

Ah-Gwah-Ching Center

Reuse Study *Final Report*

Walker, Minnesota

this study is funded jointly by the:

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with assistance from the:

Minnesota Historical Society

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Study Prepared by



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REUSE STUDY
PROCESS

REUSE STUDY
WORKSHOP



“The preservation of historic resources can be best accomplished through alliances between those who recognize the historic value of a property and those who might be able to enhance that value with appropriate rehabilitation strategies. The Historic Properties Reuse Team process is designed to create such alliances within a community.”

A Primer for Historic Properties
Reuse Teams in Minnesota
Minnesota Historical Society
State Historic Preservation Office

What is a Reuse Study?

The goal of a Reuse Study is to assist a property owner who is seeking to generate needed momentum to protect a threatened historic property—protection from decline for a variety of reasons—ultimately leading to a property being “restored” to a state of usefulness. The Reuse Study also has a specialized mission:

- ❖ Determine the property’s historic significance, review current conditions, identify reasons for its existing state (or current threat), evaluate proposed reuses, and detail the work needed in order to implement viable reuse goals.

The Ah-Gwah-Ching Center Reuse Study sought to accomplish this mission through the process of gathering information, assessing proposed reuses, and communicating the information back to the community in the form of a public presentation and this report.

Process Guidelines

The Reuse Study process included an intensive period of work in the Summer and Fall of 2002. The five general process categories for this study include:

1. Information Gathering

Data was gathered about the buildings and site to identify current uses, threats and opportunities. Information was compiled to understand some of the issues that affect reuse including: Design, Site, Community, Political, and Economic Issues.

2. Reuse Team and Advisory Team Assembled

Professionals with expertise related to reuse were invited to serve on the Reuse Team including architects, a representative of the Minnesota Historical Society, and specialists in the areas of Community Development and Economic Development. Community leaders and residents were invited to actively participate through interviews and a public forum. A community Advisory Team convened to review and supplement information gathered concerning reuse viability.

3. Building Assessment

The current condition of the buildings and typical floor plan diagrams for each building were assessed. Character-defining features of the building and site were identified and their significance was established.

4. Community Workshop

The Reuse Study Workshop provided an opportunity for the Reuse Team to hear about community needs through individual and small group interviews representing a broad spectrum of the community. These interviews included representatives from city, township and county government, banking, tourism, special interest groups, employers, Ah-Gwah-Ching employees, schools, seniors, and others (see references for complete interview list). The two days of interviews were supplemented by a public forum to gather additional information. Bringing people together, even those with differing opinions about best reuse, serves to build consensus for reuses that meet with community support later. The outcome of this Reuse Study Workshop pointed toward a primary appropriate reuse as a regional center for rehabilitative treatment facilities, along with several related options.

5. Reuse Report

This report builds upon the findings of the Reuse Study Workshop with additional information specific to findings. The work plan for reuse includes references to other information sources. The report is a written and graphic tool for communicating the goals to the community at large.

**REUSE STUDY
TEAM**



**REUSE STUDY
ADVISORY
TEAM**

MEMBERS OF THE REUSE STUDY TEAM INCLUDE:

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- ❖ Jim Dowson, County Commissioner
- ❖ Harlan Fuerstine, DNR Area Fisheries Supervisor
- ❖ John Grimely, AGC Task Force
- ❖ Jinny Meyer, Ah-Gwah-Ching Center Staff Site Director
- ❖ Stephen Michel, Administrator, City of Walker
- ❖ Brad Walhof, Mayor, City of Walker
- ❖ Bob Yochum, Administrator, Cass County

REPORT OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND

Ah-Gwah-Ching Center (AGCC) is a state-operated psychiatric nursing home located 3 miles south of Walker, Minnesota. The Ah-Gwah-Ching facility opened in 1907, originally for the treatment of tuberculosis, remaining so until 1962. Ojibwe for *Out-Of-Doors*, the name indicates the most prominent early treatment options focusing on fresh air and food. The AGCC site currently includes about 175 acres with over 250,000 Square Feet of usable building space. The AGCC psychiatric nursing home program currently houses 150 patients at various security levels, all within portions of the connected building cluster of the main building campus. Near this cluster are freestanding buildings in partial use or vacant.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

The site is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a Historic District. Its historic significance is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to broad patterns of history in areas of Health, Medicine, and Architecture. Distinctive characteristics of its architecture include structures from 1906-1946 with Colonial, Tudor, and Spanish Colonial Revival styles, including a number of buildings designed by Minnesota architect Clarence H. Johnston. The National Register of Historic Places Registration Form completed in 1996 by Rolf T. Anderson states the basis of its historical significance: *“Throughout its history, nearly 14,000 individuals were treated for Tuberculosis at the Minnesota State Sanatorium for Consumptives. Its construction represents a turning point in the history of the treatment of tuberculosis in Minnesota and it depicts the history of one of the state’s most serious diseases. Ah-Gwah-Ching remains the state’s best reminder of Minnesota’s once comprehensive system of tuberculosis facilities and the last surviving large-scale sanatorium.”* The majority of other tuberculosis facilities have been destroyed or significantly altered. This is one of the few national examples of an intact campus and is unique for its setting.



Scenic views along the Shingobee Bay shoreline of the Ah-Gwah-Ching Center property are one of many reasons the property is highly prized by developers and naturalists alike.

CURRENT THREAT

Historic Reuse Studies focus on viable uses for threatened or under-utilized historic buildings. It is important to understand that utilization of this historic facility as a state-run psychiatric nursing home has been on a downward trend for 20 years and may end in the very near future, replaced through the development of community-based mental health services. Recent political struggles have sprouted from proposed relocation of the Ah-Gwah-Ching Center program by the Department of Human Services, State Operated Services (DHS-SOS). Beginning over 10 years ago when Governor Arne Carlson supported closing the AGCC facility, the Walker facility has again recently survived a similar closure attempt supported by Governor Ventura in early 2002. Still, numerous staff cuts have occurred, and the patient population has declined from approximately 300 in 1990 to about 150 today. The January 17, 2002 Walker *Pilot-Independent* newspaper covered the ongoing political debate including the following: *“State Senator Tony Kinkel does not believe the state’s claim that consolidating AGCC would save \$5 million annually. Nevertheless, he said, one of the challenges for him and [State Representative] Howes will be to present responsible alternatives*

REPORT OVERVIEW

continued



to budget cut proposals...’ In April 2000, Kinkel and Howes successfully fended off other closure threats by authoring a joint bill to guarantee the long-term existence of AGCC at Walker and ultimately overrode a Governor Ventura veto. The bill specified that the Legislature intends that AGCC remain open at its Walker location, and that it cannot be shut down without legislative approval.” Governor Pawlenty may again raise questions about the viability of maintaining a program at AGCC. DHS-SOS continues to investigate options for “consolidating” the program with other secured facilities.

OWNER PERSPECTIVES

From the perspective of DHS-SOS, public policy has called for the development of community-based mental health services for more than 20 years. Additionally, decreased utilization of the AGCC facility has driven overhead costs to unacceptable levels. Cost of care rates are much higher at AGCC than similar nursing facilities in the Minnesota, and AGCC’s original design as a sanatorium (long-narrow floor plan yielding maximum cross ventilation) has proved challenging to adapt to a secured facility requiring visual monitoring. AGCC population reductions are attributed by DHS-SOS to an increase in development of other community-based options for mental health services, and not on any intentional reduction in clientele.

A process within the Department of Human Services has recently declared approximately 48,000 square feet of the AGCC buildings as surplus to its needs. In a process defined by Minnesota Statute, this property, now also including most of the land outside of the main building cluster, will likely become available for acquisition by other governmental and public entities. This leads to additional acquisition issues such as assessed land values and the “pecking order” of entities vying for the property should nursing home programs be relocated. The County has indicated an interest in acquiring the property, ostensibly to relocate county courts and offices, including the need for an expanded county jail. The DNR has formally indicated an interest in the lakeshore and wetland property for an Aquatic Management Area. Though surplus property is made available first to other public entities, it would also be highly valued if available for private purchase, if not so distributed. An assessment of values has been conducted but has not yet been made public by DHS-SOS.



Shingobee Bay along the highway south of Walker provides a gateway view of the Leech Lake recreational area.

