



NARRATIVE IN SUPPORT OF A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

Adaptive Reuse of 44 North Street, Hingham, MA

INTRODUCTION

The proposed redevelopment of 44 North Street is fundamentally a preservation project. Its purpose is to preserve and rehabilitate one of Hingham's historically significant buildings while establishing a viable long-term use that will ensure its continued maintenance and stewardship.

The project combines the rehabilitation of the existing Federal-era building with a carefully designed restaurant addition. Throughout the design process, every decision was evaluated against a single objective: preserving the historic building while allowing it to remain an active and meaningful part of the community.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

44 North Street is an individually significant Federal-style building contributing to both the Hingham Local Historic District and the National Register Historic District. Its architectural character, prominent location, and long history make it an important part of Hingham's historic streetscape.

Originally constructed around 1810 and relocated from Baker's Island to North Street in 1817, the building has adapted to changing needs for more than two centuries while retaining the qualities that define its historic significance. This proposal continues that history through thoughtful adaptive reuse. The objective is not to recreate the past, but to preserve an important historic resource by ensuring its continued use.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The proposal preserves the building's character-defining historic features while removing later, non-contributing additions that diminish the clarity of the original structure and reduce its long-term resilience.

This approach restores the historic building as the primary architectural focus of the site while creating an appropriate location for a new addition that remains clearly subordinate to the original structure.

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PRESERVATION STRATEGY

The project has been designed to preserve both the appearance and character of the historic building.

Historic exterior materials and detailing will be repaired and rehabilitated wherever practical. Significant framing, masonry, and other original building elements will remain visible where appropriate, allowing the history of the building to continue to be experienced from within. Salvaged materials will be reused wherever practical as part of the completed project.

FLOODPLAIN RESILIENCY

The property's location within the FEMA AE Flood Zone became one of the primary influences on the design.

Rather than reconstructing within the existing floodplain, the proposal removes non-historic encroachments and replaces them with an elevated addition supported on open pile foundations. Compared to the existing condition, the project reduces floodplain obstruction, improves hydraulic performance, and provides greater long-term protection for the historic structure.

The floodplain strategy supports the broader preservation objective by improving the building's resilience while minimizing impacts to the site.

ACCESSIBILITY

Providing universal accessibility while preserving the historic character of the property was one of the project's greatest design challenges.

Numerous alternatives were studied before the final solution emerged. By eliminating the traditional basement level, coordinating finished floor elevations, and integrating circulation throughout the site, the project provides accessible entrances from both North Street and Station Street. This creates convenient access from the Town's primary public parking area while preserving the building's historic relationship with North Street.

Accessibility has been integrated into the architecture from the outset rather than added as a separate design element.

SCALE AND MASSING

Maintaining the visual prominence of the historic building remained a guiding principle throughout the design process.

Numerous alternatives were explored, including larger building footprints and a second-story addition. Although these schemes increased program area, they were ultimately rejected because they competed with the historic building and altered the established architectural hierarchy of the site.

The final design breaks the addition into a series of smaller interconnected forms that reflect the traditional pattern of incremental growth found throughout New England. The addition remains visually subordinate to the historic building while providing the space necessary for a successful restaurant.

ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

The addition has been designed to complement the historic building without replicating it.

Traditional New England forms, rooflines, proportions, materials, and detailing informed the design while allowing the addition to remain clearly identifiable as contemporary construction. The goal is compatibility, not imitation.

MODERN BUILDING SYSTEMS

Mechanical equipment has been located on the roof and screened to minimize its visibility from surrounding public ways, and service functions have been organized to reduce visual clutter. These elements support the operation of the restaurant while remaining subordinate to the historic building.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS

The project has been guided throughout by the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

Character-defining historic features are retained and preserved. The addition is clearly identifiable as contemporary construction while remaining compatible with the existing building in its scale, massing, materials, and architectural character. The proposal allows the building to meet current accessibility, life safety, and operational requirements while preserving its historic integrity.

CONCLUSION

The proposed redevelopment of 44 North Street preserves one of Hingham's important historic buildings while establishing a sustainable use that will support its long-term stewardship.

The project removes non-contributing additions, improves floodplain performance, provides universal accessibility, and introduces a carefully scaled addition that respects the architectural hierarchy of the site. Throughout the design process, alternatives were explored and refined to ensure that preservation remained the primary objective.

For more than two centuries, 44 North Street has adapted to meet the changing needs of the community while remaining an important part of Hingham's architectural identity. This proposal continues that history by preserving the building's character while ensuring that it remains an active and sustainable part of downtown Hingham for generations to come.

For these reasons, we respectfully request approval of the proposed Certificate of Appropriateness.

Respectfully submitted,

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