

Riverdale Park Town Hall and Community Youth Center Design Principles and Program

(September 14, 2012)

The renewed interest in strengthening our downtowns and creating places where residents can access and contribute to their government follows a significant period of mass-produced, single-use municipal buildings. This interest has inspired cities and towns to become more diverse in culture and function, and it demands public spaces that encourage pedestrian traffic and recreation. These civic buildings and spaces reflect their community's unique composition, history, environment and values. As such, the architectural and landscape design of the municipal building now often develops in response to the people and community it will serve.

Along with the increasing emphasis on community involvement and public use are logistical reasons that require the renovation of existing facilities. New advances in technology, many of which did not exist a decade ago, for record and data processing often demand new infrastructure. The growing amount of information available online has changed the public's need to visit the town hall just to pay a bill or for information. Likewise, large spaces for single town hall government uses only, do not promote or sustain community use or investment in civic buildings. Finally, uninspiring places result in lackluster public interest and participation in community affairs. Buildings may simply become outdated aesthetically or programmatically due to changes in town demographics, population, and organization of services. The renovation and addition to the Riverdale Park Town Hall and Community Youth Center are intended to address these issues and to help inspire greater community participation in its civic affairs.

DESIGN RULES:

Imbued in the development of a program and design for the renovation and addition to the Riverdale Town Hall and Community Youth Center are certain Principles that should be employed throughout the design process that fulfill the goals and aspirations of the greater community. These Principles were generated through questionnaires and discussions with the general public, Riverdale Park Town Staff and the Mayor and Riverdale Park Town Council. These Principles include the following:

- **The building must promote a sense of Civic Pride within the Riverdale Park community.** This building should express the aspirations of the Riverdale Park community. As one person put it in one of the many discussions, “I want a building that we can show to guests.” It is important that the building be attractive, elegant and beautiful, and promotes a sense of durability and permanence. The building should assert a design that does not appear dated over time. Ultimately, the Town Hall design must clearly serve the public.
- **The building must be highly flexible in its community uses.** Because the Riverdale Park Town Council only meets as many as two times each month and rarely do these meetings attract more than a couple dozen visitors from the greater community, it is inefficient to dedicate a single large space with a permanent dais to only one use. Although the large public seating area of the current Council Chambers is sometimes

used by community organizations, it is difficult at best to accommodate the many diverse activities and organizations that urgently need community space. Therefore, all future lobby spaces, meeting spaces and classrooms should be designed in a way to maximize flexibility of use in the days and evenings. These spaces should also be near storage areas to maximize a diverse set of public uses.

- **The building must be socially, economically and environmentally sustainable.** As stewards of our community, the region, and the world, Riverdale Park envisions a Town Hall and Community Youth Center that maximizes our economic resources while minimizing its footprint on the environment. As an educating opportunity for the community, this building should incorporate as many integrated sustainable elements and systems as possible. This may include recycled or recyclable materials, re-use of gray water and the use of bio-retention designs, maximization of natural day lighting, geo-thermal heating and cooling, low flow fixtures, solar hot water heaters and/or photovoltaic panels to name a few. Likewise, incorporation of a mixture of small and large multi-functional spaces should be realized to maximize office and public use all hours of the day and evening. Finally, the building must increase the efficiency and even productivity of the space with a logical layout that is sensible to veteran city employees or first time visitors.
- **The building must be open and inviting to all.** The building must be welcoming to the community and have a strong connection from inside to out. People should have the ability to look into the events of Town government and to look out from within. This building should also be multi-cultural to the greatest extent possible. The use of public art should be incorporated into the architectural design at an early stage of the design process to strengthen its relationship to the many diverse and talented members of the community.

The existing building has a total footprint of 5,800 square feet with an additional 700 square feet of lot coverage allowed through previous building permits that limit lot coverage to 67% of the total site. In order to increase this lot coverage on the constrained site, additional variances for lot coverage will be required.

The entire building will provide wireless internet connections and will have flexible state of the art audio and visual systems in all public meeting rooms, classrooms and offices. Storage spaces will be strategically located throughout the building to support the offices and the individual meeting rooms and classrooms. Safety and security of Town Staff will also be important to the design of the building. Although visitors should always feel most welcome, their access to the Staff and Council offices should be controlled.

PROPOSED PROGRAM:

The following program elements have been suggested through several meetings with Town Staff, the Mayor, Council and the public. Certainly budget will play an important role in the final

determination and extent of renovation and additions to the existing building, but the following program elements and spaces have been requested and should be considered.

