


Newton Center for Active Living (NewCAL) project

Community Meeting					
Date:	Thursday, June 30, 2022				
Location:	Zoom webinar				
Time:	6:30PM				
Attendees – City Staff and Consultant Team:					
Josh Morse	<i>Public Buildings Dept.</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Joel Bargmann	<i>BH+A</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Alex Valcarce	<i>Public Buildings Dept.</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Dan Chen	<i>BH+A</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Melissa Gagnon	<i>NV5</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Thomas Murphy	<i>NV5</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Josh Morse, the City of Newton Public Buildings Commissioner, opened the Community meeting at 6:32PM. Due to the ongoing Covid-19 public health crisis, the meeting took place virtually, via Zoom. There were 81 participants in attendance. The following participating groups and individuals were represented: Public Buildings Department, NewCAL Working Group, Council on Aging (COA) Advisory Board, Commission on Disability, BH+A (architects) and NV5 (Owner’s Project Manager).

Participants were offered the option to be promoted to panelists (full participants) or remain as attendees. It was explained that all panelists would have the option to speak verbally by raising a virtual hand. All participants (panelists or attendees) could submit comments and questions in writing through the chat and Q&A features which would be read following the presentation and verbal comments. Questions can also be emailed directly to newcal@newtonma.gov.

The meeting was recorded and is posted on the project website: [2022 0630 NewCAL Community Meeting Video](#)

The presentation is also posted on the project website: [2022 0630 NewCAL Community Meeting Presentation](#).

Introduction

Josh Morse welcomed participants to the meeting. A brief presentation by the City of Newton was followed by questions and answers.

The focus of this meeting was the acquisition of 47 Walnut Place, presented as “A wonderful partnership with the Germani Family and a tremendous opportunity for Newton’s older adults.”

It was noted that the NewCAL project has been evolving for close to 4 years. The project is approaching the design development phase which will be followed by construction documents. Groundbreaking is scheduled one year from now with the building opening in approximately three years, if not sooner.

An acquisition was recently structured with the owners of 47 Walnut Place, the abutting property to the current senior center. Although the City Council will need to approve the acquisition, the City has reached an agreement with the owners to move forward.

An overview of the site orientation was provided. The parcel at 47 Walnut Place is directly east to the north end of the site. When custody is assumed, the NewCAL property will be expanded to the east northeast. The parcel in question is approximately 10,000SF. Images were presented from the vantage points of Highland Avenue as well as from the intersection of Walnut Place and Highland Avenue.

The following points were noted:

- The deal has been structured so the occupant of the home can stay in her home for the rest of her life or until she moves out, at which time the City would take full custody of the property.
- After the City formally acquires the property, we will begin the process of working with the community to determine the best future use of the land.
- The additional parcel would allow the project to have significantly more green space whether the green space is on the newly acquired property or whether the parking is reconfigured to provide for more green space on the current site.
- The acquisition process has been positive, working with Giosina Germani and the Germani family.
- The acquisition is a great opportunity for the City of Newton, and it is the culmination of more than two years of hard work and collaboration with the Germani family.
- As a direct abutter, there will be constant contact with the Germani family during construction.
- The acquisition will not impact the design as the site plan is established and there will be no impact to the schedule.

Additional opportunities which will be studied were presented as follows:

- As much as a twice the onsite green space from what exists today
- Creation of a cohesive community gathering space
- Net increase in onsite parking potential
- New reduction in heat island effect
- Increased passive recreation
- Net reduction in impervious surface and improved stormwater resiliency
- Increased opportunity for outdoor programs for older adults
- Opportunities for expanded pollinator gardens

Public Comment

Questions and Answers

Q: Why will it take three more years to complete the project?

A: Currently the project is in the site plan approval process with the City Council, which is driven by City of Newton ordinances. Following approval, which is anticipated for this summer, the project will move to design development then to construction documents which will allow the project to go out to bid. The contract would be publicly awarded next year, followed by 18-24 months for construction.

Q: Will the adjacent community gathering space be part of the senior center or part of the community?

A: Seniors are part of the community, so there will be an opportunity to create something special with the additional available parcel. There will be opportunities for the neighborhood as well.

Q: Will there be a process to solicit feedback for programming of the additional outdoor space?

A: There are approximately 1,000 residents on the project listserv, plus the Mayor's constant contact which goes out to 30,000 residents as well as direct outreach through the senior center.

Q: Is there an equivalent facility where non-seniors can go for recreational activities?

A: Newton Parks and Recreation can provide a list of facilities and associated programming. Community meetings will continue to solicit feedback. Jayne Colino noted communications and outreach from the senior center is being improved with rebranding of the newsletter and paper communications, making sure that as many residents as possible are reached.

Q: The question was raised about the demolition review process.

A: It was noted that the project will need to circle back with the Newton Historic Commission for a demolition review and approval process.

Q: What was the purchase price of 47 Walnut Place?

A: The purchase price was \$1.5M for the two-family property.

Q: Did the City offer to purchase the property adjacent to 47 Walnut Place which was recently sold?

A: Newton stays in contact with direct abutters and will remain in contact.

Q: What is the impact of the lawsuit on the timeline?

A: The lawsuit will play itself out in the courts and at this point the focus is to move the project forward.

Q: How are the stained-glass windows going to be preserved?

A: The design team has experience with stained glass restoration and will be continuing to work with the Connick Foundation. Options are being studied for placement – at the north and south sides, at the new library and the multipurpose room. The windows will be protected and preserved. A lot of care and thought will be put into reinstallation including day lighting and back lighting as well as a plaque explaining the significance of the pieces.

Q: What is the plan to provide for senior services during construction?

A: A few options are being vetted in Newton Highlands. It is important to make sure programs and sense of community are sustained during the construction timeframe.

Q: Will there be a tour of the current senior center to talk about its history?

A: John Rice was recently voted by the Newton Historic Commission to be a liaison with the Working Group to assist with working through mitigation and how to best preserve the history of the existing building. The project team is also working with an historic building consultant, Epsilon Associates.

Part of the mitigation plan will be to create careful documentation with a visual display which will help to protect and preserve the building history. This would be similar to what was created at the Angier School.

Q: What is the plan to keep the community involved re: the transition from the current to the new senior center?

A: There is a plan, and more information will be forthcoming.

Q: How does the size of the gym at the Hyde Community Center and what with the size of the gym proposed at the new senior center?

A: The gymnasium at the Hyde Community Center is between 4000 and 5000SF, at the three new elementary schools the gymnasiums are 6000SF and in the older smaller elementary schools, as well as the other community centers, the gymnasiums are between 2500-

3200SF. The gymnasium at the new senior center will be 6500SF to accommodate a basketball court.

Q: What is the lawsuit?

A: There is a ten-taxpayer lawsuit which was filed questioning the decision of the Newton Historical Commission as well as whether the green space in front of the current senior center is subject to Article 97 protection.

The next Community meeting is scheduled for Thursday, July 21, 2022 at 6:30PM (via Zoom).

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:02 PM.

Prepared by: Melissa Gagnon, NV5 [End of 06/30/22 Meeting Minutes]