

**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE  
HISTORICAL COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF WORCESTER**

**AUGUST 3, 2016**

**LEVI LINCOLN CHAMBER – CITY HALL**

**Commission Members Present:** Andrew Shveda, Chair  
Randolph Bloom, Clerk  
Karl Bjork, Alternate  
Cheryll Holley, Alternate

**Commission Members Absent:** Timothy McCann, Vice-Chair  
Robyn Conroy  
Devon Kurtz

**Staff Members Present:** Stephen S. Rolle, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services  
Deborah Steele, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services  
Michael Antonellis, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services

**New Business**

**1. Request for comment on Courthouse (2 Main Street) Recordation Plan**

Mr. Rolle stated that prior to turning over the building to the developer; the city agreed to prepare a document to record the major architectural features of the building and presented the following photos that had been taken of the courthouse.



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# WORCESTER COUNTY COURTHOUSE 2 MAIN STREET RECORDATION PLAN

Prepared by: City of Worcester, Executive Office of Economic Development

June 2016

## INTRODUCTION

This document provides photographic record of the exterior and interior architectural features and details of the Worcester County Courthouse at 2 Main Street, recorded in November 2014.

## BUILDING EXTERIOR

The exterior of the present Courthouse building was shaped by four major construction phases spanning 1843 through 1954, as summarized on the following pages.

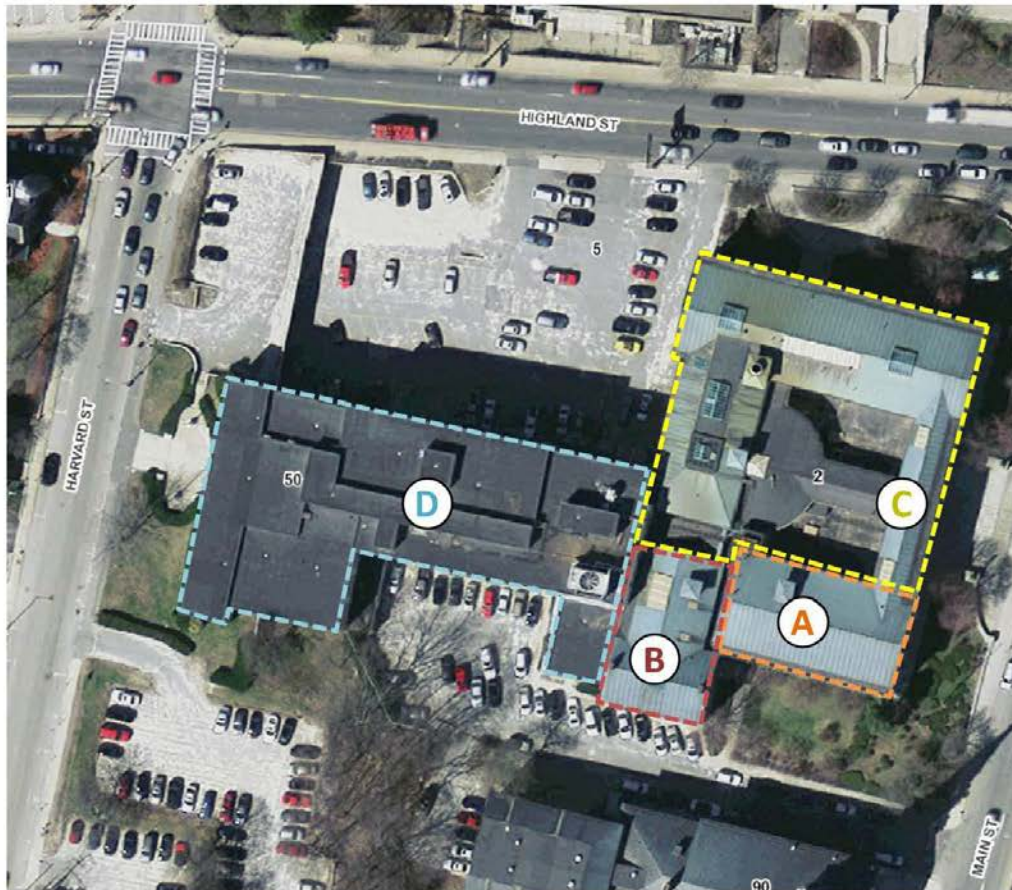


Figure 1: The courthouse was constructed in four major phases.

### Circa 1845 Courthouse

The south wing of the courthouse (A), constructed between 1843 and 1845, is the oldest surviving portion of the building. The building was designed by Ammi B. Young in the Greek Revival structure was located south of a circa-1803 brick building on the site, which was later demolished.

### 1878 Addition

An addition (B) was added to the southwest side of the 1845 building in 1878, and was also constructed generally in a Greek Revival style.

