

A Partnership with the Amherst Historical Society

As you know, the Historical Society is our next door neighbor. About eight years ago, their Board of Trustees approached the Library's Board of Trustees, because they knew that we were planning a renovation/expansion project. The Historical Society suggested that it would be beneficial to both organizations if the Library purchased a portion of the Historical Society's back yard, giving the Historical Society much-needed funds, and giving the Library more room to expand (so as to preserve more green space). Both groups have been working toward this mutually beneficial arrangement ever since.

Currently the Town, Library and Historical Society are in the process of approving a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which discusses this land purchase and the benefits of collaborating. The goal is to improve the cultural campus we have on this side of Town. We hope to share exhibit space, storage space, and programming space. But there are two small stumbling blocks:

1. The Historical Society needs to go before a judge in order to ask that their deed be released, not only to be able to sell a portion of their land, but also to be able to make improvements to their building (separate from the Jones project) that the existing deed prevents from occurring.
2. The Historical Society property is zoned Residential General, but if they were to sell any portion of their land to anyone, it would make them non-conforming. Thus, the Historical Society property needs to be re-zoned to Business General.

Consequently, the Historical Society Trustees voted to request that an article go before Town Meeting this spring which will ask that their property be changed from Residential General to Business General. The Library Trustees voted to support this request. Both entities want the flexibility to use the full value of both pieces of property...we both want to keep our options open. If the re-zoning article does not pass however, then the Library will expand on its property only.

Massing Models

To help people visualize the project, our architects have created these two “massing models.” These are by no means final drawings!

- ✚ Option one shows no re-zoning, and no sale of land. Thus the Library would expand onto its property only.
- ✚ Option two shows successful re-zoning, and a Library expansion closer to the Strong House, making collaborations easier, such as the sharing of artifacts and documents.
- ✚ The third drawing shows the elevations. Whether we expand onto only our property, or use a small portion of the Historical Society’s property, we plan to go no higher than three stories.