



Design Review Committee
PUBLIC BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT
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Setti D. Warren
Mayor

Honorable City Council
City of Newton
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton Centre, MA 02459

29 September 2016

RE: Cabot Elementary School Project

SUBJECT: 100% Schematic Design and Site Plan Review

Honorable Council:

On Wednesday, 28 September 2016 the Design Review Committee met and reviewed the 100% Schematic Design and proposed site plans dated 28 September 2016 as presented by DiNisco Design Partnership on behalf of the Public Buildings Department and Newton Public Schools for the above referenced project.

The City of Newton working in collaboration with the Massachusetts School Building Authority is proposing the renovation and addition of the existing Cabot School. The existing building is to be renovated and new Library, Gymnasium and Classroom additions will be constructed resulting in an 84,500 S.F. school. The Project has undergone several reviews with the Newton Historic Commission which unanimously voted on 28 August 2016 its support for the proposed site plan and building massing.

The proposed project site includes the existing school site, the abutting property to the north at 23 Parkview Avenue (which was recently acquired by the City for the Cabot project), and the portion of Parkview Avenue abutting the school site to the east. The proposed site design features a new entry gathering plaza which directly connects the school and existing Cabot Park and includes shared parking, shared emergency access and egress, and new play structures located on the adjacent park. Final site planning has further reduced the impacts to the park which were previously approved by the Parks and Recreation Commission on 30 September 2015. The proposed site plan includes a new bus pull-off and loading space, new van loading and parking area, a new student drop-off / pickup lane, and additional new on-site parking. Site work also includes new utilities and landscaping.

The Design Review Committee determined that the schematic design and site plans are appropriate. Through the design review process several alternatives were studied. The DRC concurs that the proposed site plan organization and building massing provide the following significant benefits:

- Provides the best solution to the educational program requirements and functional needs of the school. Distributing the program around the existing structure reduces internal congestion and noise by separating the high use spaces; gymnasium, library, art, music and cafeteria, while the original building remains an integral part of the facility and hub of the school.
- Balances the needs of a modern elementary school with the integrity of the existing historic structure and continues its use as a public school. The proposed project will maintain and repair the exterior of the original 1929 building including masonry, stone work and cupola repairs, and replace the existing non-original windows with windows that are commensurate with the original building.
- Strengthens the relationship between the adjacent Cabot Park and the school by creating a physical continuous connection resulting in an enhanced public realm which provides greater student, pedestrian and public safety.
- Separates vehicular access and flow by providing three drop-off and pick-up zones. Buses are located in a pull-off directly adjacent to Cabot Street. Van loading and unloading is located in the front lot accessed from Bridges Street. Parent drop-off and pick-up is accommodated along the drive located at the north side of the site. Further, by directly connecting the school and park property, additional access is available on East Side Parkway on the opposite side of the park. Onsite parking as well as parking on adjacent Bridges Street, Parkview Avenue, and East Side Parkway is also provided.

- Is contextually appropriate to the surrounding residential neighborhood. Program spaces have been situated such that the smaller library mass is located along Bridges Street, the larger gymnasium has been located to front on the large open space afforded by Cabot Park while set back from Cabot Street. The cafeteria and classroom wing mass is located to the north of the original structure. By distributing the program the resulting mass to the north is therefore less dominant. In addition the original school entry is now both visible and accessible directly from Cabot Street.
- Mitigates the loss of views. At locations where additions meet the existing building lighter transparent corners utilizing glass allow the original building mass to be more visible. The existing masonry and stone facades at the new gymnasium connector and new entry between the existing building and north addition are left exposed and featured on the interior to further strengthen the view of the original building. Exterior fenestration at the new additions has been designed to create simple, unified elevations distinguishable from the existing building. Proportions, locations and modulation of new windows have been developed to be responsive to the original punched openings in the existing structure.

The Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the project be presented for site plan approval. In accordance with Section 5-58 of the Revised Ordinances, this letter is to petition the City Council on behalf of the School Department for Site Plan Approval. The DRC identified the following areas of design which will continue to be evaluated and refined by the design team and City through the Design Development Phase.

- Continue to develop opportunities for and refine pedestrian crossings, sidewalks, and walkways at Cabot Park. Particular attention should be given to locations of crosswalks around the school and surrounding streets.
- Coordinate with Parks & Recreation on final locations, widths, materials, and lighting for new pedestrian paths through Cabot Park to ensure maintainability and ease of snow removal.
- Provide enhanced or expanded bike rack facilities to promote bicycle use.
- Continue to develop opportunities for additional drop off and parking along Eastside Parkway. Continue to develop opportunities for shared parking on Bridges Ave., with Cabot Village, and on adjoining streets if needed to create a Parking Management Plan.
- Review the width of Cabot Street bus drop off and configure so as to discourage use by unauthorized vehicles.
- Coordinate proposed tree locations, sizes and species so as not to interfere with access of emergency vehicles. Trees should also be set back such that root zones do not interfere with paved areas.
- Continue to look for opportunities within the building, site and plaza to accommodate educational program enhancements, while continuing to improve the efficiency of the building and site. Particular attention should be given to plaza steps to provide additional railings and material changes to make steps highly visible. Lighting for plaza, walks, access and egress, and site to be further refined.
- Coordinate design and location of storm drainage infiltration systems, pervious pavement and potential waterproofing to protect existing basement from flooding.
- Continue with integrated design approach to the building's design through its mechanical systems, envelope, floor to floor heights, ceiling heights and the height and extent of glass and glazing, methods of sun control, day lighting, electrical lighting, sound control, and solar PV all to promote efficient performance of the building and reduce its overall energy consumption, consistent with both its purpose and context.
- The aesthetic of the exterior building elevations will continue to be developed, with a focus on window sizes and patterning as well as material choices, such as masonry sizes, coursing, and patterning. Attention will be given to the base, body, and cornice of the building. Exterior materials and colors to create both a harmonious and distinctive addition to the existing school.

Sincerely,



Ellen Light, AIA, LEED AP BD+C



Peter J. Barrer

Design Review Committee, Co-Chairs

CC: Joshua R. Morse, Commissioner of Public Buildings
 Dori Zaleznik, Chief Administrative Officer
 Maureen Lemieux, Chief of Staff / CFO
 Dr. David Fleishman, School Superintendent
 Liam Hurly, Deputy Superintendent/Chief Administrative Officer