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BELMONT, MA

CASE NO. 23-21

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NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING BY THE
TOWN OF BELMONT PLANNING BOARD

ON APPLICATION FOR DESIGN AND SITE PLAN REVIEW APPROVAL

Notice is hereby given that the Planning Board will hold a public hearing on Tuesday, September 5, 2023 at 7:00 PM by remote access through the Zoom app. to consider the application of Belmont Public Library, Conrad Ello, AIA, LEED AP, agent, for Design and Site Plan Review Approval to construct a Library at 336 Concord Ave. located in a Single Residence C (SRC) zoning district. Section 7. 3. 2 a) of the Zoning By-Law requires Design and Site Plan Review Approval from the Planning Board for the construction of a non-residential building that has a total Gross Floor Area greater than 2,500 square feet or a proposal that results in the need for six (6) or more parking spaces.

Note: Application submittals, meeting agenda & instructions on remote access can be found on the Town's website: <https://www.belmont-ma.gov/planning-board>

TOWN OF BELMONT PLANNING BOARD



Oudens Ello Architecture

August 2, 2023

Mr. Ara Yogurtian
Assistant Director
Town of Belmont - Community Development
Homer Municipal Building
19 Moore Street, 2nd Floor
Belmont, Massachusetts 02478

Re: Belmont Public Library - Design and Site Plan Review Application

Dear Ara,

On behalf of the Belmont Public Library, we are pleased to submit this application for Design and Site Plan Review. The enclosed application is for the proposed new library building on the site of the existing library at 336 Concord Avenue in Belmont, MA. We appreciate this opportunity to present this wonderful project, and we welcome your questions and comments on the enclosed submission package. Please contact me at 617-422-0980, if you have questions prior to the hearing.

Sincerely yours,

Conrad Ello, AIA, LEED AP

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Design and Site Plan Review Application
Belmont Public Library
336 Concord Ave
Belmont, MA 02478

Prepared By
Oudens Ello Architecture
46 Waltham St, Suite 4A
Boston, MA 02118



Town of Belmont
Planning Board

APPLICATION FOR DESIGN AND SITE PLAN REVIEW

Date: August 2, 2023


Planning Board
Homer Municipal Building
19 Moore Street
Belmont, MA 02478

To Whom It May Concern:

Pursuant to the provisions of Section 7.3, Design and Site Plan Review, of the Town of Belmont Zoning By-Laws, I/We the undersigned, being owner(s) of certain parcel of land (with the buildings thereon) situated on 336 Concord Avenue ~~Street/Road~~, hereby make application to your Board for **DESIGN AND SITE PLAN REVIEW** for the erection or alteration on said premises or the use thereof under the applicable Section of the Zoning By-Laws of said Town for a new public library building

_____ on the ground that the same will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of said Zoning By-Law.

Petitioner(s) are further to comply with the requirements of Section 7.3.5 of said Zoning By-Law attached.

Signature of Petitioner	<u></u>
Print Name	<u>Clair Colburn</u> Chair, Library Building Committee
Address	<u>336 Concord Avenue</u>
	<u>Belmont, MA 02478</u>
Daytime Telephone Number	<u>609-902-3237</u>

Project Statement

Introduction

On behalf of the Belmont Public Library, Oudens Ello Architecture proposes a new 40,573 square foot public library building on the existing library site at 336 Concord Avenue. The proposed design respects its Belmont environment and builds on the town's legacy of civic buildings. Guiding principles for the new library project include:

- *Library as Community Center:* A living room for all Belmont residents to learn, convene, and engage
- *Openness and Accessibility:* A building that is welcoming and accessible to all
- *Flexibility:* Spaces, systems and technology designed for future adaptation
- *Sustainability:* An all-electric building with efficient systems, healthy materials, and resilient design
- *Natural Light:* Inviting daylight in to enhance human comfort and patron experience
- *Integrated Site and Landscape:* Using the site as a public amenity and extension of the library

