

TOWN OF WELLESLEY



MASSACHUSETTS

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

888 WORCESTER STREET • SUITE 160 • WELLESLEY, MA 02482

J. RANDOLPH BECKER, CHAIRMAN
ROBERT W. LEVY, VICE CHAIRMAN
DAVID G. SHEFFIELD

LENORE R. MAHONEY
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
TELEPHONE
(781) 489-7450

WALTER B. ADAMS
DEREK B. REDGATE
PETER COVO

2025-62
Petition of Wellesley Historical Society, Inc.
323 Washington Street

Pursuant to due notice, the Special Permit Granting Authority held a Remote Public Hearing on Thursday, November 6, 2025, on the petition of Wellesley Historical Society, Inc. requesting renewal of a Special Permit pursuant to the provisions of Section 2.1 A 8 c, Section 3.1 and Section 6.3 of the Zoning Bylaw to allow the use of the structure at 323 Washington Street, in a Historic District and a General Residence District, for storage and care of collections, office, work and meeting space, and permitted activities on site.

On October 8, 2025, the Petitioner filed a request for a hearing before this Authority, and thereafter, due notice of the hearing was given by mailing and publication.

Present at the public hearing were Peter Mongeau, President, and Faith Ellis, Executive Director, Wellesley Historical Society (the Society).

Mr. Mongeau said that the request is to renew and modify the special permit for the newly renovated Wellesley History and Exhibit Center. He said that the building was purchased in 2012 and was designated a single building in a Historic District in 2020. He said that they recently completed \$1.3 million in renovations and opened in September 2025.

Mr. Mongeau said that the first floor contains four galleries that are open to the public, with the current inaugural exhibit "Wellesley Through Time." He said that the building has ADA-compliant facilities and exits on all four sides. He said that they have partnered with the neighboring Unitarian Universal Society for evening parking and potential school bus parking. He said that the neighbor to the left submitted a letter of support.

Mr. Mongeau said that the Society is requesting three modifications to the special permit to allow Wellesley public school groups to visit, with buses parking at the Unitarian lot, hosting workshops or small gatherings for up to 35 people 15 times annually, and for hosting or renting the building for events for up to 75 people 20 times annually. He said that the events are limited to first floor. He said that the Society is also requesting extension of the renewal period to 3 years.

The Chairman discussed concerns that private party rentals would not be permitted under Section 2.1.8.c, which allows only public, semi-public institutions of a philanthropic, charitable, or religious character uses in residential districts. He stated that while events for the Society, school groups, and charitable organizations would be appropriate, private parties for fees would not be permitted.

No member of the public wished to speak to the petition.

Statement of Facts

The Wellesley Historical Society is a 501 (c) charitable organization, formed in 1925 and incorporated in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 1965. It is the Historical Resource Center for the Town of Wellesley.

The Wellesley Historical Society is the primary archival repository for the Town of Wellesley and is responsible for the archives of several non-profit organizations. Collections include manuscripts, photographic images, maps and plans, art pieces, costume collections, butterflies, individual artifacts, and a significant textile and lace collection. In addition, the Society annually awards scholarships to Wellesley students to "inspire public involvement in and appreciation of Wellesley's heritage and culture by Wellesley youth in their endeavor to further their studies" via higher education.

The Society is currently located in the Dadmun/McNamara House at 229 Washington Street at the intersection of Routes 16 and 9.

The current collections of the Society occupy almost all the current usable space in the Dadmun/McNamara House (1,760 square feet) leaving insufficient workspace for the care and ongoing cataloging of the collections, and monthly meetings of the Board of Directors.

The Society's continued use of 323 Washington Street reflects the organization's desire to fulfill its mission to a degree that it is unable to do within the confines of the Dadmun/McNamara House at 229 Washington Street. The Society intends to continue to use the space at the Dadmun/McNamara House for storage and research activities.

