November 8, 2016

To the Williams Community

A Report and Recommendation from the Garfield House Building Committee.

Based upon extensive studies and analysis performed by a team of consultants and designers the committee would like to communicate the following conclusions and recommendation:

Structure & MEP:
Investigative probes into the existing building revealed a "plank framed house" supported in most areas by a stone rubble foundation. This type and age of construction does not lend itself well to the extensive modifications that are required to bring Garfield House into compliance with the current college (and building code) requirements of today's residence halls. The structural upgrades required to satisfy seismic requirements alone would be very extensive. Complete removal and replacement of the exterior wall cladding system would be required to meet building codes for new construction including insulation and air sealing. The main steep sloped slate roof and all the low slope roofing are at the end of their service lives and need to be replaced. The existing steel framed windows have single pane glazing, leak air and are beyond their serviceable life.

The mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems (MEP) are all in a similar condition and have reached the end of their useful life. New gas fired boilers have been installed recently but the systems of distribution and controls are seriously inadequate. Mechanical ventilation is non-existent and would need to be retrofitted into the existing structure at the sacrifice of precious space for ventilator fans, duct shafts and distribution lines. A full upgrade and replacement of the life safety systems would be required as well as replacement of all data and communication lines and equipment.

Accessibility:
The College's memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MAAB) requires that Garfield be brought into full compliance with accessibility codes. In many areas this would require re-framing existing floor structures and adding interior ramps. This also requires that an elevator be installed and that the main entrance to the building be brought into compliance by the addition of a ramp.

Energy:
The college has set the Energy Use Intensity (EUI) target for a new dorm building at 28 kbtu/sf/yr. Based on previous models built, an EUI of 36 kbtu/sf/yr has been estimated for the renovated building option. This represents a 28.5% increase from the new building EUI target and approximately 39% whole building energy increase from the

new construction option due to the difference in building area. A more efficient design of a forty-bed residence hall would only require 15,000 sq/ft versus the 19,000 sq/ft currently existing at Garfield.

An assessment of embodied carbon was also completed and a comparison of New versus Renovation revealed that the "New Building Option is resulting in a 4.5-year Total Carbon Payback". At that point the operational carbon in the Renovation scheme will cumulate to a higher level than the original outlay on Embodied Carbon in the New Build scheme.

Student Quality of Life:
The Williams Residential Sector Plan, completed in July 2013, describes Garfield House in surveys with students as the least desirable residence hall on campus. While it would be difficult to completely understand all the reasoning for this perception it is easy to see that small rooms, poor HVAC, leaky walls and windows, extremely poor paths of circulation and the lack of dedicated small lounge areas to gather all certainly played a major role.

Historical:
".....the facade is handsome, and an ornament to the street. The three public rooms on the ground floor are also handsome. Those are the only parts, I think, that are worth saving. As I told my companions as we walked the grim corridors upstairs, I have stayed in cheap motels that were nicer. The third floor is particularly awful, the rooms miniscule. The interiors of the more recently added brick staircase towers, lined with concrete block, might be acceptable for a prison, but not for the #1 liberal arts college. Students have to use them every day! Even though I'm an architectural historian and an ardent preservationist, I find it very hard to argue that we should go to the trouble and take the risks of trying to make it into a more acceptable dorm. It was originally, in 1850, a summerhouse for a single family. When the fraternity bought it in 1924, they turned it into the stockbroker Tudor house we see today, cladding the shingled exterior in stucco and half timbering. The frat would have housed perhaps 20 students. To make it work as a decent, 40-student, up-to-date dormitory is next to impossible. In the back, ground-floor room there is a nice, carved, wooden fireplace surround that possibly could be worked into a new building. It's surely part of the Tudor renovation. I don't believe anything remains of the 19th century interior. The original (?) staircase was cruelly ripped out of the center of the house when it was converted to a dorm in the 1970s, to make anonymous halls off of which one-person rooms open.
I believe we should go forward with a new building and spend our time trying to make that the best we possibly can."

EJ Johnson, Art Historian

Conclusion:
The committee felt that while many of the challenges that the existing structure presents could be solved during a renovation, that process would require the commitment of enormous resources just to solve them. Constrained by the existing structure's footprint, various floor elevations and extremely poor circulation paths, the resultant project would be less than successful in improving the quality of student life and meeting the current college standards for residence halls.

The recommendation of the committee therefore is for the construction of a new residence hall to replace Garfield that will respect the neighborhood, satisfy the energy goals of the college and transform the student experience from the least desirable residence hall on campus to a place where students will thrive and feel supported in their environment.

At the culmination of the six-week feasibility phase, the recommendation of a new dorm was a unanimous decision.

More detailed information and the final report prepared by SGA Architects can be found here:

https://app.e-builder.net/public/publicLanding.aspx?QS=fc4635c86e274b8c8b2b5996e2d7469f

Respectfully Submitted by Members of the Committee:

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