REUSE ISSUES - BUILDING TYPES

The suitability of the site and its structures for new uses raises a number of logistical and planning issues. The location of the property is 3 miles south of Walker, suggesting that relocation of an existing primary commercial or civic entity such as Cass County services—currently located in Walker—could be detrimental to Walker’s thriving downtown core. Discussion about the adaptive reuse of the buildings themselves is complicated by the number and variety of building types, roughly divided into four primary categories (also see *Land Use Issues* for Site Zones maps):

- ❖ Main building campus, including these contiguous buildings remaining in use, the West Wing, Administration Building, Dining Hall and Service Building, Plumbing Wing, Infirmary I, Infirmary II, and the Indian (or Federal) Building



REPORT OVERVIEW

continued

- ❖ Freestanding historic buildings, such as the Staff House, Hall Pavilion, Lakeside Pavilion, Engineer’s Cottage, old Pump House, and the Superintendent’s Residence (Green House), all designated as “Surplus Property”
- ❖ Supplemental historic structures such as the Observation Station, Agricultural Garage/Shop, and Staff House fieldstone Retaining Wall
- ❖ Utility or maintenance structures, such as the Water Tower, Water Treatment Plant, Powerplant, Machine Shed, and various maintenance shops and garages

REUSE ISSUES – ADAPTIVE REUSE

Discussion of adaptive reuse potential of the main campus is complicated by its cluster of buildings that prove difficult to separate into individual buildings (the Federal Building is one noteworthy exception). The stair and entry additions that provide continuously secured space for a variety of monitored inpatient needs are now most readily reused for programs requiring some level of secured entry. The narrow floor plan dimensions, small patient rooms, and double-loaded corridors of the main cluster may detract from reuse for hospitality or tourism purposes such as hotel reuse. Adaptive reuse for offices may be easily achievable, understanding that most of the main building cluster cannot be fully separated into freestanding units, since exit stair towers typically serve adjoining buildings. However, adaptive reuse as a treatment facility requiring minimal security seems highly appropriate.

The freestanding historic buildings most easily suggest adaptive reuse. These have been leased for a number of purposes, although most now stand vacant. The utility and maintenance structures may be desirable for acquisition by the City of Walker or to support a large-scale new venture at the existing AGCC site. With creative reuse thinking, these freestanding buildings offer many possibilities for continued service and conservation.



Adaptive reuse of the main campus is challenging in that the main cluster of buildings is not easily separated into individual buildings for non-shared purposes.

COMMUNITY ISSUES

The most alarming community threat is a loss of the AGCC employment that now supports the financial needs of many local families. While tourism brings an influx of seasonal capital, these tourism-based salaries are typically supplemental income. AGCC is Walker’s 3rd largest employer with an annual budget of \$14 million, employing 200 people near the city of Walker with its population of about 1000. The 1998 U.S. Census Bureau estimates Median Household Income in Cass County to be only \$29,260.

Clearly the greatest threat to the local economy is the loss of the AGCC program, with salaries among the highest and most stable in the area. The potential loss of the historic buildings remains secondary in the minds of local residents.

An unfortunate corollary to the political activity that has kept the AGCC program open at its current site has been the slowness with which the community has been able to dynamically marshal economic development forces to locate and attract new employment opportunities to the area or to this site .

REPORT OVERVIEW

continued

After many years of “dependence” on AGCC for economic stability, such economic development action must now become a second track to secure the Walker area economy. The degree to which the Walker community has already openly accepted a secured patient population and its ability to adapt to specialized employment needs highlights the willingness of the Walker community to adapt successfully for other secured treatment programs.

The primary goal of reuse studies is to identify feasible, sustaining, supportable reuses that will justify the effort of building rehabilitation and thus return a structure to usefulness. Without such viable reuses, restoration of historic buildings may be less valuable to the community, absorbing community dollars with little return on investment. In the spirit of seeking feasible reuses, the Reuse Study Workshop interviewed a broad spectrum of the Walker community to identify greatest assets and concerns, preferred community reuses, and least preferred reuses.

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

From the community’s viewpoint, the area’s *greatest local assets* include:

- ❖ Quality of life including water, woods and fresh air,
- ❖ Beauty of the community, recreation and tourism appeal, and
- ❖ The high quality training of the local workforce.

Greatest community concerns focus on these difficult questions:

- ❖ How can existing AGCC high quality jobs that support families be preserved?
- ❖ How do AGCC employees stay in this community if consolidation leads to program relocation out of the community?
- ❖ How does the community respond and capitalize upon development pressures without losing qualities initially attracting people to the area?

Preferred community reuses include: Treatment Facilities—a skilled labor force resides near this community that accepts and responds to the needs of a secured facility in its midst. Treatment facilities for chemical dependency, juvenile treatment or offender facilities are suggested reuses. Regional correctional facilities and hospital or urgent care facilities are both needed and desired. Aquatic Management Area or land trust uses for lakeshore areas are also preferred.

The stated *least preferred uses* include any development directly on the remaining undeveloped lakeshore, additional casinos, bars, or retail ventures that create only tourism jobs without introducing employment with salaries associated with more highly skilled labor. The community clearly objects to any development which is harmful to the beauty of the site, particularly its lakeshore.

An assessment of values has been conducted but has not yet been made public by DHS-SOS. It has been suggested that this “fire sale” approach may be not only poor public policy, but also hampers the ability of the community to envision and work toward the best use for the AGCC property should it be closed as a state facility.



The freestanding peripheral buildings such as Hall Pavilion (above) and Lakeside Pavilion (below) most easily suggest adaptive reuses and have been leased for a number of purposes, though most now stand vacant.



REPORT OVERVIEW

continued



Shingobee Bay along the highway south of Walker provides a gateway view of the Leech Lake recreational area.

CONTRASTING ISSUES

The reuse of Ah-Gwah-Ching Center remains a *study in contrasts*, in that the search for viable reuse solutions is complicated by values and needs that are seemingly in conflict; namely:

1. The historic significance of the AGCC site and its place in history does not translate to an ease with which the buildings can be adaptively reused. The site location and building plan arrangements are specific to the existing use as interconnected hospital facilities. Connected buildings with controlled entry provide highest potential for reuse for purposes with a similar need for secured access, or other “lodging.”
2. Floor plan arrangements of the existing AGCC facilities are challenging to monitor visually and contrast significantly with more contemporary design approaches for secured mental health facilities (typically with separate zones for differing needs).
3. The economic value of tourism in the region contrasts with the low salaries associated with tourism employment. Acceptable as secondary incomes, tourism salaries cannot typically support families. Reuses that address employment concerns will be most highly supported by the community.
4. There is constant tension between the value of Leech Lake’s pristine lakeshore and adjacent landscape, yet with ongoing development pressures to build on available lakeshore, or transfer from public to privately held property.
5. Incomes are moderate for Cass County, yet real estate values have risen as costs escalate for seasonal resident vacation homes.
6. The urgent need for coherent, long-term economic development strategies for Cass County is at odds with practice, with the elimination of funding for a county economic development director. Significant community resources (such as timber) continue to be exported from the county for industrial processing. Regional economic development entities cannot focus on the community to the same degree as a local agency and director.
7. Community-initiated economic strategies have minimal commonality with state legislative responses to proposed closures at AGCC. Energies spent seeking legislative protection have not been paralleled by local economic development strategic planning. The Walker community must learn how to develop its own community process to actively seek stable growth and retention of jobs, including a strategy to develop common goals between City, County, Township and Tribal stakeholders, and a process for ongoing dialog.
8. The statewide and local interests align in many ways, yet adequate trust to foster dialog between the community and the DHS-SOS is not yet established. As one means of building trust, the Department needs to better inform the community about such critical issues as projected timelines for key decisions.
9. Civic agencies such as Cass County government and detention facilities have expressed an interest in the AGCC property. Yet it is unclear if that interest in site acquisition is for purposes of relocation, resale, or jail expansion. There is a strong likelihood that relocation of county services outside the city would negatively impact the vitality of the Walker downtown and affect vehicle movement and future roadside development south of Walker.

REPORT OVERVIEW

continued



The vacant 1919 old Pump House is a delightful gem found along the lakeshore at Shingobee Bay.

REUSE RECOMMENDATIONS

It is important to note that there are things that can be done now to improve the likelihood of reuse for these significant historic buildings and their site. We identify three primary directions for action that can be initiated immediately:

- ❖ **The site and its buildings can be better utilized now by seeking out lease arrangements that will keep the buildings occupied and will produce the income necessary to maintain them.**
- ❖ **The community can insist upon allocation of funds for a local economic development entity.**
- ❖ **The State can adopt an improved public policy about involving the local community in the process of reuse.**

The overall list of recommendations for best reuses include:

1. **Protect the Site Zone “B”** (wooded hillside and lakeshore conservation zone) from development. Retain this property within the public domain. A property transfer to the DNR is one way to do this; alternatively, a Conservation Easement would also control development (but possibly with the added benefit of supporting property values of the adjacent zone “A” main campus).
2. **Investigate suitability of the site** (particularly *Zone C - North Wooded Zone*) for relocated Cass County government or regional correctional facility. Determine, through public discourse, the likely impacts on existing downtown Walker by this relocation of services. Other communities have made similar planning decisions, and the Walker community must understand and anticipate the potential impact of a new community “center” located some distance outside of the downtown commercial core.
3. **Stabilize existing historic buildings in disrepair**, by maintaining occupancy through ongoing lease arrangements with local educational, nonprofit, or other agencies.
4. **Investigate reuse of the freestanding historic buildings** (Staff House, Hall Pavilion, Lakeside Pavilion, Pump House, and Green House) for educational, office, medical, or civic uses. Determine viability to accommodate current expansion needs of Bemidji based Episcopal Community Services for expanded youth treatment facilities.

