

DRAFT Mitigation Plan for the Demolition of the Former Newtonville Branch Library Located at 345 Walnut Street

Introduction

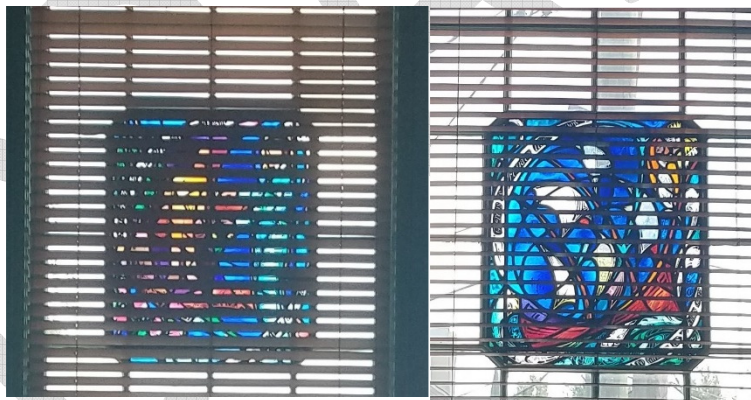
The City of Newton after many years and hundreds of public meetings announced the formal decision in the Summer of 2021 to proceed with full demolition of the building located at 345 Walnut Street in Newtonville. There were many reasons given, but the primary issue was that adaptive reuse of the existing building could not be accomplished in a manner that created an age-friendly, barrier free, universally accessible, welcoming, and inclusive facility.

However, the City of Newton acknowledges there exists historical resources upon and within the existing building, and the following is a starting point with regards to historical mitigation options for the loss of the existing building.

Recommended architectural salvage items and existing features from which our current design pays homage to Connick Stained Glass Windows



On the above left is the north face of the Connick stained glass window depicting “Mending Wall” by Robert Frost. On the above right is the south face of the Connick stained glass window depicting “There is No Frigate Like a Book” by Emily Dickinson.



On the above left is the current interior display of Connick stained glass window depicting “Mending Wall” by Robert Frost. On the above right is the current interior display of the Connick stained glass window depicting “There is No Frigate Like a Book” by Emily Dickinson.

The NewCAL Project has offered to partner with the Connick Foundation, and our project team from BH+A has significant experience in the restoration and incorporation of stained glass windows. These windows will be salvaged, restored, and incorporated into the design of the new facility. Significant restoration will be required to restore these to their original condition. We are sensitive to the new location, natural and artificial lighting, and the surrounding design details.

Exterior Medallions



The above are decorative medallions on the north and south facades of the existing building could be something we look to salvage and restore, or cast and recreate, to incorporate inside the new building possibly in the library.

Cupola



In the above picture, the cupola on the existing building is not scaled appropriately for the new facility and is not what was originally designed in 1938. However, there are several possible ways in which we could salvage pieces of the cupola to incorporate into our project. Could we repurpose the windows and decorative fenestrations on the cupola into some form of interior or exterior public art piece? Could the windows be salvaged and restored in incorporated into the interior or exterior design in some way? We are approaching this element with a creative and open mind.

Granite Pillars, Exterior Light Fixtures, and Wrought Iron Fence



In the above image, the blue arrows are showing the exterior light fixtures and bases which could be salvaged, restored, and incorporated in some manner. The red arrows show the four granite pillars flanking the original main entrance to the existing building on Walnut Street. These will be salvaged, restored as needed, and reinstalled somewhere on our site. The green arrow is showing the wrought iron fence which will also be salvaged and incorporated in some manner as well.

Wrought Iron Decorative Piece



In the above, the red arrow is showing the wrought iron decorative piece that is mounted above the original main entrance. Our new design plays off this piece, but there may be opportunities to salvage, restore, and incorporate this piece somehow.

Chandelier and Skylight



The above image shows the chandelier and skylight that sit beneath the cupola, and above the original main lobby. The chandelier will be salvaged, restored, incorporated, and reinstalled. The skylight above may also provide some opportunities for salvage or possibly design homage.

Interior Light Fixtures



The light fixtures above existing in both the north and south wings of the main floor. These will be salvaged, restored, and incorporated into the new design.

