Newton Senior Center

Newton, Massachusetts

Existing Conditions Assessment Report

Prepared by

Bargmann Hendrie + Archetype, Inc.
Boston, Massachusetts

For

City of Newton, Massachusetts
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INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The City of Newton is fortunate to have retained as one of its key municipal facilities the building that was dedicated in 1939 as the Newtonville Branch Library. This building, constructed in the Classical Revival style, was a state-of-the-art facility in its day. The brick façade is notable for its prominent center pedimented entry and cupola, the large windows that hint at the reading room functions inside, and the stained glass custom designed for the library use. The interior is highlighted by the balconied central hall that is flanked by the original reading rooms, and the Deco-inspired detail. The building has served the city well. Its current function as the Newton Senior Center is a hub of activity in the midst of Newtonville, and is a reminder of the city's proud history. The building has aged, however, and its systems have become obsolete. The City of Newton has been looking at how to provide a modern facility to house the senior and other functions, and the suitability of this existing structure for that function is being considered.

The purpose of this report is to provide information that will assist in the process of assessing the feasibility of reusing the current building by renovating it and expanding it to serve as the NewCAL facility. The scope here covers a preliminary review of existing building conditions, based on a cursory visual inspection as well as review of documents form previous renovations.

This document is not intended to identify specific programmatic deficiencies or to propose design solutions. The intent is to provide background information that assists in determining the historic value of the building and of select components within it. The intent is also to identify the condition of materials in a way that can be used to help identify costs related to potential renovation work. The major decision to be made is to decide what, if anything, of the existing building is to remain, and what new construction will be erected on the site along with or in place of this building. The NewCAL process to date has involved looking at several possible sites, and the decision has been made that this site is the selected location for NewCAL in some form.

If the city decides to retain and renovate this building, a more detailed analysis of conditions will be performed as part of the design effort.

Executive Summary

Exterior

The building exterior is in overall fair condition. Brick is sound, with some need for repointing masonry joints. The slate roof is missing slates, and related copper gutters and flashings are worn. The roofing has outlived its useful life. Windows are double hung wood windows, with added exterior storm panels. These look to be in good condition, though a check of operability and condition has not been done. Wood trim elements have peeling paint, which likely indicates there is rotted wood that needs replacement before a more lasting repainting is possible.

The original front entry at Walnut Street is not accessible and currently is not used. The current main entrance is at the parking lot side, where a grade-level entrance was added as part of the 1993 renovations. This includes glass doors and sidelights that create a vestibule with double doors and an air-lock to help protect the interior from the elements. This piece was designed to be a modern intervention in 1993. The entrance, as well as the elevator shaft, are visible changes relative to the original rear façade.

Original Walnut Street entry is currently not used

Brick and glass added at rear as part of 1993 renovation.

Interior

The interior is generally in good condition and shows evidence of having been well maintained. Then main first floor spaces include tile flooring, built-in wood shelves, and plaster walls. There is little in the way of visible deterioration. The barrel-vaulted ceilings, however, have acoustic material that does not look to be original.

The center space retains its original detailing, with metal railings, wood columns. This space as the former reading rooms retain original light fixtures. Fixtures still function, at least in part, but do not have LED lamping.

The 1993 renovation that changed the building's use to be fully used as the Senior Center included reconfiguring some spaces to accommodate needs such as a commercial grade kitchen, conference and office spaces, and it provided new finishes at most areas. The work added an elevator, accessible toilet rooms, and a reception area at the new grade-level west entry, making it comply with MAAB requirements of the time.

The original terrazzo stairs remain at the original entry area, though the north stair has been covered over with the addition of an office space. The rear stair, providing circulation up to the mezzanine as well as down to the parking lot and continuing to the ground floor, also includes terrazzo treads and is in good condition.

The ground floor includes finished spaces that also show little deterioration. Some partitions were added in 1993, and a renovation likely would include removal of the partitions and reconfiguring of the spaces. It is assumed there are no historic finishes to retain.

Site

The street side, north side and west entrance area include multiple landscapes seating areas that are in good condition. Newton is in the process of making changes to the sidewalks and curbs along Walnut Street in front of the building. This work is part of a larger plan to make Newtonville a more pedestrian-friendly area.

The parking lot at the rear of the building currently allows for thirteen vehicles, with access from the side streets at the north and south. The paving is in fair condition.

Services

Mechanical, electrical, plumbing and fire protection services date to 1993 or earlier, and it is assumed that a major renovation would call for removal of these and providing new as part of the larger building. Care would be needed to rout piping and ductwork in a way that avoids disrupting original finishes that might be called for to remain.

See separate conditions assessments that address the building structure as well as hazardous materials.

