



**TOWN OF ACTON  
DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

Review Memorandum: 149 Central Street  
November 07, 2024

DRB Members in attendance: Peter Darlow, (Chair), Holly Ben-Joseph, Thomas Doolittle, and Richard Keleher

Proponent representative in attendance:

Ulrika Shepardson, ITC Business Manager  
Jason Bowers, Annum Architects Associate Principal

Documents reviewed:

Digital Presentation:  
Infant Toddler Children's Center  
Farmhouse + Schoolhouse Improvements  
11.07.2024 version

Slides consist of historic photos of the Hapgood Farmhouse, proposed floor plans, site scape, and exterior elevation images, renderings of the updated interior arrival and administrative spaces, and photos of current interior condition.

The Infant Toddler Children's Center has been located at 149 Central Street for more than 25 years. The ITC is currently operating out of its "Schoolhouse" addition to the rear of the original farmhouse. The farmhouse is presently not in use due to structural concerns within the interior. Though the farmhouse is not within the West Acton Historic District it is listed on the Cultural Resource List. The ITC is planning a series of renovations to the property. The first phase focuses on rehabilitating the farmhouse to allow for its use for administrative offices as well as to provide a public facing primary entrance for the Center.

The primary street facing elevation of the house and ell wing has been modified over the years with the removal of the front porches and a secondary entrance vestibule that was appended to the ell, as well as the removal of several original double hung windows, replaced by a bay window. The original wood clapboard siding has been covered over with vinyl siding, the pair of chimneys have been lowered and modified, and the prominent trees and landscaping that once framed the farmhouse have been removed.

The Center's administration appreciates the importance of the farmhouse history to the town of Acton. As a significant part of the renovation, it is proposed to restore elements of the farmhouse exterior including the reconstruction of the ornate front porch, replacement of a majority of the windows, and repairs made to the building envelope including removal of the vinyl siding to be replaced by wood siding. The center has applied for CPC funds to augment the funding needed to accomplish the farmhouse exterior historic restoration.

The Center will embrace the significance of the farmhouse by establishing a new primary entrance to the school that passes through the ell of the farmhouse. The new entrance will be approached via a newly introduced landscaped walk that gently rises up the bluff upon which the house is positioned. Appropriately, the interior of the two-story house will be made fully accessible including modifications as needed to level the floors and widen certain corridors, while still retaining important elements of the farmhouse such as the original stairway and baluster. A two-level lift will be positioned on the exterior of the farmhouse at the rear elevation to avoid a significant intervention of the farmhouse interior.

The DRB offer the following observations concerning the proposal for 149 Central Street:

- DRB members applaud the owners of the ITC for their careful and thoughtful considerations leading up to the proposed rehabilitation of the historic farmhouse to give this structure an important and appropriate refreshed use.
- The reconstruction of the front porch will restore the farmhouse public facing presence. Understanding budget constraints that will potentially limit how much of the porch is restored in an upcoming first phase, the DRB nevertheless encourages the ITC to ultimately pursue a complete reconstruction of the porch across the full front face of the farmhouse including across the ell wing where the new primary entrance will be located.
- Due to budget constraints not all windows are to be replaced in the upcoming first phase. The front facing bay window on the ell that replaced three original double hung windows is shown to remain. The visual of this bay window remaining is incongruous with the balance of the well thought out farmhouse restoration. The DRB understands the limited budget available to the proponents. Nevertheless, board members encourage replacement of the bay window with double hung windows as a part of a second phase.
- The relocation of the main entrance for the school to the ell wing of the farmhouse involves site scaping the front yard to accommodate a low slope walkway up the existing bluff. To avoid visual confusion as to where the primary entrance is located, the proponents intend to remove the original granite steps and walk. DRB members, though disappointed to see the granite steps removed, understand the reasoning and are pleased with the thoughtful walk to the front entrance that allows for universal access.
- The proposed lift to be located exterior of the rear of the farmhouse will be positioned where an existing first floor door and a second-floor window are presently located. Placement as proposed limits the extent of change to this facade. The proponents are discussing options for how to enclose the lift. DRB members prefer to see an enclosure that is not wrapped in a matching clapboard and corner board aesthetic with the house. Rather a glazed metal enclosure is encouraged to allow for historic clarity that the lift is not a part of the original farmhouse.

Respectfully submitted,  
Peter Darlow for the DRB