The Petitioner is requesting renewal of a Special Permit pursuant to the provisions of Section 2.1 A 8 c, Section 3.1 and Section 6.3 of the Zoning Bylaw to allow the use of the structure at 323 Washington Street, in a Historic District and a General Residence District, for storage and care of collections, office, work and meeting space, and permitted activities on site.

On November 6, 2025, the Planning Board reviewed the petition and recommended that the special permit be renewed.

Decision

This Authority has made a careful study of the materials submitted and the information presented at the hearing. The subject structure does not conform to the current Zoning Bylaw, as noted in the foregoing Statement of Facts.

It is the opinion of this Authority that renewal of a Special Permit pursuant to the provisions of Section 2.1 A 8 c, Section 3.1 and Section 6.3 of the Zoning Bylaw to allow the use of the structure at 323 Washington Street, in a Historic District and a General Residence District, for storage and care of collections, office, work and meeting space, and permitted activities on site shall not disturb or disrupt the customary character of the residential neighborhood, and is in harmony with the intent and purpose of Section 6.3 of the Zoning Bylaw with respect to Vehicular Circulation, Driveways, Vehicle Queuing Lanes, Compatibility with Surroundings, Pedestrian Safety, Noxious Uses and Intensity of Uses.

Therefore, renewal of a Special Permit is granted for the requested use, as voted unanimously by this Authority at the Public Hearing, subject to the following conditions:

1. There shall be no overnight living in the premises.
2. Researchers who presently go to the Dadmum-McNamara House at 229 Washington Street shall be allowed to go to this building. It is anticipated that will consist of five people per week or one person per day.
3. The Historical Society may host the third graders in Wellesley Public Schools for seven days in June between 9 am and 1 pm for their Butterfly Program. The children will arrive via school bus that will drop them in the Unitarian Church parking lot where there is a connecting pathway to the Wellesley Historical Society property.
4. The Historical Society may host events for public, semi-public institutions of a philanthropic, charitable, or religious character for no more than 35 people up to 15 times a year.
5. Private parties for fees shall not be permitted.
6. This Special Permit shall expire three years from the date time stamped on the decision.

7/25/2019 9 PM 12:15
WELLESLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
WELLESLEY, MASSACHUSETTS

ZBA 2025-62
Petition of Wellesley Historical Society, Inc.
323 Washington Street

APPEALS FROM THIS DECISION,
IF ANY, SHALL BE MADE PURSUANT
TO GENERAL LAWS, CHAPTER 40A,
SECTION 17, AND SHALL BE FILED
WITHIN 20 DAYS AFTER THE DATE
OF FILING OF THIS DECISION IN THE
OFFICE OF THE TOWN CLERK.

Robert W. Levy (rm)
Robert W. Levy, Acting Chairman

Walter B. Adams (rm)
Walter B. Adams

Derek B. Redgate (rm)
Derek B. Redgate

ZBA 2025-62
Applicant Wellesley Historical Society, Inc.
Address 323 Washington Street

NOT VALID FOR RECORDING UNTIL CERTIFIED BY TOWN CLERK

In accordance with Section 11 of Chapter 40A of the Massachusetts General Laws, I hereby certify that twenty (20) days have elapsed after the within decision was filed in the office of the Town Clerk for the Town of Wellesley, and that no appeal has been filed, or that if such appeal has been filed, that it has been dismissed or denied.

Date:

Attest:

Cathryn Jane Kato
Town Clerk

ST. CATHRYN JANE KATO
TOWN CLERK OF WELLESLEY, MASSACHUSETTS
2025 NOV 19 PM 12:15

cc: Planning Board
Inspector of Buildings
lrm

TOWN OF WELLESLEY



MASSACHUSETTS

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WALTER B. ADAMS
DEREK B. REDGATE
PETER COVO

ZBA 2025-62-Modified
Petition of Wellesley Historical Society, Inc.
323 Washington Street

Pursuant to due notice, the Special Permit Granting Authority held a Remote Public Hearing on Thursday, January 8, 2026, on the petition of Wellesley Historical Society, Inc. requesting modification of an existing Special Permit pursuant to the provisions of Section 2.1 A 8 c, Section 3.1 and Section 6.3 of the Zoning Bylaw to add a condition to allow the Wellesley Historical Society to host up to 20 events per year for a maximum of 75 people for public or semi-public institutions of a philanthropic, charitable or religious character, at 323 Washington Street, in a General Residence District and a Historic District.