- **Large Meeting and Assembly Space:** **2,000 sqft.**
 Used for large meetings, special Council meetings with a movable dais, presentations, educational seminars, performances, dances, etc. This space should also have movable partitions to allow it to be subdivided into smaller meeting rooms.
- **Kitchenette adjacent to the large Meeting Space:** **200 sqft.**
 Will include a refrigerator, industrial size sink and counter space that may accommodate a microwave oven and large coffee maker, etc. This space will also accommodate movable, catering food warming trays for private or community events. This space is not intended to be a full service kitchen.
- **Council Chambers/Large Conference Room:** **800 sqft.**
 Space will have room for a movable dais, staff desks, and seating for as many as 20 guests.
- **Town Council Office:** **200 sqft.**
 Room will have a central round small conference table, a work cubical and additional seating space.
- **Audio/Visual Control Room:** **175 sqft.**
 Space for controlling audio/visual equipment and systems for the Council Chambers, Large Assembly Space, and classrooms.
- **Mayor's Office:** **175 sqft.**
 Room for a desk, side table and additional seating for meetings. This office will be near or adjacent to the Town Council Office.
- **(2) Classrooms:** **300 sqft. Ea.**
 These rooms should have several 2' x 6' movable desks that can be reconfigured into student desk pairs filling the room, display tables along the edge of the room, or a large table in the middle. Each room should also have cabinets with countertop and sink along one wall and chalkboards/whiteboards.
- **Public and Meeting Room Storage:** **500 sqft.**
 Space for storage of tables, chairs and removable dais. Individual lockable space for storage of miscellaneous equipment and materials for community groups is also required.
- **Lobby/Display Space:** **1,000 sqft.**
 Inviting space for greeting of guests, community information displays or kiosks, informal meetings, social events, and display of permanent and visiting art.
- **Public Bathrooms:** **150 sqft. Ea.**
 Room for a minimum of 4 stalls and 2 sinks in each bathroom.
- **(5) Town Staff Offices:** **125-150 sqft. Ea.**
 Office space for Town Administrator, Accountant, Finance/Human Resource Director, and additional Administrator. All office spaces should have access to direct or indirect natural light.
- **Code Enforcement Offices:** **300 sqft.**

Cubical spaces for 3 people within this room with cabinets and tables for laying out drawings.

• Reception/Office Assistant:	150 sqft.
An open area where a person will sit at a desk where she/he will be able to receive visitors to the Town offices, answer visitor questions, and manage and control the public circulation into and through the building. Visitor seating should be located adjacent to this space.	
• (2) Office Assistants:	150 sqft. Ea.
Open office area adjacency to the Reception area and the Town Administrator.	
• Small Conference Room:	150 sqft.
Space for a cabinets and countertop on one wall and room for a round conference table in the middle.	
• Office Lunch Room:	150 sqft.
Room should include a refrigerator, cabinets and countertop, sink, microwave, coffee machine and dishwasher.	
• Office Bathrooms:	100 sqft. Ea.
Toilet, sink and countertop for each room plus lockable small lockers for staff storage along one wall.	
• Exercise Room :	150 sqft.
2 cardiovascular machines and a TV with headsets for viewing entertainment shows or meetings in Assembly rooms.	
• Safe/Finances Room:	75 sqft.
Secure room for the Town safe and for writing checks, etc.	
• Archives:	300 sqft.
Archive storage for files and flat files, drawings.	
• IT Room:	75 sqft.
Control room for the building computer system and audio/visual equipment.	
• Office Storage:	250 sqft.
Individual storage areas are required for supplies, chairs, business files, etc. Room will be needed for a table to review drawings and files. A portion of this storage area can be incorporated into, or near the reception and Office Assistant area and should include full height, sliding condensed file storage.	
• Printing Area and Storage:	150 sqft.
Needs to be incorporated into the Office area.	
• Mechanical Room:	250 sqft.
Central space for mechanical equipment for heating, cooling and plumbing and hot water storage.	
Total Square Feet:	9,400 sqft.
• Circulation (20% of Building Total):	1,900 sqft.
GRAND TOTAL PROPOSED SQUARE FOOTAGE:	11,300 sqft.

In addition to the Principles and Program listed above, the following comments were suggested within the public input process and should be integrated into the building program where possible.

- The exterior area adjacent to Queensbury Road should be well landscaped with spaces for seating and for informal meetings and gatherings. This area should also be well lit for pedestrians in the evenings.
- A signage plan should be developed for the entire site. The Police Station, Town Hall and Community Youth Center, and the Maintenance Building should all have their own prominent sign clearly identifying their building.
- Information on the history of Riverdale Park should be incorporated into the entry lobby space.
- Space for bicycle storage for the Code Enforcement office should be provided.
- A parking master plan for the site which could include the school parking lots should be created for this “Civic Center” area. This plan would include more daytime parking for the Town Hall Community Youth Center uses.
- Built-in projector screens and video cameras should be incorporated into all the meeting rooms.