

Newton Center for Active Living (NewCAL) project

Community Meeting					
Date: Thursday, December 15, 2022					
Location: Zoom webinar					
Time: 6:30PM					
Attendees – City Staff and Consultant Team:					
Josh Morse	<i>Public Buildings Dept.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Joel Bargmann	<i>BH+A</i>	<input 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 type="checkbox"/>

Alex Valcarce, the City of Newton Deputy Commissioner (Public Buildings Department), opened the Community meeting at 6:33PM. There were 38 participants in attendance. The following participating groups and individuals were represented: Public Buildings Department, NewCAL Working Group (WG), Council on Aging (COA) Advisory Board, City Council, Commission on Disability, Parks and Recreation Department, 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. 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 1215 NewCAL Community Meeting Video](#)

The presentation is posted on the project website: [2022 1215 NewCAL Community Meeting Presentation](#).

Alex Valcarce noted that the project is working its way towards the completion of construction documents with the plan for the drawings to go out to bid this spring 2023.

Jayne Colino noted that this meeting is the last NewCAL community meeting as Director of Senior Services.

Recording started at 6:35PM.

DESIGN PROGRESS UPDATE

Dan Chen of BH+A provided an overview of design progress and developments since the last Community meeting on November 17. The presentation was predominantly focused on the following:

- Refinement of the main circulation stair, from 1st to the 2nd floor as well as from the 2nd to the 3rd floor
- Evaluation and exploration of the furniture layout
- Articulation of the exterior elevation design relative to the building design

The site plan has remained unchanged since Site Plan Approval. It was noted that the proposed building is at the current senior center at 345 Walnut Street, at the corner lot bordered by Highland Avenue, Walnut Street and Walnut Place. Primary pedestrian entry is located at the corner of Highland Avenue and Walnut Street. Vehicular access/parking and drop off is beneath the building, with one-way access via Walnut Place and one-way egress to Highland Avenue.

Regarding outdoor spaces, there is a patio outside of the multi-function spaces along Walnut Place as well as a terrace along Walnut Street.

Building programming is organized as follows:

First floor - Most public programming areas - lounge, library, and a large multi-function space which can be divided into two spaces, plus reception, administration, and a commercial kitchen. BH+A is working with a kitchen consultant to assist with the development of the commercial and teaching components. In the multi-function/dining room there is also a large storage room behind the stage, which is accessible.

Furnishings:

- Library - the intent is to provide comfortable seating with a combination of tables and chairs as well as computer stations.
- Lobby - the reception desk will be the first place where visitors are welcomed and greeted. Furnishings are being designed to create a comfortable area for visitors to sit and rest upon arrival.
- 1st floor Lounge – large and comfortable chairs and sofas. Adjacent to the juice bar there is an overflow space outside of the large activity room.

Second floor - The 2nd floor can be accessed via the communicating stair or the elevator.

Main communicating stair circulation: At the last community update meeting, the stair was a straight run from the 2nd to the 3rd floor. The design team revised the stair layout in response to recent feedback and concerns noted from the Working Group as well as the Community. The stair has been revised to a switchback which provides a landing for visitors to rest and is not as imposing as the single run design. Below the stair are cabinets and a sink for the art room. Also, with the new revision, visitors end up at the 3rd floor lounge where there is some seating. The previous straight stair option landed near the

fitness room which would require visitors to turn around to get to the lounge area where there is some seating.

Program areas include the large gymnasium with a basketball court and (3) adjacent storage rooms. A divider curtain will extend between the two inner rails at the continuous walking track, dividing the large gymnasium into two multi-function spaces. There is also a conference room, activity rooms 1, 2 and 3 which are designed to be flexible as multi-function spaces, art studio with a large kiln/ceramics room and storage, and a suite of senior services administration spaces.

Highlights re: furnishings were noted:

- Game Room – furnishings are being studied for ping pong and pool as well as some soft seating and card tables.
- 2nd floor Lounge – soft seating and a table.