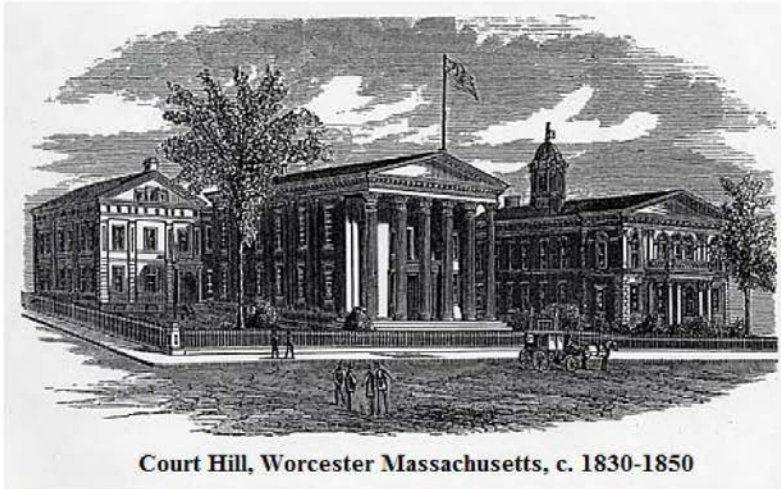


Figure 2: 1845 Court House (center), 1878 Addition (left) and 1803 Brick Building (right, demolished)<sup>1</sup>



Figure 3: 1878 Addition (center) and Circa 1898 copper roof edge detail on 1845 Original Building (right)

<sup>1</sup> Image source: <http://ahistorygarden.blogspot.com/search/label/Worcester%20MA>



Figure 4: 1878 Addition, Front facade



Figure 5: Front entrance to 1878 Addition



Figure 6: 1878 Addition (State Street side)

### 1898 Addition and Façade Alteration

A major expansion and renovation of the 1845 and 1878 buildings was constructed in 1898, resulting in the building complex that comprises the “Historic Courthouse” present today. This design, by Andrews, Jaque & Rantoul, added the current central entrance and north wing, as well as a rear wing (C). A central cupola is located in the center of the new building, surrounded by the exterior wings (See Figure 1). The 1845 building became the south wing of the expanded Courthouse, and its façade was altered to create the symmetrical front face that is evident today. The 1803 brick building was demolished to make way for the expanded building.



Figure 7: Updated 1898 Façade on the Original 1845 Building (Facing Main Street)



Figure 8: Engraving above Main Entrance



Figure 9: 1898 Column and Window Detail



Figure 10: Main Entrance (Facing Main Street)





Figure 11: Plaque above Main Entrance denoting Dates of Construction



Figure 12: Ornate Wall Light (Glass Shade Missing)



Figure 13: Lamp Post



Figure 14: 1898 Cornice Detail



Figure 15: Side Entrance (Facing Highland Street)



Figure 16: Interior Courtyard from Roof (View of neighboring First Unitarian Church)



Figure 17: Rear Entrance to 1898 Building Complex. Stone Trim around Windows suggests Possibility of Additional Windows in Original Construction.

### **Circa 1954 Annex**

The large, modernist style annex to the rear of the Courthouse was constructed around 1954<sup>2</sup> (D).



Figure 18: Circa 1954 Annex (Viewed from Highland Street)

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.preservationworchester.org/pages/tourmain.html>



Figures 19 and 20: 1954 Annex Façade Details



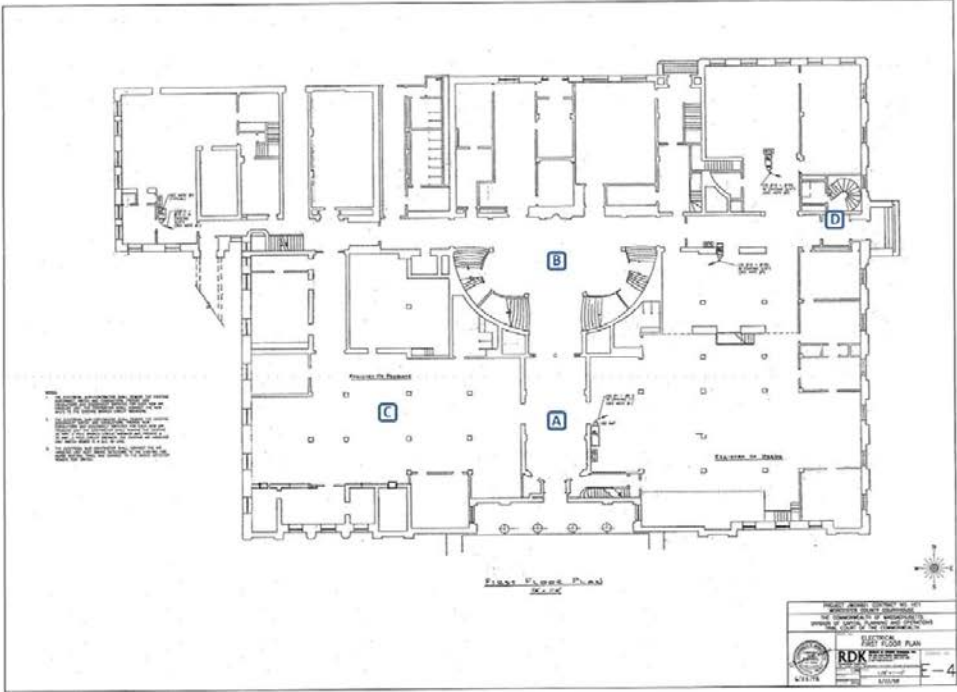
Figure 21: Entrance to 1954 Annex (Harvard Street)