On December 9, 2025, the Petitioner filed a request for a hearing before this Authority, and thereafter, due notice of the hearing was given by mailing and publication.

A Board member disclosed that, approximately 12 years ago, he was retained by a contractor who was a member of the Wellesley Historical Society to advise on code compliance for a project. He said that he felt that he could fairly and impartially make a decision on this case. There were no objections to the Board member sitting on the panel for this petition.

Present at the public hearing was Faith Ellis, Executive Director, Wellesley Historical Society, Inc.

The Chairman said that the Applicant was previously before the Board and had asked to be able to host up to 20 events per year for public or semi-public groups. He said that there was discussion at the previous hearing about renting the facility out to members of the public. He said that the Board determined that the bylaw under which the Petitioner was seeking relief was limited to philanthropic, charitable, or religious uses.

Ms. Ellis said that her understanding of the previously granted decision was that the Board granted relief to have smaller events of a public or semi-public nature, with a capacity limit of 35 people. She said that there was discussion during the meeting for approval of events for up to 75 people, which is the occupancy limit set by the Fire Department. She said that approval of the larger events was not included in the decision.

The Chairman said that the decision that the Board recently approved, ZBA 2025-62, was for renewal of a special permit. Ms. Ellis said that at that hearing, Wellesley Historical Society presented new requests to allow events for 35 and 75 people. She said that, following discussion, their understanding was that the events would be allowed, as long as they were of a public or semi-public nature, as defined in the bylaw.

The Chairman said that the request before the Board at this hearing is for up to 20 events a year, which would be almost every other week. Ms. Ellis said that Wellesley Historical Society is not looking to run events every other week but 20 events give them wiggle room to run multiple events. She said that although Wellesley Historical Society does have members, the fundraisers and events are open to the public. She said that the hope is that members will bring friends to the events, who will then get involved and donate as well. She said that revenue from fundraising events makes up a large chunk of the operating budget. She said that hosting the events in-house is better than renting an outside space.

Ms. Ellis said that the events will conclude no later than 8:30 to 9 pm. She said that she is typically cleaning up, turning off the lights and going home by 9 pm.

The Chairman said that there will be no street parking allowed. Ms. Ellis said that there is plenty of parking. She said that they have an agreement with the Unitarian Universalist Church that allows Wellesley Historical Society to use the Church's parking lot for events.

The Chairman said that the property is located in a residential district. Ms. Ellis said that the Phillips Park Apartments are located across the street. She said that the house next door to Wellesley Historical Society has been converted into apartments. She said that the owner of the apartments submitted a letter of support. She said that the Unitarian Universalist Church is located on the other side. She said that they maintain good relations with the neighbors. She said that there haven't been any issues.

No member of the public wished to speak to the petition.

Statement of Facts

The Wellesley Historical Society is a 501 (c) charitable organization, formed in 1925 and incorporated in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 1965. It is the Historical Resource Center for the Town of Wellesley.

The Wellesley Historical Society is the primary archival repository for the Town of Wellesley and is responsible for the archives of several non-profit organizations. Collections include manuscripts, photographic images, maps and plans, art pieces, costume collections, butterflies, individual artifacts, and a significant textile and lace collection. In addition, the Society annually awards scholarships to Wellesley students to "inspire public involvement in and appreciation of Wellesley's heritage and culture by Wellesley youth in their endeavor to further their studies" via higher education.

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The Society's continued use of 323 Washington Street reflects the organization's desire to fulfill its mission to a degree that it is unable to do within the confines of the Dadmun/McNamara House at 229 Washington Street. The Society intends to continue to use the space at the Dadmun/McNamara House for storage and research activities.

