



Lincoln Eliot School – Design Review Committee Meeting

Design Review Committee Meeting with Lincoln-Eliot School Building Committee in Attendance

Meeting: March 16th, 2022 (6:04 PM-8:00 PM)

Location: Digital, via Zoom

Attendees

City of Newton:	Alejandro Valcarce	Joshua Morse	Stephanie Gilman
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School Building Committee:	Councilor Alison Leary	Councilor Maria Greenberg
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Design Review Committee:	Maria Leo*	Peter Barrer*	Ellen Light*
	Ambrose Donovan	Amy MacKrell*	Andrea Kelley
	Carol Schein*	David Gillespie*	Emily Prenner
	John Mulligan*	Thomas Gloria*	SingNing Kuo*
	Steve Siegel*		

Arrowstreet Architects:	Larry Spang	Tina Soo Hoo	Claës Andreasen
	Daniel Jick		

Hill International:	Douglas Murray	Mark Krikorian
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Others:	David Frenette	Jeffrey Kahn	Julielle Kahn
	Marc Kaufman		

* Denotes Voting Members

Alejandro Valcarce called the meeting to order at 6:04 PM.

Lincoln Eliot

Tina Soo Hoo of Arrowstreet presented the working site plan and reviewed the outdoor programming areas.

([Link to PDF](#))

Examples were shown.

A. Ball Sports	B. 3-5 Playground	C. K-2 Playground
D. Outdoor Seating/Patio	E. Sloped Play Area	F. Multi-use Lawn Area
G. Outdoor Classrooms		

Site Circulation was presented and reviewed.

Orange = Walking routes

Red = Stairs

Blue = Accessible Ramps

The overall Site Map without overlays was reviewed and Tina Soo Hoo of Arrowstreet opened the floor for questions.

Ellen Light inquired as to how k-2 and 3-5 students will be kept separate within the playgrounds and how it will be monitored to ensure safety.

Tina Soo Hoo noted that the design of the playground structures has its own considerations for younger versus older kids. Grades K-2 students may have difficulty reaching the higher playground structures incorporated into the grades 3-5 Playground. Staff monitoring the younger children will have to keep a close eye on them. Ms. Soo Hoo added that Angiers, Zervas and Cabot schools incorporate separate playgrounds separated by circulation and/or hardscape.

Ellen Light clarified that the playgrounds at Angiers and Cabot are on one elevation.

Tina Soo Hoo of Arrowstreet noted that the elevation changes in the playground present an opportunity to integrate a sloped play area. Ms. Soo Hoo added that if there is a desire to have a single elevation flat playground, it can be studied further.

Carol Schein expressed the importance of designing for playground maintenance access, adding that a maintenance vehicle will not be able to traverse through the entry nodes.

Alejandro Valcarce noted the existence of two separate options; one option consists of multiple elevation levels with a gradual slope up to the play area, and one consists of a flat field and a uniform play area with a retaining wall which requires the use of switchback ramps and stairs to traverse the elevation change.

Carol Schein shared support for a level, uniform, playground area. Ms. Schein also inquired about the impact of the parking lot on the adjacent wooded area.

Alejandro Valcarce suggested removing the masking on the plans in order to see the underlying aerial photo. Tina Soo Hoo of Arrowstreet noted that the parking lot runs up to the edge of the wooded area. A small section of the wooded area encroaches on the proposed parking lot driveway, so some trees will need to be removed to account for the bus and van loop.

Ms. Soo Hoo added that further study is being done to simplify the entry node and widen the paths to allow for maintenance vehicle access.

Ms. Soo Hoo presented site sections showing perspective views of the site elevation.

Andrea Kelley inquired about the 5% slope on some of the walkways.

Tina Soo Hoo of Arrowstreet clarified, stating the current design incorporates walkways at less than 5% across the site, with two ramps that are 8%.

SingNing Kuo expressed that she would like to see more options to provide more feedback. Ms. Kuo noted her main concern with the ability of the central node design to handle all the children during arrival and dismissal. Ms. Kuo also added that having a 3d model will help the team visualize the different elements and the different elevations to gain a better understanding of the site. Ms. Kuo stated that a full basketball court would be nice, however if the school program is ok with a half basketball court, that is ok.

Alejandro Valcarce noted that talks with the school, staff, and PE teacher showed no need for a full basketball court. A half-arc “elementary school style” basketball court will be incorporated into the site. Mr. Valcarce added that options for the location of the basketball court are still being explored alongside designing a single-elevation playground. Mr. Valcarce noted that design changes are forthcoming and a 3d model will be created and updated to help visualize the landscape and playground design.

SingNing Kuo noted the opportunity to designate outdoor classrooms behind the classroom bar along Walnut Park.

Alejandro Valcarce stated locating outdoor classrooms on the quiet side of the building is desirable and is being explored. Mr. Valcarce added that elements currently depicted in the design are placeholder however incorporating usable outdoor spaces to encourage outdoor activities is desired.

Councilor Alison Leary asked for more details about the outdoor classrooms.

Alejandro Valcarce stated that the current phase is focused on thoughts, ideas and feedback and things will continue to develop further during the design development phase.

Councilor Alison Leary expressed wanting to see more options for the main entry walkway and node design, and asked what the philosophy was behind the current design.

Alejandro Valcarce noted that it began as an organizing element to help circulation and provide a place for students to gather. Mr. Valcarce added that the design is being further refined and potentially simplified.

Councilor Alison Leary inquired as to how people would access the urban forest area, and how much the parking lot will be impacting the forested area.