# BUILDING INTERIOR

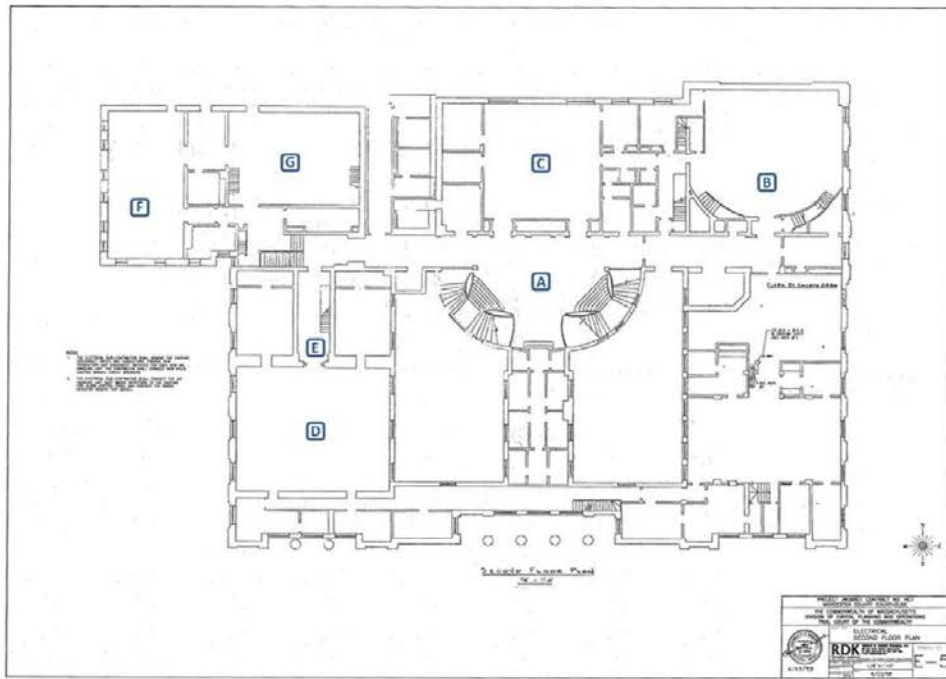
## 19<sup>th</sup> Century Courthouse Building (1845, 1878, 1898)

The exterior of the present Courthouse building was shaped by four major construction phases spanning 1843 through 1954, as summarized in the introduction to this report.

### FLOORPLANS



A: Figures 26, 27, 28  
B: Figures 24, 25, 29, 30, 31  
C: Figure 36  
D: Figures 37, 38  
Figure 22: First Floor Floorplan and Photo Key



A: Figures 32, 33, 34, 35, 42

B: Figures 39, 40, 41

C: Figures 43, 44, 45

D: Figures 46, 47, 48

E: Figures 49, 50

F: Figures 51, 52, 53

G: Figures 54, 55

Figure 23: Second Floor Floorplan and Photo Key

FRONT ENTRY, LOBBY AND MAIN STAIRCASES



Figure 24: Main staircase and windows as viewed from the first floor.