The Petitioner is requesting modification of an existing Special Permit pursuant to the provisions of Section 2.1 A 8 c, Section 3.1 and Section 6.3 of the Zoning Bylaw to add a condition to allow the Wellesley Historical Society to host up to 20 events per year for a maximum of 75 people for public or semi-public institutions of a philanthropic, charitable or religious character, at 323 Washington Street, in a General Residence District and a Historic District.

Decision

This Authority has made a careful study of the materials submitted and the information presented at the hearing. The subject structure does not conform to the current Zoning Bylaw, as noted in the foregoing Statement of Facts.

It is the opinion of this Authority that modification of an existing Special Permit pursuant to the provisions of Section 2.1 A 8 c, Section 3.1 and Section 6.3 of the Zoning Bylaw to add a condition to allow the Wellesley Historical Society to host up to 20 events per year for a maximum of 75 people for public or semi-public institutions of a philanthropic, charitable or religious character, at 323 Washington Street, in a General Residence District and a Historic District.

Therefore, modification of a Special Permit is granted, as voted unanimously by this Authority at the Public Hearing, subject to the following conditions:

1. There shall be no overnight living on the premises.
2. Researchers who presently go to the Dadmun-McNamara House at 229 Washington Street shall be allowed to go to this building. It is anticipated that it will consist of five people per week or one person per day.
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4. The Historical Society may host events for public, semi-public institutions of a philanthropic, charitable, or religious character for no more than 35 people up to 15 times a year.
5. The Historical Society may host events for public, semi-public institutions of a philanthropic, charitable, or religious character for no more than 75 people up to 20 times a year. Such events shall conclude no later than 9 pm.
6. Private parties for fees shall not be permitted.
7. This Special Permit shall expire three years from the date time stamped on the decision.

ZBA 2025-62-Modified
Petition of Wellesley Historical Society, Inc.
323 Washington Street

APPEALS FROM THIS DECISION,
IF ANY, SHALL BE MADE PURSUANT
TO GENERAL LAWS, CHAPTER 40A,
SECTION 17, AND SHALL BE FILED
WITHIN 20 DAYS AFTER THE DATE
OF FILING OF THIS DECISION IN THE
OFFICE OF THE TOWN CLERK.

Robert W. Levy (lm)
Robert W. Levy, Acting Chairman

Walter B. Adams (lm)
Walter B. Adams

Derek B. Redgate (lm)
Derek B. Redgate

ZBA 2025-62-Modified
Applicant Wellesley Historical Society, Inc.
Address 323 Washington Street

NOT VALID FOR RECORDING UNTIL CERTIFIED BY TOWN CLERK

In accordance with Section 11 of Chapter 40A of the Massachusetts General Laws, I hereby certify that twenty (20) days have elapsed after the within decision was filed in the office of the Town Clerk for the Town of Wellesley, and that no appeal has been filed, or that if such appeal has been filed, that it has been dismissed or denied.