Existing Conditions

The project site is located at 336 Concord Avenue and is owned by the Inhabitants of the Town of Belmont. The lot is comprised of two contiguous parcels with a total lot area of 86,460 SF and 402 feet of frontage on Concord Avenue. The property is bound by Concord Avenue to the north, the First Armenian Church to the west, a two-acre residential property across Wellington Brook to the south, and the Underwood Pool to the east. The site was acquired in 1963 when the Town of Belmont took two parcels by eminent domain for the current library. One parcel was large and recorded land, and the other was a small adjacent parcel on the eastern side of the larger parcel and registered land. The taking was expressly for "library purposes". (See the taking document recorded in the Middlesex County Southern District Registry of Deeds in Book 10218 at Page 300 and filed with the Middlesex County Southern District Registry District of the Land Court as Document No. 389244 on Certificate of Title No. 107085). By the "one ownership" phrase and by the Doctrine of Merger any setback on the eastern side of the proposed new library is measured from the eastern side of the small registered land property.

The property contains an existing 3-story, 29,727 SF brick library building with a raised main entrance on Concord Avenue. The western most portion of the site is designed as a Woodland Garden maintained by the Belmont Garden Club since 1991. Wellington Brook occupies the south portion of the site and enters a culvert at the east property boundary. The remainder of the lot is paved primarily with bituminous pavement for parking and vehicle circulation. There is one-way vehicular circulation in a counter clockwise direction around the building. There are 2 curb cuts in Concord Avenue. The west curb cut enters the parking lot and the east curb cut exits.

Proposed Project

The proposed project is for a new 3-story, 40,573 SF library building with a 42 car parking area and extensive public landscape. To achieve this vision, the existing building will be raised and the parking lot reconfigured to consolidate parking on the west side of the property with entry and exit from a single curb cut on Concord Avenue. The proposed entry/exit point is in the vicinity of the existing entry location. Concord Avenue traffic movements and median openings will not be altered.

The site planning strategy prioritizes preservation of the existing Woodland Garden and enhancements to the Wellington Brook landscape. The Woodland Garden and Brook landscape are envisioned as a continuous public space linking the library with Concord Avenue, Wellington Brook, the Underwood Pool and the Town's larger Community Path network.

The proposed library building provides a strong yet welcoming civic presence along Concord Avenue. Transparent materials reveal active spaces of the building, particularly the central Library Commons that serves as the main point of arrival and hub of patron and staff interaction. The main library entrance is brought down to street level to provide full ADA accessibility between the sidewalk, parking area, building, and the majority of the landscape pathways.

The remainder of the main building mass utilizes brick with variations in coursing to articulate shadow and depth across the building facades. The overall building mass includes a raised roof area clad in wood-toned laminate panels concealing a rooftop mechanical penthouse and providing clerestory glazing and daylighting for the second floor Adult reading room. The raised roof is setback from the building perimeter to minimize the perceived building height along Concord Avenue and from surrounding properties. The high roof also provides an optimal location for a rooftop photovoltaic (PV) system without shadowing effects from the adjacent tree canopy.

Community Engagement

The library design is the product of extensive community engagement and stakeholder collaboration culminating in a favorable debt exclusion vote in November 2022. Prior to the debt exclusion vote, the design team, Library Building Committee and Trustees, held four well attended Community Meetings to share design concepts and solicit public input. A fifth Community Meeting and Abutters Meeting were held in April 2023. An online survey and comment form are available to the public and continue to generate feedback.

In addition to Community Meetings, the project team has coordinated with numerous Town Departments and met with a wide range of interested stakeholders. Town Department coordination has included meetings with Community Development, Fire & Police, Facilities, DPW, Belmont Light, Conservation Commission liaison, Disability Access Commission, Council on Aging, ITAC, Belmont Media Center and the Shade Tree Committee.

Stakeholder meetings have been held with the Belmont Historical Society, Veterans Group, Garden Club and Stormwater Working Group.

Community outreach and departmental meetings will continue through the construction documents phase.

