
FROM OUR READERS

UI is mishandling Mumford renovation

I am responding to the Oct. 17 editorial "Mumford's future remains bleak," which I believe partially misrepresents the current situation with the oldest building on the U of I campus.

University of Illinois officials continue to inflate the renovation price tag as \$1.4 million-plus, even though its own Mumford House Historic Structure Report, by Vinci-Hamp Architects, estimated those costs at \$800,000. One can only assume this difference reflects the UI's high overhead costs.

The recent expenditures of \$91,000 (originally budgeted to relocate the house two miles off campus) were intended to "stabilize" the house, including making it watertight, scraping and painting the exterior and providing a minimum level of security. However, despite objections by the Chancellor's Advisory Committee — of which I'm a member — officials decided to also demolish two additions and to pressure wash the wood clapboards, a cleaning method known by preservation professionals to be damaging to historic buildings.

Officials also state that no university department wants the Mumford House. Yet our office continues to hear from university students, faculty and area residents that the UI has made no serious effort to solicit potential users for the house.

I hope these recent actions are not an intentional sabotaging of Mumford House's future. The UI Board of Trustees has twice voted to support reuse of this unique reminder of the school's origins. Improving the building's appearance, rather than making it look worse for the recent homecoming, would have been a step in that direction.

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