

**OLD TOWN HALL  
3 BACON STREET  
WESTMINSTER, MASSACHUSETTS**



**COST-OUT STUDY**

**PREPARED FOR THE TOWN OF WESTMINSTER**

**BY**

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**FINAL REPORT – APRIL 2016**

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## PROJECT SCOPE

In December 2015, the Town of Westminster contracted with Agricola Corporation to prepare a cost-out study for alternative approaches to the Old Town Hall building and site. The purpose of the cost-out analysis was to assist the Board of Selectmen in options for preservation, rehabilitation, or demolition of the building by the town. The cost-out analysis also considered sale of the property to a private developer for rehabilitation under a Preservation Restriction.

The project team for the Cost-Out Analysis consisted of the following members:

- Gregory Farmer (lead), Historic Preservation Specialist and Principal, Agricola Corporation, Chicopee, MA
- Karle S. Packard, AIA, Red Hawk Studio Architects, Concord, MA
- D.G. Jones International, Inc. (cost estimators), Woburn, MA

The current study builds upon an April 2002 report by McGinley Hart & Associates LLP, Feasibility Study / Cost Analysis for Renovation & Expansion of Town Hall. The Town subsequently decided to vacate the historic building and erect a new Town Hall on a nearby site. The Old Town Hall was structurally stabilized, but no other improvements were undertaken.

In 2007, the Town Hall Reuse Committee reviewed a single proposal received in response to a town RFP for reuse of the Old Town Hall and determined the response to be inadequate. The Committee recommended that the building be retained for town use or sold with a preservation restriction, subject to a new Request for Proposals.

Several incremental reports and actions since that time are on file at Town Hall:

- Report of the Old Town Hall Reuse Committee to the Westminster Selectmen (Sept. 2011)
- Analysis of Asbestos-Containing Materials prepared by SanAir Technologies Laboratory for A&E Environmental, Inc. (June 2013)
- Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Westminster Village – Academy Hill Historic District (April 2014)
- Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment (Brownfields questionnaire, December 2015)

The authors of the current Cost-Out Analysis are grateful to the Westminster Board of Selectmen, the Westminster Historical Commission, and Town Planner Stephen Wallace for providing access to building and to the related studies and documentation.

The concepts and cost estimates provided in this report represent the professional opinion of the consultants based on information available as of March 2016. Changes in the condition of the building and changes in the proposed treatment may result in significant adjustments to the projected budget.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

Westminster's Old Town Hall was erected in 1839 after disestablishment of the Congregational Church in Massachusetts made it politically advisable to remove town meetings and events from the meetinghouse. The Town Hall was designed as a two-story wood-frame building with Greek Revival detailing and a primary entrance on the gable end facing west.

In 1885, the building was physically jacked up and a new brick story was added below the original first floor. The building remained in regular use as offices and meeting space until 2006 when it was replaced by a new Town Hall. Structural wood and steel supports were added to the building on the recommendation of John Wathne, P.E. (Structures North report, 2002). Otherwise, the building has been left mostly unattended.

The Old Town Hall is a contributing structure in the Westminster Village – Academy Hill Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2014.

Appendix C attached to this report includes photographs of existing conditions at the Old Town Hall as of January 2016. The photographs provide a point of reference for monitoring any deterioration or damage to the building. The photos also serve to illustrate the historical and architectural significance of the Old Town Hall and the potential for adaptive reuse.

## OPTIONS FOR PRESERVATION, REUSE, OR DEMOLITION

As part of the cost-out study, the consultants were asked to explore the feasibility of the following options for the Old Town Hall:

1. Sell for \$1 with a deed restriction requiring the building's preservation.
2. Tear down the building and use the land for a parking lot and/or pocket park.
3. Properly mothball the building and find a use/buyer at a later date.
4. Rehabilitate the building for use as senior housing. (*Per decision by the Board of Selectmen March 14, 2016, this option was removed from consideration.*)
5. Rehabilitate the building for use as office space and then sell the building. (*Per decision by the Board of Selectmen February 22, 2016, this option removed from consideration.*)
6. Rehabilitate the building for use as a community center per the Old Town Hall Reuse Committee's March 2015 report.

These options can be separated into Non-rehabilitation scenarios (sell with a deed restriction, demolish the building, and mothball the building) and Rehabilitation scenarios (senior housing, commercial office space, and community center). Any of the Rehabilitation Scenarios would require bringing the entire building up to current codes, including the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board regulations, the Building Code, and the Plumbing Code.