Zoning Compliance

The library site is within the Single Residence C (SR-C) District. A public library is permitted in the SR-C district as a "religious or educational use exempted from prohibition by Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 40A, Section 3" per *Table 3.3 Schedule of Use Regulations*.

Zoning Compliance tables for the existing building and new library are included on the Site Plan (C1.0) and provided on the following page. The existing building is in compliance with the zoning use and dimensional requirements. The proposed project requires exceptions to the following SR-C dimensional requirements: lot coverage, front and side setbacks, building height and building stories.

Per the Dover Amendment, the library is claiming an exemption from these requirements in order to meet the future educational mission of the library. Notwithstanding, the project must go through the Design and Site Plan Review (DSPR) process and "may be subject to reasonable regulations concerning the bulk and height of structures and determining yard sizes, lot area, setbacks, open space, parking and building coverage requirements" per MGL, Chapter 40A, Section 3.

The project has made efforts to comply with all other SR-C zoning requirements.

4.2.1 Area Requirements (SR-C)		Existing Library		Proposed Library	
Category	Required	Existing	Complies	Proposed	Complies
Minimum Lot Area (SF)	25,000	86,460	Yes	86,460	Yes
Minimum Lot Frontage (SF)	75	392	Yes	402	Yes
Maximum FAR	n/a	0.34	Yes	0.47	Yes
Maximum Lot Coverage	25% of lot	15.76%	Yes	26.85%	No
Minimum Open Space	50% of lot	58.26%	Yes	54.75%	Yes

4.2.2 Linear Requirements (SR-C)		Existing Library		Proposed Library	
Category	Required	Existing	Complies	Proposed	Complies
Front Setback (ft)	25	37.6	Yes	6 ±	No
Side Setback - East (ft)	10	60	Yes	7 ±	No
Side Setback - West (ft)	10	166	Yes	186 ±	Yes
Rear Setback (ft)	25	75	Yes	85 ±	Yes
Max Building Height (ft)	30	30	Yes	39	No
Max Stories	2.5	2.5	Yes	3	No

Where SR-C zoning requirements cannot be met, careful consideration has been given to the building massing and site design to ensure the library is integrated with its immediate context and other properties along Concord Avenue:

Maximum Lot Coverage

The proposed library footprint marginally exceeds the allowable minimum lot coverage (26.85% vs. 25%) as a result of approximately 2,000 SF of covered outdoor space provided for library patrons. Covered outdoor space is an increasingly important amenity for public health in civic buildings and a priority for the library project.

Front Setback & East Side Setback

The developable area of the library parcel is limited by Wellington Brook to the south and the preserved Woodland Garden area to the west, pushing the building footprint towards the north (Concord Avenue) and east (Underwood Pool) property lines. In an effort to identify reasonable setbacks for an institutional building in this context, the project looked to Local Business I (LB-I) dimensional requirements as a reasonable standard. The front and east side setbacks meet the LB-I minimum setback dimensions (5 ft and 6 ft respectively). Furthermore, the front setback is consistent with existing LB-I district parcels to the west on Concord Avenue, including commercial buildings at 375, 385, 395 and 405 Concord Avenue.

The east side of the library parcel abuts the town-owned permanent open space known as the “Golden Bowl” on the Underwood Pool property. The proposed 7± ft setback is measured from the lot line to the edge of the cantilevered second floor reading porch. The main bulk of the building, including the entire ground floor, is setback 18 ft from the lot line. Given the expansive scale of the “Golden Bowl,” the reduced setback at the reading porch does not detract from the existing use or character of the Underwood Pool property.

Max Building Height & Max Stories

The proposed library is a civic scaled building comprised of two stories of functional library space with a third story mechanical penthouse. The additional height introduced by the penthouse brings the overall building height to 39 ft. The number of stories and overall building height exceed the allowable SR-C maximums.

In respect to the zoning requirements and the surrounding context, the main mass of the building, including the street wall along Concord Avenue, is limited to a height of 28 ft to conform with the maximum height requirement. The penthouse volume is setback 21 ft from the building edge to create a clear delineation between the main two story building mass and third story penthouse. Refer to the Roof Plan (A1.4) and Building Sections (A4.1-A4.2) for further definition of the building massing and third story setbacks.

