

Newton Center for Active Living (NewCAL) project

NewCAL Working Group Meeting					
Date: Tuesday, February 1, 2022					
Date: Zoom Meeting (online)					
Time: 9:30 AM					
Attendees:					
Working Group		Present	City Staff		Present
Susan Albright	<i>City Councilor</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Seth Bai	<i>Veteran's Services</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sandra Butzel	<i>Community Member</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Devra Bailin	<i>Planning</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jayne Colino	<i>Senior Services Dir.</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nicole Banks	<i>P&R Commissioner</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jini Fairley	<i>ADA Coordinator</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Amanda Berman	<i>Planning</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bea Goldsmith	<i>Community Member</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Barney Heath	<i>Planning Director</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Joan Belle-Isle	<i>COA Chair</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ellen Ishkanian	<i>Mayor's Office</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maureen Lemieux	<i>Chief Financial Officer</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Zachery LeMel	<i>Planning</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Brooke Lipsitt	<i>Community Member</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jack Neville	<i>P&R Commission</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Norm Meltz	<i>COA Member</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rachel Sherman	<i>City IT</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Josh Morse	<i>Public Buildings Comm.</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Linda Walsh	<i>Public Health</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Richard Rasala	<i>Community Member</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Consultants		
Sue Rasala	<i>COA Member</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Tom Murphy	NV5	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
John Rice	<i>Community Member</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Melissa Gagnon	NV5	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Nancy Scammon	<i>P&R Department</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Frank Kennedy	NV5	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Alex Valcarce	<i>Public Buildings</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Joel Bargmann	BH+A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Jonathan Yeo	<i>Chief Operating Officer</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Dan Chen	BH+A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
			Ruofeng You	BH+A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
			Camile Wimpe	BH+A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Josh Morse opened the online Zoom meeting at 9:30AM.

The intent of the meeting today is to continue to review design developments since the last WG meeting, in preparation for the upcoming Community meeting which is scheduled on February 17th.

A working session with the mayor took place to push the design of the building, specifically addressing issues raised at the last Working Group meeting on 1/18.

In addition to floor plans, elevations and perspective renderings, the site plan is also being developed for the 2/17 Community meeting presentation.

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.

The following recent updates were highlighted:

First Floor

- One entry with a set of double doors at the corner of Walnut Street and Highland Avenue.
- In lieu of hardscape terraced areas, the landscape architect is working to define green/landscape designs along Walnut and Highland.

Second Floor

- Administration area is being studied as a shared workspace. The internal function of spaces will continue to be refined.

Third Floor

- Game room – new location offers improved access to the roof deck.
- The relationship between the stair location and cupola placement is being studied.
- Lounge – large glass window as well as door for direct access to the roof deck.
- Fitness – no changes; direct access to roof deck.

Roof

- Cupola placement will need to be studied.

Existing Building Elements

Existing building images were presented and reviewed as details are being studied for design inspiration, to incorporate in the new building design. The East elevation was presented with guard railings, spandrel panels an articulated cornice, a cupola, salvaged and repurposed stained-glass panels, and a band of stone at the base as well as the brick termination – these elements will replicate and pay homage to the existing building.

The decorative metal element above the former main entry frieze at the existing building may be a helpful motif to guide or suggest design elements for the new building.

Cupola – A study was done to transplant the cupola from the existing building however the existing cupola is too small in scale and proportion for the new building. Drawings were located of the originally intended cupola which was much larger than what was built. This original design may be used for cues for the design of the new cupola. It was noted that previous studies have shown the cupola as a decorative element only, serving no function. The rendering presented shows an alternative approach with the cupola located off center above the staircase, along Walnut Street. In this location, the cupola could function as a cupola and add natural light to the staircase.

Materials

A material board was presented with the following preliminary options being studied: wood soffit at roof overhang, wrought iron railings, metal channels at main entry, metal roof, cast decorative spandrel panels, cladding at 3rd floor, brick at lower two levels and limestone at the stair tower along Highland Ave as well as at two story entry volume at the corner of Highland and Walnut. Existing stained-glass windows were shown reinstalled at the art room windows on the second floor, facing Walnut Street.

