


## Newton Center for Active Living (NewCAL) project

<b>Community Meeting</b>					
Date: Thursday, August 19, 2021					
Location: Zoom meeting					
Time: 6:30PM					
<b>Attendees – City Staff and Consultant Team:</b>					
Alex Valcarce	<i>Public Buildings Dept.</i>		Melissa Gagnon	NV5	
Josh Morse	<i>Public Buildings Dept.</i>		Joel Bargmann	BH+A	
Jayne Colino	<i>Senior Services Director</i>		Dan Chen	BH+A	
			Jennifer Bentley	BH+A	

Josh Morse, the City of Newton Public Buildings Commissioner, opened up the meeting at 6:35PM. Due to the ongoing Covid-19 public health crisis, the Community meeting took place virtually, via Zoom. 51 participants joined the meeting. The following participating groups and individuals were represented: Public Buildings Department, NewCAL Working Group, Council on Aging (COA) Advisory Board, Jayne Colino (Director of Senior Services), BH+A (architects) and NV5 (Owner’s Project Manager).

It was noted that this is possibly the 277<sup>th</sup> project meeting. The intent of this meeting was to provide a progress update to the Community since the last meeting on 02/22/21. The Working Group prepared a recommendation letter after meeting with the Community multiple times and after hearing overwhelming support from a lot of stakeholders that the majority of people recommend new construction over an addition/renovation option. Next steps include studying floor plans and site configurations to refine the interior of the building which will help inform what the massing will look like at the exterior of the building with the ultimate goal to fit contextually within Newtonville.

The floor plans being presented tonight are not final, they are conceptual in nature and are not set in stone. There is flexibility as to where programming can be located within the building.

BH+A provided an overview in terms of positioning on the site. Site improvements for the Walnut St improvement project are complete which created opportunities for potential drop off areas on both Walnut St and Highland Ave. The street has been encroached upon by the sidewalk creating a single lane of traffic in front on the building, with some nice green space.

Particular trees were identified as possibly being able to be retained. If salvaging a particular tree is not possible, a new tree will be planted in its place, particular re: the tree which anchors the corner at Walnut and Highland.

[There is opportunity for some green space setback/buffer with green space at the corner.](#)

The building is being oriented parallel to Walnut Place which was triggered in an effort to make the parking lot most efficient. The parking is currently designed with one way traffic, entering via Walnut Place and existing to Highland Ave. There are currently 32 onsite parking spaces designed. This orientation allows the entry to open itself up to the corner of Walnut and Highland. Programming located at or near the corner shall be figured out in terms of what activities are meaningful to folks using the building as well as to those passing by on the street.

Specific areas on the site plan were highlighted in orange: the corner of Highland and Walnut, as an important destination entry point and the zone along the street as an active and vibrant front to the building.

The following program zoning was presented:

1<sup>st</sup> Floor – Public Spaces (lobby, lounge, administration, multipurpose/dining, kitchen, juice bar, shop)

2<sup>nd</sup> Floor – Programming Rooms (art and program rooms, administration and gym)

3<sup>rd</sup> Floor – Activity Spaces (fitness, games and track)

First floor is the street with drop-in and more casual spaces, the second floor the spaces you want to get to and the third floor has more active destination spaces. The zoning concept is to have the more public spaces at the ground floor, more thoughtful spaces in the middle and more active spaces on the top level.

Following this logic and the logic of the site, the main entrance is on the corner with a two story lobby space which visitors can see from the second floor. The lounge makes sense near the entry as well as nearby to the large multipurpose space, for overflow crowd, as well as a nice opportunity to open up to the outdoor space on Walnut Street. Reception area is positioned for perfect oversight to the program areas as well as the two points of entry.

The second floor has more thought provoking spaces including art, activity, classroom and administrative spaces. Administrative spaces are distributed on different floors. The gymnasium is also on the second floor, with the entrance seen from the two story lobby below.

The third floor has the most active destination spaces including fitness, game room (billiard/ping pong) and walking track, as well as 2000SF outdoor deck. The deck could be subdivided into two zones, one side with more shade and the other side with more sun.

There are good opportunities for outdoor spaces including green space off of the library along Highland Ave, 10'-15' deep green space along Walnut Street which could be an outdoor bistro like cafe, as well as a small patio space off the large multipurpose room along Walnut Place. Opportunity to buffer the edge of the site while creating some human scale spaces at street level as well as at the third level of the building to create an active front along Walnut Street.