Parking

There are 42 existing parking spaces at the site. The proposed project maintains 42 parking spaces including 3 accessible spaces and 6 EV charging spaces. The quantity of EV charging stations conforms with 2023 MA Energy Stretch Code, C405.13 for Assembly buildings (10% of 42 spaces = 5 spaces). An additional 7 street parking

spaces are available on Concord Avenue. Covered bicycle parking for 8 bicycles is provided on the west side of the building near the building entrance.

Parking spaces are subject to Section 5.1.2(i), "Other Uses: a number of spaces to be determined by the Building Inspector (or the Planning Board in cases referred to it for Design and Site Plan Review), based upon evidence from similar uses under similar circumstances."

Site Design Elements

The library project includes extensive site improvements to enhance public use of the library property. The landscape design incorporates walking paths along Wellington Brook linking a series of outdoor seating areas and reading spaces. An outdoor event terrace and informal amphitheater allow library activities to spill out to the exterior. The landscape design is also integral to the sitewide stormwater strategy through the implementation of bio-retention areas and planted swales to manage and filter runoff. Wherever possible, existing trees are preserved or relocated on site. Native species are specified for new trees and plantings.

Exterior lighting will be provided in the parking area, pathways directly behind the building and at the flagpole near the building entrance. Lighting will be designed to meet the requirements of Section 5.4.3 of the zoning by-law.

Covered bicycle parking for 8 bicycles is provided on the west side of the building near the building entrance.

A pedestrian-scaled building sign is incorporated on the exterior wall at the building entrance, see the north exterior elevation (A3.1).

Noise levels for outdoor mechanical equipment, located in the building penthouse, will conform with MassDEP and Town of Belmont Noise by-law limits. Background noise testing was completed in June 2023.

Stormwater

The proposed Project is considered a redevelopment under the Town of Belmont and Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) Stormwater Handbook since there will be a net decrease in impervious area throughout the site. The project is introducing several stormwater management systems throughout the site to mitigate runoff and peak rates, promote groundwater recharge, improve water quality, and protect the adjacent Wellington Brook. The stormwater runoff from the parking area will be directed through a water quality structure to a subsurface infiltration system consisting of 18-inch perforated pipes with an overflow to Concord Ave. A bio-retention area in the northern portion of the site will collect stormwater and direct it downhill to Wellington Brook via grass channels. The roof drainage will be directed to rainfall outlets at grade at both the grass channel and the southern grass area. Trench drains in the pedestrian walkway areas will also be directed to the grass channel.

A Notice of Intent (NOI) application will be filed with the Conservation Commission towards the end of August.