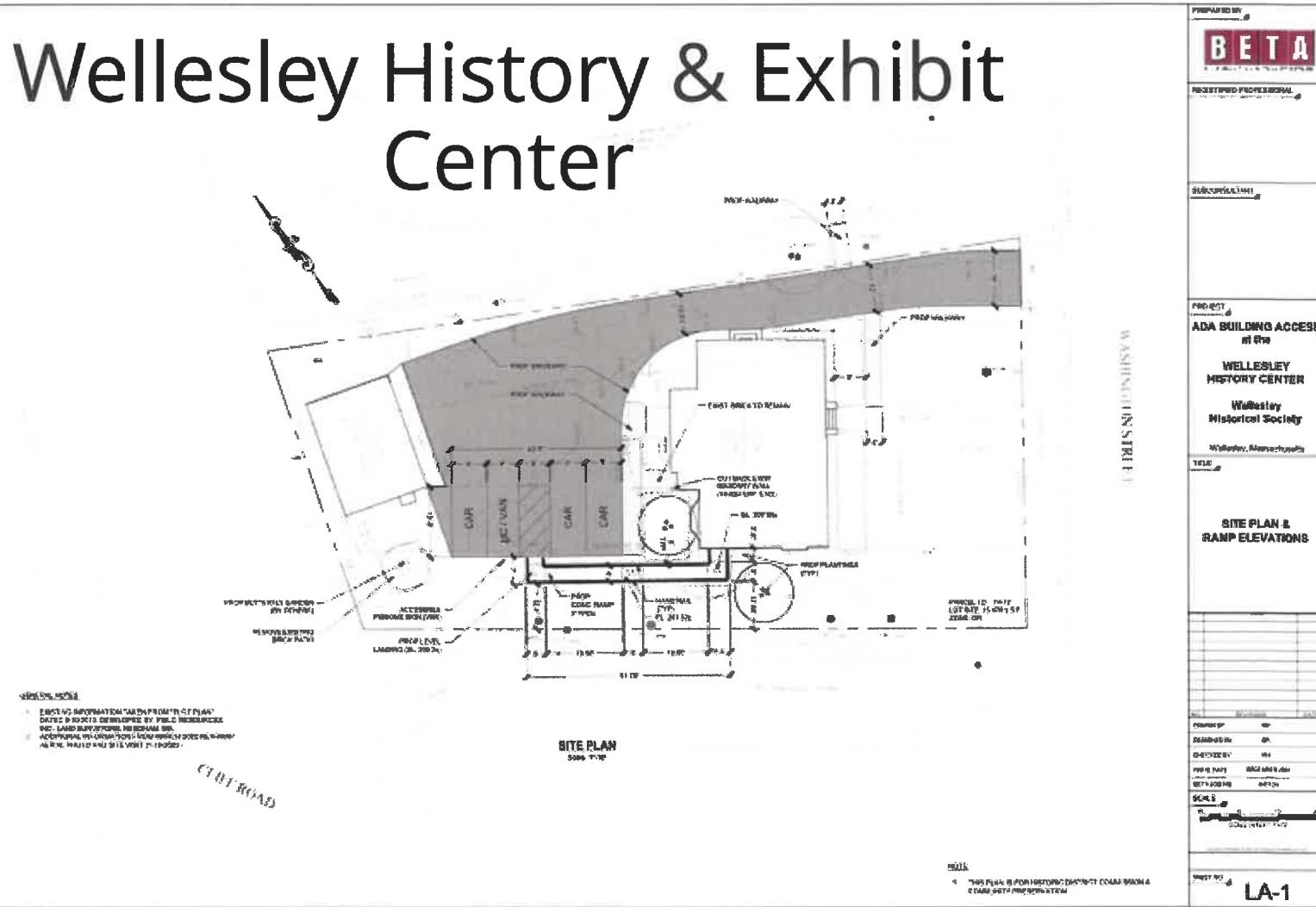
Date:

Attest:

