

# Special Accommodations: Lessons Learned from the Disposition of Surplus Institutional Buildings

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Blue Mountain Lake, NY

The proper custody and treatment of the insane, are now recognized as among the duties which every State owes to its citizens; and as a consequence, structures for the special accommodation of those laboring under mental disease, provided at the general expense, and under the supervision of the public authorities, will...be found in every one of the United States.

-- Thomas Story Kirkbride

*On the Construction, Organization and General Arrangements of Hospitals for the Insane (1854)*

The roots of what we now call deinstitutionalization are firmly lodged in a cyclical tradition of institutional reform: Each reform flourishes briefly, is implemented and becomes routine, then is forgotten and neglected by its creators and the general public until a kind of institutional rot sets in, whereupon another reform movement replaces it.

-- Ann Bradley Johnson

*Out of Bedlam: The Truth about Deinstitutionalization* (1990)

THEORY

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# Theoretical frameworks – how to think about reuse

From King (1992)

- ▶ Global restructuring: surplus public institutions as raw materials for use by global capital
- ▶ Discourse analysis: the ways in which institutions are reused make statements about power and control
- ▶ Historiographical: “buildings are also social and political resources. They are a contested terrain. They are never neutral but become platforms for promoting particular issues” (King, at 132).

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LESSONS

# Theoretical frameworks – how to implement reuse

From Vanderburgh (1992)

- ▶ Critical reuse: attempt to “give oneself a past from which one would like to have been descended in opposition to the past from which one is descended” (Nietzsche)
- ▶ Antiquarian reuse: veneration of old objects to prevent new ideas
- ▶ Monumental reuse: “the great which once existed was at least possible once and may well again be possible sometime”

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## Lifecycle of a closed institution

- ▶ Maintenance by programmatic agency
- ▶ Transfer to administrative/property-management agency
- ▶ Legislative action

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## Possible dispositions

- ▶ Direct legislative disposal
- ▶ Auction
- ▶ Transfer to new agency
- ▶ Transfer to quasi-public finance/  
development authority
- ▶ Trust

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LESSONS

# Legislative disposition

ii

106TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

## **S. 2827**

To provide for the conveyance of the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center at Ft. Lyon, Colorado, to the State of Colorado, and for other purposes.

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 29, 2000

Mr. ALLARD introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

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### **A BILL**

To provide for the conveyance of the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center at Ft. Lyon, Colorado, to the State of Colorado, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. CONVEYANCE OF FT. LYON DEPARTMENT OF**  
4 **VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL CENTER, COLO-**  
5 **RADO, TO THE STATE OF COLORADO.**

6 (a) CONVEYANCE AUTHORIZED.—Notwithstanding  
7 any other provision of law and subject to the provisions  
8 of this section, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs may con-  
9 vey, without consideration, to the State of Colorado all

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## Legal considerations

- ▶ Type of conveyance
- ▶ Environmental laws
- ▶ Historical preservation laws
- ▶ Physical plant issues

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# Potential for adaptive reuse increases with historical & architectural significance



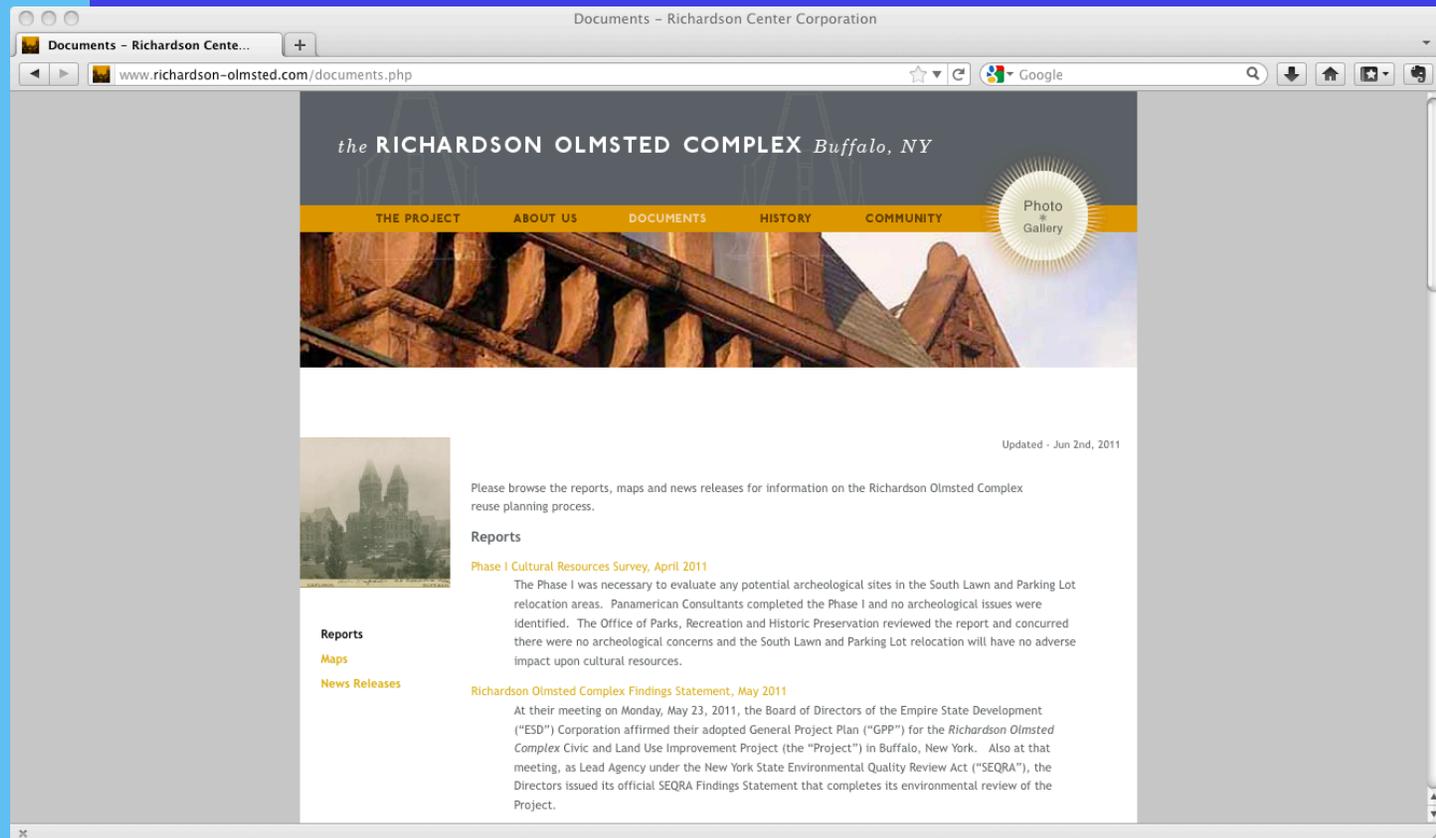
Buffalo State Hospital (NY)