Third floor – The 3rd floor can be accessed via the stair or the elevator. The walking track which is suspended over the gymnasium, is 7' wide. There is also a game room, fitness room and lounge area all with direct access to an outdoor roof deck. Furniture will be helpful in defining and understand some potential functions on the large deck. Opportunities for gardening on the roof deck will be studied. The deck area directly outside of the fitness room has been envisioned as an extension for activities during favorable weather conditions. Storage space for deck furniture will continue to be studied.

- 3rd floor Lounge – soft seating and tables. There is a second casual seating area outside the fitness room with a few chairs and a table.

Roof Plan – The area for future solar panels was identified as well as locations for mechanical equipment and the two stair towers. It was noted that the panels will generate some electricity for the building usage. The building is achieving an aggressive EUI (energy use intensity) of 29 and 30. The design team is working with Mass Save to achieve an extensive embodied carbon as well as energy reduction and conservation for the building.

INTERIOR PERSPECTIVES

Interior perspectives were presented with some of the following highlights noted:

- Lobby view at entry – elevator and communicating stair with soft seating area. When a visitor enters the lobby there is ability to see many of the program areas.
- Lobby communicating stair – more view of the lounge area and the entrance from the rear parking area, elevator, and the multi-function space beyond with pairs of glass doors.
- Lobby view towards multi-purpose room –visual connection of lounge with multi-function rooms beyond and juice bar.
- Gymnasium (2 slides) – ductwork will be relocated to either side to better coordinate with the divider curtain.
- Walking track – width of track has increased by approximately 14" which will be shown at the next presentation.

EXTERIOR ELEVATIONS

Rendered elevations and perspectives were presented relative to building organization and programming.

West Elevation (along Walnut Place)

The following program areas were identified:

- Gymnasium volume, stair tower, multifunction space on 1st floor, senior services on 2nd floor and fitness room on the 3rd floor.
- Two (2) brick volumes are gymnasium storage areas at 2nd floor and medical equipment storage and trash collection area on 1st floor, in parking area.
- Windows in gymnasium are the walking track.

East Elevation (Walnut Street)

In response to feedback that main entry corner were not as well detailed as adjacent areas. Updates were presented. Materials are still being studied. Highlights noted are as follows:

- Canopy provides shading as visitors arrive
- Cupola centered on center bay of the building
- Roof deck with decorative railing
- Double height lobby space, lounge area with art room on 2nd floor above; multi-function space on 1st floor with activity room #3 above. Fitness room, lounge and game room, all on the 3rd floor, opening to the roof deck.

North Elevation (Highland Avenue)

- Gymnasium volume with walking track above
- Main entrance at corner of Highland and Walnut
- Library with large windows, (2) activity rooms above and game room above on 3rd floor
- Studying masonry articulation at the large façade at the gymnasium

South Elevation (Walnut Place)

- (2) activity rooms on 1st floor, activity rooms (2) and social services on 2nd floor and roof deck on the 3rd floor
- Gymnasium volumes with surface parking and entrance to parking below
- Outdoor terrace at the 1st floor, with direct access from the activity and dining area

EXTERIOR PERSPECTIVE

An exterior rendered perspective was presented, from the corner of Walnut Street and Highland Avenue. BH+A noted the perspective has been updated to accurately reflect surrounding existing conditions. Corner entry was highlighted with stair and gymnasium beyond. Roof hanging over roof deck will provide approximately 50% deck shading.