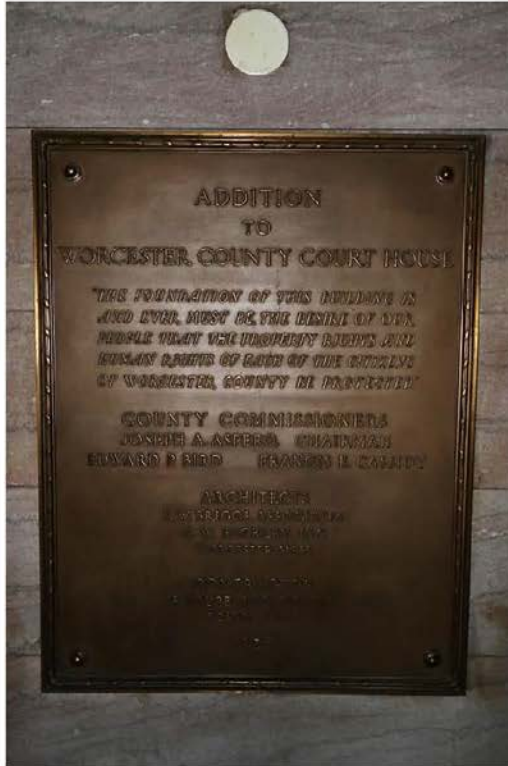


Figure 25: Plaque commemorating Courthouse addition



Figure 26: First floor entry, looking toward lobby



Figure 27: First floor entry, looking toward front entrance



Figure 28: Light fixture and ceiling detail in first floor entry





Figure 29: One of two staircases, first floor lobby



Figure 30: Main staircase, looking down toward first floor



Figure 31: Column detail



Figure 32: Column detail



Figure 33: Staircase and windows in the 1898 building's central cupola, viewed from the second floor.



Figure 34: Second floor lobby in the central cupola, looking toward main stairwell.



Figure 35: Molding detail, second floor lobby.

#### OTHER FIRST FLOOR SPACES



Figure 36: One of two large office rooms, northeast corner of first floor



Figure 37: Spiral stairwell located in the northwest section of the building.



Figure 38: Detail, spiral stairwell

SECOND FLOOR – NORTHWEST COURTROOM



Figure 39: Northwest Courtroom, looking toward judge's bench.



Figure 40: Northwest courtroom, looking toward entrance and stairwell to the third floor.



Figure 41: Stairwell detail

#### SECOND FLOOR – CENTRAL COURTROOM



Figure 42: Entrance to central courtroom.



Figure 43: Central courtroom with large skylight.



Figure 44: Entry doors into the central courtroom.



Figure 45: Molding detail.



SECOND FLOOR – SOUTHEAST COURTROOM



Figure 46: Southeast Courtroom



Figure 47: Southwest courtroom – wall paneling



Figure 48: Ceiling detail in the southeast courtroom.



Figure 49: Stairwell outside of the southeast courtroom.



Figure 50: Stairwell detail.

1878 ADDITION



Figure 51: Fireplace and shelving, 1878 addition.



Figure 52: 1878 addition to the south side of the building.



Figure 53: 1878 addition, view toward Main Street.

*Library (1878 Building)*



Figure 54: Library and skylights within the 1878 Addition.

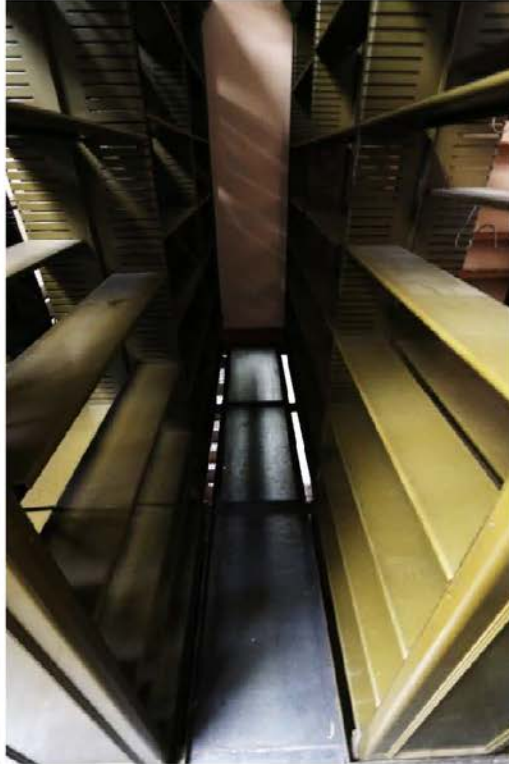


Figure 55: Glass floors allow passage of light to the first floor below.

THIRD FLOOR/ATTIC SPACES



Figure 56: File room on the third floor (attic).



Figure 57: File room molding detail



Figure 58: File room molding detail



Figure 59: Tile detail on third floor.



Figure 60: Railing detail

**1954 Addition**

**WEST ENTRANCE AND LOBBY**



Figure 61: West entrance and lobby



Figure 62: West entrance into 1954 building



HOLDING CELLS



Figure 63: Holding cell

COURTROOMS



Figure 64: Courtroom



Figure 65: Clocks in courtroom



Figure 66: View of Worcester Auditorium from courtroom



Figure 67: Judge's bench

The Commission stated that they would like to see more photos taken of the interior and exterior of the building and see photos taken of the landscaping surrounding the courthouse building.