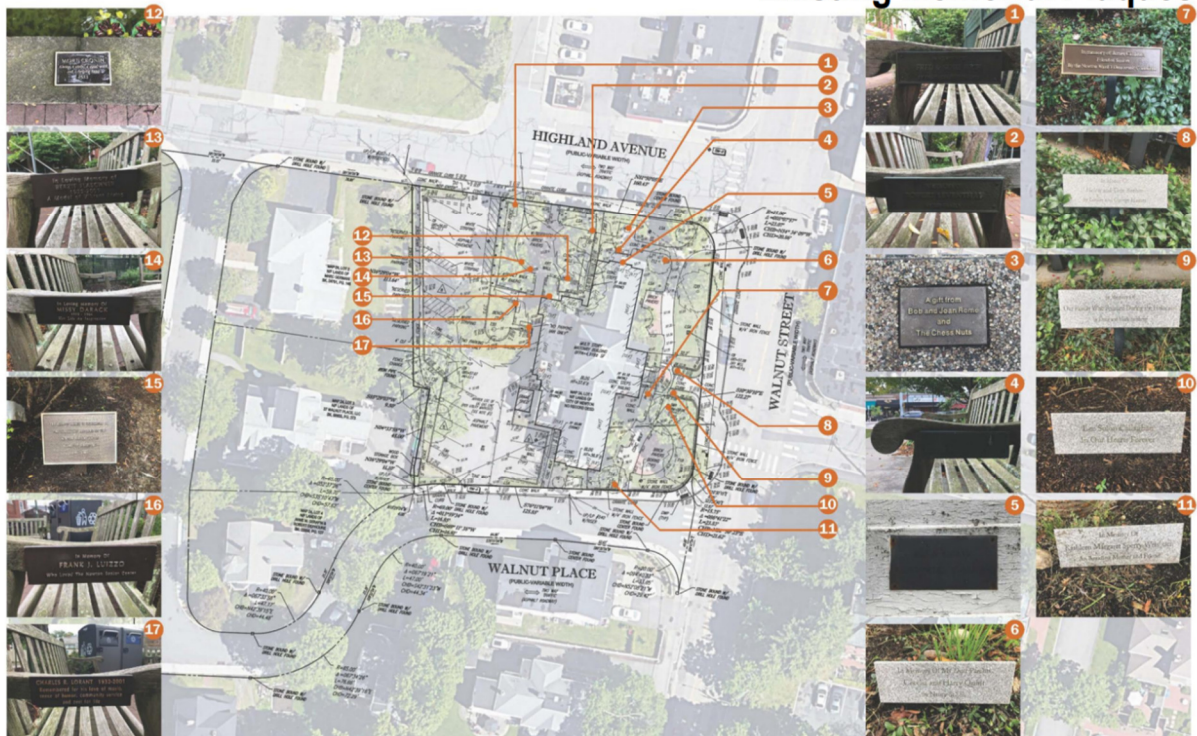
Interior Decorative Wrought Iron



The above images show the interior decorative wrought iron work that we are using to influence our design. We could also look to salvage, restore, and incorporate these pieces into the new project.

