Horace Mann Addition/Renovation Project

DRC Project Update	
Date: Wednesday, November 15, 2023	
Date: Zoom Meeting (online)	
Time: 6:00PM	

Attendees:

See attached Sign-In List for Design Review Committee, City Staff and Project Teams. The list below includes Horace Mann School Building Committee members as well as Community members who were in attendance.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE		COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES	
Alec Zimmer		Giulia Tran	
Emily Prenner		Ima Jonsdottir	
Mark Nardelli		Lindsey Krueger	

Josh Morse opened the meeting at 6:05PM.

In attendance were Raymond Design Associates (RDA), Traverse Landscape Architects and NV5, the Owner's Project Manager. Steve Watchorn (RDA) provided an overview of design developments and refinements which transpired since the SBC meeting last month. It was noted that the project just completed the Feasibility Study phase and is now in Schematic Design.

Proposed DRC Meeting Schedule through Final SD Approval

Tom Murphy (NV5) presented the design milestone schedule and how that coincides with upcoming DRC meetings, from now through final SD approval in February. Consultant team members will join meetings as appropriate, depending on the scheduled topic. NV5 worked with RDA and the City to develop a proposed schedule with suggested topics for the monthly DRC meetings through February 2024:

- 11/15/23 - Introductions and reviewed of work completed to date with the HMSBC
- 12/13/23 - Site plan, floorplans, elevations, building systems and materials
- 01/10/24 - Building systems and materials, energy model and sustainability
- 02/14/24 - Building envelope and final SD approval

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Design Progress Update

Steve Watchorn of RDA introduced Dustin from Traverse Landscape Architects with whom the following agenda items were presented and reviewed:

- Site Design – a rendered conceptual site design plan was presented depicting access and circulation (both vehicular and pedestrian), outdoor play areas, fencing and how stormwater management is being addressed. The two (2) proposed additions were shown - the large 2-story addition in the back and the small 3-story addition in the front.
- Building Design – additions, extent of renovations to achieve the desired program, staff feedback/space program plan updates and interior circulation.

  All floor plans were presented illustrating both the extent of the proposed demolition scope as well as the proposed additions.
- Exterior Renderings/Design – from various vantage points around the building as materials and window configurations are developed.

Site Design

It was noted the existing building was built on an upper plateau, facing Nevada Street. The lower plateau has a 1960s addition which includes a gymnasium. The existing building is 2-stories, with the 1st floor extending to the 1960s addition, with a lower level. The larger of the two proposed additions is behind the 1960s building with a cafeteria and K-1 classroom clusters (early elementary wing). A second smaller addition will connect all 3 floors with a new stair and entrance.

The rendered site plan depicted the two (2) proposed additions, and the various site elements including playgrounds, outdoor classroom, baseball field, basketball court, play fields and sledding hill. The existing smaller playground, beneath the mature trees, is being preserved, whereas the larger playground directly behind the building, is being replaced with a new playground.

The baseball field was reoriented which allows the green space to be more uninterrupted contiguous and open and allows for (2) practice soccer fields. The sledding hill is being maintained.

Some highlights were noted as areas of focus as they relate to the site design:

- Improve pedestrian safety (via Linwood Ave)
- Improve vehicular circulation (via Linwood access drive)
- Create a buffer between the parking area and the adjacent playground
- Provide accessible walkways to the building entrances

Linwood Avenue Access Drive

It was noted that an existing striped pathway from Linwood Avenue takes pedestrians through the parking lot. The intent is to create a safe pedestrian route, avoiding the need to cross through the parking lot.

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A site plan and rendering were presented depicting a proposed sidewalk from Linwood Avenue, along the edge of the property, which would connect with existing walkways alongside the building.

The mature trees on both sides of the driveway present somewhat of a design challenge. RDA is working with the landscape architect (Traverse) and civil engineer (Samiotes) to study a few different options.

The existing paved area is narrow being just under 20' wide and from property edge to edge only 40'.

The following site plan design features were noted:

- A new large playground with poured in place surfacing and new play equipment
- Fenced area with basketball court and hardscape play (fence height to be studied)
- Smaller existing playground, accessible pathways from Linwood into the site, as well as from the front to the back of the building
- Contiguous green space and sledding hill
- Vegetation area, creating a buffer between the upper and lower plateaus
- Outdoor ramps to accommodate circulation inside and outdoor connection
- Bike racks

Fencing

New fencing is proposed between the parking lot and playground area as well as on three sides of the basketball area, to prevent balls from going down the hill or towards the school and the baseball field.

Infiltration systems

Water infiltration systems are in the rear and the front parking lots, which will capture the site run off to either deep catch basins or rerouted to infiltration systems.

Building Design

It was noted that by Code all building entrances must be accessible. RDA reviewed with the HM school staff to determine which entrances need to be maintained as accessible. There are currently (3) exits at grade at the lower level.

The intent is to limit the extent of demolition. Want to provide meaningful spaces that align with the educational program and provide required adjacencies while trying to salvage as many of the existing walls and infrastructure as possible. Per the code review summary, both existing and new stairs can all be open and do not need to be enclosed. The open stair design will allow the building to have a much more open feel. A design goal is to maximize natural daylight throughout the building, with skylights and glass corridor walls where possible, which will enliven existing long dark corridors with more natural daylight.