## **2. Historic Preservation Plan**

Elizabeth Rairigh presented the following for the Historic Preservation Plan



August 3, 2016

# CITY OF WORCESTER HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM PLAN



## **IDENTIFICATION OF ISSUES AND NEEDS**

- Administration and Operation of the Commission
- Historic Building Demolition Delay Ordinance
- Local Historic Districts
- Preservation in Downtown



# GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

## **ISSUES AND NEEDS: ADMINISTRATION**

- Commission is staffed at less than one FTE currently.
- Staff lacks specific expertise in preservation and/or architecture.
- Public hearings have specific procedures that must be followed.
- Meeting materials and discussions with the applicant are not accessible to audience members.
- Verification that work is performed according to approvals.
- Lack of enforcement
- Application requirements should be updated; rules and regulations are outdated



## STAFFING LEVELS AND EXPERTISE

- Establish a full-time, preservation-focused position to staff the Commission.
- Alternatively, retain a preservation consultant on-call to provide technical assistance to the Commission.

	Staffing Levels
Newton	2 FTE
Brookline	2 FTE
Cambridge	6 FTE
Somerville	2 FTE
New Bedford	1 FTE
Providence, RI	1 FTE
Portland, ME	2 FTE

## **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

- A suggested outline for public hearings and suggested meeting procedures will be included. Every public hearing should operate the same way in order to maintain consistency and fairness. Each public hearing throughout the course of a Commission meeting must be opened and closed, or tabled, individually.
- The applicant should stand at the podium currently used by the public for public comment.
- The chair should note that any materials provided by the applicant at the meeting are public, and that the audience is invited to review them.
- All materials submitted by the applicant as part of the application should be scanned and made available on the large screen in the meeting room as necessary during discussion.
- A map of the City of Worcester should be made available in the room so the audience can identify where the project is taking place.

## **DECISION FOLLOW-UP AND REVIEW OF APPROVED WORK**

- The Commission should establish design guidelines for each individual local historic district.
- In local historic districts, a staff member from the Division of Planning and Regulatory Services should review completed work to ensure compliance with both the overall regulations of the district and any conditions that were placed on approval.
- Work with Building department to establish process to ensure that work is in compliance with Commission approval prior to closing out permits.

## **NON-COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT OF COMPLAINTS**

- Current ordinance allows for \$300 a day fine. Develop policy for how this fine should be used in cases of non-compliance.
- The current ordinance could be amended to include a provision prohibiting the issuance of a building permit if a building is demolished without undergoing Historical Commission review. The MHC sample bylaw uses this language: “If a building subject to this bylaw is demolished without first obtaining a demolition permit, no building permit shall be issued for a period of two years from the date of the demolition on the subject parcel of land or any adjoining parcels of land under common ownership and control unless the building permit is for the faithful restoration referred to above or unless otherwise agreed to by the Commission.”

# APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS / RULES AND REGULATIONS

- Applications for both the Demolition Delay Waiver and Local Historic District certificates should be updated with clearer requirements for submissions.
  - Photographs of the property and detailed descriptions of proposed work should be required, not recommended.
- Rules and Regulations should be updated.
- Commission can charge a fee for application review.
- Should encourage digital submission.

	Review charges
Amherst	\$50 for Commission, on top of town's demolition application fee
Greenfield	"costs of public notice should be borne by the applicant"
Newton	No fee
Canton	\$15 (part 1); \$175 (part 2)
New Bedford	Only regular demolition permit fee
Cambridge	No fee, but requires 12 copies of completed application
Somerville	No fee
Brookline	\$300.00 Cert. of Significance \$100.00 Cert. of Non-Significance



## **DEMOLITION DELAY**

# DEMOLITION DELAY

- Which structures are affected?
  - MACRIS (current)
  - Other specific list (WHC list, National Register, etc.)
  - All structures by age (e.g. – 50 years, 75 years, 100 years, etc.)
- What work constitutes demolition?
  - Any exterior work (current)
  - Specific definition of partial demolition
  - Total or substantial demolition only
- How long should the demolition period be?
  - 12 months (current)
  - Other duration