### **1. Sell the Building with a Deed Restriction to Ensure Its Preservation and Reuse**

There would be no hard construction costs with this option, but there would be administrative, sales, and legal costs.

### **2. Demolish the Building and Prepare the Site for Reuse**

The building would be dismantled and the materials disposed of. The foundation shall be removed and the excavation filled, loamed, and seeded. No site development work for parking spaces or other uses are included in the feasibility study.

A certain amount of asbestos containing material identification and abatement has been carried out. Any remaining asbestos containing material should be removed by a licensed abatement contractor. Once this is done, the rest of the building can be dismantled and disposed as ordinary construction waste. Many of these materials, including concrete, porcelain fixtures, tile, lumber, metals, masonry, and others, can be recycled. Wood components coated with lead based paint can be disposed with other materials<sup>1,2</sup>.

### **3. Mothball the Building in Anticipation of Future Funding and Reuse**

"Mothballing" the building would entail performing work needed to prevent deterioration of the building fabric over an extended period of time, say five years, during which time the building would be unoccupied. A more extended period of time, say greater than five years, would necessitate repeating inspections and repeating some of the work.

A priority would be repainting the exterior, which is showing signs of peeling and paint deterioration which will allow siding and trim to get wet and decay. All exterior surfaces should be scraped and repainted. All existing paint shall be assumed to be lead-based and required precautions taken.

The asphalt roof shingles do not appear to need replacement at this time. They appear to be in good condition without cupping, curling, breakage, or loss of aggregate. They should be inspected regularly and may need replacement in 5 to 10 years.

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<sup>1</sup> US EPA. 1993. Applicability of RCRA disposal requirements to lead-based paint abatement wastes. Final Report. EPA 747-R-93-006 Technical Programs Branch, Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics. March 1993. The US EPA has stated that solid architectural components coated with LBP are less likely to be hazardous because of the small ratio of lead paint to total waste mass.

<sup>2</sup> US Dept. of the Army. US Army Environmental Hygiene Agency. Interim Final Report. Lead-based paint contaminated debris waste characterization study No. 27-26-JK44-92. May 1993. The US Army conducted a study which concluded that whole-building demolition debris is not likely to exceed the toxicity characteristic standard for lead if it is handled as a single, whole waste stream and disposed of all together. Whole-building demolition debris is therefore considered a non-hazardous waste with regard to lead. No sampling/analysis of painted components for lead is required for disposal as non-hazardous waste.

At the time of our observation, all window glass appeared to be intact. Window glazing putty should be inspected and scraped off and replaced where cracked and missing. Protective screens should be installed to deter vandalism.

Several inspections of the crawlspace beneath the building have observed signs of dampness<sup>3</sup>. This dampness may be related to poor drainage around the foundation and blocked ventilation<sup>4</sup>. This dampness has apparently affected several of the existing spaces on the first floor. To prevent further damage from mold and decay remedial steps should be taken. These would include regrading the perimeter of the building and installing louvers in the masonry openings in the foundation wall.

The interiors of buildings that are unheated for several years deteriorate, typically with cracked and flaking paint and cracking plaster. This is caused during warm spells, especially in the winter, when warm moist air comes into contact with cold material surfaces. Condensation forms, often with water dripping off overhead beams and projections. The remedy for this is generally to maintain an indoor temperature that is higher than the dew point in the winter. The existing unit heaters are no longer functional. Electric baseboard heating or ceiling mounted electric infrared heaters should be installed and set at a low thermostat setting. This will require reactivating the electrical service.

The brick masonry at first floor level exterior walls is somewhat deteriorated, especially near the ground, but appears sound enough to last for 5 years without severe damage. At that point cleaning, repair, and repointing should be considered.

It is assumed that all plumbing has been shut-off and drained.

#### **4. Rehabilitate the Old Town Hall as Senior Housing**

The first and second floors can accommodate four (4) one-bedroom units each and the third floor attic level can accommodate two (2) units for a total of 10 one-bedroom units. For the purposes of the building code, the use group is Residential R-2.