Reuse Recommendations *continued next page*

REPORT OVERVIEW

continued



*View of main building cluster
looking from the south*

Reuse Recommendations *continued*

5. Investigate long-term leases for the land and/or buildings that can easily operate as separate entities now, such as the Federal Building of the Main Building campus, such that the buildings remain occupied to ensure stabilization and maintenance costs are covered by leases. Ideally, such uses may evolve into cash flow that supports the “campus” (or part of it).

6. Provide funding to investigate feasibility of primary needs in the regional community that could be a good fit for the site, such as for a regional corrections facility or urgent care facility. Even at 30 miles from the nearest hospital, the immediate population density may still be unable to sustain a freestanding urgent care center. An urgent care facility may be most feasible when coupled with a treatment center or correctional facility “anchor” that also depends heavily upon local medical facilities and staff.

7. Investigate opportunities for private, public, or nonprofit treatment centers. Adaptive reuse as a minimally secured treatment facility appears highly appropriate, and programs suggested during the Reuse Study Workshop include: Chemical dependency, youth rehabilitation, DUI offender, and Native American focused treatment programs. Many of these programs are likely to be supported at a multi-county or regional level. The economics of such programs typically favor utilization of existing facilities requiring minimal reconstruction.

8. Consider acquisition of the utility and maintenance structures by the City of Walker or to support a large-scale new venture at the existing AGCC site. Determine city interest and value of these assets.

9. Determine a public Request for Proposals process for parties interested in acquiring the AGCC site (entire or portions). Make the process public, and identify value assessments of property and DHS goals for financial return. Similarly, design a process for community stakeholders to actively participate in a meaningful fashion.

THE HISTORIC BUILDINGS

HISTORIC CONTEXT TIMELINE

1906 The West Wing was the first major building constructed at the Minnesota State Sanatorium for Consumptives. Designed by architect Clarence H. Johnston, it included spaces for patients, staff, kitchen, and administrative functions. The building is constructed in a u-shape with two stories over a raised basement. Facades are of brick-trimmed stucco. The West Wing has been expanded with several building additions, forming the central section of the main cluster of buildings still seen at Ah-Gwah-Ching today.



1907 The State Sanatorium officially opened as the first state-operated tuberculosis treatment facility.

1910-12 The Administration Building was constructed, connecting to the West Wing at the northern end of its east wall. Like other additions to the main cluster, the facade materials are stucco trimmed with brick, originally with red-tiled roofs. Typical transformations include stair towers and other code accommodations dating from the 1980s.

1914-15 The Dining Hall and Service Building was constructed, connected to the north face of the West Wing. The Plumbing Wing was also built, extending from the north face at the east end of the West Wing. In 1915, the Staff House was built, bordering on the steep hillside east of the main building site.

1919 The two story brick Pump House was built along Shingobee Bay.

1920s The Garage/Shop was originally constructed and used in the Sanatorium's significant farming operation—producing food for patients as part of a treatment emphasis that included healthy eating and fresh produce. The Machine Shed, an open-walled storage building, also survives from this same era. Many other agricultural structures original to the site have been demolished.

The 1930 Nurse's Home (now Lakeside Pavilion) displays decorative stone elements at its entry designed by Clarence H. Johnston.

1922 The Infirmary I was constructed, initially separated from the main building cluster southwest of the West Wing. At this time, the State Sanatorium's post office name was changed to *Ah-Gwah-Ching*, Ojibwe word for "out-of-doors." The name indicated the primary tuberculosis treatment at the time, consisting primarily of fresh air and a healthy environment.



1923 The fieldstone Observation Station was constructed for weather information recording, resembling a small outdoor picnic shelter.

1923-25 A new Power Plant was constructed north of the main cluster of buildings, that continues to service the Ah-Gwah-Ching Center campus. The Engineer's Cottage was constructed in 1925 just south of the Power Plant, today owned and occupied by a county social service agency.

The 1920s agricultural Garage/Shop is a reminder of previous agricultural operations.

1927-28 Hall Memorial Pavilion was constructed southeast of the site, originally designed and utilized for the treatment of children with tuberculosis. This two-story brick structure has been partially leased until recently for educational programming.

THE HISTORIC BUILDINGS

HISTORIC CONTEXT TIMELINE

continued



The 1923 Observation Station is located east of the main cluster of buildings.



The 1927-28 Hall Pavilion, like many buildings at Ah-Gwah-Ching, was designed by architect Clarence H. Johnston. This gracious brick structure utilizes decorative detailing sensitive to its original purpose as a treatment home for children with tuberculosis.

1930 The Nurse's Home (now called Lakeside Pavilion) was constructed southwest of the 1915 Staff House. A brick, two-story rectangular structure with basement, the Nurse's Home is built into the hillside permitting on-grade access to the basement level at the north side.

1931-32 The Infirmary II was constructed as part of the main building complex, connecting the Infirmary I to the West Wing. The new surgical and treatment rooms of the Infirmary II building represented the beginning of a changing era of medical practices at Ah-Gwah-Ching. It was the first building at this site designed by architects Sund and Dunham.

1933-34 A fieldstone Retaining Wall was constructed at the hillside east of the Staff House.

1934-35 The fifth addition of the original West Wing building cluster, the Indian Building was constructed through a joint agreement between federal and state governments for the treatment of tuberculosis in the local tribal population. This building was attached to the Dining Hall and Service Building by a narrow 1970s ground level addition, making it one of the structures of the main building cluster with highest potential for physical separation. A large brick Garage was also built in 1934 near the Power Plant.

1940 The Kitchen and Laundry was added to the main building cluster, extending from the midpoint of the west face of the Dining Hall and Service Building.

1954 The wood frame New Superintendent's Residence and Garage was built south of the Nurse's Home. Today, it is referred to as the Green House and is leased for private use.

1958-59 A small Garage was built in 1958 adjacent to the Staff House. A large t-shaped Garage was built in 1959, west of the main building cluster. Originally built as a 30-stall vehicle garage, this larger structure currently houses the maintenance shop.

1963 The Water Treatment Plant was constructed into the hillside north of the old Pump House.

1965 An 8-stall vehicle Garage was built near the 1959 Garage.

1967 The concrete block Lime Storage Building was built adjacent to the Water Treatment Plant.

1986 The 100,000 gallon Water Tower was constructed to serve the Ah-Gwah-Ching Center campus.

The 1915 Staff House borders on a steep hillside above Shingobee Bay, shown here adjacent to the fieldstone Retaining Wall built in 1933-34.