Traffic

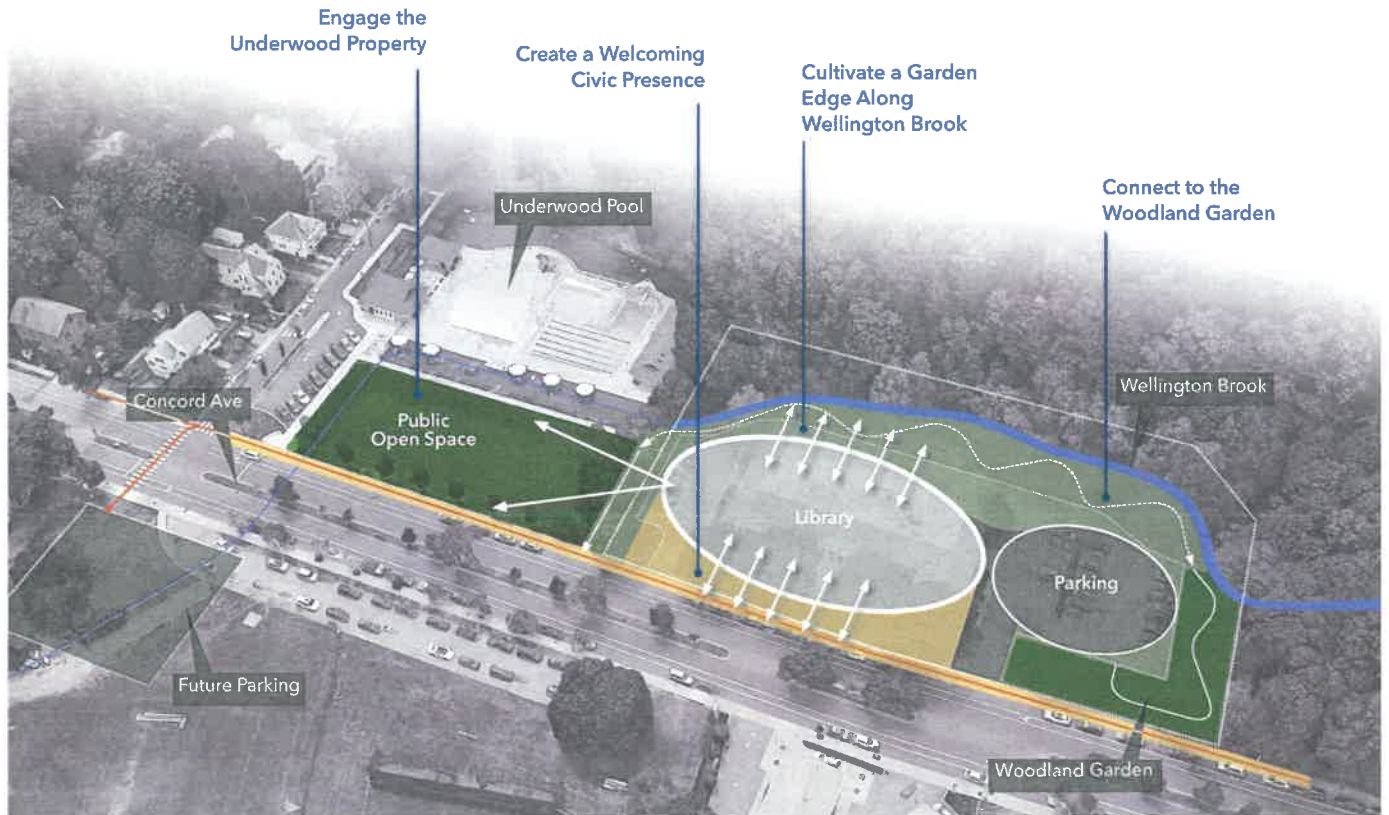
The proposed project provides access to the site via the existing western driveway entrance to Concord Ave and includes 42 parking spaces, 3 of which are accessible. Travel through the parking area will be a one-way loop with cars entering and exiting to Concord Ave. A reinforced paved area in the southeast part of the parking area will be utilized for emergency access to the rear of the building. On the east side of the property, the existing emergency access entrance for the adjacent Town property will be expanded to provide emergency access for the proposed library as well and access to the Wellington Brook headwall cleanout.

Existing Concord Avenue traffic movements and median openings will not be altered.

Utilities

The utilities for the building are accessed from Concord Avenue. Electrical, telecommunications and sewer will enter the building underground at the north side of the building. Fire protection water and domestic water enter the building at the south side of the building. Gas service will not be provided to the new library.

Project Images



Opposite, Top Site strategy diagram showing the integration between the library building, parking area, Wellington Brook, surrounding open space and the Concord Avenue frontage.

Opposite, Bottom View from Concord Avenue with the main building entrance to the right and the transparent Library Commons inviting views into the building and through to Wellington Brook

