



Memorandum

PROJECT: Horace Mann Elementary School
225 Nevada Street
Newton, MA

RDA PROJECT # NEW2101

DATE: March 29, 2024

Horace Mann Elementary School Project Description

The Horace Mann Elementary School Project involves construction of two additions to the existing school building totaling 27,254 SF: a large two-story addition primarily located behind the existing building, and a smaller early childhood entry / stair tower addition to the front of the school that will connect the existing first floor corridor with the larger addition. The additions will house relocated classroom and shared spaces, which will in turn help alleviate space constraints in the existing building. The project does not impact existing grade configurations, and does not increase the number of classrooms or design enrollment which is 396 students from Kindergarten through Grade 5.

The additions are comprised of relocated Music, Kitchen and Cafetorium (including Stage) on the lower floor adjacent to the existing Gymnasium, as well as relocated Kindergarten and First Grade clusters and related support spaces on the First Floor. Additional Special Education Teaching Spaces and other support rooms, including a separate PT room and SEL/COACH are also included.

Within the existing building, the centrally-located Cafeteria will be transformed into a Media Center. Renovations within the existing school are selective, but deliberate - in order to provide additional square footage to existing rooms in order to better align these spaces with the Design Program.

Sitework includes new / relocated playground, hardsurface play areas, and baseball field. An outdoor classroom is added at the rear of the site under some existing shade trees. Accessible walkways connect various amenities of the site and the building entrances/exits.

Proposed site changes do not impact any of the existing designated bus and parent drop-off areas or driveways. The side entrance off of Linwood Avenue will be provided with a raised sidewalk which will extend and connect with the access to the fields as well as the front of the building without crossing through the parking lot. The site will retain much of the existing 'sledding hill' and improve contiguous multi-use lawn areas and landscaping.

Existing Conditions & History

The existing three-story Horace Mann Elementary School is located at 225 Nevada Street in Newton, MA on an approximately 3.0 acre parcel.

The school parcel is bounded by Nevada Street on the north and residential properties on the south, east and west, as well as across the street on the north. On the east and west sides, right-of-ways extend to Linwood Ave and California Streets.

Horace Mann is one of fifteen (15) elementary schools in the district with a current enrollment of 360 students during the 2023-24 academic year.

The Horace Mann School (previously known as the League and Carr School) was constructed in 1935. Additions to the building became necessary in 1966 and 1986, and Renovations including Modular classrooms were completed in 2014 when the Horace Mann School relocated here. Smaller interior renovations have occurred including in 2019.

The Newton Historical Commission found the property to be preferably preserved, generally approves of the proposed addition, and voted unanimously to find in favor of a 12-month demolition delay at their January 29, 2024 meeting.

Project Details

Kindergarten and 1st grade classrooms are located on the first floor of the large addition, 2nd and 3rd grade classrooms on the first floor of the existing building, and 4th and 5th grade classrooms will be located on the second floor of the existing building. The Media Center (Library) will be relocated to the existing (centrally-located) cafeteria space. When school is not in session, the academic wing (to the left of the small entry and stair addition) can be closed off to the general public. The new stair will connect all three floors of the existing building which is currently not provided in one location, and will provide efficient egress out of the building and easy access to and from the front parking lot, through the building to the early childhood wing and community spaces below on the lower level. The building is designed to be fully accessible, with ramps throughout to manage the various existing floor elevations and grade.

The addition will be an all electric building (no fossil fuels), designed to support photovoltaic panels on the roof. The roof will be accessed directly by a set of stairs, with roof ladders connecting roofs at lower levels. HVAC equipment will be located on the roof. Equipment is also anticipated to service the existing Gym and 1966 addition. We will be continuing to assess the noise level once final equipment is selected to determine whether acoustical screening is required at these locations. A backup generator will be located near the existing generator. A new transformer will be located in close proximity to the new electrical room housed in the lower level of the large addition.

The building is fully sprinklered and will extend existing service to all new areas. Modifications will be made existing renovated spaces. A recent preliminary hydrant flow test was conducted and revealed adequate pressure.

Site amenities include a paved play area with painted asphalt, an accessible play structure on permeable rubber play surfacing, outdoor learning spaces, a small basketball court, and practice baseball field. The existing driveway to Linwood Street will be repaved and designed to provide an accessible pedestrian sidewalk connecting Linwood Ave to the playfields and connecting to existing sidewalks near the front of the building. Landscape features will include new trees which will provide shade for the new play areas and more than compensate for any loss of existing trees per the City of Newton bylaws.

The site is designed so that emergency vehicles are able to access the rear parking lot at the rear of the building, while primary response will remain unchanged from the front of the building. Paved paths and the hardscape play area will be designed to accommodate the weight and turning radii for fire apparatus vehicles.

The proposed new onsite staff parking lot will have no net loss of effective parking spaces for a total of 46 spaces, 4 of which will be accessible. Bike racks will be located adjacent to the new ramped entry closest to the rear parking lot.

Sustainability

The City of Newton Public Buildings has established Building Design and Construction Sustainability Guidelines for new and major renovation projects, which have served as a basis for the design process. The Horace Mann Elementary School project will meet requirements to be LEED Certifiable but will not be certified. A large portion of the roof at the large addition will be designed to be solar-ready and has good southern exposure.

Anticipated Construction Schedule

Work on the school is scheduled to be completed in 20 months, after a bidding process projected to last 3 months. Work on the site is to be completed in phases to support continued occupancy and operations at the existing school. An early enabling phase will commence upon Contract and will include temporary egress from the lower level, allowing the Contractor to restrict access to 3 sides of the Gymnasium while construction of the addition is underway. Renovations to the existing building are primarily occur over 2 summers, and once the additions are complete, remaining sitework will remain until the following season.

Project Reviews

The project was presented by Raymond Design Associates (RDA) and the Public Buildings Department to the Development Review Team (DRT) on January 17, 2024. The project team has also met with Newton Fire Prevention on January 3, 2024 to review building and site requirements. Additionally, a meeting with Public Safety (Newton Fire and Newton Police) and the school department will be held to review site and building security features and Newton standards and protocol.

Traffic patterns will not change as part of the project except for the relocation of service, deliveries and trash pick-up, which will all be relocated to the Nevada Street parking lot, reducing the need for service vehicles to enter from Linwood Ave and accessing the rear of the site which is predominantly play areas. Although there are no significant changes to traffic, the project will work with Traffic, NPS and other stakeholders in future design phases as needed. No additional curb cuts are necessary.

We are working within the City of Newton Tree Preservation Ordinance and have included planting and tree removal plans with our planning submission.

Site Plan Approval Plans will be submitted to Newton Engineering (John Daghlian) by RDA.

Existing School Site Considerations

An existing Right-of-Way access drive from Linwood Avenue on the east side of the parcel will be altered to provide a new raised sidewalk on the southern side of the drive, and extended with a crosswalk across the drive to connect to an existing sidewalk at the side of the school, thereby providing a safer pedestrian path without walking through the parking lot (as is currently necessary).

The first floor of the existing school structure is located approximately 4' above grade around the school except at the back behind the gymnasium, where the site drops off roughly 10 feet to a lower plateau. Ramps connecting pedestrian routes to the 2 main entrances to each of the additions (at the upper plateau) will be provided. At both of these entrances, canopies will provide cover. At the rear entry, 2 sets of ramps (one exterior and one interior) will provide access to the existing first floor elevation. Another set of interior ramps are also required to achieve an additional 2 feet of clearance above the higher Cafeteria ceiling below. The new stair addition at the front of the building, between the existing building and the 1966 Gymnasium, will provide access to all 3 levels of the school.

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