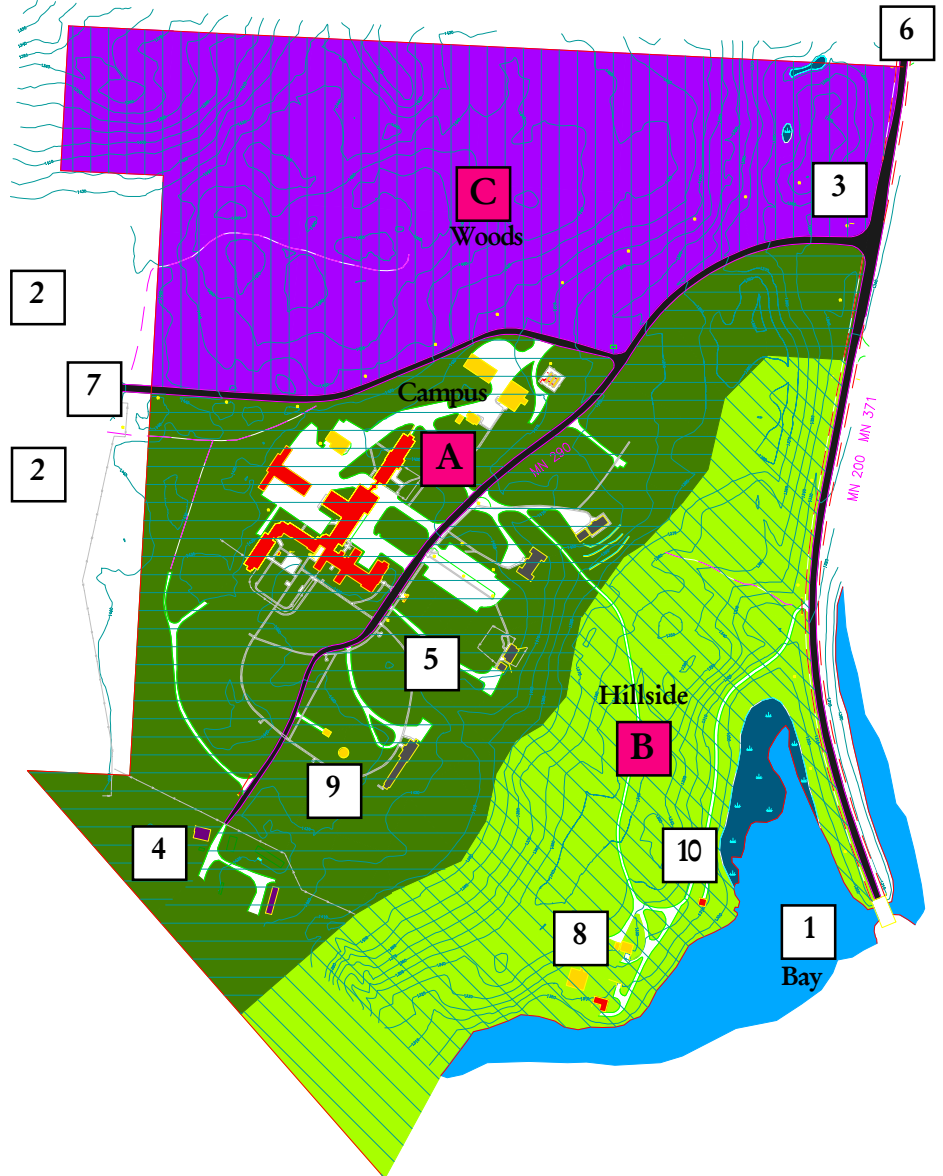


SITE ANALYSIS



Picnic Area adjacent to Shingobee Bay

- A** AGCC Main Building Cluster & Parking Zone
- B** Wooded Hillside & Lakeshore Conservation Zone [SURPLUS PROPERTY]
- C** Undeveloped Land Zone (wooded) [SURPLUS PROPERTY]
- 1** Shingobee Bay of Leech Lake (smaller bay is Pumphouse Bay)
- 2** Adjacent City Sewage Treatment Lagoons
- 3** Primary Highway Entry Area
- 4** Historic Agricultural Buildings
- 5** Secondary Buildings adjacent to hillside (many unoccupied)
- 6** Three miles north to Walker
- 7** County Road (west to Highway 34)
- 8** Water Treatment Plant & Lime Storage Building
- 9** Water Tower
- 10** Picnic & Boat Dock Area



**AH-GWAH-CHING CENTER
SITE PLAN KEY MAP**
SITE "ZONES"



Walker is located in north central Minnesota (west of Grand Rapids and north of Brainerd on Highways 371 and 200) on the southwest shore of Leech Lake.

SITE ANALYSIS

1	West Wing 1906
2	Administration Building 1910-12
3	Dining Hall & Service Building 1914-15
4	Plumbing Wing 1914
5	Kitchen & Laundry 1940
6	Infirmery I 1922
7	Infirmery II 1931-32
8	Indian (or Federal) Building 1934-35
9	Power Plant 1923-25
10	Engineer's Cottage 1925
11	Garage
12	Garage 1934
13	Garage 1959
14	Garage 1965
15	Staff (or Doctor's) House 1915
16	Retaining Wall 1933-34
17	Staff House Garage 1958-59
18	Nurse's Home (or Lakeside Pavilion) 1930
19	Superintendent's Residence (Green House) 1954
20	Garage 1954
21	Observation Station 1923
22	Hall Memorial Pavilion 1927-28
23	Garage
24	Water Tower 1986
25	Garage / Shop 1920s
26	Machine Shed 1920s
27	Root Cellar (verify if extant)
28	Pump House 1919
29	Water Treatment Plant 1963
30	Lime Storage Building 1967
31	Picnic Shelter



**AH-GWAH-CHING CENTER
BUILDING KEY PLAN**

LOCATION OF BUILDINGS & OTHER STRUCTURES

- Main Building Cluster (OUTLINE INDICATES EXTENTS OF "SURPLUS PROPERTY")
- Utility & Maintenance Structures
- Agricultural Buildings
- Other Buildings

SITE ANALYSIS

continued

SITE VIEWS of MAIN CAMPUS: ZONE "A"

(left) View of highway commercial sites east of 371 near entrance to AGCC site.

(right) View northwest from 371 to AGCC site



(above) Main Building cluster viewed from the West

(right) Main Building cluster viewed from the East



SITE ANALYSIS

continued

Zone “A” includes a variety of Subzones in four primary categories:

1. East end power plant area (see The Historic Buildings - *Infrastructure*)
2. Center cluster of residential buildings (see The Historic Buildings - *Main Building*)
3. Bluff edge with individual buildings and transition from flat campus to natural landscape (see The Historic Buildings - *Hall Pavilion, Lakeside Pavilion, and Staff House*)
4. West end agricultural area previously used for farming operations (seen at right and below)

OTHER SITE VIEWS: ZONE “A”

(Right:) View of landscape typical of open areas of the central campus, with a mixture of deciduous and conifer trees and lawn.



(Right and below:) Views of Zone A west end agricultural and storage. The view at right shows areas once used for garden and fruit trees west of the main campus. The view below shows the remaining 1920s agricultural building west of the fence seen at right.



SITE ANALYSIS

continued

Zone "B" includes area sub-categorized into four primary Subzones:

1. East end facilities (see *The Historic Buildings - Pump House and Other Structures*)
2. East - Developed lakeshore flats (seen at right and below)
3. West - Undeveloped lakeshore flats
4. Lakeshore ecology: shallow water habitat of reeds and cattails (seen at right and below)



SITE VIEWS of SHORELINE: ZONE "B"



THE HISTORIC BUILDINGS

BUILDING ANALYSIS

Main Building



Views of the service side of the interconnected Main Building cluster are seen above.

The main building cluster is comprised of eight interconnected buildings with shared circulation pathways including corridors, elevators, and stair towers. The buildings are typically made up of many small, upper level residential rooms with shared bathrooms, administrative and staff offices and meeting rooms, dining, kitchen, laundry, and support spaces.

The heart of Zone “A” includes a large interconnected grouping of eight buildings including the 1906 West Wing, the 1910 Administration Building, the 1914 Dining Hall and Service Building, the 1914 Plumbing Wing, the 1922 Infirmary I, the 1931 Infirmary II, the 1934 Federal building, and the 1940 Kitchen and Laundry. This *Main Building* cluster includes over 182,000 net square feet of usable space and houses the primary AGCC residential and administrative functions.

Positive aspects of the building which contribute to its reuse include its durable construction and finishes, good maintenance record and current condition, large number of windows and natural light, spacious square footage, wheelchair accessibility to most areas, site expansion space availability, centralized kitchen and food service, centralized heating systems, and modern infrastructure and maintenance support spaces. Naturalized landscape areas and adequate parking are also positive aspects of this building area. These positive aspects increase the potential for the building to be successfully reused for a number of medical, office, education, or civic uses, where a significant quantity of interrelated space is desired.

Aspects of the building which may limit its reuse include an interdependent circulation system, narrow floor plan widths, and limited entry access points. Shared stair towers make it very difficult to separate the majority of the buildings in this cluster, requiring buildings to share circulation spaces, including stair towers and elevators. Thus it may be difficult for multiple independent entities to share the buildings. Minimally sized residential rooms without individual bathrooms suggest that the Main Building lacks potential for hospitality-type residential use, such as a hotel, without significant remodeling. The large quantity of finished square footage and location 3 miles away from Walker could also be considered a detraction to smaller business entities whose functions require modest square footage with direct entry access, or that depend upon proximity to civic or retail needs.

The Main Building could be most readily reused for similar secured medical facilities, or reused for civic, office or educational purposes that function well within modestly sized, interrelated spaces sharing central services and circulation. The existing Federal Building is the only building of the Main Building cluster with a circulation system that could be physically separated for non-shared use.



THE HISTORIC BUILDINGS

BUILDING ANALYSIS

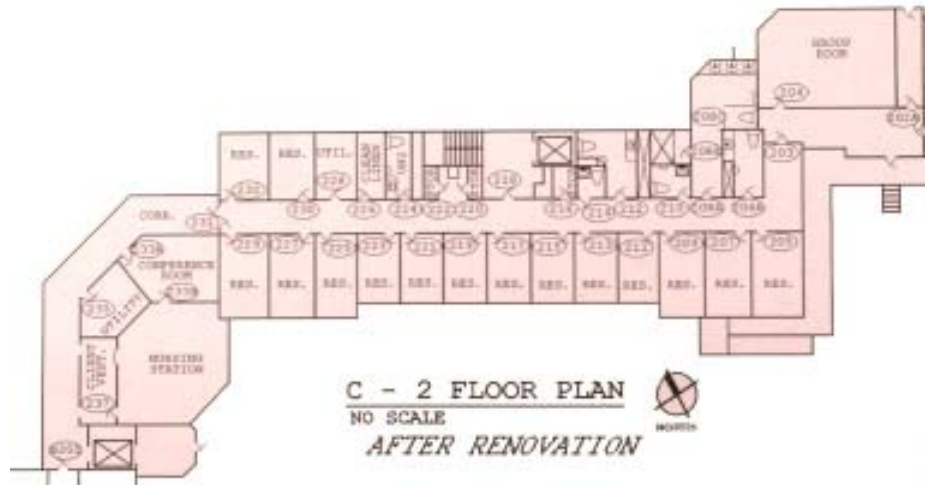
Main Building *continued*



Typical views of the main building cluster demonstrate the functional nature of the building plan arrangement. Double-loaded corridors of the residential areas typically locate patient rooms, rest rooms, utility rooms, and storage rooms along each side of a corridor connecting all buildings of the main campus. Administrative areas are similarly arranged with rooms at either side of a central corridor.



