

## Developer Announces Interest in Audubon School

Written by Save Audubon School – A Community Coalition  
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*Rock Island* – An alternative development plan for the historic Audubon School has been identified. Joseph L. Lemon, Jr., developer of the historic Abbey Station event center in Rock Island and the Abbey Center in Bettendorf, IA has announced his interest in pursuing a project that would be a “win-win-win” for the community, the Rock Island/Milan School District and the City.

“Our development team has successfully brought many buildings back to life. Audubon School is a community resource that has great re-use potential,” said Mr. Lemon, whose family has ties to the school. “We see economic opportunities for residential or other uses that could fit within the existing building. We have some work to do, but we are confident that there are alternatives to demolition.”

The site is currently under an option agreement between Fareway Stores, Inc and the School District that expires on August 1. On Tuesday, June 4, the Rock Island City Planning Commission will consider a proposed rezone that, if approved by the city council, would lead to Audubon’s demolition. Neighborhood groups are actively opposing the project.

Victor Panagos, an adjacent property owner said “The City Council said they would have considered retaining Audubon’s Landmark Designation granted by the Preservation Commission if there were development alternatives. Now we know that there are. As a community, we must have a vision that includes preservation of our historic resources. People like Joe Lemon can help us fulfill that vision and still achieve the city’s fiscal goals.”

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