

Newton Center for Active Living (NewCAL) project

Community Meeting					
Date: Thursday, March 14, 2019					
Date: Newton Education Center – Room 211					
Time: 7:00PM					
Attendees:					
Alex Valcarce	Working Group	Y	Sandra Butzel	EBC	Y
Amanda Berman	Working Group	---	Bea Goldsmith	EBC	Y
Barney Heath	Working Group	---	Peter Johnson	EBC	--
Bob DeRubeis	Working Group	Y	Marian Knapp	EBC	Y
Jayne Colino	Working Group	Y	Cheryl Lappin	EBC	---
John Rice	Working Group	Y	Brooke Lipsitt	EBC	Y
Jonathan Yeo	Working Group	Y	Jack Neville	EBC	Y
Josh Morse	Working Group	Y	Sue Rasala	EBC	Y
Maureen Lemieux	Working Group	---	Richard Rasala	EBC	Y
Ruthanne Fuller	Working Group	---	Carol Schein	EBC	Y
Thomas Rooney	City Staff	Y			
Deb Youngblood	Working Group	---	Joe Sirkovich	Stefian Bradley	Y
Jini Fairley	Working Group	Y	Teresa Wilson	Stefian Bradley	Y
Nancy Scammon	Working Group	Y	Anthony Miniscalco	Stefian Bradley	---
Phil McNulty	Working Group	---	Tom Murphy	NV5	---
Rachel Sherman	Working Group	---	Italo Visco	NV5	Y
Seth Bai	Working Group	---	Melissa Gagnon	NV5	Y

Josh Morse, City of Newton Public Buildings Commissioner, called the meeting to order at 7:00PM.

Stefian Bradley Architects prepared a presentation entitled “NewCAL – Newton Center for Active Living Community Update Meeting, Thursday, March 14, 2019.” A copy of the presentation, as well as additional handouts (“NewCAL Newton Center for Active Living Community Update Meeting, Thursday, March 14, 2019 - Additional Information” and “NewCAL Program Proposed Rooms/Spaces”) are posted to the project website: <https://newcal.projects.nv5.com>.

1) Highlights of the presentation are as follows:

- A. The NewCAL Vision Statement was updated in February and is posted on the project website. The updated version notes meeting the needs of Newton’s older adults.
- B. The NewCAL Guiding Principles have been further developed and are posted on the project website. Josh M noted that the Principles can be considered the “recipe” for the Vision Statement and the project goal is to try our best to create an asset that we can all enjoy and benefit from.
- C. NewCAL – A First Look: Increasing building hours in the new facility is being considered. The current senior center hours are 8:30AM-4:00PM M-F with a building size of 10,000SF. The project team is looking at expanding hours in the new facility to a 7:00AM-7:00PM (minimum) and 7:00AM- 10:00PM (maximum) M-F, with a potential of more days, including Saturday and Sunday. The building size would be close to 3 times larger than the current building. It was noted that with the expanded size and hours, there would be a potential increase of 22-52 hours/week that the building would be open. The larger facility with expanded hours increases the potential for an expanded schedule for older adult programming.
- D. Concept Diagram: The concept “bubble” diagram shows types of spaces that will potentially be at the NewCAL facility, with potential linkages to adjacent spaces. The corresponding color legend indicates categories of spaces, represented by different colors (green = admin. & support, blue = multipurpose activity, yellow = common areas, orange = kitchen & Café, pink = gymnasium, gray = pool & fitness, purple = outdoor). It was noted that multipurpose spaces (indicated by blue color) represent approximately 30% of the program area, which are typically the heart and soul of these types of centers.
 - a. The intent is to size the spaces appropriately to meet the needs. The concept diagram is broken down into three zones: Active Programs, Reception/Admin/Support Spaces and Quieter Programs. It was noted that the The multi-purpose fitness room, or the gymnasium, could also be used for other program functions.

- b. Common areas would be available to everyone as they move through the building - including alcoves, casual seating areas, arts and cultural displays, store, kitchen/demonstration area the café.
- c. The gymnasium would be approximately 9,800SF. This space is deliberately sized to be used in several different configurations: basketball court, pickle ball and volleyball as well as an elevated 3-lane running track where 18 laps total just over one mile. The fitness components under discussion, which are more site dependent, are the swimming pool and fitness equipment center.
- d. Outdoor activities being considered include bocce, garden areas, terrace and quiet spaces. Development of these program areas will be site dependent.

2) Questions and Answers:

- A. If there is a pool, how much would it add to the SF of the facility?

The total SF would depend on the type of the pool – therapy pool (approximately 2,000SF) or a pool complex (approximately 15,000SF) or somewhere in between that range. Some sites may lend themselves to a particular type of pool facility or none at all.