The Group Room (above left) and Nurse's Station (above right) have been placed at the intersection of building additions of the Main Building cluster. These larger spaces support the needs of the typical resident rooms, placed along connecting corridors as seen on the floor plan below. Stairs and elevators provide vertical access and exiting from the entire building cluster. This shared access makes it difficult to separate the individual buildings for non-related purposes.



A view of a larger patient room (right) with terrazzo floors and plaster walls demonstrates construction for long-term durability. Larger rooms that originally housed three patients may permit only one or two patients by contemporary nursing home room standards.



THE HISTORIC BUILDINGS

BUILDING ANALYSIS

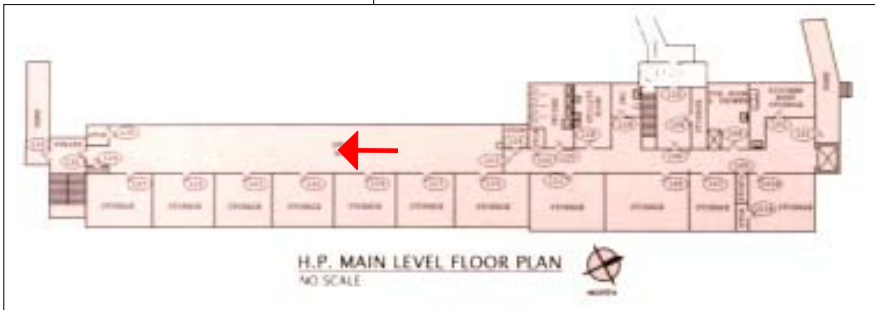
Hall Pavilion



Decorative bracket of the 1927-28 Hall Pavilion bay window designed by architect Clarence H. Johnston



The decorative bay window and entry stair presents a residential image befitting Hall Pavilion's original purpose as a home for children with tuberculosis.



This view of a group room in Hall Pavilion (above right) is indicated on the upper left area of the floor plan (above left).



main cluster of buildings, with its own drop-off and parking area at the southwest section of the main campus (see *Building Key Plan*). In recent years, Hall Pavilion has been partially leased to a local alternative school, with leases ending in 2002.

Hall Memorial Pavilion was designed by architect Clarence H. Johnston and constructed in 1927-28 of brick with stone trim with decorative entry detailing. The building was named to honor the memory of a long-standing superintendent of the Ah-Gwah-Ching sanatorium, Dr. Pearl M. Hall, whose tenure lasted from 1918 to 1928.

Intended as a residence for children with tuberculosis, this two-story building replaced earlier wood-framed cottages also used as treatment facilities for children. Hall Pavilion includes over 10,000 square feet of space in good condition, highly adaptable for educational, office, medical or civic reuses requiring a freestanding building with a variety of modestly sized spaces arranged along a shared corridor. The building stands independently, separated from the

THE HISTORIC BUILDINGS

BUILDING ANALYSIS

Lakeside Pavilion *or Nurse's Home*



Decorative entry portico of the 1930 Nurse's Home designed by architect Clarence H. Johnston



Like Hall Pavilion, Lakeside Pavilion (originally the Nurse's Home) stands apart from the main Ah-Gwah-Ching Center campus, with its own drop-off and parking areas.



The basement level of Lakeside Pavilion is highly usable with its on-grade access and adequate windows providing natural light.

Interiors of Lakeside Pavilion include shared "living room" spaces with dormitory-style sleeping rooms indicative of its original purpose as living quarters for AGCC staff nurses. Narrow corridors and three levels without elevator may detract from some reuses, but numerous shared spaces are generously sized and well-lit, with desirable views and access to the adjacent wooded hillside.



Like Hall Pavilion, Lakeside Pavilion has a high potential for reuse as a freestanding building with its own parking separate from the Main Building campus. Its three levels with over 13,000 square feet of space are highly adaptable for educational, office, medical or civic reuses which could make good use of a variety of modestly sized spaces arranged along a central corridor with accessible entry to the entry and lower levels. In recent years, this building has been successfully leased for a chemical dependency treatment program.



THE HISTORIC BUILDINGS

BUILDING ANALYSIS

Pump House

The historic 1919 red brick Pump House stands vacant along Pumphouse Bay, reached by a narrow service road also leading to the new water pumping and treatment facilities nearby (see *Building Key Plan*). A two-story building with nearly 1,900 square feet of space, the Pump House could be reused for purposes that capitalize upon both location and a gracefully designed historic structure. Reuse is most feasible for semipublic purposes where its limited access road will not conflict with controlled access to the adjacent service facilities. A gate from the public spaces could restrict control to the service road after hours if needed.

An interest in lakeshore-oriented environmental education has been expressed by the DNR, and the structure could be reused to house spaces supportive of this educational purpose, with convenient access to the adjacent lakeshore. Storage for canoes or other recreational storage could also support new uses of the main campus or periphery buildings of Zones "A."



The historic red brick Pump House building stands gracefully along Pumphouse Bay. Reached by a gravel road also servicing the new water pumping and treatment facilities, the Pump House holds reuse potential as an environmental education center as espoused by the DNR, or could also support recreational goals of reused or expanded Zone "A" buildings.



THE HISTORIC BUILDINGS

BUILDING ANALYSIS

Staff House



The 1915 Staff House is seen above left and right (1958 Garage at right)

The 1915 Staff House is a large wood-frame house constructed and utilized for multifamily residential purposes. Spaces include over 3,000 square feet of residence and a 900 square foot garage. The building is in good condition, although the roof must be repaired to prevent significant ongoing damage to the interiors. Rooms are arranged in “suites” with bathroom facilities, small kitchens, bedrooms and living rooms. The hillside to the south (below left) is terraced with 1933 WPA fieldstone retaining walls. A service road leading down to the lakeshore through the woods is located just west of the Staff House, and high quality views of the wooded bluff area and lakeshore are prominent.



High reuse potential exists for residential uses for single or multifamily occupancy, bed and breakfast style hotel, or as a residential retreat facility. The Staff House is also highly suitable for private office or for a combined residential/office occupancy similar to recent leased use for youth-oriented Social Service programming. Adjacent lawns and pathways to woods and lakeshore contribute greatly to reuses that rely on access to the outdoors, making this building a good candidate for programs in environmental education and nature exploration. Garage storage and parking areas provide support spaces adequate to support full occupancy and reuse of the Staff House for all of these potential reuses.



Graceful interior spaces and details are found at the 1915 Staff House, including the stone fireplace, generous windows, and hardwood floors (seen left and right).



THE HISTORIC BUILDINGS

BUILDING ANALYSIS

Other Structures



1923 Observation Station



1954 Superintendent's Residence
currently leased for private use



1925 Engineer's Cottage
owned & occupied by a County
Social Service agency



1934 Power Plant Garage

A number of historic and non-historic buildings are seen at the Ah-Gwah-Ching Center campus. Buildings that are not integral to the historic character of the site are considered “noncontributing.” The majority of the structures are both historic and contributing to the historic character of the site. Refer to previous sections of *The Historic Buildings* and the *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* for contributing status and additional information about individual buildings.

We have identified “zones” within the site to identify the special characteristics of individual areas (see *Reuse Issues - Land Use*). Each zone has specific attributes that affect development and reuse options. The Historic District description guides the way the zones might best work together. It is preferable to look at the virtues of each zone to suggest the best reuse of the whole--looking at the characteristics of the whole to guide decisions about a particular zone, feature, or structure that is within that zone.



1920s Garage/Shop originally used as an agricultural building



1923-35 Power Plant



1967 Lime Storage Building



1963 Water Treatment Plant

BUILDING ANALYSIS

Infrastructure



Underground tunnels (top) route utilities throughout the AGCC campus. The Power Plant (above and above right) provides service adequate for full occupancy of the programs, now utilized below capacity.



The 1986 water tower, located near Hall Memorial Pavilion, served the greater water needs of the AGCC campus of that time.