Historical Review

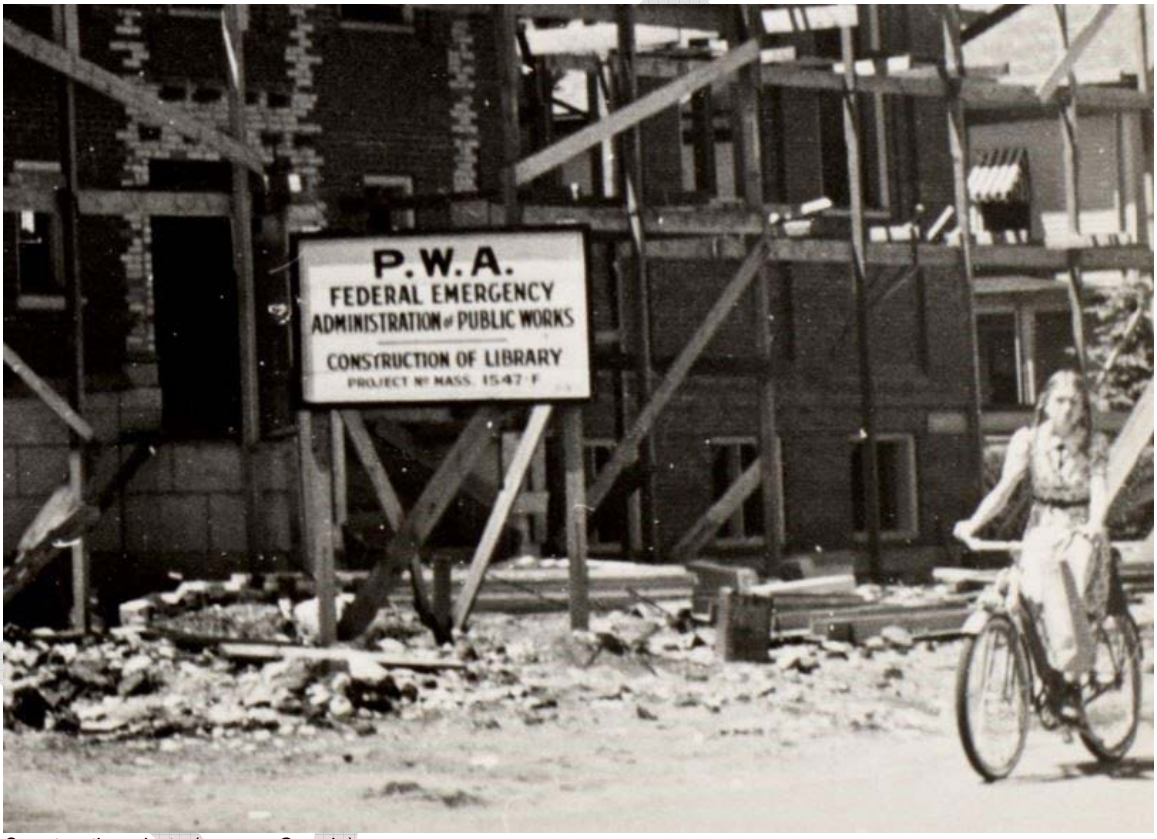
The building contributes to the National Register's Newtonville Historic District, but it is not part of Newton's Newtonville Historic District. A potential demolition or partial demolition/renovation will need to take into consideration the status of the building. Per the 1987 description as part of the National Register Application, the building has both historical significance as one of five branch libraries constructed in the late 1920's and 30's, and architectural significance . The important architectural characteristics of the building were described as follows:

> *The Newtonville branch library is a handsome brick Classical Revival structure whose symmetrical façade is organized around a pedimented pavilion with a third story and cupola rising behind it. The pavilion is trimmed with pilasters carrying a frieze which reads: NEWTON FREE LIBRARY. The double-leaf entry is headed by an entablature carrying an urn. The flanking wings have five bays each, defined by recessed panels containing 16/12 double hung windows. This is the largest and most elaborate of Newton's several branch libraries.*

The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) and the Newton Historical Commission are the two primary entities that may be involved in reviewing potential changes. The MHC's involvement is only triggered by state or federal funding. The review process for this is outlined in this report. The Demolition Delay Ordinance review in Newton is triggered by the building being over 50 years old, so that process will undoubtably will take place if any changes to the exterior are proposed. The Newton Historical Commission manages the Demolition Delay Ordinance and comments on projects and provides advice from a preservation perspective. The Demolition Delay process can take up to 18 months given that the building is "historic". There is no up-front criteria with either group dictating that any elements or the building in full must remain. There will be pros and cons in terms of potential reuse of this building as part of NewCAL (versus complete demolition), and the process will involve looking at alternatives with the goal of avoiding, minimizing or mitigating adverse effects and avoiding needless destruction of our heritage.

BUILDING HISTORY

The Newtonville Library was the fifth branch library built during the 1920's and 30's at the instigation of local residents. Although the branches in West Newton, Auburndale, Waban and Newton Centre were paid for entirely by subscription, the Newtonville branch was funded in part by a PWA (Public Works Assistance) grant, which covered 45% of the cost. The site, formerly that of the Newton Club, was purchased by community subscription and the remainder of the cost was made up by the city. The library was conceived as an important resource for Newton High School students and was therefore larger than might otherwise have been needed for branch service. The library was designed by Newtonville resident E. Donald Robb, a member of the firm of Robb and Little. Stained glass windows were designed by the Connick Studio, whose founder Charles Connick was also a resident of Newtonville. The building was dedicated on December 1, 1939.



Construction photo (source: Google)

Early photos of front and rear of building (source: Google)

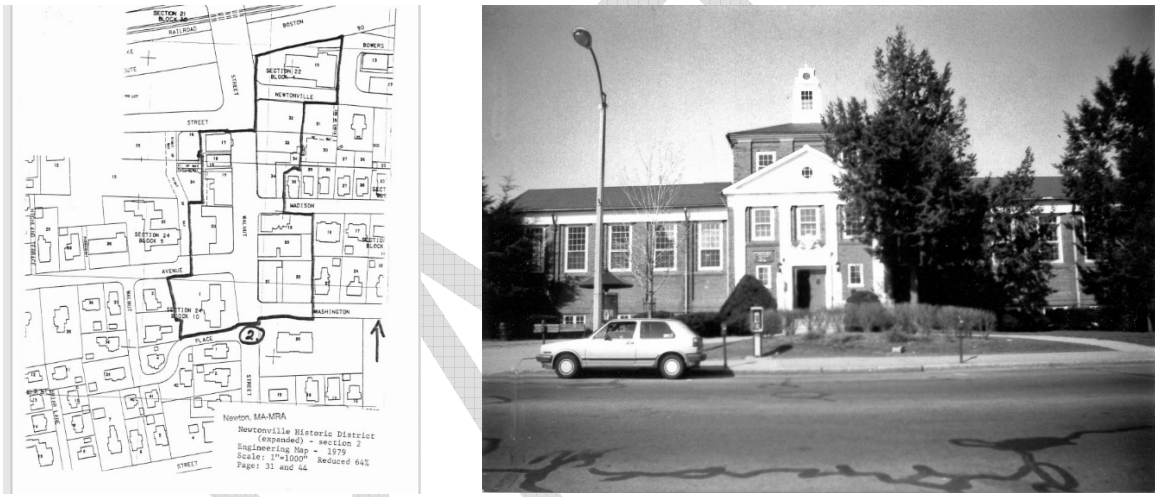
Photo of south reading room, date unknown (source: Google)

The bulding functioned as a library, and at some point (late 1980's?) one wing of the lower level was allocated for seniors as a "drop-in center". This was one of several buildings with this "senior" use, with others being at the Lincoln Eliot School and in Nonantum. Once Newton's new Newton Free Library opened in 1991, the Newtonville branch was no longer

needed as a library. Newton received a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), and the 1993 renovation of this building into the centralized Senior Center was the first CDBG public facility renovation in Newton. Swartz Silver was the architectural firm responsible for the design, which updated the building to be accessible, in addition to other limited renovations to accommodate the Senior Center. Subsequent work has included revised landscaping around the building, some of which was paid for through a CPA grant to make the Walnut Street side a community resource. Currently the building is also used by non-profit groups such as arts organizations and gets rented out.

