

Lyme Art Association Master Plan

This document assesses the needs of the Lyme Art Association in relation to the physical facility and property over the long term. Pressing structural concerns are considered alongside the Association's anticipated programmatic needs to develop a phased plan of improvements for the most efficient use of resources and efforts.



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Lyme Art Association Master Plan

Purpose

Today, in 2015, over one hundred years after its founding, the Lyme Art Association (LAA) continues to exhibit fine representational artwork, free to the public, in an historic building, specially designed to be a superb gallery space. The organization is the center of a thriving artistic community, offering top tier classes, gathering artists together and presenting fine art to the community in juried exhibitions. The building has served this purpose for more than 90 years, and is urgently in need of restoration. This document outlines the LAA's study and planning to align the restoration work that is so clearly needed with the Association's anticipated needs and plans to remain a vibrant and pertinent organization for the next 100 years. The outcome of this study is a series of logical and attainable phases scheduled over the next several years.

Background

Construction of the Existing Building

Founded in 1914 by nationally renowned artists who made Lyme and Old Lyme the seat of American Impressionism, the Lyme Art Association is the nation's oldest art association. For many years, the founding artists exhibited their work at the nearby Phoebe Griffin Noyes Library. Their annual exhibitions drew patrons from Boston, New York, Chicago, Washington, and beyond. This growth of the Association soon demanded it seek its own exhibition space. In 1919, the artist-members contracted with Charles Adams Platt, a celebrated architect and artist, to design an ideal exhibition space. The resultant gallery building, now on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Old Lyme



Historic District, opened in 1921. The Lyme Art Association became a model for the public exhibition of fine art in the United States.

Though the building was lauded as a grand success of public architecture, several key elements of Platt's original design were never executed. During the research phase of this project, the Association discovered documents and drawings, previously unknown to the Association, located in the Platt Archive at Columbia University's Avery Library. These documents include, in significant detail, additional components illustrated in Platt's original vision for the gallery. These elements include a loggia on the north side, a decorative trellis surrounding the main entrance, and a special trim course designed to follow the roofline of the structure. (See Attachment 1: *Platt plan from Columbia University archives*)

Further, during the 20th Century, the Association made modifications and additions to the building that attempted to expand on Platt's original design, and respond to the needs of the Association. These add-on structures include an additional art gallery, constructed in 1938 on piers over a flood-prone area, an art studio built in the late 1970s, and office space affixed to the building's south side, also built in the late 1970s.

Preliminary Fundraising and Steps to Secure a Condition Assessment Study

In 2009, the LAA was planning a major capital campaign designed to fund much-needed deferred maintenance. Unfortunately, in early 2010, a small creek behind the gallery building flooded, pushing two feet of water into the LAA's lower level and causing over \$100,000 worth of damage. Fundraising immediately shifted to flood repair, cancelling the renovation campaign's momentum. However, one significant upside to this event is that, in the course of repairing its lower level from the floodwaters, the LAA was forced to look critically at the condition of its physical plant overall.

Plans for a more substantive overall restoration began to germinate. Having had a chance to see up close just how deteriorated some of the areas affected by the flood actually were, the Association decided to commission a comprehensive Condition Assessment Study to determine the overall state of the building. A fundraising campaign followed, raising over \$46,000 from individual donors including a \$20,000 Historic Preservation Technical Assistance Grant (HPTAG) matching grant from the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation. In 2013, Centerbrook Architects of Centerbrook, Connecticut was commissioned to conduct the study. (See Attachment 2: *2013 Condition Assessment Study Revised 2015*)



Results of the Condition Assessment Study

Centerbrook Architects (Centerbrook) determined several key areas to be addressed to halt the deterioration and restore the historic building. Critical needs include replacing the original cedar shingles, restoring rotting and deteriorating trim, repairing cracked foundation elements, replacing interior lay lights, installing a modern HVAC system, improved security, replacing the outdated electrical system, and installing current safety code and ADA-compliant entrances, points of egress, and facilities. The study also included a prioritized list of work, costs and time line.

Suspension of Short-term Campaign in Favor of Long-term Master Plan

Despite the urgent needs outlined in the Condition Assessment Study, in its early deliberations about how to proceed with the recommended repairs, the Association acknowledged that the repairs were significant enough that the Association ought to review the full scope of its mission before proceeding, including anticipated operational and programmatic needs for the coming decades as well as the Association's important role as the caretaker of a landmark work of architecture. The Association determined to spend some time thinking more broadly about the project, "taking the long view," considering the conditions, needs, and resources of the Association, and ensuring that the full scope of approaches to proceeding were considered before a course was chosen.

Formation of Second Century Committee

In October of 2013, Association volunteers formed the Second Century Committee with the charge to explore various alternatives for physically accommodating the Association's business and programs, both currently and in the future, while maintaining and celebrating the Charles Platt-designed building.

Project Definition Studies

Condition Assessment Study

The 2013 Condition Assessment Study by Centerbrook Architects was of critical use in defining the project, as any option will include the restoration of the 1921 building.

Site Survey and Study

The Lyme Art Association building stands on a small, uneven, triangular piece of land, where a flood-prone creek and wetland area forms the hypotenuse between two state highways. On the opposite bank of the creek is the Florence Griswold Museum. In April of 2014 the Association successfully applied for a \$20,000 matching Survey and Planning Grant from the Department of Economic and



Community Development (DECD) to develop a Master Plan and define the limitations and opportunities of this physical site.