The infrastructure of the AGCC campus was designed and constructed to serve a patient and staff population that once fully occupied the site, infrastructure services under-utilized for current program demands. Centralized systems provide heat, electricity, and treated water for the campus. Utility services have been maintained and updated over the years to provide efficient utilities appropriate for a large operation at a reasonable cost. This infrastructure would also readily support the intensive needs of a new use that might utilize the campus in its entirety. Office, civic, light industrial, and residential uses could be accommodated with existing systems. Few limitations to expansion of existing systems provides an opportunity for new uses with growth potential at the site. Expanded use of the site's wooded Zone "C" to the north may require utility expansion if the buildings of Zone "A" are also fully reused.



In addition to providing services for programs that reuse existing AGCC buildings, reuse potential exists for the AGCC service infrastructure to meet the residential expansion needs of the City of Walker and Shingobee Township as residential growth occurs north of the AGCC site.

CURRENT
PROBLEM
OVERVIEW

This is an overview of key issues uncovered in the Reuse Study process, explored in more detail on the following pages. See the *Table of Contents* on page 2 to locate additional information related to individual issues.

Land Use Issues: “Zones” have been identified within the overall AGCC site to identify the unique characteristics of individual areas (see *Reuse Issues - Land Use, pages 28-30*). Each zone has specific attributes that affect development and reuse options. Zone “A” includes the main building area with its interconnected cluster of structures, peripheral buildings, and adjacent parking areas. Zone “B” includes the lakeshore and wooded hillside area with its character differing significantly from the main campus. Zone “C” refers to the area north of the main campus, wooded and undeveloped. One key issue is the desire that the lakeshore must be protected from development to remain in a naturalized state. Also important is the way that separate ownership of this lakeshore property may impact values of the adjoining property.

Stabilization Issues: Occupancy and regular maintenance is key to stabilizing buildings from further degradation. Many of the peripheral buildings now stand vacant although several have been successfully leased in the past. Ongoing leases prevent degradation typical for vacant buildings and helps fund needed maintenance and repairs. The Staff House is currently in need of reroofing, the old Pump House requires general stabilization repairs, and Hall Pavilion and the Lakeside Pavilion could again be leased to provide ongoing occupancy.

Preservation Issues: The Ah-Gwah-Ching Center site is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a Historic District, significant for its unique contribution to our history in the areas of Health, Medicine, and Architecture. The AGCC

historic district includes the natural features, viewsheds, roads, trails and pathways, archeological sites, remnants of early structures now missing, shorelines, and buildings. The individual buildings provide an important contribution to the overall context of the Historic District. Character-defining features of the structures and buildings are interrelated with defining site characteristics of the District. Even buildings that are considered “non-contributing” may impart significant functional impact upon the way the site is perceived.

Political Issues: Proposed closure or relocation of the AGCC program has been halted in the past through legislative action, yet the numbers of program staff and residents continue to decline. How does the community sift through the issues that are best resolved in legislative venues, and move toward attracting the high-quality jobs that the AGCC program has represented in the community?

Economic Issues: What are the biggest cost issues associated with stabilization, restoration, or adaptive reuse? What funding sources are available for historic rehabilitation? What tax issues exist? How can historic buildings contribute to the economic base of communities such as Walker? What is the budgetary reality associated with maintaining a DHS program at AGCC?

Community Issues: Adaptive reuse of historic structures is typically much easier to achieve if there is widespread community support for reuse. Maintaining high-paying jobs and protecting pristine lakeshore top the list of issues that concern this community. The community’s perception of the value of historic buildings is secondary to economic realities associated with employment and a stable economic base.



Trail leading through the wooded hillside area from the main campus to the lakeshore

LAND USE
ISSUES



Main cluster of buildings at Ah-Gwah-Ching Center

A AGC Main Building Cluster & Parking Zone

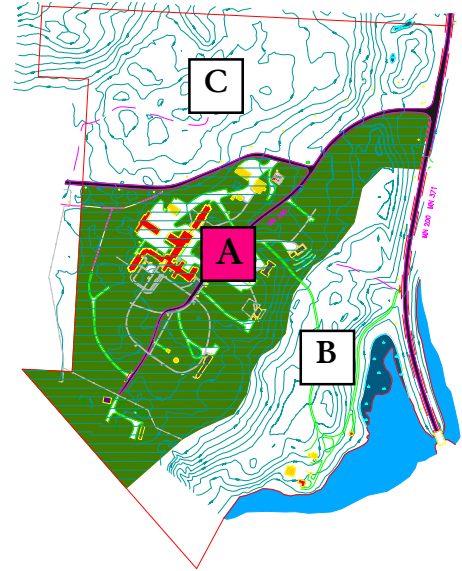
B Wooded Hillside & Lakeshore Conservation Zone - see page 30

C Undeveloped Land Zone (wooded) - see page 31

SITE PLAN REUSE MAP

SITE ZONES

Examining geophysical features (including topography and forestation), roads, and structures, the property divides naturally into three large zones or bands of property, each running the width (roughly east-west) of the entire site, running from Highway 371 at the east to the property's western edges. The boundaries of these zones are important considerations. We give each a provisional label Zone A, B, or C, for convenience in discussion.



ZONE "A"

Central Campus Zone: (very developed, with wooded edge and roads):

Zone A is the heart of the existing Ah-Gwah-Ching Center campus. This central section of the site includes roughly 70 acres of relatively flat building site within the total site of approximately 175 acres. Existing buildings comprise roughly 250,000 square feet of usable space, the majority of which is located within this area of the site.

Its construction density is low with much open space. Major buildings, driveways, sidewalks, parking, and dominant ground vegetation in mowed lawns are found here.

Sub-Zones:

- 1) East end Power Plant area
 - ❖ Includes the main entrance to AGCC, wooded and hilly along the east, a transitional zone from 371 to AGCC campus
- 2) Center cluster of residential buildings, garage, shops
 - ❖ Fairly level and flat, lawns and walks, the major cluster of buildings with service driveway at north to garage and shop buildings.
- 3) Bluff edge
 - ❖ Noteworthy existing individual buildings, each worthy of restoration according to planned reuse; A transition occurs from the campus level and parklike setting, to the environmentally sensitive hillside of the bluff; some viewsheds are possible, contingent upon season and possible vegetative trimming.
- 4) West end agricultural and storage
 - ❖ Very open character differs from other zones with access through the Center Campus; it is usable as expansion parking area for large events at adjacent areas.

Reuse:

Of these Sub-zones, the bluff edge area is the prime area for reuse. The four existing buildings are underutilized. There is sufficient land to sensitively expand existing buildings to support viable economic reuse of these buildings. The bluff edge building sites are easily accessible by existing roads and pathways, and could accommodate convenient parking spaces of moderate capacity.

LAND USE
ISSUES



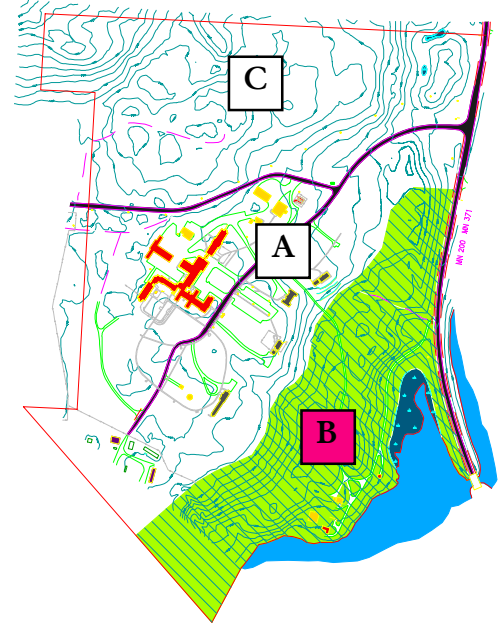
Picnic area along Shingobee Bay

- A** AGC Main Building Cluster & Parking Zone - see page 29
- B** Wooded Hillside & Lakeshore Conservation Zone
- C** Undeveloped Land Zone (wooded) - see page 31

SITE PLAN REUSE MAP

ZONE "B"
Below Bluff (hillside and lakeshore flats on Pumphouse Bay):

Zone B includes the lakeshore and wetlands area and hillside area south and east of the main Ah-Gwah-Ching Center campus. This area of the site is highly valuable in economic terms, but is also important for its reflection of community goals for conservation of undeveloped lakeshore. The wetlands and adjacent slopes are most environmentally sensitive to development. The high visibility of Shingobee Bay makes this an important gateway to the Walker area, and development must be prohibited near the lakeshore. One high-profile view of the site is seen from the 371 bridge at Shingobee Bay looking across to the Pumphouse Bay picnic area. The hillside is steeply sloped and wooded, character-defining landscape features worthy of conservation and preservation.



Sub-Zones:

- 1) East end facilities: The Pump House and Water Treatment facilities are at the end of a maintenance road running south through Zone B.
- 2) East - Developed lakeshore flats: There is a flat lakeshore area along the bay that includes a small picnic area with dock.
- 3) West - Undeveloped lakeshore flats: The west edge is less densely wooded, and was once farmed in the area between AGCC and the sewage treatment ponds (the ponds are found on higher ground west of the AGCC current property boundary).
- 4) Lakeshore ecology: The adjacent lakeshore is varied with a shallow water habitat of reeds and cattails.

