

Newton Center for Active Living (NewCAL) project

NewCAL Design Review Committee (DRC) Project Update					
Date: Wednesday, November 10, 2021					
Date: Zoom Meeting (online)					
Time: 6:00PM					
Attendees:					
See attached Sign-In List for Design Review Committee, Project Community Representatives and Guests who were in attendance.					
CITY COMMITTEE STAFF					
Josh Morse	Public Buildings Dept.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Alex Valcarce	Public Buildings Dept.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
CONSULTANTS					
Tom Murphy	NV5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Joel Bargmann	BH+A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Melissa Gagnon	NV5	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Dan Chen	BH+A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
			Kyle Zick	KZLA, landscape architect	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Alex Valcarce opened up the meeting at 6:05PM. The intent of this meeting was to provide an update to the DRC with regard to further developments and bring the DRC up to speed with where the project is with regard to schematic design and site plan approval progress, since discussed at the last meeting on 10/13/21. The project team met with Council on Aging at the end of October. A straw vote was taken in support of the current plan based on the basic location of the major spaces. A meeting also took place with the Planning Development Review Team (DRT). The DRT is not an advisory body nor an approver however, a 5-58 report will be prepared by Planning as part of the packet for Site Plan Approval, which is targeted for Spring 2022. An opportunity for questions and answers was provided following the presentation. The full presentation can be found on the project website: [2021 11 10 NewCAL Design Review Committee \(DRC\) Presentation](#). Highlights of the presentation are noted below.

Project Update

Dan Chen of BH+A noted the intent of this meeting is to present developments relative to landscaping ideas and building massing and materials as well as address some issues previously discussed. Design development updates will be provided since the last DRC meeting on October 13.

Kyle Zick (landscape architect, KZLA) provided concepts for three (3) potential terrace areas as well as landscape areas along Walnut Street, to the south at Walnut Place and to the north at Highland Avenue. It

was noted that similar to any urban project there are many areas being addressed with regards to the landscaping approach. The following focus areas are being studied:

- Importance of the main entrance on the corner of Walnut Street and Highland Avenue to be well visible and accessible.
- Treatment of the building perimeter. Each side of the building has a different personality in terms of the interior relationship as well as the relationship to the street and urban fabric.

Along Highland Avenue - trying to create an attractive edge which highlights the library space in the interior closest to the entrance as well as provides buffering and screening of the parking garage further back along Highland Avenue. Landscape areas are being studied and were presented as follows:

- Walnut Street - the streetscape is fairly new however was designed with the current building in mind. The new proposed building comes forward, closer to Walnut Street, than the existing building. Landscape elements proposed are some basic foundation plantings with no paving going to building walls. A terrace is proposed closer to Walnut Place. The plan is to integrate some new street trees with the streetscape with the tree canopy part of the public realm. The terrace and streetscape would be visually connected while being physically separated. Based on the proposed design, terraces along Walnut Street and Walnut Place would be accessible only from the building interior, not from the sidewalk.
- Walnut Place - a mixture of proposed and existing trees along Walnut Place, as well as at the back of the site, would provide a buffer from the streetscape. The terrace along Walnut Place is attached to the Café space. A planter edge would provide seasonable interest and separation from the terrace and streetscape.
- Highland Avenue - space for a terrace along Highland Avenue is being studied. The space for a terrace is tight. A few small tables or benches could be provided. Alternatively, in lieu of a terrace more benches and seating could be provided along the sidewalk, relative to the drop off area. Rendered perspectives were presented for these two options.

Dan Chen provided floor plan updates as well as an overview of the three (3) terrace locations (Walnut Place off the activity and dining area, Walnut Street off the lounge/activity area and Highland Avenue outside of the library) as well as the main entrance and drop off area, at Highland Avenue and Walnut Street. Highlights were noted as follows:

First Floor

- Main entrance and drop off is located at the corner of Highland Avenue and Walnut Street.
- Reception is centrally located, visible and accessible from main entrance and from parking area.
- Commercial kitchen layout and function is in progress.
- Stage layout is being studied in terms of ADA requirements.
- Storage requirements are being reviewed throughout.

- Library will likely be designed to accommodate public computer stations.
- Monumental stair carries to the third floor which will be helpful for wayfinding.

Second Floor

- Classroom and large activity room were shifted to the north side and two art rooms were relocated to the east side allowing for larger art rooms with more storage space.
- Waiting/gathering area added outside of gymnasium with benches and possible cubbies below.
- Storage room added to the north side of the gym, creating storage at both sides of the gym.

Third Floor

- Lounge area added near the fitness room for impromptu gatherings.
- Roof deck has three functional areas: North side observation overlooking Highland Avenue and Walnut Street with umbrellas for shading, central area for seating and socializing, and south side for potential connection to fitness room programming. Deck covering concepts are being studied.