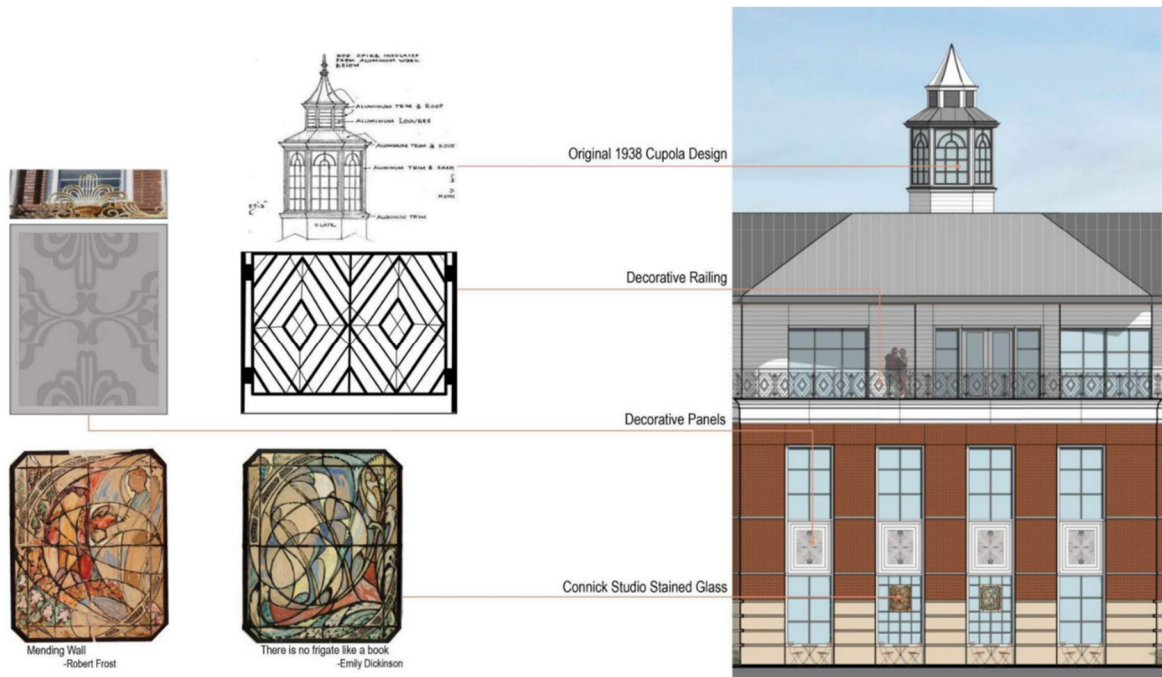
Memorial Plaques and Dedications

Existing Memorial Plaques



There are a multitude of interior and exterior memorial plaques that will all be saved, restored, and incorporated into the design and will all be displayed in some fashion on or around the new facility.

Historical Elements Already Shown in our Design Concepts



The above slide shows the various major elements already included in the exterior design. Some of these elements like the Connick stained glass windows are being saved, restored, and reinstalled. Other elements are being used to create and influence our design in a way that pays homage to the historical resources upon and within the existing building.

Design Features that Pay Homage to the Existing Building and other Historical Buildings in Newtonville



The above slide shows the various building materials, colors, and design details we're currently including the design concepts that play off the existing building and several historic buildings in the Newtonville neighborhood, such as the Church of the Open Word, the Masonic Hall, and others.

Additional Mitigation Efforts to be Considered

Photography: We shall obtain and produce photographic documentation of the existing interior and exterior conditions of the property located at 345 Walnut Street, with such documentation to be in the form of 5"x7" archival-quality black and white photographs keyed by number to a photograph description sheet and building sketch plan (exterior), and building floor plan (interior), and with such photographs to include views of the overall exterior elevations/interior spaces and representative views of architectural details, including, but not limited to, windows, doors, stairways, and light fixtures. At least three context views showing the building in relationship to its current setting also will be included. Both sets of photographs will be accompanied by a flash drive of digital photographic images meeting the Massachusetts Historical Commission's photographic recordation standards.

Public Interpretive Program: The design team has reviewed materials contained in the City's archives which can be reproduced to create an interpretive exhibit consisting of photographs of the former Newtonville Branch Library with identifying captions, a history of the premises, information on any memorabilia from the library or the senior center, a history of the programs and services provided at the facility and how the facility contributed to the neighborhood. Special attention shall be given to the design of the exhibit to engage people of all ages. This display will be located in a central publicly accessible area within the new building. Efforts will be made to make the display interactive and engaging.

Design Review: The Newton Historical Commission shall be given the opportunity to review and comment on the design of the exterior features of the new facility. The Newton Historical Commission will help ensure that the proposed new construction is visually compatible with nearby historic buildings.

Public Art: Exterior and/or Interior Public Art that pays homage to the existing building or incorporates physical elements of the existing building.

Brick Salvage: Brick salvage could present opportunities for interior or exterior incorporation into the design. Here are just a few possibilities:

- Used to frame a fireplace in the library.
- Interior decorative element in the main lobby.
- Used to frame the stage for the new performance and dining hall.

3D Replica: Three-dimension replication of the existing building to be displayed in the new facility.

Painting: Commission a local artist to paint the existing building, which could then be displayed in the new facility.

Conclusion

The City of Newton is excited to roll up our sleeves and work with the members of the Newton Historical Commission to salvage, restore, and incorporate the historical resources upon and within the former Newtonville Branch Library. We look forward to working side-by-side with the Newton Historical Commission to create a wonderful new facility that pays homage to the existing building, uses design elements, details, and materials inspired by other historic buildings in Newtonville, while creating a finished product that is both visually appealing, respectful of our history, as well as one that is age-friendly, barrier free, universally accessible, welcoming, and inclusive. In this draft document, we have provided several possible mitigation strategies we can apply to this project. However, we are also very receptive to any suggestions the members of the Newton Historical Commission may have with regards to other mitigation steps we may want to consider. We welcome the continued partnership with the Newton Historical Commission on this project, as we work together to preserve many of the various historic resources upon and within the former Newtonville Branch Library.