Nemergut Consulting was contracted to explore the issues that might arise with respect to septic, zoning, flood plains, wetlands, etc. to better define the constraints inherent in the Association's property that might limit the project. They created updated site plans, including revised wetland markings. (See Attachment 3: *Revised wetlands markings overview*). These markings enabled the Association to begin informal and positive discussions with the Town of Old Lyme as to what flexibilities would be permitted should alterations to the landscape be proposed.

Study of Current and Anticipated Needs

The Survey and Planning Grant also enabled the Association to continue its relationship with Centerbrook Architects and to hire Anne Penniman Associates Landscape Architecture to assist in conceptualizing some different options for accommodating the Association's operations on-site. To provide Centerbrook with parameters for this effort, the Committee drafted a new mission and vision statement (Attachment 4: *New Mission and Vision Statement*). They also worked with Centerbrook to define current needs and consider anticipated needs for the coming decades. Each area of the Association's operations was studied, needs prioritized, and quantified (when applicable) in terms of square footage of building space. (See Attachment 5: *Square footage current use and options*) details the various operations of LAA in terms of square footage.

Presentation of Options for Renovation/Construction

Centerbrook Architects and Anne Penniman Associates used Nemmergut's site survey and study, the Association's new mission and vision statement, and the current and anticipated needs assessment (see Attachment 5a: *Study of Current and Anticipated Needs*) to propose several conceptual options for the LAA to use to plan for renovation and/or construction in immediate future as well as in the coming century (Attachment 6: *Design Options A, B, & C*).

After examining and considering the Conditions Assessment Study and the conceptualized drawings from Centerbrook and Anne Penniman, the Committee identified the following options:

Option One:

1. Complete Platt's original vision
2. Remove post-1921 additions to the building (eliminating education and administration spaces from this structure).
3. Complete all maintenance on original building



4. Erect a new building to provide space for education and administration (see Attachment 6: *Design Options Attachment A, B, & C*).
5. Re-design landscaping and create new parking areas (also shown in Attachment 6)

Option Two:

1. Better integrate post-1921 structures into the Platt's architectural design, including changing newer gable vents from square to round, extending/installing trim and friezes where missing currently, changing the gable/tympanum siding at Goodman from shingles to white painted boards (see Attachment 7: *Documentation for Exterior Rehabilitation*).
2. Complete critical maintenance and address building, accessibility, and fire code issues
3. Upgrade interior of gallery with new walls, insulation, and environmental systems
4. Make improvements to exterior lighting, landscaping and parking areas

A common component in each option included addressing critical maintenance to revitalize and preserve the historic gallery.

Selection of Option Two and Timing

Rational for Option Two

Based on the urgent need to address critical repairs, the feasibility of new construction on another portion of the lot, and the LAA's organizational and fundraising capacity, the Committee selected Option Two. Option Two will be accomplished as follows:

Option Two Initial Actions

Refurbish Building Exterior and Address Priority 1 Code Issues: Centerbrook Architects created a table of prioritized work, cost estimates, and timeline (Attachment 8: *Prioritized List of Work, Cost, and Timeline*) included in the Conditions Assessment Study. The Committee used this table to help define the scope of work for initial actions. Initial actions will include all the Exterior Rehabilitation items detailed in Attachment 8 (both Priority 1 and Priority 2) with the exception of replacement of studio windows. Initial actions will also include addressing all code issues that were identified as Priority 1. Working with Centerbrook Architects, the Committee has estimated the costs for the Initial Actions to be \$300,000. (Attachment 9: *List of Work and Costs for Initial Actions*). This list shows the items that comprise the Initial Actions cost estimate. In addition to the selected items from the *Prioritized List of Work, Cost, and Timeline* from Centerbrook Architects, the Initial Actions cost estimate includes lawn and parking area repairs, contingency, and fundraising. Centerbrook Architects produced plans and specifications in preparation for proceeding with the Initial Actions (Attachment 10: *Centerbrook Architect Plans and Specifications*).



Option Two Future Actions

Upgrade Interior: At a future date, the Association will address those code issues that are identified as Priority 2 in Attachment 8, refurbish gallery walls, reconfigure bathrooms and fixtures to comply with ADA, insulate walls and other improvements detailed in Attachment 8 that are not included in the initial actions.

Improve Landscaping and Outdoor Lighting: At a future date, the Association will complete landscaping improvements, better integrating the LAA property with the adjacent Florence Griswold property, improving parking and accessibility, and supporting and enhancing the stream and pond habitat bordering the property.

Conclusion

With the project scope explored and defined, and with the plans and specifications for the work complete, the Association is now prepared to launch a successful fundraising campaign to accomplish the initial building renovation. The Master Plan also sets the stage to create the budget and timeline for future actions to upgrade the interior of the gallery and make lasting improvements to the exterior grounds. The creation, development, periodic review and updating of the Master Plan will make the Lyme Art Association's vision a reality.

The Association is now well positioned to preserve their historic building and its grounds to continue to present fine representational art for the next century.



List of Attachments

1. Platt plan from Columbia University archives
2. 2013 Condition Assessment Study Revised 2015
3. Revised wetlands markings overview
4. New Mission and Vision Statement
5. Square footage current use and options
- 5a. Study of Current and Anticipated Needs
6. Design options A, B, & C
7. Documentation for Exterior Rehabilitation
8. Prioritized List of Work, Cost, and Timeline
9. List of Work and Costs for Initial Actions
10. Centerbrook Architect Plans and Specifications