Historic Designations

The Newtonville Historic District was added to the National Register in 1986. That area included 143 residential properties located south of the Turnpike. This original district did not, however, include the library. In 1988 there was an amended application that added the library as well as some commercial buildings along Walnut Street, and that application was approved in 1990. The building currently has a historic designation as part of the National Register District and National Register MRA (Multiple Resource Area) for the Newtonville Historic District.



Newtonville Historic Area Expanded and photo included in 1990 National Register application (Source: MHC)

The City of Newton's Newtonville Local Historic District includes an area of residential properties north of the turnpike. The current Senior Center building is not part of that district and is not a Newton Landmark Preservation Site, and thus has no local historic designation.

State Review Process

The following description applies only if state or federal funding is involved, so this information is included to describe what would happen should the project meet that criteria.

The Massachusetts Historic Commission (MHC) is the entity that reviews National Register projects in MA. The Introduction on their web site states as follows:

> *"Any new construction projects or renovations to existing buildings that require funding, licenses, or permits from any state or federal governmental agencies must be reviewed by the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) for impacts to historic and archeological properties. It is the nature of the federal or state agency involvement that triggers MHC review, not listing in the National or State Registers of Historic Places. A listing in either register does not necessarily require review and likewise, lack of listing does not eliminate the need for review."*

(Note that the State Register of Historic Places is a list of properties that have received local, state, or national designations, so this building is considered to be on the State Register in MA. There is no separate State landmark or district designation.)

Federal review is a process that requires review in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the purpose of which is to take into account the effects of their actions on historic properties. The process identifies and evaluates historic properties, assesses adverse affects to the propeties, and takes prudent and feasible measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate those effects.The review is done in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). In Massachusetts, the MHC is the SHPO. Local historical commissions are also consulted.

The regualtions that guide MHC review of state funded, licensed or permitted projects are published in 950 CMR 71. These regulations set up a process that mirrors the federal "Section 106" regulations: identification of historic properties; assessment of effect; and consultation among interested parties to avoid, minimize, or mitigate any adverse effects.

The summary on the MHC web site states:

> *"These laws and regulations set up processes to ensure that government agencies "look before they leap." They do not necessarily stop government from acting, but ensure that government actions are studied in consultation with interested parties, and that proposed actions be modified, if feasible, so that public funds are not used in ways that cause needless destruction to our heritage. In short, they promote responsible and responsive government."*

- The process begins with the submission of a Project Notification Form to the MHC, and MHC will respond within 30 days.

- If a project is found to have an adverse effect to a significant historic property, MHC enters into consultation with the project proponents and, as warranted, other government agencies and other interested parties. There may be a requirement to submit an analysis of alternatives.

- The end of the consultation process is the developing and signing of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the proponent, MHC, the state or federal funding, permitting, or licensing agency, and other participating parties as warranted.

- If the MHC does not respond to the initial PNFsubmission, or if there is a determiniation of no adverse effect, the process ends.

- If no state or federal funding is involved, there is no requirement to submit a PNF and there is no MHC review required.

Local Review Process

As noted above, there is no local (Newton) historic designation for this building. The project will still be required, however, to be reviewed by the Planning and Development Department's Preservation Planners. Structures over 50 years old, if proposed to be altered or demolished, go through Demolition Review if proposed changes exceed the stated minimum threshold.

- The Request for Demolition Review notes that "partial" demolition is defined as "the alteration or removal of over 50% of any single exterior wall surface or roof structure. Each is calculated by square footage." A comprehensive renovation and addition to this building would meet this criteria.

- The process involves submission of project documents as part of an application for General Permit. Timelines are strict, with documents required fifteen (15) days before the scheduled meeting date. The Department then determines within fifteen (15) days whether the structure for which the demolition review is requested is historically significant, and whether or not further review by the Newton Historical Commission is required.

- If the property is found to be significant, the Department shall schedule the application for a public hearing before the Commission.

- A delay of up to eighteen (18) months is possible for a building listed in the National Register, as opposed to the typical timeframe of twelve (12) months.

- The demolition delay begins on the date of the Newton Historical Commission's decision that the building is found to be "preferably preserved" and is in effect until it expires or a waiver is granted.

- After four (4) months, or six (6) months for National Register properties, the owner may request that the demolition delay be waived based on proposed plans. The owner may also seek a partial demolition, which can be heard at the next regularly scheduled meeting. An owner seeking a waiver of the demolition delay is encouraged to speak with a Planner prior to submitting such a request.

- As part of the process, applicants are advised to consult the City of Newton Historic Preservation Design Guidelines.

If there were to be significant opposition to the demolition of the building, a possibility would be for the Newton Historical Commission and City officials to designate the building as a Newton Landmark Preservation Site. The purpose of Newton's Local Landmark Ordinance is to recognize and protect buildings, structures, landscapes, and places, which are architecturally and/or historically significant resources within the City, and provide them with the highest level of protection. This would be an extreme measure, but could presumably happen toward the end of the Demolition Review period and would recognize certain features of the exterior and even the interior as important to retain, if the proposed solution were not already doing so.

The Request for Demolition Review form, found on Newton's web site, includes instructions that advise applicants to schedule a Development Review Team (DRT) meeting early on in the process to meet with City staff from several departments in order to address issues early on. The follow-up to this meeting is typically a checklist for next steps and handouts further explaining the review and approval process. Given that multiple departments are likely to use the proposed building, and there could be multiple options for funding sources, some of which may trigger additional reviews, this meeting is advisable.

