

Newton Center for Active Living (NewCAL) project

NewCAL Working Group Meeting					
Date: Tuesday, November 10, 2020					
Date: Zoom Meeting (online)					
Time: 9:30 AM					
Attendees:					
Working Group		Present	City Staff		Present
Sandra Butzel	<i>Community Member</i>	---	Jonathan Yeo	<i>Chief Operating Officer</i>	---
Bea Goldsmith	<i>Community Member</i>	√	Seth Bai	<i>Veteran's Services</i>	---
Brooke Lipsitt	<i>Community Member</i>	√	Devra Bailin	<i>Planning</i>	√
Norm Meltz	<i>COA Member</i>	√	Amanda Berman	<i>Planning</i>	---
Jack Neville	<i>P&R Commission</i>	---	Ellen Ishkanian	<i>Mayor's Office</i>	---
Richard Rasala	<i>Community Member</i>	√	Zachery LeMel	<i>Planning</i>	---
Sue Rasala	<i>COA Member</i>	√	Thomas Rooney	<i>Public Buildings</i>	---
John Rice	<i>Community Member</i>	---	Rachel Sherman	<i>City IT</i>	---
Susan Albright	<i>City Councilor</i>	√	Linda Walsh	<i>Public Health</i>	---
Nicole Banks	<i>P&R Commissioner</i>	---	Deb Youngblood	<i>Health/Human Services</i>	---
Jayne Colino	<i>Senior Services Dir.</i>	√			
Jini Fairley	<i>ADA Coordinator</i>	√	Consultants		
Barney Heath	<i>Planning Director</i>	---	Tom Murphy	<i>NV5</i>	---
Maureen Lemieux	<i>Chief Financial Officer</i>	---	Melissa Gagnon	<i>NV5</i>	√
Josh Morse	<i>Public Buildings Comm.</i>	√	Joel Bargmann	<i>BH+A</i>	---
Nancy Scammon	<i>P&R Department</i>	√	James Bruneau	<i>BH+A</i>	√
Alex Valcarce	<i>Public Buildings</i>	√	Dan Chen	<i>BH+A</i>	√

Alex Valcarce opened up the online Zoom meeting at 9:35AM.

The purpose of this meeting is to review presentation materials for upcoming meeting with the DRC and NHC next week. The plan is to distribute both presentations at the end of this week. While not necessarily reaching a conclusion, the goal of these meetings is to solicit feedback. The

side deck is organized to include a summary page for each option for retaining the existing building with a new addition as well as demolishing the existing building and building new. Each option is prefaced with advantages and challenges. The following seven (7) options were presented and discussed:

Retain Existing Building and New Addition

- Option A (keep both wings and central cupola, parking entry from Highland Ave)
- Option A1 (keep both wings and central cupola, parking entry from Walnut Place)
- Option B (keep south wing and central cupola)
- Option C (keep north wing and central cupola)
- Option D (keep central cupola only)

New Building

- Option E (new 4 story bar building)
- Option E1 (new 4 story L-shaped building)

Retain Existing Building with a New Addition - Summary Comments:

Advantages

Existing building has large setback from Walnut Street, keeps with scale of the neighborhood fabric, retains charming brick façade, and retains large windows with high ceilings and cupola.

Challenges

The existing site is very tight which inherently makes building an addition challenging with regard to awkward circulation, restricted onsite parking, very tight accommodation of large multifunction program spaces on the ground floor, challenge of loading and unloading with limited area for back of house functions as well as potential cost premiums to integrate new addition to the existing building. There was consensus that the larger program areas should be located closer to the main entrance.

There was discussion about modifications to the existing front steps to ensure accessibility. By retaining the existing building, the stairs would have no functional use in a renovated option.

Discussion Points for Options Presented:

- Option A (keep both wings and central cupola, parking entry from Highland Ave)
- Modifications were discussed with regard to the existing stairs along Walnut Street. It was noted there would be no functional use gained by retaining the existing former entrance.
 - Proportions of spaces at the upper levels are restrained.
- Option A1 (keep both wings and central cupola, parking entry from Walnut Place)
- The intent is to improve the relationship between the main functional spaces and the kitchen. Although the relationship is improved, parking is reduced.
 - Parking has one point of access (not through way) which could be challenging. A suggestion was made for the red arrow to indicate two-way travel.
 - A direct entrance is needed from the parking area to the building. A centralized control point will be challenging.
 - This option can be omitted from upcoming presentations to the DRC and NHC.
- Option B (keep south wing and central cupola)
- Although it may be odd for one wing to be removed from a symmetrical building, there is more room to accommodate ground floor programming.
 - The lobby area is accessible from the parking area.
 - Although the site is still a bit tight, program layout is more regular and useful.
- Option C (keep north wing and central cupola)
- The main advantage is that the familiar view of the existing building is maintained from the north (from the commercial area).
- Option D (keep central cupola only)
- By removing both wings, there is more programming area available. All first floor programming can be at grade (without multi levels), with the exception of the activity space at the existing tower area which is 6' above grade.
 - The store could possibly relocate to be at grade.

- The raised area, at the existing tower/cupola, could be used as a gathering space overlooking the main lobby, accessible by stairs and an elevator.
- Although there may be some constructability issues the concept is viable.

Option E New 4-story building

- Smaller footprint with increased parking area at backside.
- Building massing is pulled away from abutters on Walnut Place.

Option E1 New 4-story L-shaped building with partial covered parking

- Rotating gym horizontally reduces mass along Highland Ave.
- Can add a roof deck or additional programming to the building.
- More flexibility in building siting and solar orientation.
- Accommodates room for future expansion.
- Front doors should be rotated, to face Walnut Street.

General Discussion Points:

- With regard to the 11/18 DRC presentation, the level of detail and any fenestration should be equally shown for all options. The overall strategy is to graphically convey that due diligence is being done to study the new building in relation to the existing building.
- Leaving the existing building a brick color with the new massing shown in white helps to graphically relay what is being retained vs. what is new.
- A new 4 ½ story mixed use building is being proposed where CVS is currently located on Walnut Street in Newtonville.
- The topic was raised with regard to incorporating a cupola into a new building design. Similar to the Newton Free Library, which is complimentary to City Hall, NewCAL could be created as a modern building with traditional features.
- BH+A shall distribute a progress update on Friday, prior to the presentation being issued to the DRC. All options should be presented equally.
- Although audiences are different, presentations should be the same for the DRC as well as for the NHC. The DRC will be more focused on the programmatic review, making sure

needs of the user group are satisfied as well looking for the solution that works best with the project budget. Alternatively, the NHC will be more concerned with whether or not the existing building can be retained and what can be done to retain the building history in the event the best solution is for the existing building to come down.

- In addition to reviewing historical documents such as exhibits and photos, the team will evaluate building features to determine what items can be preserved in the event the preferred option is to take the building down. It was discussed that select items, such as stained glass windows and chandeliers in the reading room, would have some value in being integrated into the new building.
- With regard to accessibility, a new building design would allow for two elevators, whereas there would likely only be one elevator if the exiting building were to be retained.

Additional Upcoming Meetings (all online with remote participation via Zoom):

- 11/18/20 DRC meeting
- ~~11/19/20~~ NHC meeting (changed to 12/17/20)
- 11/24/20 NewCAL Working Group meeting
- 11/24/20 Council on Aging meeting
- 12/03/20 NewCAL Community Update meeting (to be confirmed)

Melissa G shall coordinate with Alex and Jayne and distribute Zoom info for all meetings noted, as it becomes available.

NV5 shall send out notices to the WG of any additional upcoming meetings relative to this project.