



Design Review Committee
PUBLIC BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT
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Ruthanne Fuller
Mayor

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

16 May 2024

RE: Franklin Elementary School Project, 125 Derby Street

SUBJECT: Site Plan Review and Approval

Honorable City Council:

On Wednesday, May 15, 2024, the Design Review Committee, DRC, and the Franklin School Building Committee, FSBC met and discussed the proposed site plans, building floor plans, and architectural schematics dated April 17, 2024, as submitted by HMFH Architects on behalf of the Public Buildings Department and Newton School Department for the above referenced project.

The City of Newton is proposing to demolish and replace the existing Franklin School with a new school of approximately 71,000 SF to be located on the western side of the existing site at 125 Derby Street. The new school provides 18 general education classrooms with educational support spaces, cafetorium, and gymnasium to accommodate a design enrolment of 396 to 414 students as previously voted by the School Committee.

The building envelop design will comply with the newly adopted opt-in stretch code and specialized energy code. Materials will include masonry, metal and phenolic panels, and insulated glass, and will be selected to reduce the embodied carbon of the project. The building will be all-electric with a Ground Source Heat Pump (GSHP) mechanical system, making it the city's second geothermal project. The design will also allow for future photovoltaic panels to be installed on the roof and as solar canopies over the staff parking area.

The new structure is located on the western end of the site allowing for a universally accessible school. An enhanced storm water management system utilizing infiltration systems and pervious pavement will handle storm water on site. A new bus loop separated from the traffic lanes will be located on Derby Street nearest to the new school's main entrance, and improvements will be made along Derby Street include traffic calming measures and crosswalks. Pedestrian access from Cherry Street will include a new crosswalk, flashing beacons and pathways to the fields and school. Pedestrian access will also be maintained from Russell Road Street. Staff parking and Van Drop-Off/Pick-Up is to be located on-site at the western side, and Blue Zone Drop-Off/Pickup is located on Derby Street. All three areas have access to the main school entry lobby. The site design features include a fully accessible playground, hard surface play areas and new field space. Landscape features include bio-retention areas, pollinator gardens, and previous pavement. Landscaping and trees will be planted throughout the site.

The Design Review Committee determined that the proposed site plan, building floor plans, and architectural schematics are appropriate. The Committee believes that the proposed circulation and placement of building and associated site functions are a good solution to a site that presents a challenging topographical landscape. 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 are to continue to be developed and evaluated. It is understood that the Public Buildings Department and HMFH Architects will continue to work with the DRC, FSBC, and city staff in the completion of the schematic design phase and all future design phases.

- The design team should continue to take an integrated design approach to the building's design through its mechanical systems, building envelope, floor to floor heights, ceiling heights including the height and extent of glass and glazing, methods of sun control, day lighting, electrical lighting, and sound control. All components should be designed to promote efficient building performance and reduce overall energy consumption, consistent with both its purpose and context. This process should include life cycle cost analysis in the vetting of building systems.
- In response to high costs and long lead times for glass and glazing systems, the design team will look at alternatives to curtainwall construction and evaluate carrying optional construction as an alternate in the bid documents.
- The design team should provide updated LCCA for GSHP + VRF option for verification, and continue to strive to meet, or exceed, our sustainability goals. This should include further study and evaluation of geothermal, on-site PV, and other methods of driving down our energy use intensity, as Newton strives to reduce its' carbon footprint and pushes towards net zero buildings. The building will be heated and cooled using no fossil fuels on site. The building design and specifications should be developed in a practical manner that facilitates conversion to higher efficiency systems coupled with LCCA to drive our energy intensity towards net zero.
- The project team should evaluate options for guardrails and bollards for pedestrian safety along bus loop and entry plaza.
- The team should develop a site photometric plan to confirm adequacy of exterior lighting, and to ensure that direct glare sources are appropriately cut off in response to the significant grade changes.
- The design team should continue to investigate site conditions to refine storm water management design options.
- The design team will continue to develop the playground design to provide fully accessible solutions to meet the design requirements similar to those at the Lincoln-Eliot and Countryside School playgrounds. The team will review with PR&C the potential for netting along the ball field foul lines, and outfield fencing along the pathways.
- All facades of the proposed building should be refined to address concerns regarding massing and buffering of the building from the abutting properties. The project team will work with the abutters to identify and provide appropriate fencing and plantings along abutting property lines.
- The project team should continue to work with NPS, DPW Traffic staff, and city Accessibility Coordinator to ensure that the plans work well with the site distribution and pedestrian and bicycle safety, as well as developing a Parking Management Plan. The project should evaluate options for additional drop-off on Cherry St.
- The project will work with the community and school to develop a remembrance or memorial feature as part of the final site design.

Sincerely,



Ellen Light, AIA, LEED AP BD+C



Thomas P. Gloria, Ph. D.

Design Review Committee, Co-Chairs

CC: Joshua R. Morse, Commissioner of Public Buildings
Jonathan Yeo, Chief Operations Officer
Maureen Lemieux, Chief Financial Officer
Dr. Anna Nolin, School Superintendent
Liam Hurly, Deputy Superintendent/Chief Administrative Officer