BUILDING ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The building conditions portion of the report is based on visual inspections. The expectation is that the information here will be suitable for preparing conceptual cost estimates and allowing for a scope determination to be made. Once the desired scope of work has been identified, a more detailed review of some elements will be required. That might include removal of some materials, detailed documentation of conditions and dimensions, and access to upper regions of the building to inspect areas that are difficult to see from below. This more detailed information will inform future cost estimates and the bid documents.

Definitions for terms used in the condition assessment:

- *Excellent condition*: Element is in new or equivalent condition. No work needed other than routine maintenance.
- *Good condition*: Element is performing its intended function or is otherwise serviceable, although it may show signs of wear. No repair required other than routine maintenance.
- *Fair condition*: Element may require work, usually minor, to better perform its intended function, bring to a maintainable state, or return to a condition resembling its historic appearance.
- *Poor condition*: Major work needed to for element to perform its intended function or to bring item to a maintainable state.
- *Original*: Dates to the period of initial construction.

SUBSTRUCTURE, FLOOR, WALL AND ROOF STRUCTURE

See Bolton & DiMartino Structural Code report for a description of the building's structure and conditions. Structure generally consists of concrete, concrete-encased steel, and unreinforced masonry walls. The roof structure consists of steel trusses covered with gypsum plank decking.

BUILDING EXTERIOR

Exterior Walls

The red brick at the walls is generally in good condition. Bricks are sound, with minimal cracking or spalling. There is some staining of the brick and spatters from previous painting work. Mortar joints are in fair condition. The mortar color is quite uniform, indicating little has been done to repoint over time. While there are not significant areas of missing mortar that would dictate a complete repointing is now needed, a close-up review indicates there are areas where mortar is cracked and allowing water in. These conditions are located near windows that have rusting steel lintels.



General view of brick, close-up, and detail showing deteriorated mortar joints and rusted lintels.

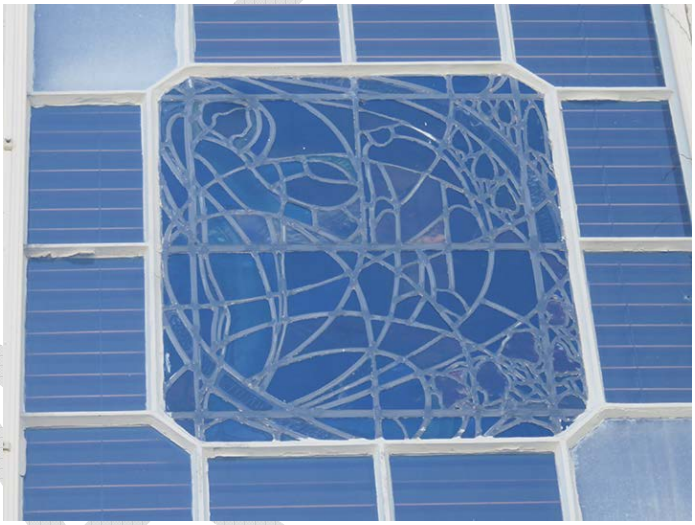
CONDITION: Fair.
RECOMMENDATION: Clean brick. Cut out and repoint a percentage of joints.

Exterior Windows

There are several sizes and types of windows on the building. Access did not permit a review of window operation, but it appears windows have not been opened or closed in recent years, and most are likely painted shut.
The original drawings show “double-glazed sash”, with an added exterior piece of glass as having been part of the design for thermal reasons.

The most distinctive windows on the building are at the north and south ends, where wood-framed, multi-lite windows at the ends of the reading rooms are highlighted by leaded glass art panels. Wood and glass appear to be generally intact, though some areas of replacement glass are evident. The art glass looks to be in excellent condition.


South façade


Detail of art glass at north window

The most prominent windows on the main façade are those at the reading rooms. These double-hung wood windows look to be largest of the windows, those at the reading rooms, look to be the original wood double-hung windows with wood muntins and individual glass lites. These windows have had aluminum storm windows added at the exterior.


Front façade with reading room windows at the right side.


Close-up of window.

Other smaller windows include the basement windows, small casement windows at the entry area, and windows at the west façade. Smaller windows have no added exterior storm panels. Conditions are good, with the exception of peeling paint and some mismatched replacement glass. If windows throughout are to remain, a minimal scope would be stripping of paint, some wood repairs, repainting ,re-glazing, and re-caulking.


Basement window.


Window next to east entry doors.

CONDITION: Fair.
RECOMMENDATION: Retain and restore existing windows. Strip paint at exterior and repaint.

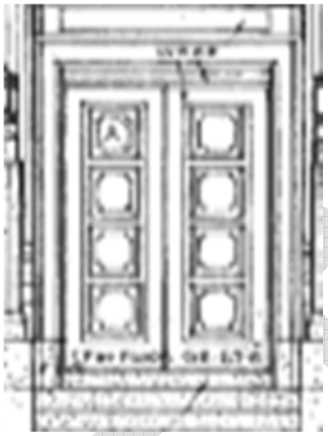
Entry Pavilion
The center three-bay pavilion is the main focus of the Walnut Street façade. In addition to the steps and entry door, the façade includes lantern lights on limestone posts, fluted, painted wood pilasters, painted wood frieze and pediment, with upper story (original stack level that is now offices) and cupola visible behind. The woodwork throughout is peeling, and likely is deteriorated to the point that it will not accept repainting without first stripping and doing repairs.


Pedimented center pavilion, letters from 1993 renovation, and original decorative metal above entry.

The “Newton Senior Center” letters, according to the 1993 drawings, include salvaged aluminum stars from the original library signage.

CONDITION: Fair.
RECOMMENDATION: Strip paint at all wood. Assume some wood requires replacement. Retain decorative aluminum stars for reuse. Retain and repair wrought aluminum ornament. Restore lantern lights.

Exterior Doors
The painted wood doors at the original east entry look like they might be original but, if so, have been significantly altered over time. The doors are used only for emergency egress, if at all, but their appearance detracts from the front façade due to retrofit panels, peeling paint, and visible weatherstripping. Other doors at the building exterior also suffer from peeling paint that reveals deteriorated wood. None of the doors look to be salvageable.



