

January 6, 2023

Joint Appropriations Long-Range Planning Subcommittee
Montana State Capitol
1301 E 6th Avenue
Helena, MT

Subject: Montana Historic Preservation Grant Program
Miles City Convent Keepers Community Center
Roof Column Supports/Upper Porch Project

Dear Committee Members:

We appreciate this opportunity to provide written testimony in support of our project for the Miles City Convent Keepers Community Center. This beautiful historic 3 story brick and stone structure was built in 1902. The Convent of the Sacred Heart enrolled both sons and daughters of settlers from all over eastern Montana. This well-preserved landmark is an apt tribute to the Ursuline sisters, marking their contribution to the building of Montana and dedicated service.

In 1991 when the Catholic parish decided to demolish the Convent a small group of volunteers banded together as the Convent Keepers. The Convent was saved and deeded over to the group to be used as a community center. We are a 501 (c) (3) non-profit and the building is on the National Register of Historic Places. The building is non-denominational and no longer part of the church. Photos are attached highlighting the beauty of the building plus the project that needs to be completed.

The project we are seeking funding for is the Roof Column Supports/Upper Porch Project. On the north side of the building the columns and porch that support the roof have deteriorated and need replaced. Concrete footings are crumbling and four wood pillars are rotting. This structure supports the roof of the building. We want to replace the concrete footings and then install steel pillars with a façade of wood to replicate the historical accuracy of the building. The porch floor will have steel floor joists covered with tongue and groove wood flooring. The project would provide work for local contractors during construction.

Tackling a project of this size is a challenge financially for our non-profit. We are requesting \$119,688 and have secured the \$30,635 in matching funds for the project and appreciate your consideration of this project for funding through the Montana Historic Preservation Grant Program. The building is well maintained and we have methodically been completing projects in the \$2500 to \$10,000 range with support from other grants and local donations.

We are a community center that rents space to other non-profits, small businesses, and events such as baby/bridal showers, birthday parties, weddings, meetings, and other events. The Drywell Club hosts over 75 AA, NA, and GA meetings a month. The Barn Players Theatre Group

routinely uses the building for auditions and rehearsals; in addition, they rent most of the top floor for costume storage. We have fund raisers and give tours to visitors.

We currently have all available office space rented and have a thrift store in the basement. Recently we added the Milestown Old West Photos Studio as another source of support and to support local tourism. We are financially stable and have made great strides over the years in preserving this historic building.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Please feel to contact me at 406-852-0722 if you have any questions.

Respectfully,

Sharon Moore
Executive Director

**Miles City Convent Keepers Community Center
Front view, Chapel, Staircase**



North side – Proposed Roof Column Supports/Upper Porch Project



Roof Column Supports – Upper Porch



Photos showing deterioration of columns and wood supports for porch