## **CURRENT DEFINITION OF DEMOLITION**

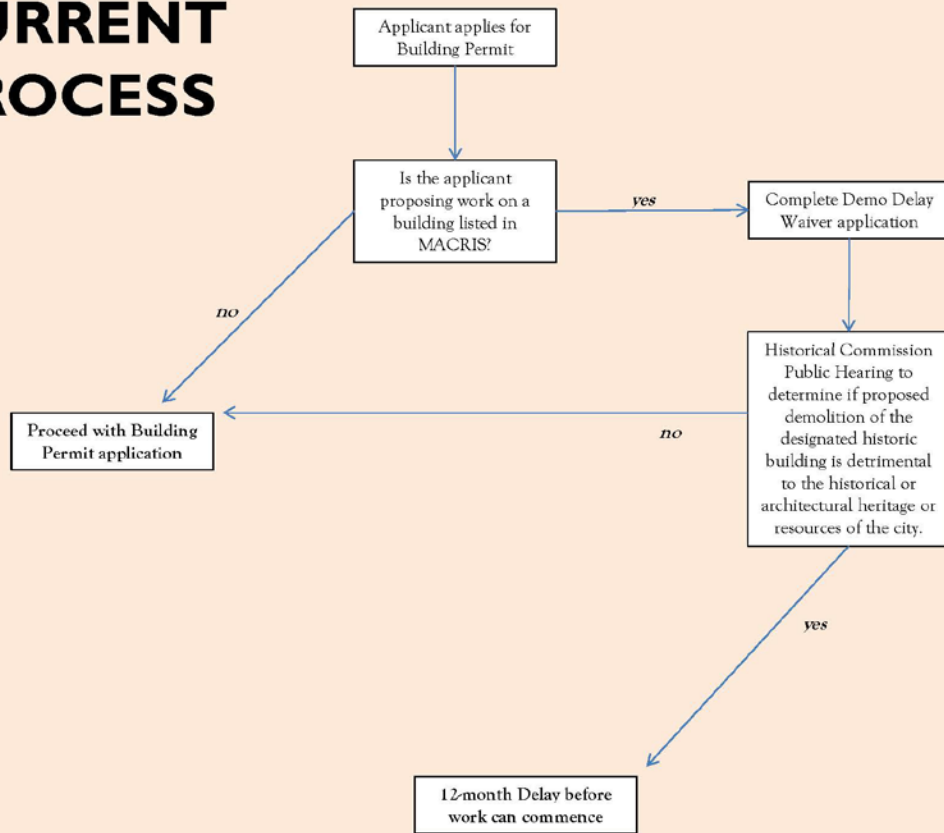
- “Any act of pulling down, destroying, removing or razing a building or any designated historic portion thereof, or commencing the work of total or substantial destruction with the intent of completing the same.”



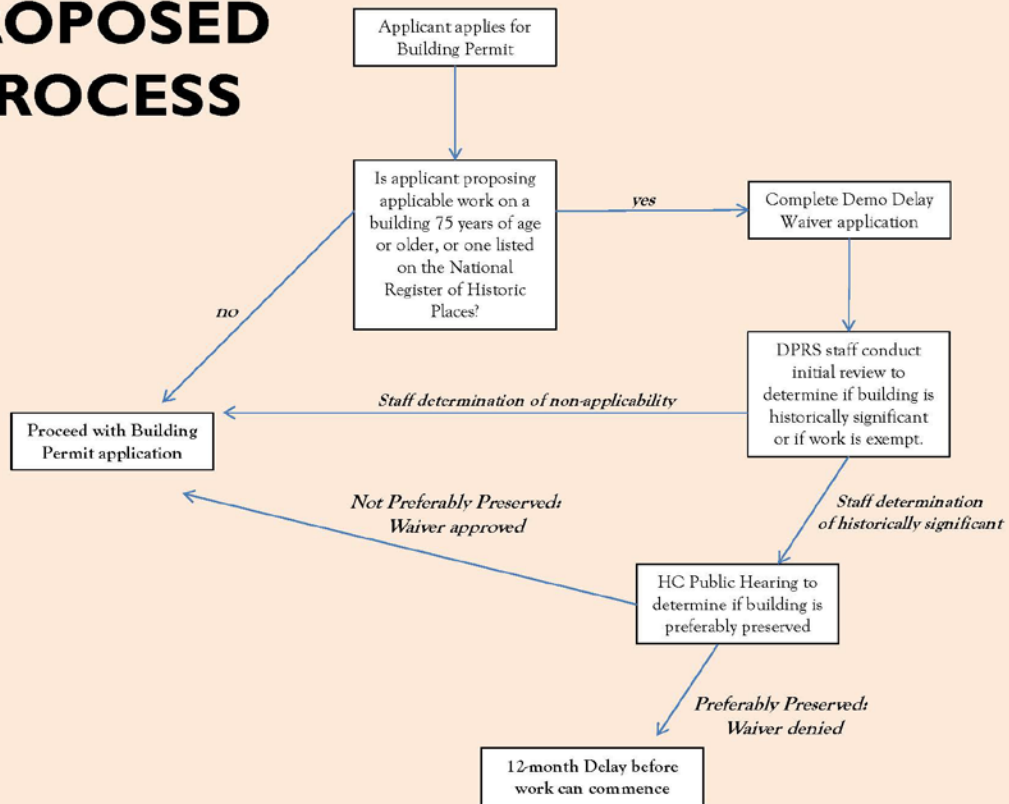
# SUGGESTED DEFINITION OF DEMOLITION

- The intentional act of substantially pulling down, destroying, defacing, removing or razing a building or structure or commencing the work of total, substantial or partial destruction with the intent of completing same. It includes:
  - Total demolition, dismantling or relocation of a structure.
  - The delay or withholding of maintenance on a building or structure in such a way as to cause or allow a significant loss of architectural integrity or structural stability.
  - Partial demolition, dismantling, pulling down, defacing or destruction of a structure involving any of the following:
    - Removal of 50% or more of an exterior wall visible from the right of way.
    - Changes to a roof (except minor repairs or re-shingling with in-kind materials), including altering a roof line, installing or removing dormers, changing roof pitch, or replacing slate, tile, metal or wood shake roofs with different materials.
    - Removal or addition of window or door openings.
    - Altering a building's key-character defining features, making it non-eligible to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