BH+A presented some examples of program areas from senior center projects in Scituate and Falmouth, highlighting the multi-level lobby, lounge spaces, kitchen, arts and crafts with a maker space with digital printers/computers, simple classrooms which can be converted to multiple functions, and a second floor gym with third floor walking track.

## Community Feedback

Questions:	Answers:
Will there be a performance/theater space and will there be a stage?	The theory would be to incorporate a stage in the large flexible multipurpose dining/activity space.
Is there an elevator? Will the elevator be large?	Yes, at least one. Maybe two. The elevator will be large and ample sized, for a full sized stretcher.
Has underground parking been considered?	Would be extremely expensive and inefficient on such a small site. Factoring in onsite parking, Highland Ave and Austin street, there are approx. 100 parking spots available within 200 feet of the new building.
Question about display space for visual art? Toby Reed, representing three major visual arts organizations in the City, has been talking with Jayne about using major spaces for display. Track lighting and wall hanging systems are needed for art display.	There will lots of wall space to display artwork, as well as track lighting and wall hanging systems.
Will there be facilities for changing or washing after biking to NewCAL?	There will be bike racks. Will be single use bathrooms. Showers are challenging and are not very common in senior centers as there are safety issues and may not be advisable. Do want to encourage alternate means of travel.
Is it expected that most visitors will arrive by foot or by car? The 1st floor layout seems to assume most visitors will walk in at the front door. Has this assumption been tested?	The vast majority of folks drive to the senior center. Although the main entrance faces Highland and Walnut, the main entrance in practice may be from the parking lot. We will want to make sure good lines of sight are maintained for both entrances.
Will there be consideration for artist involvement for certain unique features such as railings and banisters and outdoor seating at the decks?	Yes, the team will be reaching out. In addition to rotating displays, permanent art would be great at the new building. Will be reengaging with performing and visual arts community as well as Parks and Rec.

What will the covered portion of the parking lot will look like?	The idea is that there will be a wall at the edge of the garage, other than where the drive aisle goes through. Will not appear as a raised building with parking below.
Will the building have solar?	The building will have solar. Goal is for the building to be net zero and fossil fuel free. A combination of passive house and LEED standards will be applied.
What will be done to control potential pest/rat issues during construction?	A pre-existing survey will be done with a pest control company. There will be a rat control program with box stations which are monitored regularly. Standards for site cleanliness and standing water. Comply with IPM requirements.
Will low VOC materials be used?	Yes, low VOC materials will be used throughout with the exception of the gym floor where an oil based product may be used due to long term durability.
Will there be carpet?	There may be select areas where carpet makes sense. Carpet is available in rubber packed, low allergy materials. Many different flooring materials will be considered.
What is being considered for air circulation and filtration?	All requirements will be met of ASRAE 62.1 for fresh air introduction and will run MERV 13 filters. There needs to be a balance of making sure building is as energy efficient and as green as possible while being as safe as possible. Will use heat pumps and most likely energy recovery systems.
Will sound and lighting technology be available to performing artists?	All spaces need to flexible and fluid and need to fully out fitted with a versatile AV package system. Almost every space needs to have ability to broadcast out as some form of remote participation may be here to stay. Performing arts location will have a more robust AV and hearing assist systems.
Where will drop off and pick up locations be?	The City has already created drop off zones at the corner of Highland and Walnut. The team is looking into whether two of the metered spaces can be turned into a drop off zone.

Where will theater classes be held?	Program locations will need to be determined and assigned appropriately, to ensure there are as few overlaps as possible.
Will any existing trees be saved?	As many trees as possible will be saved, pending review of pros and cons. If trees need to be removed new trees will be planted.
Will existing stained glass windows be salvaged and reinstalled?	Stained glass windows will be protected, preserved, restored and reinstalled. The team will work with the community as to how to best display salvaged items in a way that is proud and fitting in the new building.
Will there be a way to have the deck shaded so it can be used throughout the summer?	The deck can be totally shaded however options will be studied for a trellis or a solar structure with partial shading, 50% shading for the entire deck, etc. Roof decks need to be comfortable. There is opportunity to bring in artistic features as well as planting programs, greenhouse, etc.
First floor public spaces look promising in terms of active and passive spaces although the reception deck needs to be more visible when people enter the building to make contact and to answer questions.	The reception area will be studied in terms of how to be more visible. It is helpful for the reception area to back up to administration space. A friendly face is key within direct line of sight from the entryways.
What is the timeframe for when the new building will open?	Planning to break ground two summers from now and will open the building within two years from that point. If the project can move quickly through design, construction will start sooner.
What is the temporary relocation plan of programs and services during construction?	May continue to expand programming within spaces currently being used, such as the Hyde Center. Although there will be one central location, other locations will likely be needed to compliment programming.
Is there a plan for table tennis?	Conversations will continue about need for the ping pong as well as tables and storage.