PUBLIC COMMENT – QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

- Stairs. It was noted that it seems odd to have two (2) switchback stairs, rather than one continuous stair to the 3rd floor. BH+A noted various options were studied for the communicating stair to connect all three floors; however, when studied in three dimensions the stair was overpowering in the double height space and landing was imposing from the 1st floor view upon entry. Alternatively, creating a separate straight run from the 2nd to the 3rd floor also seemed imposing with many stairs. The current solution of a switchback stair from the 2nd to the 3rd floor is an improvement over one set of stairs connecting all three floors in a double height open space which appeared to be overpowering.
- Stairs. Can the stair landing from the 2nd to the 3rd floor be expanded to accommodate seating? BH+A noted that there is not much space to work with; however, this will be studied.
- Stairs. A comment was made that the balcony at the landing at the communicating stair (from 1st to 2nd floors) may inspire some fun small scale theatre improv.
- Storage at stairs. Will the space beneath the main circulating stair be utilized for storage? BH+A noted the intent is to provide storage.
- Stairs. The term “communicating stair” was asked to be clarified. BH+A explained that a communicating stair is not needed for egress and therefore does not need to adhere to the stringent design guidelines for a fire egress stair and has more design flexibility. The stair is open which facilitates communication between floors, allowing for visual and physical connections.
 - It was noted it would be nice for the lounge and the main stair to be visually connected.
 - The question was asked if the first stair flight could be open in the back, similar to the 2nd flight, to allow a visual connection to the other side. BH+A noted that Code would require a physical barrier need to be provided, to block usable area beneath the stair. Also noted on the other side of the wall, adjacent to the stair, is the chair storage area.
- Stage capacity. An inquiry was made re: the stage SF (including the ramp) as well as how many people the stage can accommodate. BH+A noted the stage/ramp is 250-300SF and approximately 10 people can fit on the stage. It is anticipated that 120 seats can be accommodated in the combined multi-function room.

- Storage beneath the stage. In response to a question, BH+A noted the stage is only 18” off the floor so there is not a lot of space below the stage. The storage area behind the stage as well as near the lounge, are the primary storage areas.
- Gym equipment or light weights. Jayne Colino noted the facility will have light weights. Heavy equipment is not programmed as it was not a prioritized feature during the programming phase.
- Beverage and/or snacks at 3rd floor. Will there be space for a coffee bar and/or beverage or snack area at the 3rd floor, near the roof deck? BH+A noted that currently this program is not accounted for although this can be considered.
- Reception/“welcome” desk. An image of the reception desk is being developed relative to the space, shape, and materials and will be provided at the next Community meeting. A question was asked about modifying the desk to be more accessible to visitors. It was noted by a community member that consideration should be made for visitors with ambulation issues (wheelchair, walkers, canes), people with hearing or vision difficulties and people that need someone to help them find a chair to sit down.

The following additional comments were made by a community member:

- The reception desk should not be a barrier and should be warm, welcoming and engaging with participants as they enter the building. Visitors should know that there will be receptionists available to help them when they enter, if needed.
- The reception desk should provide a cut-out section for wheelchairs and easy access so that people working behind the desk are able to come out and help those who are entering, as needed.
- Desk functions need to be determined which will help to define the design. The reception area will be referred to the “welcome center” as well as provide administrative functions. A sign-in system will be a function.

The following links were posted in the chat (from Alice Ingerson) with images of welcoming reception desks:

[VALDE Curved Reception Desk w/Counter Top, ADA Compliance by MDD Office Furniture | Sohomod.com](https://www.sohomod.com/valde-curved-reception-desk-w-counter-top-ada-compliance-by-mdd-office-furniture)

[Contor - Curved reception desk 3 | Ken Rand Partners | Curved reception desk, Reception desk, Reception counter design \(pinterest.com\)](https://www.pinterest.com/pin/curved-reception-desk-reception-counter-design/)

- Walking track. In response to a question of how many people can walk on the track simultaneously, BH+A estimated the walking track will be able to accommodate 30+ walkers. The lanes have been widened to (2) 30”+ lanes, which will allow two people to walk side by side, without compromising the basketball court below. The Intent is for a 7’-6” wide track, from

guardrail to the wall. The intent is that walkers move in the same direction. It was noted there could be a plan in place to reverse direction certain days of the week, etc.