Housing units and common spaces in the Old Town Hall building do not have to be handicapped accessible. Any building previously occupied for any purpose, which is converted, renovated, reconstructed, altered or remodeled for residential use after the effective date of the regulations (2006) is exempt from providing Group 1 Dwelling Units (521 CMR 9.2.1). The requirement for Group 2 units applies to renovation and reuse of dwelling units, not buildings previously in other uses (521 CMR 9.2.2), and to 5% of rental units in multiple dwellings containing over 20 units (521 CMR 9.4). Public use and common use spaces of multiple dwellings in existing buildings consisting of less than 12 units do not have to be made accessible

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<sup>3</sup> McGinley Hart & Associates LLP *Feasibility Study/Cost Analysis - Renovation & Expansion of Town Hall*, April 2002; report by Structures North Consulting Engineers, Inc.

<sup>4</sup> Mass. Dept. of Public Health - Center for Environmental Health - Emergency Response/Indoor Air Quality Program, *Indoor Air Quality Report*, November 2005; p. 9.

(521 CMR 10.1). For these reasons an elevator is not required by regulation for this project, however it may be desirable to provide one as an amenity for the residents.

In addition to one bathroom group for each apartment the Plumbing Code requires one washing machine per 20 apartments or fraction thereof for housing for the elderly. We have provided one washing machine, one dryer, and a laundry sink at the 1st and 2nd floors. The Westminster zoning bylaw requires one (1) parking space per apartment for housing for the elderly.

Use of the third floor attic level for human occupancy requiring a live load capacity greater than the 20 pounds per square foot (psf) certified by the structural engineer would require structural reinforcement (see Structures North Consulting Engineers letter dated May 20, 2002). Use of that level for apartments is a Residential occupancy requiring a live load capacity of 40 psf. Discussing this with SNCE we were able to determine that reinforcement of the existing trusses could probably satisfy that capacity.

Per decision by the Board of Selectmen March 14, 2016, this option will not be pursued because the Town does not have the administrative capacity to manage the facility and it is more economically feasible for a private developer or local housing authority to develop it. A cost estimate for this option was not carried out.

## **5. Rehabilitate the Old Town Hall as Commercial Office Space**

Per decision by the Board of Selectmen February 22, 2016, this option will not be pursued, because it is more financially feasible for a private developer to undertake than for the Town to undertake.

By the definition of public building (521 CMR 5.00 and 521CMR 11.1) as a building where a service or product is offered to the public and into which a member of the public may enter including, but not limited to, doctors', dentists', and counseling offices, chiropractors', psychologists' and psychiatrists' offices, lawyers', and accountants' offices, insurance companies, veterinarians, realtors, travel agents, as well as city and town halls and facilities, re-use as commercial offices would require providing handicapped accessibility throughout the building.

The area for office use at each floor would include 2,513 gsf which would hold 25 occupants @ 100gsf/per occupant. This would require the following plumbing fixtures at each floor: female: 1 toilet, 1 lavatory; male: 1 toilet, 1 lavatory; general: 1 drinking fountain, 1 service sink.

Per decision by the Board of Selectmen February 22, 2016, this option will not be pursued because the Town it is more economically feasible for a private developer to develop it. A cost estimate for this option was not carried out.

## 6. Rehabilitate the Old Town Hall as a Community Center

As a public building, renovation of the Old Town Hall into a Community Center would require making the entire building handicapped accessible (521 CMR 3.1 and 3.3). For the purposes of the building code, the use group is Assembly A-3.

Uses listed in the March 16, 2015 report of the Old Town Hall Needs Assessment Committee include the following:

- youth events
- large meetings
- exercise
- art exhibits
- art classes
- performing arts
- park
- exhibits
- private functions
- theater
- children's events
- library events
- information area
- dance classes
- space rental
- commercial kitchen
- town meeting

In order to accommodate these varied uses the proposed design has included a kitchen, a seating area with tables and chairs for 72 occupants, plus meeting rooms on the first floor, and renovation of the existing auditorium with seating for 154 occupants on the second floor. This scenario would require the following plumbing fixtures: at the first floor: female: 1 toilet, 1 lavatory; male: 1 toilet, 1 lavatory; general: 1 drinking fountain, 1 service sink. The area of the auditorium is 1,844 square feet, therefore the plumbing code requires fixtures for 264 occupants (@ 7sf/occupant) as follows: female: 3 toilets, 1 lavatory; male: 1 toilet, 1 urinal, 1 lavatory; general: 1 drinking fountain, 1 service sink.

The Westminster zoning bylaw requires 1 parking space for each 4 seats in an assembly use building, except that proposed amendments for the Commercial-III Downtown District state that the number of parking spaces required shall be determined by the appropriate permitting authority on a case by case basis. Within the setbacks proposed under the Commercial-III Downtown District amendments we have laid out 22 parking space including one barrier-free van space.