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LESSONS

# Potential for adaptive reuse increases with historical & architectural significance



<http://www.richardson-olmsted.com/documents.php>

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# A building cannot be saved by its historical significance alone



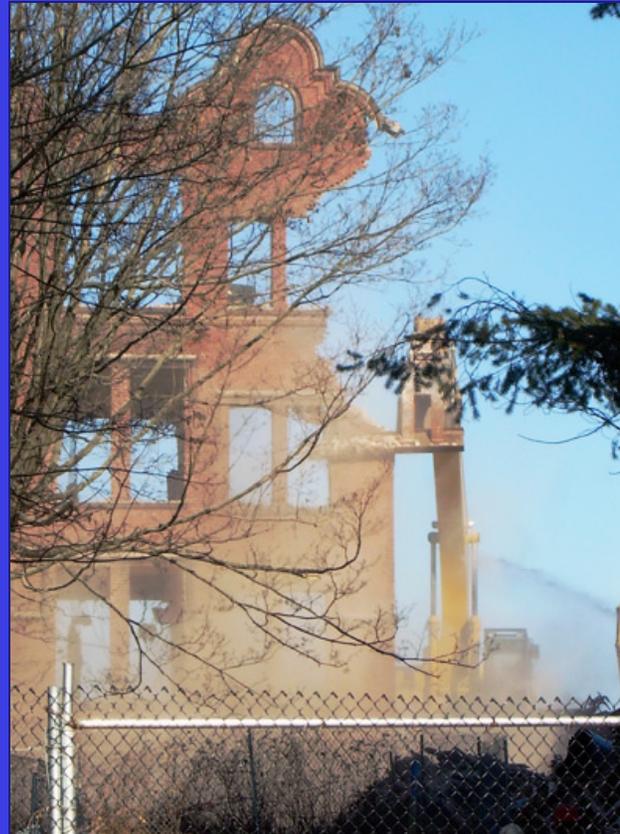
Northampton State Hospital (MA): opened 1858

THEORY

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LESSONS

# A building cannot be saved by its historical significance alone



Northampton State Hospital (MA): demolished 2006

THEORY

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# A building cannot be saved by its historical significance alone

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# Urban sites usually have more feasible redevelopment options