Elevations and Perspectives

Rendered conceptual perspectives were presented with the following options for the cupola design and placement: Restore and reuse existing cupola (decorative), New cupola over staircase (skylight), Restore original 1938 cupola design (not built) and Pyramid roof (center area roof projection over lounge).

BH+A reiterated the importance to maintain a lower two-story volume that engages with Walnut Street.

Rendered conceptual drawings were presented of all four (4) elevations. Features of the East elevation include placement options to incorporate the salvaged stained-glass panels: 2nd floor art room (facing Walnut Street), spandrel panel (facing Walnut Street) and 1st floor lounge (facing Walnut Street). 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:

- Cupola needs to be further refined. Although the concept of representing the original 1938 design, the scale may not be appropriate for the new building. A modern representation may be more appropriate. A suggestion was made that the cupola could sit on a break in the roof line. Dimensions for the cupola base could be enlarged if related to the size of the pediment whereas currently the cupola base is dictated by the size of the stair.
- The cupola could be functional at the top of the stair to the double height space. Whereas the building is not symmetrical, there is no center atrium.
- The stained-glass panels may be better located to be more prominently noticed from the outside. The thought was that the panels should be on the 1st floor to maximize the visual importance.
- More detailing is needed at the south and west elevations, as there is no “backside” of the building.

- It was noted that gymnasiums are present in more than 50% of senior centers visited and/or studied.
- The cupola could be functional at the top of the stair to the double height space. Whereas the building is not symmetrical, there is no center atrium.
- It is important that decorative elements are affordable, so they are not lost during the VE process.
- Toilet room layout on the 2nd floor – a suggestion was made to reorient the toilet rooms, so all doors are visible from the same vantage point. Perhaps a central corridor with toilet rooms on both sides with three (3) relocated to be along the wall at the shared work area.
- A suggestion was made that the front stair could be used for roof access. However, for this to happen, the stair would need to extend approximately another 10’ vertically.
- The pyramidal roof appears organic and provides focus to the center, which is good.

February Community Meeting Presentation

- Design options with the pyramidal and gable roof lines should be presented.
- A slide should be created which points to images that are being saved and reinstalled or designed as elements that pay homage to the existing building.
- Professional terminologies which require explanations should be avoided such as spandrel, fenestration, and corbelling.
- Approach to the entrance, parking and drop off should be reviewed. Currently there is a bump in on Highland Ave, which is close to 40’ wide at that location. It may be helpful to insert a NewMo image at drop off area along Highland Ave. It was noted that the RIDE and NewMo will likely drop off/pick up at the rear parking lot.
- Historical information is needed explaining the project development.

Landmarking

Josh explained that a petition for a Local Landmark nomination for the address of 345 Walnut Street (Newton Senior Center) was signed by 500 residents and submitted to the Newton Historical Commission, in support of preserving the existing building. It was further explained that the landmarking process can take anywhere from a few months to 6-8 months with the next step in the process being a vote by the NHC on 3/24 on whether to accept the nomination. If the NHC votes to accept the nomination, there will be a vote scheduled to designate the property at a subsequent public hearing which would likely be in April or May.

The following points were noted:

- There are times when it makes sense and there are times when it doesn’t make sense to landmark a building, and this is one of those times when landmarking does not make sense.
- By retaining the existing building, a large mass will be forced to be built behind and closer to the neighbors. The existing building is not welcoming or age friendly. Plus, after required renovations are done, very little of the existing building will remain as currently recognizable.

- The existing building was not designed as a senior center. There are significant accessibility challenges and given what will need to be done in terms of modifications to make the building accessible will result in the existing building becoming a shell of its former self.
- The existing roof and cupola will need to be restored.
- A ramp structure will need to be built and the front facing windows will need to be modified to be lowered.
- Although restrictions for interior modifications may not be enforceable by local landmarking, such limitations may be enforceable at the state level.

Jini Fairly is planning to compose a letter to the COD to be on the agenda for approval at the next meeting. John Rice officially resigned from the NewCAL Working Group, after four years of contributions.

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

- 02/15/22 Working Group Meeting – 9:30AM
- 02/17/22 Community Update Meeting – 6:30PM
- 02/22/22 Working Group Meeting – 9:30AM
- 02/24/22 Newton Historic Commission Presentation – 7:00PM

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