



## Administration

Telephone: 701-241-5770

Fax: 701-241-5776

wilsonro@casscountynd.gov

### MEMO

TO: County Commission  
FROM: Robert W. Wilson  
Date: November 3, 2023  
Subject: RDJ Building Inspection Report

---

The Commission Office has received the building inspection report for the Robert D. Johnson Building located at 1104 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue South in Fargo. The report was requested as the potential of increasing the purchase offer to the Fargo Parks District was discussed in more detail.

A copy of the report is enclosed. The report was completed by Steve Skoblik of Foss Architecture and Interiors. The building's condition is rated on a scale of 1-5 in eleven categories, taking into account the building is 93 years old. An overall impression is described as, *"the maintenance on the building has been good. The building is in relatively good condition for its age with future maintenance required and updating, as with all buildings, to be ongoing."*

On October 16, 2023 the Commission authorized amending the purchase offer to the Parks district for the RDJ Building to \$825,000 pending a building inspection that is satisfactory to Cass County.

**SUGGESTED MOTION: Receive the Robert D. Johnson building inspection report and accept the findings as satisfactory to Cass County.**



## Robert D Johnson Building Inspection Fargo, North Dakota

### Building Data

Year Built:	1930
Total Floor Area:	Approx 32,000 SF Total, 3 floor levels
Number of Stairs:	2 (one each at common areas of main hallways)
Elevator:	1 unit near north entry
IBC Classification	B Occupancy Non-Sprinklered
Zoning	SR-2 Current commercial use is conditional based on zoning designation.

### General Description

The building consists of 2 floors over a basement. Gross Square footage is the following:

Lower level (Basement)	Level 1	Level 2	GSF
12,050 sf	12,050 sf	8,250 sf	32,350 sf

Originally built as the Emerson H Smith Grade School in 1930, the building was renamed after the Fargo Park District acquired the property in 1996.

The lower level wall construction is cast in place concrete, with upper walls built of solid masonry approx. 10"-12" thick finished with ¾" plaster. Intermediate floors are a cast in place concrete pan joist system approx. 12"-16" deep with concrete columns and beams. The roof structure consists steel bar joists with a metal lath and concrete topping deck supported by steel beams and columns. Original interior walls are primarily non-bearing pyrobar (gypsum) blocks or clay block with a plaster finish. See photos A57-A63. Newer walls are either wood or metal studs with gypsum wallboard. Remodeling within the existing classrooms has been fairly minor (just adding dividing walls) as evident of the presence of the original built-in casework and chalkboards that are still found in many of the spaces.

**OVERALL IMPRESSION:**

The maintenance on this building has been good. The building is in relatively good condition for its age with future maintenance required and updating, as with all buildings, to be ongoing.

**Rating Descriptions:**

- 1 = Poor      Urgent needs to be completed within one or two years if possible to correct problem, eliminate damaging deterioration or code compliance.
- 2 = Fair      Potential urgent deficiencies, which if not corrected in 2-5 years will become urgent need.
- 3 = Average    Demonstrates wear or aging consistent with life expectancy. Plans for near term repair or replacement should be considered but not critical.
- 4 = Good      Meeting expectations. Some action may be required to maintain performance. No significant repair or replacement in near future.
- 5 = Very Good    New or nearly new condition meeting all expectations.

**Building Condition Report**

<b>Exterior:</b>	<b>Brick and Stonework, Photos A1-A12</b>	<b>Rating: 4</b>
------------------	---	------------------

Material: Brick and Stone banding.

Condition: Good

Notes:

1. Overall the exterior finishes are in good condition with no major cracking or failures that may be indicative of hidden structural issues.
2. There are various locations around the building where the mortar has deteriorated to the point of needing repair, especially along the parapets, window sills and chimney. Openings in the mortar allow moisture to infiltrate the walls that could lead to further wall deterioration and interior finish damage. Recommend a 100% building cleaning and tuckpointing equating to about 10%-15% of entire building elevation.
3. Caulking at the head joints at the stone cap along the top of the roof parapet has pulled away from surfaces and should be replaced.
4. The mortar at the head joints of the stone banding is missing or deteriorated in the majority of locations allowing moisture to infiltrate the wall system. These should be replaced with flexible sealant.

<b>Exterior:</b>	<b>Windows (new replacements)</b>	<b>Rating: 5</b>
------------------	-----------------------------------	------------------

Material: Aluminum storefront with operable inserts.

Condition: Very Good

Notes:

1. About 50 percent of the existing window openings have been replaced within the last 10 years.
2. Not all interior finishes have been completed (primarily on level 2), but do not compromise the function or protection provided by the new window system.

<b>Exterior:</b>	<b>Existing Windows (350 SF), Photos A13-A16</b>	<b>Rating: 3</b>
------------------	--	------------------

Material: There are a number of wood single pane, double hung windows in the lower level that have not been replaced – some had storm windows.

