

Newton Center for Active Living (NewCAL) project

NewCAL Working Group Meeting					
Date: Tuesday, January 18, 2022					
Date: Zoom Meeting (online)					
Time: 9:30 AM					
Attendees:					
Working Group		Present	City Staff		Present
Susan Albright	City Councilor	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Seth Bai	Veteran's Services	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sandra Butzel	Community Member	<input type="checkbox"/>	Devra Bailin	Planning	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jayne Colino	Senior Services Dir.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nicole Banks	P&R Commissioner	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jini Fairley	ADA Coordinator	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Amanda Berman	Planning	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bea Goldsmith	Community Member	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Barney Heath	Planning Director	<input type="checkbox"/>
Joan Belle-Isle	COA Chair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ellen Ishkanian	Mayor's Office	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maureen Lemieux	Chief Financial Officer	<input type="checkbox"/>	Zachery LeMel	Planning	<input type="checkbox"/>
Brooke Lipsitt	Community Member	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Jack Neville	P&R Commission	<input type="checkbox"/>
Norm Meltz	COA Member	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Rachel Sherman	City IT	<input type="checkbox"/>
Josh Morse	Public Buildings Comm.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Linda Walsh	Public Health	<input type="checkbox"/>
Richard Rasala	Community Member	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Consultants		
Sue Rasala	COA Member	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Tom Murphy	NV5	<input type="checkbox"/>
John Rice	Community Member	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Melissa Gagnon	NV5	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Nancy Scammon	P&R Department	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Frank Kennedy	NV5	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Alex Valcarce	Public Buildings	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Joel Bargmann	BH+A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Jonathan Yeo	Chief Operating Officer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Dan Chen	BH+A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
			Ruofeng You	BH+A	<input type="checkbox"/>
			Camile Wimpe	BH+A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Melissa Gagnon (NV5) opened the online Zoom meeting at 9:30AM.

The January 20th Community update meeting has been cancelled due to a conflict with other City meetings that evening. The intent of the meeting today is to continue to review design developments in preparation for the next Community meeting which is scheduled on February 17th.

There was discussion about effective ways for the Working Group to communicate the need to move forward quickly, to keep the project on schedule, and create clear messaging. It is key that residents understand that an all-new building will be a much more suitable facility for seniors, with main program areas at grade level entry without the need to go up six feet and navigate below grade parking. It was discussed that the only hope to create a beautiful iconic building for Newtonville is to build a new building.

Newton Public Buildings has the authority to use City resources to distribute an update letter to the NewCAL project listserv with imagery of the planned design and to let residents know there is a sub-group of residents interested in saving the existing building which would in essence cause the project to stop and be reset.

A suggestion was made for a Working Group sub-group to meet with leadership of the Senior Citizens Fund.

Updated renderings at the corner entry at Walnut Street and Highland Avenue was presented.

BH+A Presentation

In response to previous comments, BH+A presented updated renderings and perspectives focused on building massing, materials, and the main entry as well as exterior space including landscaping to enhance the relationship of the building massing with Walnut Street.

It was reiterated that one of the project design goals was to reduce massing by having a two-story building wrap around Walnut Street. The original colored massing diagram was presented showing two story volumes along Walnut Street and wrapping around to Highland Avenue. Updates made since the last meeting are:

First Floor

- One set of double doors is proposed at the main entry on the corner of Walnut and Highland, in lieu of two sets as previously shown. The new proposed entry is canted at the corner accentuating the main entrance. Main set of stairs, near the entrance, is encompassed in a double height lobby space.
- Outdoor terrace areas along Highland and Walnut have been replaced with additional landscaping. In concert with the massing along Walnut Street only being two stories, this additional green space will help to reduce the overall volume.

Second Floor

- It was noted that the NE corner conference room is orthogonal, rather than chamfered, which may be more practical for the intended use.

Third Floor

- A curvilinear form with a continuous roof line was presented. The curved continuous roof line will help to counterbalance the rigid building geometry as well as tie together volumes of the lounge and stair while leaving most of the deck uncovered.
- The two-story volume below is important to reduce the volume along Walnut Street.

Building Massing Studies

Existing building images were presented and reviewed as details are being studied to incorporate in the new building design. Elements including articulated cornice and spandrel panels, cupola, salvaged and repurposed stained-glass panels, band of stone at base as well as the brick termination replicate and pay homage to the existing building. New large windows provide opportunity for an abundance of natural light.

A suggested location for the stained-glass panels is at the spandrel panels along Walnut Street however the panels will not be visible from the interior. Another suggestion was made for the panels to be at the art room, which is higher and less susceptible to vandalism.

Studies were presented with various material options, reducing the larger volumes with different materials.

Elevations and Perspectives

Rendered conceptual drawings were presented of all four (4) elevations, as well as perspectives with focus on East (Walnut Street) and North (Highland Avenue) elevations. Features of the East elevation include a continuous curvilinear roof line, incorporation of salvaged stained glass window panels and an open roof deck. Features of the North elevation include large windows and open and welcoming entry area. Articulation of the gymnasium massing will need to be studied.

Discussion Points are Noted as Follows:

- The transparent all-glass corner was well received and appreciated.
- The stone base and spandrel panels much appreciated. It was noted that there may be an option for the panels to be crafted by a local artist. BH+A noted reference to a spandrel panel designs at 8 Newbury Street in Boston.
- The importance of protecting the salvaged stained-glass panels was noted, as well as the appropriate location for the panels to be reinstalled. Possible locations noted were the two-story lobby, lounge, art room and either side of the main entry door.
- Roof deck railings will be highly visible and prominently featured. Material consideration is ongoing as well as the manner of how the railings will connect to the elevation.
- Geometry of corner entry volume. New Trio apartment building was discussed in the context of whether a curved corner volume in juxtaposition with a curved canopy would be appropriate for NewCAL. BH+A noted a curved volume can be studied however this form may not be practical in use for interior function.
- The northeast perspective is well developed although the southeast perspective needs to be further developed.
- The cupola size and style seem inappropriate for the building and need to be studied further.

- Light filters down through the existing cupola whereas the proposed cupola is more decorative and appears small in scale for the new building. Regarding the Newton Free Library, the cupola is of a larger scale and is a more modern abstraction of a traditional cupola. Window articulation is similar at the library – a rectangle divided into squares - however mullions are thicker at the library.
- The corner canopy seems somewhat undersized for the scale of the building. BH+A will study making the canopy deeper.
- Large open area in the administration suite is intended to be a space to provide services as well. BH+A will break down the SF for public understanding.
- It was explained that private offices for staff are important for confidential conversations.
- It was noted that there is approximately 3000SF of parking area beneath the second floor. Pressure could be relieved on site, including proximity to the street, if additional site area was available.
- If additional site area were to be acquired at some point in the future, the new space could accommodate parking and the space currently slated for parking could become green space.
- It was suggested that medical storage and trash area slide northward, closer to Highland Avenue, which will allow for flexibility to connect with potential expansion area.

February Community Meeting

Options for reuse of historical elements will be presented at the next Community meeting.

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

- 02/01/22 Working Group Meeting – 9:30AM
- 02/15/22 Working Group Meeting – 9:30AM
- 02/17/22 Community Update Meeting – 6:30PM

It was decided that an update to the DRC would be more appropriate in February, after the January Community meeting.

NV5 shall coordinate with the City of Newton in distributing Zoom info for all meetings noted.