- In response to a follow up question, BH+A noted the intent to provide seating in the corners of the track. Perhaps benches in one corner and maybe a stationary bike in another corner.
- BH+A to look into the number of laps to make a mile. The thought is 16-20 laps range.
- Interior elevator dimensions. BH+A noted the elevator is sized to accommodate a stretcher, which is required by Code, along with 2 or 3 people. Elevator is rated for 3500 lbs which can comfortably accommodate 10-15 people.
- Stair width. In response to a question, BH+A note the communicating stair is 4'-0" wide per run.
 - Comment was made to consider widening stair to accommodate potential volume of visitors passing by each other. It was also noted that the stair near the administrative area exits directly out to Highland Ave. The other egress stair, near the kitchen, is designed to travel through all three floors.
- Storage for personal items. In response to a question, BH+A noted there is a storage area on the 2nd floor, near the gymnasium entry, with lockers for coats, boots, etc. Lockers are designed to stack 2-3 high. The total number of lockers and stacking arrangement is TBD as the design of this area is being developed. The plan is to have at least (30) lockers. Lockers at the entry area to the gym is also being studied.
- Lounge visibility. The lounge is visible when visitors first arrive from the main entry as well as from the widows along Walnut Street and from the multi-purpose activity room.
 - A comment was made that it would be nice to be able to see the lounge from the stair.
- Garage and parking. In response to a question, BH+A noted the parking garage is on the same level as the first floor. There is similar transparency from the parking entrance as well as at from the main entrance. Both entrances bring visitors to the central lobby and the reception area.
- Shop location. The shop location and design are being studied and developed in terms of whether it will take on the form of a physical space, a built-in display, or a kiosk. There is interest in a kiosk idea which is inherently open, although can be closed, and will create visitor interest.
- Open gathering spaces. Look lovely and welcoming.
- 3rd floor lounge area. The question was asked about the current configuration of the lounge and the ability to accommodate more seating.
- Soundproofing and acoustics. In response to a question about acoustics, BH+A noted an acoustic consultant is part of the design team. Acoustics for reverberation time and absorption are being studied in areas where there is AV equipment. Theater lighting design is not part of the program. Lighting will be dimmable, and LEDs are at a temperature which is not very bright white or blue.

- BH+A noted consideration will be made to determine if there should stage focused lighting.
- A WG member noted that many activities planned for the multi-function room would be better suited on a smooth floor, rather than on carpeting.
- A suggestion was made for rollable area rugs in lieu of wall to wall carpeting.
- Game room and pool tables. Jayne Colino noted there has been a request for two (2) full-size pool tables to have a tournament.
- Large squares on Highland Ave elevation. In response to a question, BH+A and the City of Newton explained that opaque windows for more interior light would not be considered given location in the gymnasium. Large windows would not be located within the gym in terms of safety and glare. The plan is to look for ways to provide more articulation with the patterning of the brickwork. Light is provided from above, at the walking track.
- Building to the property line and green space. In response to a question, BH+A referred to the site plan and noted areas shown in green are green areas with landscaping. There are areas where there are some original trees with preserving (2) trees and relocating (1) tree which is currently on site. Patio and outdoor spaces have been incorporated where possible.
 - A WG member noted to keep in mind that at some point in the future the property at 47 Walnut Place will be available to be used for potential green space. BH+A noted the current building is designed with connection to the adjacent space in mind. The siting of the building is anticipating future growth with removable grilles at the ground level.

Jayne Colino noted that this is the last official NewCAL meeting as a paid staff person with the City of Newton. Going forward, Jayne will be observing and participating as a non-City of Newton employee.

Suggestions for future presentations were noted:

- Pointer should be larger and red to be more easily identified
- Floor images should be larger

The next NewCAL Community meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 19, 2023 at 6:30PM (via Zoom). If you haven't already registered, you can do so by clicking the following link:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_FL3f6SKISUuPeLDdMoMokg

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 PM.

Prepared by: Melissa Gagnon, NV5 [End of 12/15/22 Meeting Minutes]