# CURRENT PROCESS



# PROPOSED PROCESS



## **DETERMINATIONS OF “HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT”**

- Any building within the City of Worcester which is in whole or in part 75 years or more old, or listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and which has been determined by the Commission or its designee to be significant based on any of the following criteria:
  - The Building is listed on, eligible for, within an area listed on, or is the subject of a pending application for, the National Register of Historic Places; or
  - The Building is importantly associated with one or more historic persons or events, or with the broad architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of the City or the Commonwealth; or
  - The Building is historically or architecturally important (in terms of period, style, method of building construction or association with a recognized architect or builder) either by itself or in the context of a group of buildings.

## **PREFERABLY PRESERVED**

- At the hearing the Commission shall determine whether the demolition of the historically significant building or structure will be detrimental to the historical, cultural, or architectural heritage or resources of the City and therefore be Preferably Preserved.

## **PREFERABLY PRESERVED**

- The Commission shall consider the following in making its decision:
  - The building or structure is of such interest or quality that it would meet National Register criteria for designation;
  - The building or structure is of such architectural or historic interest that its removal would be a determinant to the public interest;
  - Retention of the building or structure would help preserve and protect a historic place or area of historic interest in the city;
  - The reason for the proposed demolition and data supporting said reason, including data sufficient to establish any economic justification for demolition; and
  - The proposed reuse of the parcel on which the building or structure is located.

## DURATION OF DELAY PERIOD

- 106 Demolition Delay Ordinances in Massachusetts
- Most commonly used delay period is 6 months; second most common is 12 months.
- MHC recommends 12 months

	Delay Period
Cambridge	6 months
Somerville	9 months
Springfield	9 months
Newton	12 months
Brookline	12 months 18 months if Nat'l Register listed
New Bedford	12 months



# **LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS**



## **ISSUES – LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS**

- Awareness and education of residents in LHDs
- Composition and continuing education of the Commission
- Redundant Demolition Delay reviews
- Lack of design guidelines by which to evaluate projects
- Many significant neighborhoods or individual structures not protected as Local Historic Districts
- Establishing Single Building Local Historic Districts vs. Landmarks

## **AWARENESS AND EDUCATION**

- Yearly reminder letter or postcard to all property owners.
- Letter to new property owners upon purchase.
- Outreach to local realtors about LHDs.
- Identification in Assessor's property records.

## **CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR STAFF AND THE COMMISSION**

- Commission and staff engage in ongoing training
- “New Commissioner” training
- Develop library of resource materials
- Attend Statewide historic preservation conference

## **REDUNDANT DEMOLITIONAL DELAY REVIEWS**

- Specifically remove LHDs from the Demolition Delay ordinance.