The International Mechanical Code 2009, Section 507 and NFPA 96 Standard for Ventilation Control and Fire Protection of Commercial Cooking Operations require that a non-residential kitchen in an Assembly occupancy with cooking appliances (stoves, ovens, etc.) be provided with a Type 1 commercial exhaust hood with an integral fire suppression system and an updraft exhaust system.

Use of the third floor for human occupancy requiring a live load capacity greater than the 20 psf certified by the structural engineer would require structural reinforcement (see Structures North Consulting Engineers letter dated May 20, 2002). We have proposed use as a dance studio which is an Assembly occupancy requiring a live load capacity of 100 psf. Therefore a proposal to insert steel beams beneath the third floor structure is included in the design.

The projected cost estimates for each option are summarized below and presented in detail in Appendix E, attached to this report.

Appendix F attached to this report provides conceptual floor plans for three options:

- Demolition drawing A1.1 dated March 18, 2012 - Floor 1 and 2 Plans
- Demolition drawing A1.2 dated March 18, 2012 - Floor 3 Plan
- Mothballing drawing A1.2 dated March 18, 2012 - Floor 1 and 2 Plans
- Mothballing drawing A1.2 dated March 18, 2012 - Floor 3 Plan
- Community Center drawing A1.1 dated March 18, 2012 - Floor 1 and 2 Plans
- Community Center drawing A1.2 dated March 18, 2012 - Floor 3 Plan
- Community Center drawing L1.0 dated March 18, 2012 - Site Plan

**TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF PROJECTED PROJECT COSTS**

(Please refer to Appendix E – Conceptual Cost Estimate, Update #2)

	OPT: Demolition	OPT: Mothball*	OPT: Comm. Ctr.
Construction (Bldg.)	85,721	95,897	2,107,634
Construction (Site)	99,474	30,242	323,990
SUB: Hard Costs	\$185,195	\$126,139	\$2,431,624
Gen'l Cond's, Permits, etc.	85,528	58,254	1,148,394
<b>TOTAL CONSTR. CONTRACT</b>	<b>\$270,723</b>	<b>\$184,393</b>	<b>\$3,580,018</b>
Construction Contingency (5.5-7.0%)	18,951	12,908	250,600
Architectural & Engineering	15,000	20,000	393,062
SUB: Soft Costs	\$33,951	\$32,908	\$643,662
<b>TOTAL PROJECT COST</b>	<b>\$304,674</b>	<b>\$217,301</b>	<b>\$4,223,680</b>

\* The goal of “mothballing” the building is to stabilize the structure and protect it from major deterioration for a period of up to five years. The building will require a minimal level of heating during that period. At an estimated rate of \$0.12 per kilowatt/hour, the cost of minimal heat in the 11,000 sq. ft. building would be approximately \$398 per month or \$1,990 per year, based on a heating period of five months.

### PROJECT PHASING – COMMUNITY CENTER

The development of a Community Center in the Old Town Hall could be phased according to the availability of funding. However, phasing the project would incur additional design costs, additional general construction costs (temporary barriers, modification of previously installed heating and fire suppression systems), and specific construction costs related to the final fit-out of each floor. In addition, construction costs can be expected to escalate at a rate of 5% per year.

Total rehabilitation of the building as a Community Center in a single phase design and construction project is estimated at a total cost of \$4,223,680 (\$380 per sq. ft.) as outlined above and detailed in the attached cost estimates (Appendix E).

The project scope could be reduced by leaving the third floor unfinished and closed to any use. The cost of interior demolition on the third floor, structural reinforcement, plumbing fixtures, new stairs, and new interior partitions and finishes on the third floor would be deferred to a later phase. The total project cost for two floors, leaving the third floor closed off and unfinished, is estimated at \$3,691,670 (\$455 per sq. ft.).

The scope could be further reduced by leaving both the second and third floors unfinished and closed to any use. The cost of an elevator would be deferred to a later stage as would the cost of improvements and finishes on the two upper floors. The total project cost for the first floor only, leaving the second and third floors closed off and unfinished, is estimated at \$2,685,088 (\$713 per sq. ft.).