Condition: Good.

Average Life Expectancy: 20-30 years.

Life Remaining Based on Current Condition: Past their life expectancy

Notes:

1. For the age of windows, no major deterioration was observed.
2. Replacements could be considered to match other openings replaced and would increase energy efficiency.
3. Refinishing and recaulking should be completed in next 3-5 years.

<b>Exterior:</b>	<b>Infilled openings (800 SF), Photos A17-A23</b>	<b>Rating: 2</b>
------------------	---	------------------

Material: Various materials.

Condition: Fair.

Notes:

1. Many large openings have been infilled with studs and smaller windows (probably during 1970's). The exterior finish is metal clad panels with exposed fasteners. The joints of the panels have opened up and the fasteners have started to rust. Recommend replacing the panels with a concealed fastener system and caulk perimeter.
2. Other openings have just been infilled with painted wood panels that are not meant to be an exterior finish and many do not have sealant. Recommend covering with appropriate exterior finish (like a metal panel) and seal perimeter.
3. Ultimate solution would be to infill existing openings with aluminum system to match previous replacements.

<b>Exterior:</b>	<b>Existing entry doors, Photos A24, A25</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>3</b>
------------------	--	----------------	----------

Material: Wood and glass

Condition: Fair

Average Life Expectancy: 20 years

Life Remaining Based on Current Condition: Past life expectancy

Notes:

1. Doors and frames are showing signs of deterioration, especially along the bottoms. These appear to be original to the building and for the age, are in relatively good condition and could be repaired if desired.
2. Access door to basement on west side courtyard should be replaced and repair opening in wall.

<b>Exterior:</b>	<b>Roofing, Photos 26-A31</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>4</b>
------------------	-------------------------------	----------------	----------

Material: Ballasted EPDM

Condition: Fair

Average Life Expectancy: 20-30 years

Life Remaining Based on Current Condition: Unknown

Notes:

1. Surface was unable to be observed and no recent records were provided.
2. Tern bar and sealant along back of parapet seemed to be in good condition without deterioration or damage.

<b>Interior:</b>	<b>Accessibility, Photos A32-A35</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Varies</b>
------------------	--------------------------------------	----------------	---------------

Notes:

1. Accessible route to the building was added in 1996.
  - a. Includes an exterior ramp and elevator at the north entry. This is the only wheelchair accessible entry to the building.
  - b. An exterior egress ramp was also included for egress from the gymnasium on the west side.
  - c. Other entries to the building are only accessed by exterior steps without landings.
2. Panic hardware was added to select doors for updated egress.
3. Most door hardware consists of knobs and/or deadbolts that do not meet current ADA requirements.
  - a. Recommend changing out locksets to lever type.
4. Public restrooms fixtures have been modified for accessibility.
  - a. Further review needed if door configurations meet requirements. Minor adjustment is needed.
5. All current single use restrooms do not meet requirements.
  - a. Extensive remodeling would be necessary to bring up to ADA standards.

<b>Interior:</b>	<b>Floor finishes, Photos A36-A42</b>	<b>Rating: 4</b>
------------------	---------------------------------------	------------------

Notes:

1. Existing corridor and restroom floor finish is terrazzo (probably sandbed type) with a coved base.
  - a. Very good condition – no outstanding cracks noticed.
2. Wood floors – primary classroom areas have wood floors.
  - a. Many office areas have installed carpet over this.
  - b. Where exposed appears to be in good condition and could be refinished.
3. Carpet
  - a. Where installed – appears to have reached the end of useful life and should be replaced.
4. VCT
  - a. Primarily in Lower level corridor – Good condition.

<b>Interior:</b>	<b>Ceilings, Photos A43-A45</b>	<b>Rating: 4</b>
------------------	---------------------------------	------------------

Notes:

1. There are a variety of ceiling materials throughout the building.
  - a. Includes Lay-in tiles and grid, 12x12 spline tiles (adhered), 1x2 adhered tiles and plaster.
    - i. The plaster appears to be in good condition without evidence of any major repairs.
    - ii. Lay-in tile and grid may appear dated, but otherwise in good condition.
    - iii. There are multiple versions of the 12x12 spline tile. Most are above other ceilings and the primary damage is from removal – substrates in good condition.
    - iv. 1x2 adhered tiles have a smooth texture and only show damage in a couple of areas.
  - b. Cosmetic changes would only typically be needed for uniform appearances.