Main entry doors at east façade, along with drawing of original doors.

Grade-level door at west egress stair.

CONDITION: Poor
RECOMMENDATION: Remove all existing doors. Provide painted wood doors to match the original at the east façade, whether entry is used or not.

Exterior Stairs

The main entry stairs were originally granite. These have been repaired over time and some granite has crisp, unworn edges and looks to be relatively new. Joints are open throughout, however, and some stones have shifted. There have been multiple handrails over the years, none of which are original. The rust stains and cut-off steel posts are residual from the 1993 work.

View of east entry.

Granite steps have open joints and residue from metal railings.

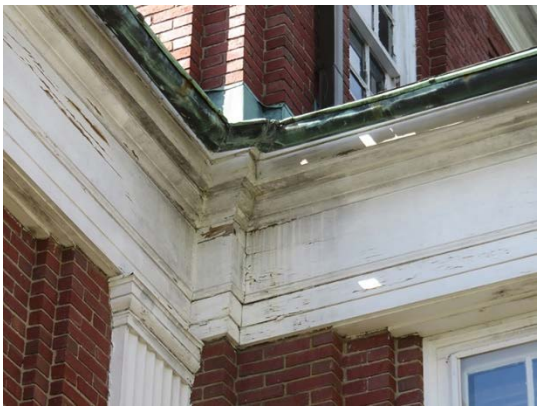
CONDITION: Fair.
RECOMMENDATION: Reset and clean granite steps. Remove existing railings and provide new railings if this is to be used as an entry or emergency exit.

ROOFING

The roofing on the building is quite worn, and for that reason is assumed to be original. This includes slate shingles along with copper gutters and trim.


View of slate roofs.


Missing and broken slates.


Copper gutter and deteriorated wood below.


Detail of underside of gutter.

CONDITION: Poor.
RECOMMENDATION: Remove existing slate and copper gutters, along with related trim. Provide slate and copper to match. Provide new flat roofing over Kitchen if this wing remains.

CUPOLA

This is one of the character-defining elements of the building. It is a four-sided painted wood structure, with painted wood urns, and cap. Currently the upper portion has acrylic panels and an exhaust duct at the upper faces. All materials except the acrylic/duct look to be original, matching the early photos. The early photos indicate that the panels may have been clock faces. , even though the shape and materials are different from what was on The original drawings show an octagonal cupola with louvers at the top, and an octagonal shape. The drawings identify the material being aluminum for all except a copper spike-shaped lightning rod at the top, where the existing has a sphere.


View of cupola from the east.


Detail view from southwest.

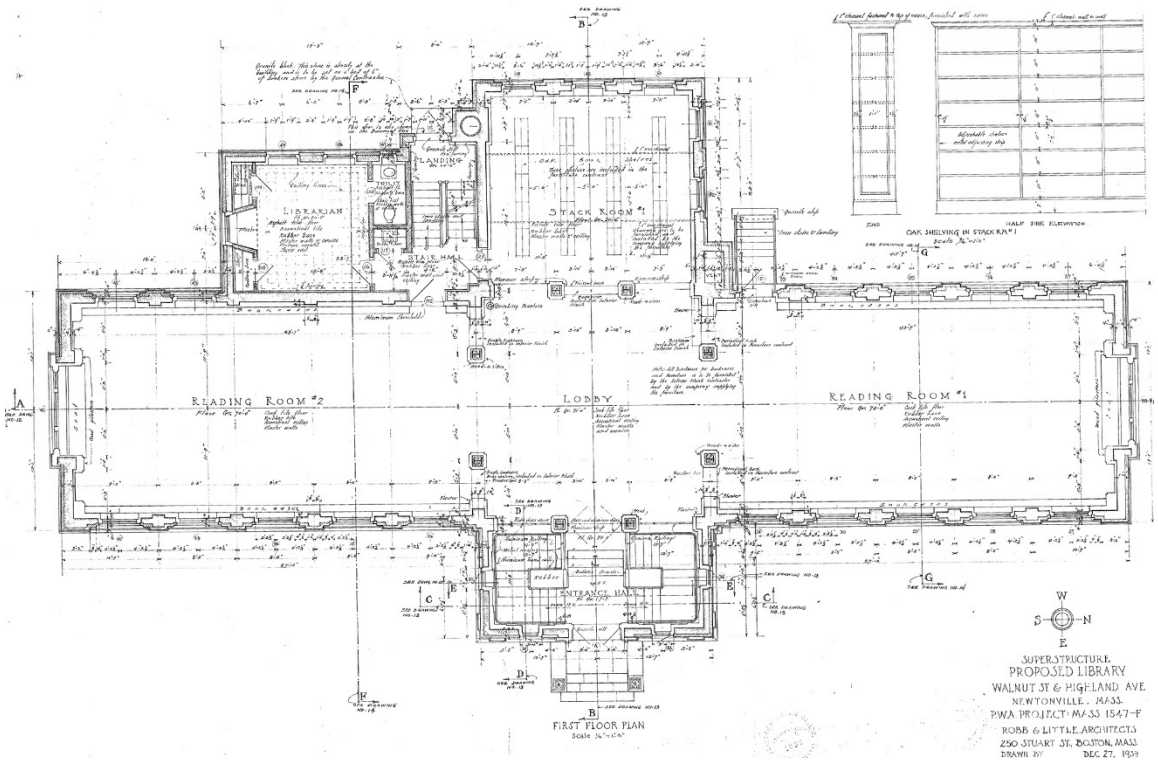
CONDITION: Fair.
RECOMMENDATION: Strip paint, repair wood. Remove retrofit plastic panels and reintroduce original faces.

BUILDING INTERIOR

A renovation of this building will likely require significant removal of finishes as well as some partitions in order to better accommodate the revised program and large addition. This section will focus on the more significant spaces, where a determination regarding the materials that should remain is what is most relevant. For spaces not addressed here, see the structural analysis, which speaks to the condition of the substrate and structure. Assume if these lesser spaces remain they will be stripped to the structure and get all new finishes.