## **LACK OF DESIGN GUIDELINES**

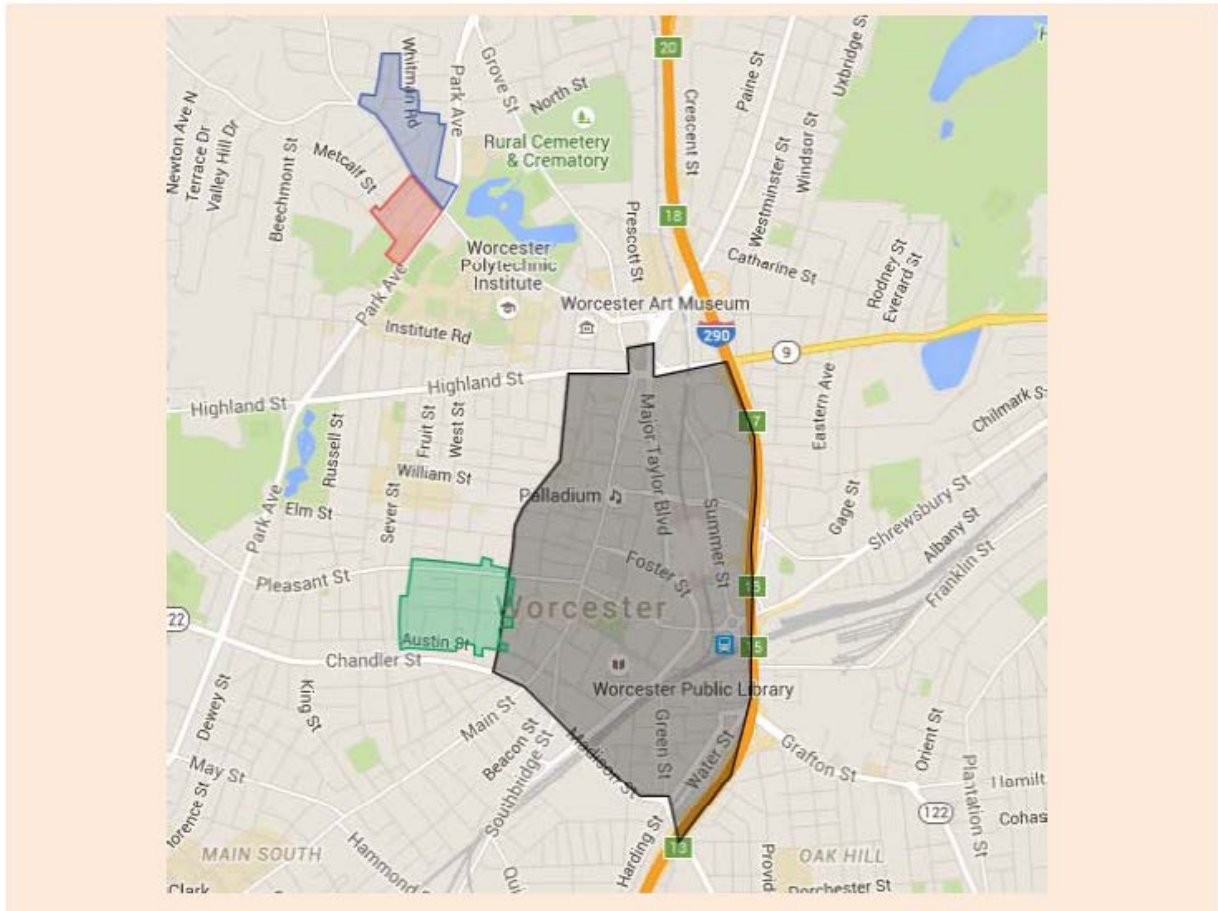
- Create specific design guidelines for each district.
- Base decisions on appropriateness on these guidelines uniformly.
- The Commission should develop a list of those items which do not require Commission approval but do require a certificate of non-applicability.

## **NEW LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS**

- Identify potential neighborhoods that are candidates for new Local Historic Districts and initiate study process for the creation of such districts.
- Significant individual buildings worthy of protection should be considered for designation as Single Building Local Historic Districts.



## **PRESERVATION OF UNDERUTILIZED HISTORIC DOWNTOWN BUILDINGS**





## **ISSUES AND NEEDS - DOWNTOWN**

- **Issues associated with Downtown Properties**
  - Identification and prioritization of historic resources
  - Limited protections for historic structures downtown
  - Costs and cost effectiveness of historic rehabilitation
  - Few developer incentives
  - Lack of recognition of importance of historic preservation

## **IDENTIFICATION AND PRIORITIZATION OF HISTORIC RESOURCES**

- Inventory properties currently not listed in MACRIS
- Update inventory forms for other properties
- Commission should consider identifying “Landmark” buildings and pursuing additional protections
- Determinations of eligibility for National Register
- Establish new NR districts in downtown

## **LIMITED PROTECTIONS**

- Expand demolition delay to cover all historic buildings
- Consider establishment of a Landmark buildings program or Individual Local Historic Districts
- Establish and promote preservation restrictions program
- Consider additional zoning changes that support retaining and reusing buildings.

## **COST OF REDEVELOPMENT AND REHABILITATION**

- Establish National Register Historic Districts to increase the number of properties eligible for historic tax credits.
- Explore feasibility of tax or valuation credit programs from other communities
  - Baltimore: Local Historic Tax Credit for Residential Properties
  - Illinois: Assessed Value “Freeze” on Approved Residential Projects
- Expand programs such as the façade improvement program and tailor to provide incentives for historically appropriate treatments.
- Voluntary preservation restrictions can confer tax advantages
  - WHC can hold preservation restrictions

## **EDUCATION, MARKETING AND PERCEPTION**

- Education for property owners and developers
  - Tax incentives (20% and 10% credits)
  - Economics of historic preservation.
    - Each property is unique. When you factor in the purchase price, demolition costs, and new construction figures, it is often comparable to rehab a property.
  - LEED initiatives incorporating historic preservation
  - City sponsored programs (façade improvement program)
- Annual report from Commission
- Establish local preservation awards program

## **NEXT STEPS**

- Finalize recommendations
- Final recommendations presented to Historical Commission on Sept 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Complete documentation by Sept 30<sup>th</sup>.

Ms. Rairigh stated that the next step is to finalize the report and present the findings to the Commission.

Mr. Rolle stated that at a meeting in September they will have a summary of the recommendations that will be reviewed by the Commission and then the plan will be finalized and then work will begin to implement the changes.

Upon a motion the Commission adjourned the meeting at 8:50 p.m.