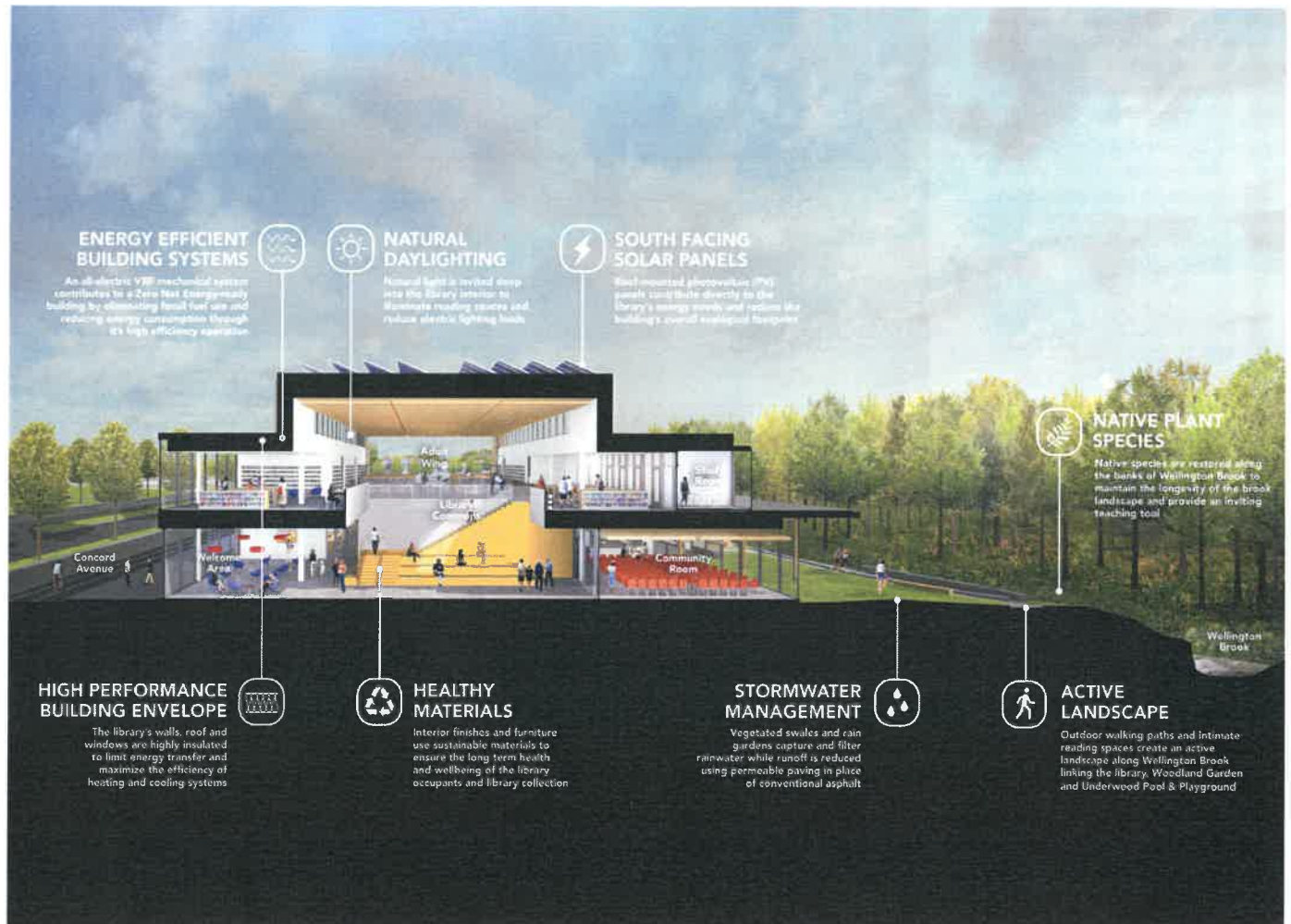


Top View of the proposed Wellington Brook landscape and amphitheater seating

Middle View at the southwest corner of the library showing the building scale stepping down to engage the Wellington Brook landscape

Bottom View from the "Golden Bowl" on the Underwood Pool property, the cantilevered outdoor reading porch on the second floor gestures to the bowl





Opposite, Top Section through the Library Commons showing sustainable building and site design features

Opposite, Bottom View overlooking the Library Commons looking towards the Adult Wing



Top View of Children's Wing

Middle View of Quiet Study Rooms overlooking Wellington Brook

Bottom View of the Community Room