FIRST FLOOR

The first floor housed the primary library spaces, with the main entry stairwell, double height lobby, and reading rooms flanking the lobby. To the west side were the stack area, and a librarian's office off the south reading room. The original plan illustrates the simplicity of the building structure and layout and illustrates the classical-style focus on symmetry of the main spaces. What the exterior and the plan do not indicate at all is the Art Deco detailing that is found at the interior. This detail, including the aluminum materials, abstracted shapes, was popular in the 1920's and 30's. It's incorporation in this building gave the library a modern feel. As it is not yet known how much of the interiors will be retained, it should be noted that some of the most unique elements of the interior are the Art Deco light fixtures and ornamental guardrails and painted stenciling. These could be salvaged and incorporated into the new design of the larger project.



Original plan of the 1st floor.

Entry Stair

The main entry stairwell retains much of its original character, though some materials have been covered over or removed. The south stair remains usable, connecting the ground and first floors. Treads have been covered with rubber, but oak plywood walls, decorative aluminum railings and guardrail remain. Handrail ends do not comply with code requirements and guardrails do not meet code for height. A renovation would require modifying these elements.

Entry landing with stairs up and down.

South stair at ground floor level has rubber treads.

The first floor level doors at the stairwell include the same decorative detail as the guardrails, though hardware has had some retrofit work. The north stair has had an inter-floor installed at the first floor level (a post 1993 renovation to add a security office), though it appears that the stair is intact below. Removal of this floor would be possible. The original guardrail remains.


Doors separate stairwell from Lobby.


Added office at north stair includes a glass wall.

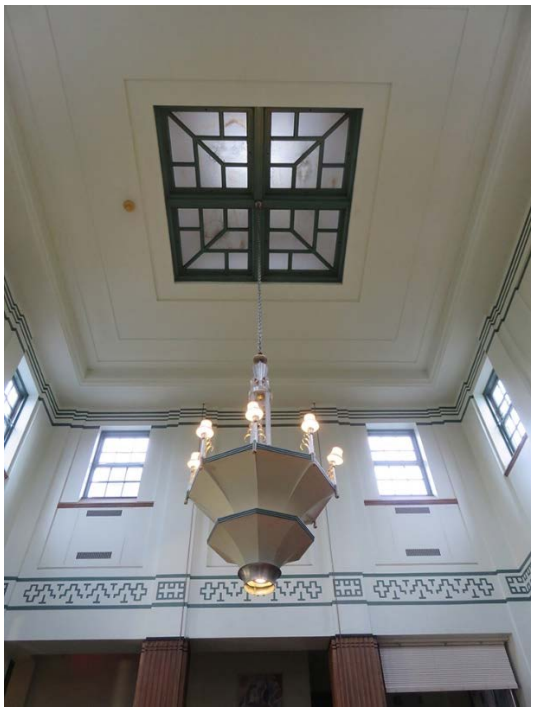
CONDITION: Fair.
RECOMMENDATION: Assess feasibility of retaining stairwell as part of building entry or egress. Remove rubber treads/risers to expose or replicate original materials. Remove office floor and partitions at north. Retain decorative railing and door elements while modifying to make code-compliant.

Lobby
The Lobby is a high space, with a laylight at the ceiling. It is open at all four sides to the adjacent spaces, creating a grand foyer and point of orientation.


Lobby looking east to entry.


Lobby looking west to mezzanine.

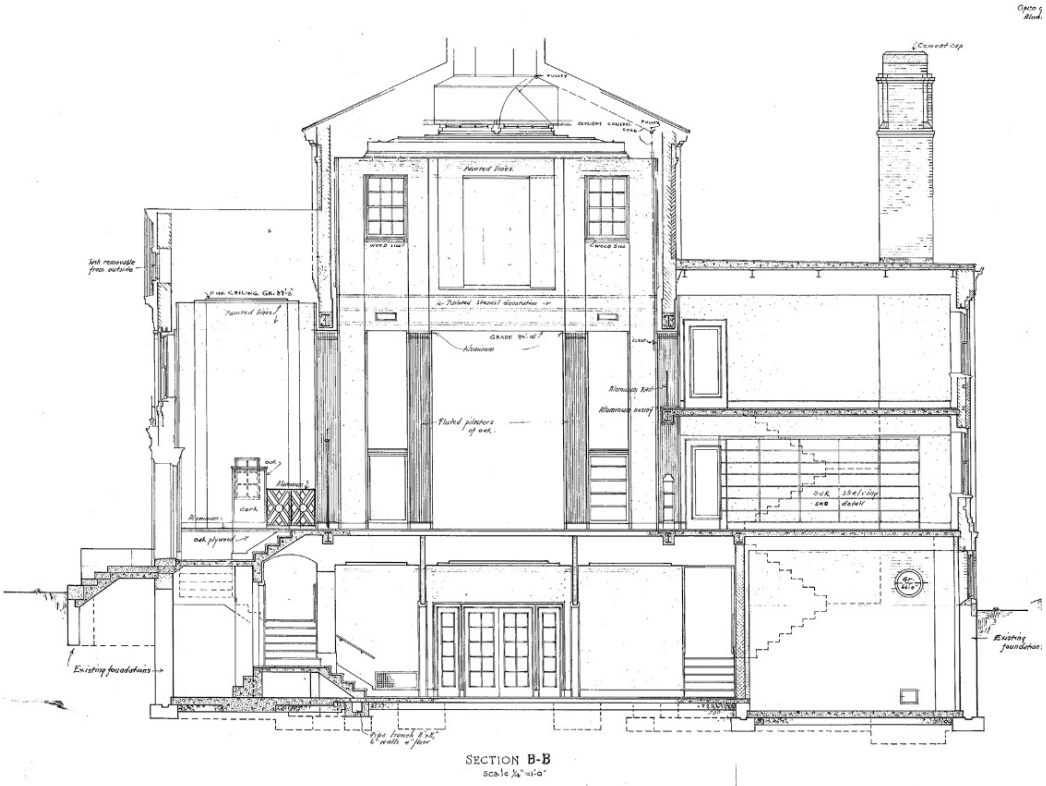
The detailing of this space includes square-shaped fluted oak columns, painted stenciling at the upper walls, and decorative aluminum guardrail at the mezzanine. Metal panels below windows, as is the case in the stairwell, include grilles for the heating system. The focal point of the space is the chandelier fixture that hangs below the skylight.