<b>Interior:</b>	<b>Wall finishes, Photos A46-A48</b>	<b>Rating: Varies</b>
------------------	--------------------------------------	-----------------------

Notes:

1. There are a variety of wall materials throughout the building.
  - a. Includes Plaster, wood paneling and gypsum wallboard.
    - i. Like the ceilings – plaster appears in good condition.
    - ii. Paneling is located primarily on walls that were constructed within original classrooms. Would only need replacing with remodeling.
    - iii. The Gypsum wallboard appears to be in good condition without evidence of any major repairs.
  - b. Walls at replaced windows on level 2 (east side) should be repairs to provide finished appearance.
2. Wood Trim
  - a. There is a significant amount of wood trim along corridors and within existing classrooms. Most are in very good condition.
  - b. Trim at replaced windows does not match existing or even at other replaced windows.

<b>Interior:</b>	<b>Mechanical system, Photos A49-A54</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Varies</b>
------------------	--	----------------	---------------

A cursory review of the existing mechanical system was conducted – further investigation would be required.

Notes:

1. Boiler (1968) was recently refurbished and is in good condition. No replacement needed.
  - a. Natural gas fuel.
  - b. Steam feeds existing radiators.
2. Rooftop unit was added in 1996 above the gymnasium.
  - a. Unknown at time of report if this is still the same unit.
  - b. Provides ventilation only to gymnasium.
3. Primary heat in spaces is provided by steam radiators (there are still some unit ventilator units with outside air closed off).
  - a. Consider changing to hot water for better control.
4. There are select areas that have some sort of ventilation but is not consistent throughout the building.
  - a. Recommend adding ventilation through the entire building or at least major occupied spaces.
5. Many spaces are cooled only by means of window A/C unit.
  - a. Recommend adding a central chilling plant or review systems that could provide better access to cooled air if spaces are fully occupied.
6. Temperature control is currently a Pnuematic system.
  - a. This type is getting harder to service and repairs can be expensive.
  - b. Consider replacing with DDC system for better control if using a building automation system.

<b>Interior:</b>	<b>Electrical, Photos A55, A56</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>--</b>
------------------	------------------------------------	----------------	-----------

A cursory review of the existing electrical system was conducted – further investigation would be required.

Notes:

1. Service is adequate for existing needs.
  - a. Needs review if any other mechanical systems were brought online.
2. Lighting
  - a. Existing lighting is primarily Fluorescent. If remodeling – Provide LED.
3. Telecommunications
  - a. Extensive analog telecommunications system installed. Should upgrade to all digital.
    - i. May require a dedicated data room.





A1: Back of east parapet



A2: Notch in parapet.



A3: Chimney



A4: Door head in courtyard.



A5: Face of east parapet



A6: Head joint at window sill





A7: Deteriorated mortar joints



A8: Window sill along grade.



A9: Window Sill



A10: Window sill.



A11: Sealant joint



A12: Damaged brick at courtyard



A13: Existing window exterior



A14: Existing window interior.



A15: Existing window Interior



A16: Existing Window Exterior.



A17: Existing Window Exterior



A18: Infilled openings



Robert D Johnson Building



A19: Infilled opening



A20: Infilled opening.



A21: Infilled opening



A22: Infilled Opening



A23: Infilled Opening



A24: Entry Door



A25: Entry Door



A26: Ballasted Roof.



A27: Gym Roof



A28: Skylight



A29: Upper Roof



A30: Roof Drain





A31: Ventilation louver



A32: Door Hardware.



A33: Door Hardware



A34: Door Hardware



A35: Exterior Ramp



A36: Corridor Finishes



A37: Remodel Spaces



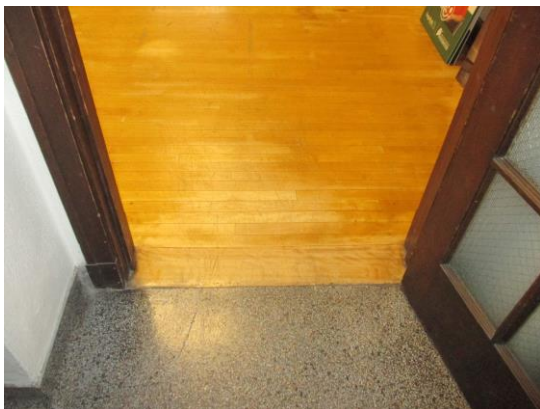
A38: Carpet over wood flooring.



A39: Basement Corridor



A40: Basement space



A41: Transition terrazzo to wood



A42: Wood Floor





A43: 1x2 adhered ceiling tile



A44: 12x12 ceiling tile.



A45: 12x12 ceiling tile



A46: Existing classroom casework



A47: Trim at replaced window



A48: Unfinished sill at replaced window





A49: Boiler



A50: Steam Radiator.



A51: Ventilator Radiator



A52: Main electrical room



A53: Window A/C unit



A54: Pneumatic wall control



A55: Analog telecommunications panel



A56: Lighting.



A57: Concrete foundation wall



A58: Concrete floor system



A59: Insulated roof bar joists



A60: Steel roof support framing



A61: Concrete roof deck



A62: Pyrobar wall block.



A63: Hole through Pyrobar



A64: Terrazzo stair