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Highlights of the floor levels were noted as follows:

Lower Level

It was noted that one of the project goals is to activate the lower level, which will be achieved with the cafetorium, cafetorium and music program areas, functioning as the community center of the school. Also, a new central stair was added, connecting all three floors, and allowing natural light to penetrate throughout. Additional program areas include new boy's and girl's toilet rooms, additional storage space and back-of-house programming, including cafeteria storage and receiving.

First Floor

Grades – kindergarten, 1, 2 and 3.

No changes have been made to this level since the previous meeting. Intent is to activate and provide collaborative learning experiences, with project areas and breakout rooms for each of the clusters. The kindergarten cluster has its own break out area. Each of the other grades have a combined breakout and project area; layouts from other elementary schools in Newton are being studied.

For ease of access for the 3rd and 4th grade, it makes sense for what used to be a window into a door at the back side of the building.

Second Floor

No changes have been made to this level since the previous meeting. Clusters for grades 4 and 5 with breakout and project areas centrally located per cluster. Also on this floor are some SPED and support service spaces.

Design Review Committee Discussion, Comments and Questions

The comments below were noted by the DRC as well as members of the community. These items will be further studied by RDA at future meetings with the Working Group and the Design Review Committee:

Proposed new receiving area and grading.

A question was asked if a new retaining wall will be constructed. RDA is exploring options for this area. The design will likely function as a bridge although details with structural options will need to be worked out.

Fencing height at basketball court.

It was noted that while a 6' tall fence will prevent balls from going down the hill, it may be too low to prevent air balls from escaping the court area. The City noted per recent review with Newton Parks, Recreation & Culture and the HM school staff, it was determined that a 10' high fence would create a visual disconnect between the court area and adjacent play areas and it was recommended to try to

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limit the amount, and height, of fencing on the site. Additional options will continue to be studied during SD.

Planning for future use of PV.

It was noted the design should have a more intentional plan for the eventual use of solar panels (PV), even if it means moving existing mechanical equipment or a skylight. RDA will study further during SD.

New secondary entrance off Nevada Street.

It was noted that the new entrance to the lower grade wing is somewhat large and prominent, in comparison to the existing main entrance, and appears as the new main entrance. RDA will study the overall size of the vestibule to see if the size can be reduced as well as ways to possibly soften the accessibility features by increasing the extent of the sloped walkway and the ramp and railings. Although the canopy provides coverage from inclement weather Newton Historic will need to review the design. RDA will further study the vestibule, grades and ramping system.

Maintenance of planting area and transition from flat walkway to building.

Concern was expressed about maintenance of hill and possibly ways to achieve more flat space near basketball court. RDA will further study grades and appropriate plantings and vegetation for this area. Typically, a 3:1 slope is designed to still be maintainable with the intent for the area to be as maintenance free as possible once vegetation is established. A option to incorporate a seating wall will also be studied.

Entrance accessibility and which doors will be used on a regular basis.

Existing conditions and accessible entrances were reviewed showing proposed demolition. RDA noted the following accessible entrances:

- Existing main entrance
- New vestibule, next to the gymnasium (replacing the existing entrance)
- Receiving (restricted access)
- Elevator vestibule, at back of building
- New entrance at the addition, off the playground
- Entrance at the existing wing, at the back of the building

Mark Nardelli noted the most frequently used entrances at the beginning and end of the day will likely be the (2) front entrances, as well as the rear entrance where the existing modulars are located.

During the school day, active entrances will likely be limited to the main entrance as well as the entrances at the back of the building for entry/exit during recess, gym class, etc.

The library door will likely be used as an emergency egress only.

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Emergency evacuation.

Make sure emergency evacuation is clear for students with mobility challenges and required equipment is provided.

Day After Day pick up logistics

Mark Nardelli noted specifics for pick up needs to be reviewed and planned. Conversations need to happen with the program staff. The plan would be for parents to continue to park where they currently park and not in the new parking area off Nevada Street.

Kindergarten classroom size.

A question was asked about the size of the kindergarten classrooms. RDA noted that the classroom SF meets the lower end of the MSBA standards. Mark Nardelli noted the new kindergarten classrooms are larger than the current SF and staff has not asked questions. The City noted 1100 SF is standard size in some communities and in comparison, the kindergarten classrooms at Angier are 1131 SF. The building design is very efficient with the circulation spaces as tight as possible, allowing for the student and staff support spaces to be larger; the net SF increased although the GSF decreased. RDA also noted project breakout areas outside the classrooms add to the classroom SF, per the MSBA guidelines.

Interior architectural aesthetic at main entrance.

A goal is to bring more daylight into interior corridors by capturing some borrowed light from the outside.

Option for solar at rear parking lot.

The City noted that economics are making solar carports challenging, with the cost of steel and labor. Also, the size, orientation and tree shading at the rear parking lot would make the economics even more challenging and less advantageous. The City will look into this and confirm the viability.

Charging stations.

The City has added charging stations at school projects and has retrofitted sites to expand EV charging station infrastructure. RDA noted that charding stations are required. The project team will discuss the preferred location – front or back parking lots or at both.

Respectfully submitted,

Melissa Gagnon - NV5, Inc.

[End of 11/15/23 Meeting Minutes]

Attachments:

- Sign In and Attendance List

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