Alejandro Valcarce noted that the edge of the proposed parking lot is up to the edge of the pre-existing dirt lot which is currently being used as a laydown for Haywood house. Mr. Valcarce added that trees around the site have been catalogued and some had been determined to be dead or dying. Ultrasonic testing will need to be carried out to confirm the status of the trees. Mr. Valcarce noted the desire to keep the good trees and remove potential safety hazards.

Councilor Alison Leary stressed the importance of doing a better job and designing for sustainability, trash, and recycling pick-up.

Alejandro Valcarce noted that trash, recycling, and composting is being tracked and will need to be explored further.

Councilor Alison Leary asked if water filling stations will be available in the school, and if there will be any outdoors.

Alejandro Valcarce stated that water bubblers, or a bubbler with a filling station will be available throughout the site.

Councilor Alison Leary stressed the importance of focusing on the site as a walkable/bikeable school. Councilor Leary added that she does not like locating a blue zone on Waban St. and Walnut park and would like to minimize the impact on neighbors and abutters.

Alejandro Valcarce noted discussions with the transportation department had occurred, and further studies must take place to develop beyond site plan approval.

John Mulligan asked if there was any precedent for creating the outdoor classroom spaces through grading instead of hardscape. Mr. Mulligan added that the old hardscape structures at Lincoln Eliot deteriorate due to the use of rock salt. Mr. Mulligan noted that it would be nice to preserve the greenspace.

Alejandro Valcarce noted the opportunity to incorporate pervious pavement in the hardscape area, adding that it had been used successfully in the past.

John Mulligan noted that the garden at the current Lincoln Eliot gets used sporadically and ends up being a project for Newton Services. Mr. Mulligan added that some neighbors and volunteers tend to it, however gardens are tough to maintain and could become an aesthetic issue.

David Gillespie stated that he sees a lot of pinch points along the main path from Jackson Rd. to the main entry and suggested incorporating a single ramp versus stairs and ramps, and at a minimum widening the walking paths.

Mr. Gillespie asked for confirmation that the basketball court location is still being studied.

Alejandro Valcarce noted that basketball court location is still being explored, and the pros and cons of each location will need to be studied. Mr. Valcarce added that stairs, ramps, and widening the pathing is being studied, however if the pathing gets too wide an intermediate rail will need to be utilized on the ramps.

Mr. Gillespie stated that a well-placed wall could be useful in this situation.

Mr. Valcarce added he wants to avoid monumental staircases stating they fall into disrepair.

Tina Soo Hoo noted that 3d models were being developed, however more time will be needed to present more proper perspective 3d views.

David Gillespie added that doing a live walkthrough review would be helpful.

Jeffery Kahn asked what is planned for the areas to the south of the cafeteria and to the north of the parking lot.

Alejandro Valcarce noted that the area adjacent to the parking lot will remain as an urban forest area. Mr. Valcarce added that the area to the south of the cafeteria is a big hill and there are no plans to develop that area.

Jeffery Kahn asked what the plans are for developing the "G"(Outdoor Classrooms) area on the plans.

Tina Soo Hoo of Arrowstreet noted that the Walnut Park side had always been envisioned as an outdoor classroom space.

Jeffery Kahn stated EMS should not be approaching from Walnut Park.

Alejandro Valcarce noted that EMS will not be approaching from Walnut Park, adding that they will come up Washington St. and down Jackson Rd. to the main entry where admin and the fire control panel is.

Julie Kahn asked what the plan was for the future addition off the back of school on the Walnut Park side of the building.

Alejandro Valcarce noted that the future addition was part of the school committee's consideration when they looked at future enrollment.

Emily Prenner added that the school committee desired a spot be designated for 4 extra classrooms for the future if needed.

Stephanie Gilman inquired about the setback from the road of the future addition, noting that it looks close to the road.

Tina Soo Hoo of Arrowstreet to provide setback distance.

Jeffery Kahn expressed concerns over impacting the large tree at the corner of Waban St. and Walnut Park. Alejandro Valcarce stated that work is being done with Mark Walsh, and ultrasound testing of the trees will be performed to determine the condition of the trees. Trees will be preserved if possible, and any trees that remain will be protected.



Councilor Maria Greenberg expressed concern about parking on Walnut Park and stated that it would be better to not have a basketball court and fencing blocking the front entry.

Alejandro Valcarce stated that parking has not been decided and must be studied and explored further.

Tina Soo Hoo of Arrowstreet noted that from ongoing meetings, adjustments are being made and many different iterations have been shown to the teams. Ms. Soo Hoo added that conversations will continue as the details get developed further. Ms. Soo Hoo stated that the feedback is good; simplicity and clear sight lines are preferred. Arrowstreet will explore options to present at the next meeting.

Alejandro Valcarce added that Nitsch will be incorporating bioswales, rain gardens, etc. as the site is further refined.

Alejandro Valcarce provided a Newton Public Buildings Update to the committees.

Ellen Light moved to adjourn the meeting.

Carol Schein seconded.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 PM

The meeting recording can be found on the project website at:

<http://lincolneliot-necp-projects.com/meeting-recordings/>

The next Lincoln-Eliot Design Review Committee Meeting is scheduled for April 13th, 2022 at 6:00PM via Zoom.

These notes will become part of the project record as written

To the best of my knowledge, these notes are a fair representation of the items discussed at the meeting.
Additional items or corrections should be brought to the attention of the writer.
Submitted by: Mark Krikorian