Upper wall and ceiling at Lobby.

Detail of upper wall and chandelier.

CONDITION: Good.
RECOMMENDATION: Remove existing vct flooring and provide cork or other suitable flooring. Restore chandelier and retrofit with LED lamping. Conceal HVAC system and reuse original grilles.

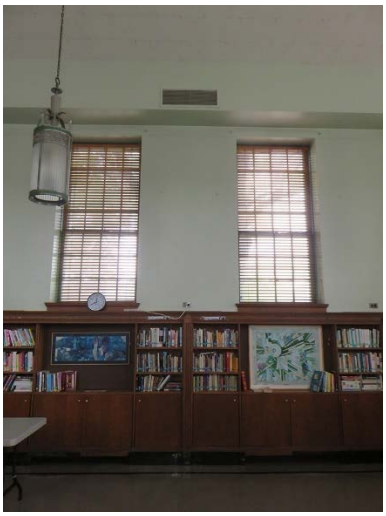


Transverse section from original drawings shows relationship of entry (left), lobby space and stack levels (right).

Dining Room (south) and Meeting Room (north)
Both of these rooms, which originally were the main reading rooms of the library, are for the most part intact and retain their original character, if not all detail. The design of these rooms originally was identical, with oak shelving lining the east and west walls below the large single-hung windows, cork tile flooring, plaster walls, and acoustic barrel vaulted ceilings.

Shelving remains, though modified in some areas to house items other than books. Woodwork details include some fluting that mimics that of the large columns. Then interiors of the windows are in very good condition. Wood sills include grilles that provide heat from ducts concealed in the walls.


North reading room.


Original shelving at east wall.

The current flooring is VCT, which may have been installed over the cork. The material is in good condition, but would presumably be replaced as part of a restoration.

The acoustic tile at the ceiling may be the original. It is not clear how well the acoustics in these spaces function, and a full renovation likely will require access above the ceilings for systems. New tile or other acoustic ceiling might be needed.

The colored, leaded glass panels at the north and south ends, as noted in the Windows section of the report, are important pieces, and most noticeable at the interior. These were designed by Connick Studios, based on Robert Frost's "Mending Wall" and Emily Dickinson's "There is no Frigate like a Book". The piece based on Robert Frost's poem was installed during the building dedication in 1939, with Robert Frost in attendance. These glass panels look to be in good condition, but should be assessed further and care taken to preserve them.


South reading room.


Art glass seen through blinds.

Detail originally included stenciling at the upper walls, though that was eliminated when duct soffits were added in 1993. If the spaces are to be restored, duct soffits could possibly be eliminated and stenciling reintroduced.

The original pendant light fixtures remain, and at least some are functional. These, along with the art glass at the end windows, are the most distinctive elements in the spaces.


Pendant light fixture lit.


Detail of aluminum fixture.

CONDITION: Good.
RECOMMENDATION: Remove existing vct flooring and provide cork or other flooring. Restore pendants and retrofit with LED lamping. Conceal HVAC system and reuse original grilles. Remove duct soffits and reintroduce stenciling. Retain shelving. Salvage lights and shelves for reuse elsewhere if spaces are not retained.

Elevator Lobby

The original stack area at the first floor was converted in the 1993 renovation for use as the elevator lobby, toilet rooms, and access from the new west entry. Partitions were added and all finishes removed and replaced with new. This space does not retain any of it's original interior.


Elevator lobby with stair up from west entry area.

Entry space looking to glass vestibule at rear of building.

CONDITION: Good.
RECOMMENDATION: Retaining these spaces is likely infeasible as part of a renovation/addition. Nothing in these spaces is important to keep.

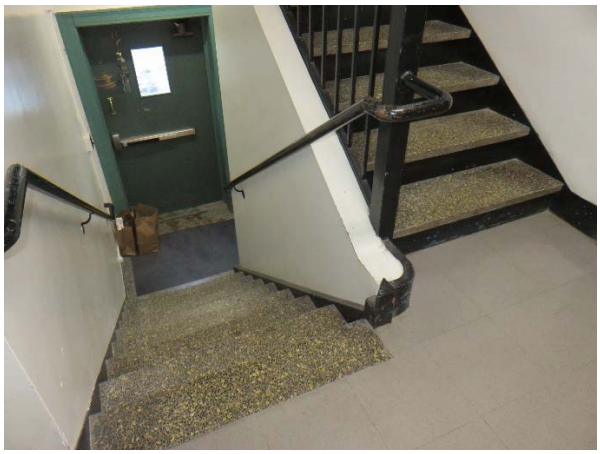
Kitchen
The space to the west of the Dining space is currently a kitchen, housing commercial level equipment and finishes appropriate for that use. A renovation would dictate full removal down to the structure, regardless of the new use.

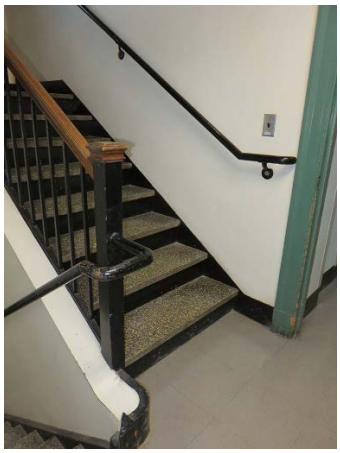

Commercial equipment in Kitchen.


Original windows and casings remain.

CONDITION: Fair.
RECOMMENDATION: This one-story space likely would be removed as part of the project. If it were to be retained, it would be stripped down to structure. The windows could possibly be retained, similar to other exterior windows.

West Stairwell
This stair connects the three levels of the library floors as well as providing egress at grade level at the west. Terrazzo treads look to be original and are in good condition. Wall-side railings added in 1993 in order to comply with code.