Building Section

An east/west building section was presented to depict the height of the proposed building, relative to the back neighborhood. The height is 40' to the underside of the eave and 48' to the top of the roof. The mansard roof will serve as a screen for rooftop equipment as well as an acoustic buffer.

Building Elevations and Perspectives

Conceptual ideas for all four (4) elevations were presented depicting study of potential possible materials including masonry, stone, high density fiber cement panels, metal panels, glazing, precast lintels and sills. The intent is to reduce the scale of the building while fitting in with the Newtonville neighborhood.

Perspectives were presented relative to building organization, from the two important "hot" corners at Highland Avenue and Walnut Street and from Walnut Place and Walnut Street. Intent is to enliven the main entrance area and create a welcoming presence by enlarging the canopy as well as with seating and landscaping. Terraces outside of the lounge and activity rooms were identified.

Discussion, Comments and Questions

Following the presentation, Committee members asked questions. A general overview of the Q+A and comments is as follows:

- Further explanation was provided behind switching location of classrooms and art rooms. Primarily, it was noted that the art rooms needed to be larger with more storage space. Classrooms are more appropriately sized in the current location at the north side of the building. At the east side location, there is more flexibility for the art rooms to be subdivided into two spaces.

- There should be more brick, particularly at the Walnut Street elevation, in comparison with the amount of metal panel presented. More brick would create an aesthetic which is more amenable to the neighborhood.
- Landscape maintenance. Consideration should be given to drip irrigation system and/or storm water system to water plantings.
- Durability and maintenance of narrow green landscape area, close to sidewalk, area along Walnut Street. Perhaps a feature would be less susceptible to damage from salt or a larger sidewalk area.
- Would be helpful to have more benches at the drop off and pick up location off Highland Avenue, as opposed to a small terrace off the library.
- Benches would be beneficial near the main entrance at Highland Avenue and Walnut Street.
- Curved walls at the third floor lounge may be costly to build and create a challenging space to furnish.
- Operable glazed wall system at fitness room. The space may be a cold source not ideal for an older population. Also, could be problematic from an energy model perspective.
- Aluminum windows may be a source of energy loss. Amount of glazing throughout may create uncomfortable spaces.
- A study should be done of potential furnishings which could potentially block windows.
- Snow removal at roof system should be studied.
- Energy model. It was noted that the most recent version should be used which can model a VRF. A model should be developed to inform the design team prior to the design being further developed, particularly given the amount of glazing proposed. BH+A noted energy model is in progress and will continue to be updated as the building design develops. The energy model needs to be integrated as soon as possible. If carefully designed, the building can still have a lot of transparency without sacrificing energy efficiency. The hope is to have an energy model submitted for review prior at the December meeting, if not sooner.
- Showers. May want to consider providing one (1) shower. There may be a need given there is a fitness room and the building will be also be used by the community.
- Pedestrian access from Highland Avenue. As an alternative to the corner entrance at Highland Avenue and Walnut Street, the rear entry is accessible via a pedestrian walkway from Highland Avenue.
- Direct access from gymnasium to restrooms should be studied.
- Security. Security should be considered given proposed doors and glazing off terraces.

- Design strategy should be considered to soften the building as it comes close to Walnut Street.
- The proposed building feels like a hybrid of civic and retail. Intent should be discussed.
- Terrace access. Proposed access is from building only. If intent is to create a civic building, all terraces should be welcoming and accessible by the community.
- Making the building more inviting and reducing any physical barriers should be the main goal.
- From the very beginning of the design planning, the team talked about how the inside of the existing building cannot be seen from the outside. An important aspect of the new design is to connect inside to the outside and vice versa which is what drove the need for a lot of glazing.
- The discussion is ongoing of the feasibility of planters at the roof deck.
- Intent of varied materials is to break down the scale of the new building in the neighborhood and to emulate varied materials and elements within Newtonville. One of the challenges is the large massing of the gymnasium with clearstory at walking track.
- Intent of high density fiber cement (HDF) panels is to delineate the massing.
- If needed to reduce costs, the Juliet balcony could possibly be eliminated.

The next Community Update Meeting is scheduled on Thursday, 11/18/21, at 6:30PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Melissa Gagnon

NV5, Inc.

[End of 11/10/2021 Meeting Minutes]

DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE		SIGN IN
Meeting Date:	DRAFT	10 November 2021
Place/Room:	Remote Meeting Via Zoom	

Name	Initial	Organization	E-Mail
DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE			
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DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE**SIGN IN****Meeting Date:****DRAFT**

10 November 2021

Place/Room:

Remote Meeting Via Zoom

Name	Initial	Organization	E-Mail
Project Community Reps			
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Guests			
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Norm Meltz	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	COA / NewCAL Working Group	
Richard Rasala	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NewCAL Working Group	
Joan Belle Isle	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	COA Chair	
Sue Rasala	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NewCAL Working Group	
Fred Lewis	<input type="checkbox"/>	Resident	
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