<p>Would an alternative to carpeting such as bamboo or cork be considered? Either of these durable renewable sources reduces joint pressure and eases the use of walkers and wheelchairs.</p>	<p>There are places where carpeting will make sense although definitely wide open to ideas and exploring other materials.</p>
<p>What activities are planned for the gym?</p>	<p>The gym is a very large multipurpose room which can be divided by curtains for the use of a variety of different functions including parties, TED talks, sports activities, etc. Will be a wonderful asset and will help attract a younger generation of seniors.</p>
<p>Will there be billiard tables permanently situated anywhere?</p>	<p>Billiard tables are a fixed asset and will need to be determined. There is a big demand for pool. Newton is part of a large tournament system.</p>
<p>A general comment was made that table tennis on top of a billiard table is not ideal.</p>	
<p>Concern of indoor pickle ball was expressed. Need to figure out where pickle ball courts can be located in Newton as many residents find the activity loud and disruptive. Pickle ball community is part of Friends of Newton Tennis. An outdoor game or for a large gym.</p>	<p>Early on there was huge support for indoor pickle ball.</p> <p>Will come down to scheduling strategy in terms of how programming activities are managed. There is no occupied space below the gymnasium which will reduce potential noise impact.</p>
<p>Will the site have EV chargers and will the parking lot have solar?</p>	<p>The site will have EV chargers and the parking lot will have solar. Parking is oriented accordingly for solar.</p>
<p>A member of the Newton Cultural Council inquired about plans for a dedicated 200-300 seat performance center.</p>	<p>The large multipurpose dining hall is approx. 3000SF with a stage. Could be compartmentalized for smaller or larger performances. Very flexible space. Ceiling height is approx. 11' although floor to floor heights still to be developed.</p>
<p>Will Center activities be able to happen after 5:00PM? Will hours be extended?</p>	<p>Staff will be growing towards opening of the Center and will be partnering with Parks and Rec and Arts community which will expand program opportunities. There will be expanded hours. There will be a significant increase in opportunities for seniors.</p>

What is total SF of the building?	Rough SF is approximately 33,000SF.
With expanded hours will security measures be in place, such as exterior lighting?	Most new facilities have security cameras throughout in common spaces including exterior cameras, covering the property. Exterior LED site lighting can provide great light and control light pollution. The site will be well lit while making sure not to create light pollution for neighbors, blind spots, etc.
Will there be controlled access to particular parts of the building?	The building will be designed so portions can be kept open while other portions can be closed.
Is there a plan for outdoor bocce or shuffleboard?	There is a finite amount of exterior space which needs to be studied in terms of the best use. These activities will be considered. BH+A noted shuffleboard is located on the roof deck of a particular project.
Will technology be integrated to help with program scheduling?	There will be many LCD screens as well as a lot of integrated technology.

It was noted that any additional comments can be directly submitted to Josh or Jayne, by phone or email, or submitted via the NewCAL project website.

Comments and feedback will be incorporated into the ongoing development of design with the hope to gain consensus as to how interior spaces should be oriented. Pending consensus, exterior massing and imagery will begin to be developed, referencing exterior elements from area buildings inside and outside of Newton. The interior and exterior design and site plan will continue to be refined and conversations will continue about particular programming elements. Monthly Community meetings will continue until Site Plan Approval when the project is brought forward to City Council for a public hearing. Pending approval, final design will proceed and move forward with construction documents, followed by going out to bid, senior services relocation to a temporary location and finally and construction beginning.

**Upcoming Meetings:**

- September 8, 6:00PM Design Review Committee meeting
- September 23, 6:30PM Monthly Community Update meeting

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55PM.

Prepared by: Melissa Gagnon, NV5 [End of 08/19/21 Meeting Minutes]