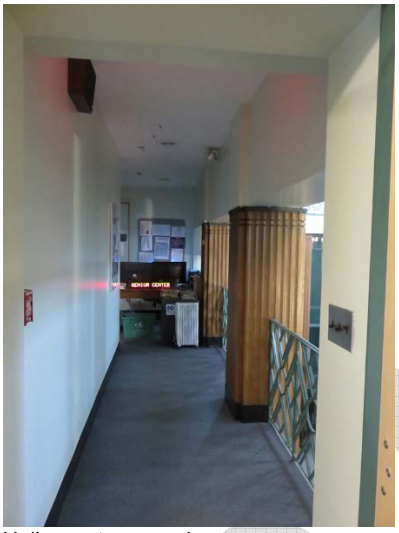

Stair down to grade at west.


Added handrail at wall.

CONDITION: Good.
RECOMMENDATION: If this is retained, some upgrades to comply with code requirements may be needed.

Mezzanine

The mezzanine area originally was the upper level of the stacks, and is now used as offices. The small office area has drywall finishes and fluorescent lighting. The one distinctive element of the mezzanine area is the open railing overlooking the Lobby space. The railing is not a code-compliant height and would require a supplemental railing as part of a renovation. The elevator does access this level. The overall occupancy of this level is minimal, so the one egress stair is code- compliant.


Hallway at mezzanine.


Office area with windows to the west.

CONDITION: Good.
RECOMMENDATION: If this is retained, an additional railing of some sort would be required to meet code requirements of 42" in height.

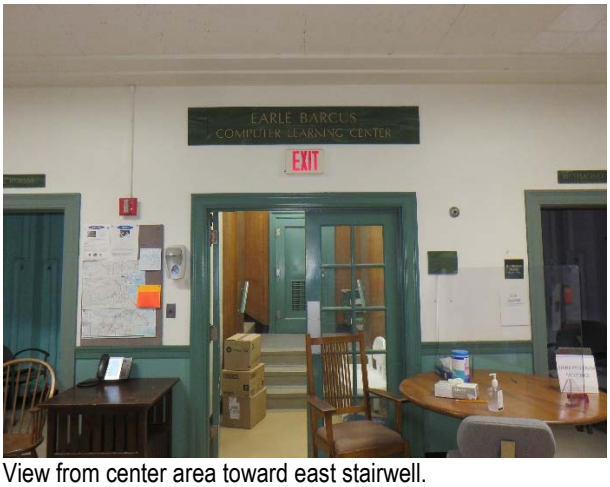
GROUND FLOOR

The ground floor area was designed originally to hose the Children's Reading Room and the Community Room, so these were finished spaces and the entry stair provided clear circulation . Some of the original millwork detail remains at areas such as the central space that is currently used for computers. This includes wood doors with glass lites and painted wood casings, along with wainscoting at the walls. Wood windows also remain, with interiors in very good condition.

The quality of the finished spaces is good where there is some access to natural light. Ceilings are in the range of 9-6" to 10'-6", so currently usable and potentially acceptable as part of a renovation.

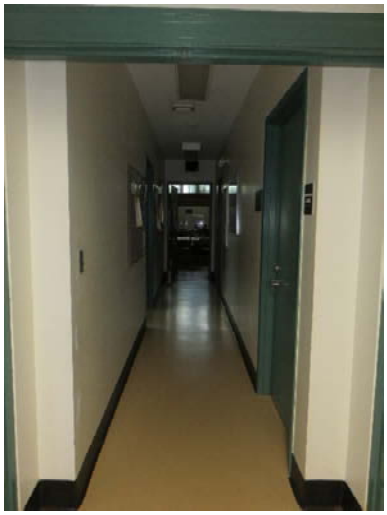
Little of the original finishes remain at the rest of the basement. The 1993 renovations added partitions, new finishes, etc. to make this space usable as art and recreation spaces, conference rooms, computer areas, etc. The far south room was retained as a library space.

At the west, the space under the stacks housed the mechanical space , and the space under the current Kitchen housed toilet rooms. These areas contain additional toilet rooms and back-of-house spaces such as mechanical and storage.



View from center area toward east stairwell.


Original closet is now as office.


South corridor.


Art room with windows facing onto Walnut Street.


Library space at south end.


Original wood window sill with heat grille.

CONDITION: Fair.
RECOMMENDATION: Remove all finishes and partitions down to the basic structure and provide all new.

CODE ISSUES

The Structural Report identifies applicable codes that would be relevant to a renovation of this building, and notes that requirements would depend on the scope of the renovation and addition to be done. Some sections above reference elements that are non-compliant at handrails and guardrails. A few key code issues that would likely apply to a renovation of this building are as follows:

Accessibility

- If the construction costs related to renovating this building exceed 30% of the value of the building, the requirement is that the entire building be made compliant with the current Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MAAB) requirements.
- All public entries to the building must be accessible, with either grade-level doors, ramps, or lifts/elevators. The Walnut Street entry has stairs at the exterior and up to the main level, and it would be infeasible to make this accessible. The expectation is this entrance could not be reintroduced for use.
- An earlier version of the MAAB requirements was in place in 1993, and that is why the west entry was created, toilet rooms changed. The current code is more strict in some regards, so items such as handrail extensions at the west stair, which were already incorporated, might require further modifications.

Egress

- Distances to building exits from any point in the building will need to meet current codes as part of a renovation, as will stairs, handrails and egress paths.
- The existing guardrails at stairs and the mezzanine are too low, and would need to be modified.
- If the Walnut Street stairs are retained as “exit only” stairs, handrails must comply with code requirements and might require modifications.
- The west stair is currently not enclosed in a way that separates it from other spaces and might need to be enclosed as part of the renovation.

Energy Conservation

- The Energy Conservation Code that applies to new construction would also typically apply to the renovation of the existing building. The fact that this building is designated “historic” allows for some relief to those requirements.
- While in the past there was a blanket exemption from the energy code for “historic” buildings, the requirement now is that the design professional writes a letter that is submitted with the application for building permit, describing how making modifications to meet the code would be detrimental to the structure.
- The possible relief would be for items such as the solid masonry walls and the roof, where insulation would not need to be added, and for existing windows that might not meet the Energy Code.

Obtaining variances from the Building Department and/or from the MAAB are sometimes an option. If any items are proposed to be retained without meeting the current code, a review with officials should be done early in the process.