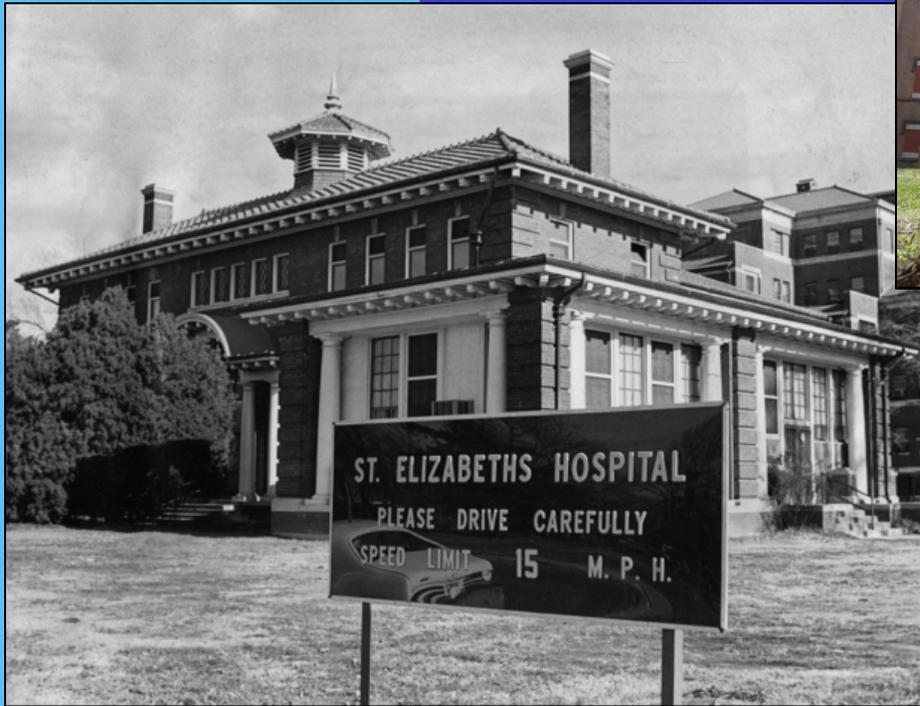
Architect's rendering of redeveloped Lorton Penitentiary, Fairfax County, VA

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Urban sites usually have more  
feasible redevelopment options



St. Elizabeth's Hospital (DC)

THEORY

PRACTICE

LESSONS

Urban sites usually have more  
feasible redevelopment options



THEORY

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LESSONS

# Redevelopment of rural sites is challenged by economic reality



Weston State Hospital (WV)

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# Redevelopment of rural sites is challenged by economic reality

HISTORY AND HERITAGE TRAVEL IN WEST VIRGINIA | TRANS-ALLEGHENY LUNATIC ASYLUM

trans-alleghenylunaticasylum.com/index.html

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## TRANS-ALLEGHENY LUNATIC ASYLUM

HISTORY & HERITAGE | HAUNTINGS & MYSTERY

West Virginia  
Wild and Wonderful

fb | |

### TOUR A LIVING MONUMENT

Welcome to the Trans-Allegheny Lunatic Asylum located in Weston, WV. Formerly known as the Weston State Hospital, this West Virginia facility served as a sanctuary for the mentally ill in the mid-1800's. The history of the building holds fascinating stories of Civil War raids, a gold robbery, the "curative" effects of architecture, and the efforts of determined individuals to help better the lives of the mentally ill. Tour this nationally recognized landmark and see how it left a lasting impression on local and national history. Daily heritage tours are available for both small and large groups.

### BEDLAM BALL COSTUME CONTEST

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 29TH, 2011

Click the banners above and discover more ways to explore the Asylum, learn about our year-round events and more!

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# Sometimes real estate development might be the answer (but do we need to invite the real estate developers?)

The Village at Grand Traverse Commons - About The Minervini Group

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### The Minervini Group

*Redevelopers of The Village at Grand Traverse Commons*

The Minervini Group is a local team assembled by Traverse City area resident and respected historic renovator & builder Ray Minervini. Our purpose is to pursue the successful "resurrection" of the historic architectural treasures on the 63-acre campus of the Grand Traverse Commons.

**A Brief History**

Starting in July of 2000, Ray Minervini and The Minervini Group team began negotiating with the Grand Traverse Commons Redevelopment Corporation, stewards of the Commons property. Our objective was to secure a Redevelopment Agreement to renovate the historic buildings in a way consistent with the city's District Plan. After several months of negotiations, and with intensified public support, the Commons Board voted to approve The Minervini Group proposal at a crowded special meeting on April 26, 2001 (See [Traverse City Record-Eagle article](#)).

On June 19, 2000 the official Redevelopment Agreement was signed, initiating a 12-month "Due Diligence" period for The Minervini Group. (See [Traverse City Record-Eagle article](#)). This period was essentially a time the group conducted a broad range of feasibility studies, including engineering, architectural, marketing and environmental analysis for review and approval by the Commons Board, the City Manager of Traverse City, and state and federal agencies.

**Finally...**

On May 6, 2002, The Minervini Group acquired the Sub-Area 2 property. (See [Traverse City Record-Eagle article](#)). Immediately after acquisition of the property, work began to re-roof the quarter-mile long roof of Building 50, the Chapel and two cottages, with completion nearly 11 months ahead of schedule.

The rest, shall we say, is history. The Minervini Group invites you to see, firsthand, the amazing transformation that has taken place since that eventful day in May. Please [contact us](#) for additional information, and explore the exciting opportunities that await you in *The Village*.

# Recommended Reading

*Changing Places: ReMaking Institutional Buildings.* Lynda H. Scneekloth, Marcia F. Feuerstein, and Barbara A. Campagna, eds. 1992: White Pine Press.

Nancy Tomes. *The Art of Asylum-Keeping: Thomas Story Kirkbride and the Origins of American Psychiatry.* 1994, U. of Penn. Press.