Comments were made that although lovely, there are costs associated with a pool including construction, maintenance and management (including life guards) as well as liability issues. Also, a pool would limit the site options. It was noted that in an ideal world, a pool would be wonderful although perhaps other considerations may be more important for this project.

A comment was made that a relatively low percentage of people may use the pool. The City noted that the possibility of a pool is listed on the proposed program in response to the survey. It was also noted that many seniors find pools to be the best way to get exercise and therefore, a pool could provide an enormous benefit.

- B. Where will the new facility be built?

Many sites will be looked at and evaluated against a broad range of criteria. The public buildings department created a map of all City owned parcels in Newton. The project team will create and develop a site selection matrix and establish priorities which

include accessibility, walkability, parking, traffic, close to village center, etc). The project team is working with the Parks & Recreation Department, the Planning Department, the Executive Office and Senior Services to evaluate sites. It has been determined that 2+ acres will be needed. If parking exists nearby, this could reduce the land area needed.

In response to previous suggestions made to look at including the new facility as part of the Northland or Riverside projects, the City noted that locations of both developments are on the outskirts of the City. It was also noted that there may be potential for the NewCAL facility to lose its identity, when being part of a larger entity.

C. Is the existing site a possibility to build the NewCAL facility?

The City noted that the existing property would have to be expanded significantly to have the land area needed for the new building.

Regardless of where the NewCAL building is, the existing Senior Center building will be reused. The building is on the National Register of Historic Places therefore extensive renovations would be challenging. In addition, much more land area is required for parking.

D. Schedule

The City explained there is a public process which is driven by ordinances and a charter. Whenever possible, the project team will endeavor to accelerate the process. Typically, a project of this nature would take approximately five years, of which we are currently almost one year in. Depending on the timing to gain consensus during the various stages, the overall schedule could be shortened.

E. Management

The City explained that the NewCAL facility will not be managed by one single person. There will however, be a single position which will manage programming – Senior Services Director. If there is increased demand for senior programming, the demand will be met. When there is less demand for senior programming, needs for other programming areas will be met. The senior population will ebb and flow but will always make up a major portion of the City’s overall population.

F. Parking and Transportation

The Director of Senior Services, Jayne Colino, reported that the City is in the process of finalizing a contract for improved transportation for seniors in Newton. The new service is called VIA and is expected to be launched this summer, as a new model in the Commonwealth. The service is intended to provide on demand door-to-door transportation for senior residents, with a lot more ease than the ride sharing programs that are currently in place. Purchased vehicles will be branded to be highly visible. The intent is that by launching a more affordable and more reliable ride sharing program, the community will become more age friendly.

G. How much parking is needed?

Currently, the concept is that 75 parking spaces will be needed at the NewCAL facility. Depending on the site, a 75-car parking lot may not be necessary, as long as there is the availability within a reasonable distance to accommodate 75 cars.

H. How will NewCAL be financed?

The City reported that per Mayor Fuller, the project will not require an override. The project will be bonded and funded through the existing City budget.

I. How can the community continue to be involved?

The City reported that Community Update meetings will be scheduled at least every 3 months, for the duration of the project. In addition to the next Community Update meeting scheduled on June 20, there may be another meeting scheduled in six weeks (end of April) to review program spaces and layout.

The community is encouraged to email the project team at newcal@newtonma.org. Josh Morse can also be contacted directly at (617) 796-1608.

Josh M explained that the Executive Building Committee (EBC) was brought in to be part of the Working Group (WG) to provide feedback, which has been very successful. This committee structure will remain for the duration of the project. The Advisory Building Committee (ABC) is working with the Council on Aging (COA), which established the BDAT (Building Design Action Team) to work on advocacy for senior needs relating to the NewCAL project. This is an opportunity for seniors in the community to advocate for ways to institute change.

- J. How many employees would be necessary at the NewCAL facility and how would they be paid?

The City explained that a management study is ongoing, as part of the NewCAL project. Other projects have been, and will continue to be visited. The increased staffing demand remains to be determined. A full time custodial position was recently approved for the current senior center so that position will be on board at the new facility. The Executive Office is aware that the project will increase in size and programming, relative to the current senior center, and is prepared to increase the budget to fund those needs.

The Director of Senior Services reported that the State currently provides \$12/senior to fund programming at the senior center. Based on the 2010 US census data, there were 18,636 seniors living in Newton.

The City also noted that along with creating an asset comes an opportunity for revenue.

- K. Will senior housing be considered as a component of the NewCAL project?

The City explained that similar to consideration of a pool, housing would be site specific. There is lots of development currently going on in Newton so the team will be looking at projects that are easily accessible to the selected site which is ultimately selected for the NewCAL.