**TABLE 2: COMMUNITY CENTER WITH REDUCED SCOPE OF WORK**

	Comm. Ctr.: All three floors	Comm. Ctr.: Fl. 1 & 2 only*	Comm. Ctr.: Fl. 1 only**
Construction (Bldg.)	\$2,107,634	\$1,997,838	\$1,519,224
Construction (Site)	323,990	323,990	323,990
SUB: Hard Costs	\$2,431,624	\$2,321,828	\$1,843,214
Gen'l Cond's, Permits, etc.	1,148,394	778,004	389,002
<b>TOTAL CONSTR. CONTRACT</b>	<b>\$3,580,018</b>	<b>\$3,099,832</b>	<b>\$2,232,216</b>
Construction Contingency (5.5-7.0%)	250,600	216,988	156,255
Architectural & Engineering	393,062	374,850	296,617
SUB: Soft Costs	\$643,662	\$591,838	\$452,872
<b>TOTAL PROJECT COST</b>	<b>\$4,223,680</b>	<b>\$3,691,670</b>	<b>\$2,685,088</b>

\*The project scope for the use of Floors 1 & 2 only includes all the basic construction costs, including construction of the elevator addition, but deducts the following third floor construction costs:

- demolition (\$2,260)
- structural reinforcement (\$5,600)
- finish plumbing (\$5,250)
- new stair construction to 3<sup>rd</sup> fl. (\$24,326)
- toilet partitions (\$2,837)
- all finishes (\$69,523)

\*\*The project scope for use of the First Floor only includes all the basic construction costs, but deducts the following:

- all third floor costs as detailed in the note above (\$109,796)

- construction of the elevator shaft (\$189,770) and elevator addition (\$129,141)
- new stair construction to 2<sup>nd</sup> fl. (\$36,489)
- demolition on 2<sup>nd</sup> fl. (\$9,309)
- new partitions on 2<sup>nd</sup> fl. (\$3,117)
- extension of the stage platform (\$2,557)
- wheelchair lift to the stage platform (\$22,738)
- toilet partitions (\$5,150)
- finish plumbing (\$7,325)
- all 2<sup>nd</sup> fl. finishes (\$73,017)

## POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

Stabilization, preservation, and rehabilitation of Westminster's Old Town could qualify for financial assistance from a range of sources including matching grants and tax incentives. The most relevant sources are listed below.

The *Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund* (MPPF) is a 50% matching grant program administered by the Massachusetts Historical Commission. The annual round of applications offers Pre-Development Grants (up to \$30,000 per project) for feasibility studies, architectural plans and specification, and related pre-construction costs. The program also offers Development Grants (up to \$100,000 per project) for capital repairs and improvements. Municipalities and nonprofit organizations are the only eligible applicants. The building must be listed on the State or National Register of Historic Places.

The *State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit* (SHRTC) is a tax incentive program that offers a state tax credit of up to 20% of qualified rehabilitation expenses for the substantial rehabilitation of income-producing properties that are listed on or eligible for listing on the State Register of Historic Places. The tax credit is available to private developers and to certain nonprofit organizations and may be transferable under certain conditions. Projects must be certified for compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. The Massachusetts Historical Commission accepts applications on three deadlines per year – January 15, April 30, and August 31.

The *Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Program* offers a federal tax credit equal to 20% of qualified rehabilitation expenses for the substantial rehabilitation of income-producing properties that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The tax credit is available to private developers and the credit may be syndicated. Projects must be certified for compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. Applications are accepted at the Massachusetts Historical Commission on a rolling basis throughout the year and are subject to review by both the Mass. Historical Commission and the National Park Service.

The *Community Preservation Act* (CPA) is a statewide statute that allows Massachusetts communities to create a pool of funding for open space, historic preservation, affordable housing, and outdoor recreational. More than 160 cities and towns in Massachusetts have adopted the Community Preservation Act, generating funding through a property tax surcharge of 1-3%. The Town of Westminster has not moved to adopt the Community Preservation Act, but it remains a possible funding source for the future.

## **SUMMARY**

The 1839 Old Town Hall in Westminster has a high level of historic and architectural significance for the community. Despite almost a decade of minimal maintenance, the building is remarkably sound and is a good candidate for adaptive reuse either by the town or by a private developer.

The location of the Old Town Hall is a large corner parcel located just north of the town's main commercial corridor. The site is located between the Town Library and the Congregational Church and serves as a buffer between the adjacent residential neighborhood and the commercial center.

The conceptual plans and cost-out analysis provided in this report are intended to facilitate the town-wide discussion regarding the future of the Old Town Hall. While the eventual decision will weigh political, economic, social, and cultural factors, the fate of the historic building rests in the hands of the townspeople.