***News Release***

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### **SDAT team recommends saving and repairing old school**

The team of nationally recognized architects, planners and design professions made a presentation to the Branson Board of Aldermen and citizens last night to make their recommendation for the old, vacant school on Sixth Street, purchased by the city last summer.

About 30 people attended the presentation at Branson City Hall to hear the proposal from the seven design professionals from throughout the country who made up the Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT). The SDATeam came to Branson through a grant from the American Institute of Architects to evaluate the school property to determine its best use for the neighborhood and community.

The team conducted evaluation visits in September and this week before making its recommendation at Thursday night's public meeting.

The team recommended rehabilitating the 50-plus year old building for a flexible, multi-use mix of tenants. The team used examples of tenants like a restaurant in the cafeteria area of the school and using the outdoor courtyard for an eating area in warm weather, incubator space for artists and entrepreneurs and areas for community organizations like the YMCA, theater, music and dance. Also a community room could be included. The team also recommended the main entrance to the building should be on the east side with elevators to upper floors.

Branson Planning and Development Director Jim Lawson said while the SDAT gave examples of tenants, the ultimate uses of the building have not been determined. The SDATeam also recommended a further market study to determine the best use possible for the property.

The architectural team emphatically recommended against demolishing the building because they concurred the structure is very solid; lets in a lot of natural light; high ceilings; good gym and stage and several entry choices. In fact, one of the design professionals complimented the architect who originally designed the school in the 1950s for the quality of construction.

The team also was against turning the school into affordable rental s, multi-family residential, additional social services offices and tourist dependent retail.

The estimated cost to rehabilitate the school would be about \$8.3 million, according to the design assessment team. That amount does not include the revamping of physical site costs such as parking lot improvements, sidewalks and landscaping. The team said the city could apply for state and federal tax credits of about \$3 million and also seek other grants and low-interest loans to offset the cost. Rents from tenants, estimated by the team at about \$184,000 annually, could also go towards payment of improvements.

The recommendations will now be discussed by the Board at future meetings to determine the next steps.

The entire presentation of the SDATeam can be accessed on the American Institute of Architect's website at [www.aia.org/about/initiatives/AIASO75426](http://www.aia.org/about/initiatives/AIASO75426). Click on "Branson."



Old Branson school on Sixth St.