- L. Has the decentralization of senior centers been considered?

The City explained that in theory decentralization could become simpler for the site selection process although in terms of logistics, would be more complicated for management and staffing. This concept was raised at the very first Building Committee meeting. A model that may ultimately exist would be to have a main central facility with satellite locations for overflow programming.

- M. Is the proposed size of the fitness center large enough?

The architect (SBA) explained that currently the proposed fitness center is sized at 1500SF which would comfortably accommodate 30 participants. It was noted that every fitness class offered at the current senior center has more than 30 participants.

The fitness area has the potential to connect with the gymnasium, for larger programming. It was noted that visibility is important so the instructor can see all the participants as well as for the participants to be able to see the instructor's feet. The size and proportion of the fitness center will continue to be evaluated. A model could

be studied where the fitness room is adjacent to another multipurpose space, separated by a movable wall. SBA noted that the proposed program includes three multipurpose rooms at 1500SF each.

The possibility of having multiple Zumba classes was discussed. It is preferred to have multiple sessions in smaller rooms, rather than fewer classes in a larger spaces, where visibility may be challenging.

A comment was made with regard to a preference for real wood flooring in the fitness center, as it is easier on the knees in comparison to synthetic flooring material.

N. Would the City partner with existing programs - YMCA, JCC and religious institutions?

The Executive Administrator for the Department of Senior Services noted that residents need to pay a membership fee to attend programs at the YMCA and the JCC. In addition, there would be a cost to provide seniors transportation to many different destinations.

O. Would the new facility be a multi-story or single story building?

The City explained that there are inherent advantages and disadvantages to both multi-story and single story. Advantages of a multi-story building would be that it would take up less land area, would be more efficient to operate and would be less expensive to build (less building envelope), though it does add an elevator and stairways. The flip side is that a multi-story building could create circulation challenges and unintended separation. It is likely that the new building will be a 2-story building with a stand alone gymnasium. Options for a 1, 2 and 3-story building will be evaluated with the different site options.

P. Is the building being designed to be large enough for future needs and expansion?

The City explained that by increasing the facility hours and possibly the days of the week that the center will be open, the size of the facility will exponentially increase programming and availability. The gymnasium will provide flexibility to offer the opportunity for more active multi-purpose type of programming. The project team expressed confidence that sufficient SF has been built in to absorb the ebb and flow of the senior population in Newton. The City noted that programming will be adjusted accordingly to meet demands of the seniors population.

Q. Would common areas be designed to be conducive to casual gathering?

Casual gathering areas will be built into the design, including the kitchen, cafeteria and café. The lobby area will include soft seating. A point was made that a casual

lounge area is needed, close to the main entrance. The lounge area should be warm and inviting, like a living room, perhaps with a fireplace.

The furniture will be movable and stable, as well as appropriate for accessibility, as it must be adaptable to provide flexibility throughout the facility. Lots of time will be dedicated to the selection of furniture, including test fits.

R. Size of the library?

A comment was made that the proposed size of the library/reading looks inefficient to accommodate the books that are at the current senior center. SBA noted that the size of the library is important to ensure the space is warm and inviting and not overwhelming. The team will continue to explore dimensions and proportions of the space. A comment was made that all books do not need to be in one dedicated space, they can be located in key locations throughout the building.

S. Will there be a performance and rehearsal space?

The City explained that the current vision is for the cafeteria to back up to a multi-purpose room that can be configured in a couple of different ways with a movable wall between the two spaces. Options are as follows: 1) An elevated stage can be created by using a slab depression or via a gradual slope within the building from the lower level to the higher level or 2) a fixed stage with ramps and railings might be considered. The project team will continue to evaluate merits of these options.

T. What is the purpose of a Family Conference Room?

The Family Conference Room is a place where confidential senior related meetings can take place.

U. Will there be an opportunity to rent space in the new facility?

Depending on the programming demand, it may be possible to rent select spaces during certain times of the day. The current senior center is rented at least once/week. The City noted that the push for revenue will not push out senior programming.

V. Will the City continue to maintain the current senior center in the interim until the new facility is built?

The City will continue to maintain the current facility although no major improvements will be done.

W. Will the new facility be open to non-Newton residents and how many residents are served?

Jayne Colino has worked for the City for 29 years. Jayne noted that currently programs are open to non-Newton residents although services are restricted to Newton residents. This system will be maintained in the new facility. Per year, programs and services are provided to over 5000 residents are per day, between 100-150 are served. It was noted that these numbers are based on residents who visit the center and provide trackable information.

Jayne noted that she is very excited about this opportunity and by the Mayor's commitment to this Project.