Reuse:

Undeveloped lakeshore areas along Leech Lake continue to dwindle in recent years, giving way to development pressure. This has led to premium prices for lakeshore real estate, responding in part to the growth of second home markets. These development pressures are seen at outstate lakes such as Leech Lake and continue to expand farther from metropolitan areas. The community has clearly stated its interest in conserving undeveloped lakeshore, that it is an important component of the tourism industry and is an important component of other goals for the area.

Two primary reuse directions have been investigated for this zone: DNR Aquatic Land Management Area, or Conservation Easement. The DNR has put forth stated goals for use of the area for environmental education and undeveloped wetlands areas. Transfer of the property for this use will meet community goals, but will reduce the value to the adjacent property (Zones A & C) if access to the lakeshore is restricted. A Conservation Easement could make possible the same goals without significant reduction of land values for Zones A & C. Lakeshore development could still be prohibited, yet access from adjacent properties could be maintained.

LAND USE
ISSUES



Yellow Lady's Slipper along roadway north of main building campus

- A** AGC Main Building Cluster & Parking Zone - see page 29
- B** Wooded Hillside & Lakeshore Conservation Zone - see page 30
- C** Undeveloped Land Zone (wooded)

SITE PLAN REUSE MAP

ZONE "C"
North Wooded Zone (undeveloped, wooded, and hilly):

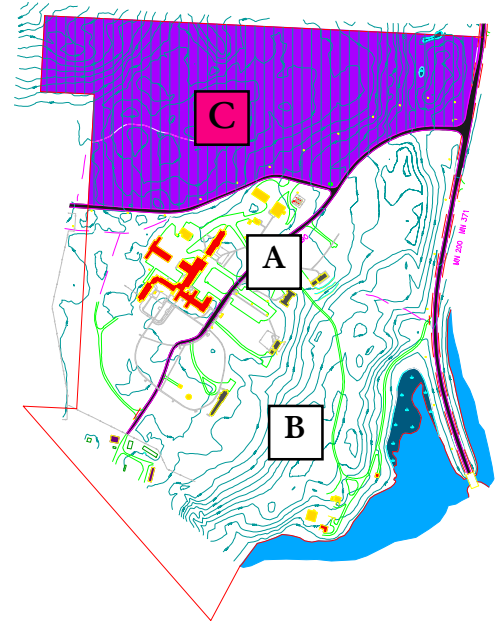
Zone C is the area of the Ah-Gwah-Ching Center site found north of the main campus area and includes about 55 acres of the total site of approximately 175 acres. This area of the Ah-Gwah-Ching site is wooded, sloping, and provides a significant buffer between the Ah-Gwah-Ching site and Walker three miles to the north.

Sub-Zones:

- 1) West - higher and near the sewage treatment facility
- 2) Center - most suited for development
- 3) East - most typical of character of entire zone including 371 view of AGCC and entry image

Reuse:

Appropriate uses for this area of the site include civic, industrial, highway commercial, and high or low-density housing. This valuable land borders on land further north that continues to be developed for a variety of uses including housing and highway commercial. It is highly desirable for city annexation though currently out of the existing utilities expansion area.



**STABILIZATION
ISSUES**

The primary current stabilization issue for the AGCC campus is deferred maintenance of some of the structures. Immediate needs for stabilization include repairs to roof and building envelope of both the Staff House and Pump House. These historic structures contribute to the historic district individually through their unique historic detailing and site prominence. Although current reuses for these buildings are not immediately obvious, like the other vacant historic buildings of the district, minimal maintenance provides the opportunity for “mothballing” of the stabilized structures until a new use can be found. A number of structures have been demolished over the years, and further loss will negatively impact the character of the historic district.

**PRESERVATION
ISSUES**

Historic District Status

The site is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a Historic District. The entire property, including natural features, viewsheds, roads, old trails and pathways, archeological sites, remnants of early structures now missing, shorelines, and buildings, etc., are all part of the district. Typically, the features and structures may be classified into two or more groups, such as:

- a. *Contributing* to the historic character, particularly of a set time period or context
- b. *Non-contributing* historically, because it does not support the time of the period of significance

This distinction is not always clear cut. Frequently, for example, one or more buildings labeled *contributing* may also have the distinction of being *pivotal*, indicating that among the group, it would be the most unfortunate if these elements, features, or structures were missing, because the overall character would suffer irreversibly. The categories can also be somewhat misleading, in that what might be categorized as *non-contributing* may actually contribute to the entire district in ways that are spatially or formally appropriate, even if not historic. For example, in a downtown area, a new (historically *non-contributing*) building is a valid and important part of a row of buildings that contributes to define the shopping street, and without its presence the block would look like a “smile with a missing tooth.”

The AGCC property also comes under the terms of the national guidelines for Historical Cultural Landscapes, and thus the entire property must be seen as the subject of historic importance, not just a cluster of contiguous buildings, or even a few individual buildings. The entire setting is a feature *contributing* to the ambiance and historical use of the site, and this ambiance is an important object of conservation and preservation.

Historic Significance

The site’s historic significance is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to broad patterns of history in areas of Health, Medicine, and Architecture. Distinctive characteristics of its architecture particularly include structures from 1906-1946 with Colonial, Tudor, and Spanish Colonial Revival styles, and including a number of buildings designed by architect Clarence H. Johnston. The National Register of Historic Places Registration Form completed in 1996 by Rolf T. Anderson



The old Pump House building near the lakeshore has distinctive features and location for creative new uses, but is vacant and deteriorating.

**PRESERVATION
ISSUES**

continued

states a basis for its historical significance: “Throughout its history, nearly 14,000 individuals were treated for Tuberculosis at the Minnesota State Sanatorium for Consumptives. Its construction represents a turning point in the history of the treatment of tuberculosis in Minnesota and it depicts the history of one of the state’s most serious diseases. Ah-Gwah-Ching remains the state’s best reminder of Minnesota’s once comprehensive system of tuberculosis facilities and the last surviving large-scale sanatorium.” The majority of other tuberculosis facilities have been destroyed or significantly altered. This is one of the few national examples of an intact campus and the most unique setting.

A set of proven guidelines exist for historic preservation projects. Produced by the Department of the Interior, *The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation*, provide a measure by which restoration efforts are judged “successful.” In particular, these standards address retention, protection, and preservation of the defining characteristics of historic buildings. Repair of intact features is preferred over replacement and false historicism or modifications that destroy historical qualities must be avoided.

**POLITICAL
ISSUES**

For over a decade, struggles to prevent AGCC closures have been bolstered through action by the state legislature, yet AGCC programs and associated employment have still declined significantly. The Walker community could not have foreseen the decline in AGCC programs due to budgetary or other concerns that would continue to pressure program consolidation or closure. Focusing on political means to maintain programs has impacted the way the community collectively has used its energies: Toward legislative mandate to ensure ongoing employment and revenues generated by AGCC programs. However, by focusing on legislative action, strategies to maintain employment opportunities equivalent to AGCC have not been as vigorously investigated. Allocations for local economic development have actually been reduced. Additional questions about political impact remain unanswered:



- ❖ How does the community evaluate the assumptions and conclusions of the projections for huge savings to be realized from consolidation with other programs such as with Brainerd’s DHS programs?
- ❖ Is it financially feasible to consolidate programs such that the existing Brainerd programs would relocate to the AGCC site? How does this compare to the costs to the public to invest in the Brainerd site for the proposed consolidation?
- ❖ Are there potential restrictions by the DHS or Department of Administration for use of the site? Should profits from taxpayer purchased land return directly to state coffers rather than transfer to local governmental or public agencies?
- ❖ What is the current legislature and governor’s likely approach toward continuation of the AGCC programs at the existing site?
- ❖ Do the people of Minnesota choose to continue funding state-run psychiatric nursing home facilities? What are the key benefits and drawbacks to market-driven privately run facilities?

ECONOMIC
ISSUES

The economic issues related to reuse of the AGCC buildings and site becomes a long list of unknowns, requiring examination in terms of site location. This discussion of cost issues take two primary directions. For the main building cluster:

1. AGCC program remains on site with accommodations to make this financially feasible, such as:
 - a. Relocation of the Brainerd DHS program to the AGCC site
 - b. Additional new leases to utilize main buildings at full capacity.
2. A new “anchor tenant” takes over occupancy of the main building cluster, with separate leasing or supportive occupancy of the freestanding buildings. The Federal Building could also be separated from the main building for another occupancy in either case.



This view at the northeast side of the main building campus shows the 1925 Engineer's Cottage at right, with the 1923 Powerplant beyond.

Either of these approaches has potential for a strong ongoing economic and employment base. Yet, it is easiest to negotiate for continuation of an existing program than to “ramp up” for a new one. A new program is likely to require significant remodeling costs to adapt existing spaces and is likely to have different spatial and equipment requirements. Once a building becomes vacant, maintenance costs become increasingly difficult to justify, negotiations to sell the buildings to a new tenant lose impetus, and structures are more likely to fall victim to damage than when unoccupied. This applies most graphically to the freestanding buildings. Currently, these are the easiest of the

entire complex to turn into generators of new income, but have been “on hold” until the main building campus cluster decisions are resolved.

So, how does a community become engaged with the existing AGCC to understand decisions affecting the local program? How can the community provide financial or other incentives for new or existing programs to locate or remain at this site? How could an active local economic development authority impact appropriate and viable reuse of this site and its buildings?

Other questions include:

- ❖ What land ownership options exist and what is most beneficial to the community?
- ❖ How do we look at the AGCC program separated from the site and buildings? Is there a way for the program to continue in the Walker area in another facility without the high costs estimated by the DHS for these buildings?
- ❖ What is the value of these historic buildings to the community? How could the unique nature of these buildings be capitalized upon?
- ❖ What are the practical costs and limitations of stabilizing or mothballing the buildings for a future use if an immediate reuse cannot be found?
- ❖ What are the cost benefits of maintaining the site’s infrastructure such as the water and boiler plants?
- ❖ Can public / private partnerships help improve cost feasibility for this historic site?

The answers to these questions can be found, in part, through understanding the local area—its goals, assets, and growth trends.

COMMUNITY
ISSUES

From the community’s viewpoint, *greatest local assets* focus on three areas: The quality of life including water, woods and fresh air, the beauty of the community, recreation and tourism appeal and the high quality training of the local workforce.

Greatest community concerns focus on three difficult questions: How can existing high quality jobs that support families be preserved? How do AGCC employees stay in this community if AGCC is consolidated and programs move out of the community? How does the community meet development pressures without losing what initially attracts people to the area?

Preferred community reuses include: Treatment Facilities--a skilled labor force resides near this community that has accepted and responded to the needs of a secured facility in its midst. Treatment facilities for chemical dependency, juvenile treatment or offender facilities are suggested reuses. Regional correctional facilities and hospital or urgent care facilities are both needed and desirable. Regarding the site’s natural features, Aquatic Management Area or land trust uses for lakeshore areas are also preferred.

The community’s stated *least preferred uses* include any development that builds on remaining undeveloped lakeshore, additional casinos, bars, or retail ventures that only create additional tourism jobs without introducing jobs with salaries associated with more highly skilled labor. The community objects to any development which is harmful to the beauty of the site.

It is difficult for the Walker community at large to currently be proactive because they essentially are “sitting on the bench” about the process. Community stakeholders currently have little access through

which to enter the discussion about the future of AGCC in a meaningful fashion. They do not know the DHS timeline for disposing of the property, the selling price for any portions of the property, potential restrictions by DHS or Department of Administration, or the new legislative or governor’s approach regarding the future of AGCC programs. Recent decisions about disposition of parts of the site are believed to have been advanced without a master plan or with little public input.

It is also difficult for the community to mount a united front on this issue, when the County has taken a position about relocation out of the downtown that likely has strong negative impacts on Walker’s downtown area.



A WPA art collection is owned by and resides at AGCC. Space was previously allocated for an art gallery, making it possible for community members to view this significant collection. In spite of its local prominence, many local people have never visited the AGCC campus.

**RECOMMENDATIONS
SUMMARY**



Old Pump House building near lakeshore beyond new water pumping building in foreground

One good reuse for the old Pump House may be as a support structure for lakeshore recreation, or a home for environmental education programs

MOST COMPELLING REUSES:

Specific Advantages and Features or Spatial Needs

USE ONE: Regional Treatment Facilities

- ❖ Likely fit for existing main building cluster
- ❖ Limited renovation costs for similar use
- ❖ Good fit for existing job skills set
- ❖ Good employment potential for community
- ❖ Expressed interest by some entities
- ❖ Use of existing infrastructure

USE TWO: Regional Detention Facility

- ❖ Good use of undeveloped land in Zone C
- ❖ Good fit for existing job skills set
- ❖ Good employment potential for community
- ❖ Potential of existing campus for auxiliary use
- ❖ Central Location
- ❖ Use of existing infrastructure

USE THREE: Cass County Government Offices & Jail

- ❖ Adequate expansion space
- ❖ Parking accommodation
- ❖ Good use of Zone C (north woods area)
- ❖ Good highway access
- ❖ Potential of existing campus for auxiliary use
- ❖ Potentially severe negative impact on existing downtown Walker
- ❖ Expressed interest by some entities
- ❖ Use of existing infrastructure

USE FOUR: Urgent Care Facility

- ❖ Adequate expansion space
- ❖ Good highway access
- ❖ Community interest and need for closer hospital facilities
- ❖ Use of existing infrastructure

USE FIVE: Single & Multifamily Housing

- ❖ Potential use of Zone C
- ❖ Proximity to lakeshore conservation district an asset
- ❖ Possible reuse for existing main cluster unlikely
- ❖ Potential use of bluff area adjacent to existing Staff House

USE SIX: Office Complex

- ❖ Likely fit for existing main building cluster or freestanding buildings for related offices in event of relocated Cass County (law-related professions, etc.)
- ❖ Distance from Walker creates likelihood that services such as restaurants, service stations, etc., will be duplicated, creating a separate “city”

USE SEVEN: Environmental Education

- ❖ Proximity to lakeshore conservation district an asset
- ❖ Possible reuse for existing freestanding buildings (particularly old Pump House, Staff House, Lakeside Pavilion, or Hall Pavilion)
- ❖ Expressed interest by DNR

**REUSE STUDY
WORKSHOP
INTERVIEWS**

Individual and group interviews were conducted by the Reuse Study Team during the July 16 through 18, 2001 Workshop, held on the Ah-Gwah-Ching Center campus. The primary topic of discussion at these interviews related to the issues currently threatening the ongoing use of the historic buildings. Every attempt was made to schedule the interview list to represent the widest sampling possible within the interview schedule. A Public Forum was also held at Hope Lutheran Church on Wednesday, July 17th, to include input from a broader base of all other interested individuals. We are grateful for the time, thoughtful input, and enthusiasm demonstrated by these members of the Walker community. Interviews included the following individuals (by order of interview schedule) including individuals participating in the Public Forum:



Sludge drying building near lakeshore (new water pumping building at right)

Pat Bauer, Physical Plant Operations, AGC ♦ Doug Seiler, Regional Director, State Operated Services ♦ Alan Van Buskirk, State Operated Services ♦ Brad Walhof, Mayor, City of Walker ♦ Steve Michel, Administrator, City of Walker ♦ Scott Bruns, Walker City Council ♦ Jim Dowson, County Commissioner ♦ Bob Yochum, Cass County Administrator ♦ Helen Manly, Shingobee Township Representative ♦ Brian Nicklason, Woodland Bank ♦ Cy Struss, Centennial Bank ♦ Dick Tiedeman, Bank of Walker ♦ Joe Sherman, Pilot Independent ♦ Randy Ehlenfeldt, True Value Hardware ♦ Vickie White, Leech Lake Band Economic Development ♦ Gail Leverson, Region Five Regional Development Corporation ♦ Pat Rafferty, former Cass County Economic Development Authority ♦ Harlan Fierstine, DNR Fisheries, Walker ♦ Gary Lyall, Watershed District ♦ John Steward, Watershed District ♦ Darrel McKenzie, Gillfillan Center, Bemidji ♦ Becky Gukeisen, Turning Point ♦ Chris Swenson, Family Safety Network ♦ Kim Puffer, Food Shelf ♦ Hyacinth Stiffler, Bi-County CAP ♦ Greg Proper, Pro-West ♦ Bill Stroot, TDS/Telecom ♦ Terry Freeman, Landecker & Associates ♦ Wade Hanson, Leech Lake Realty ♦ Dan Piprude, Coldwell Banker ♦ John Zacker ♦ Rusty Lilyquist, County Commissioner ♦ Karen Keener, AGC Employee ♦ LaVerne Kennedy, AGC Employee, Retired ♦ Margaret Dewey, AGC Employee, Retired ♦ John Grimley, AGC Community Task Force ♦ Jinny Meyer, AGC Employee ♦ Ruth Lanot, AGC Employee ♦ Dianne Maas, Retired AGC Employee, Retired ♦ Lynn Bentfield, Prudential Hedman Realty ♦ Renee Geving, Cass County Historical Society ♦ Audrey Chelberg, Walker Resident ♦ Pat Oliver, Cass County Historical Society ♦ Jim Dowson, Cass County Commissioner ♦ Harold Bruns, AGC Community Task Force ♦ Bob Mallory, Shingobee Township Representative ♦

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