Cathryn Jane Kato
Town Clerk

cc: Planning Board
Inspector of Buildings
lrm

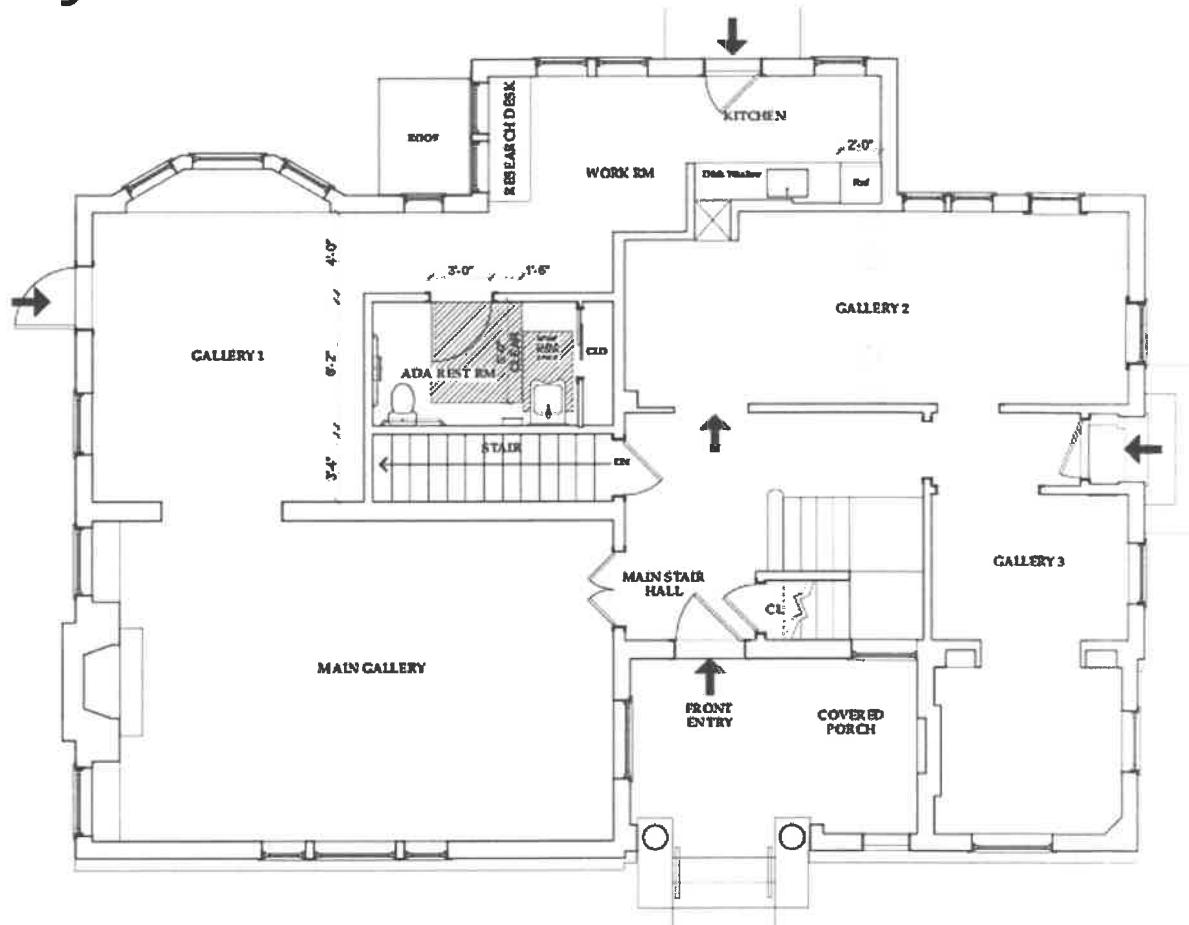
Wellesley History & Exhibit Center

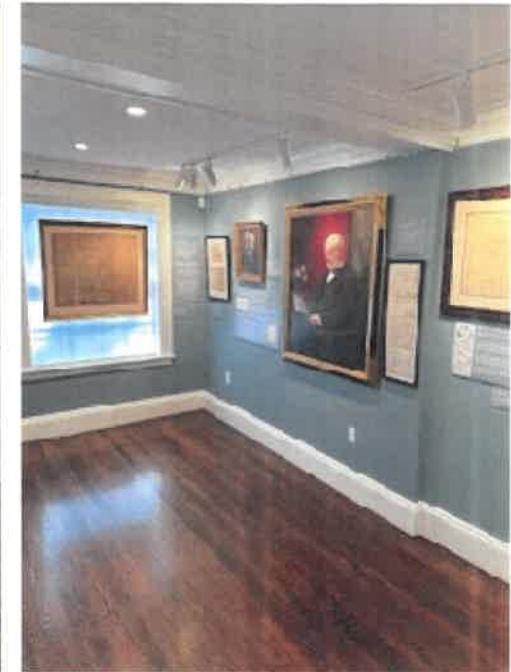


Wellesley History Center – 1st Floor Plans – Gallery Space

First floor:

- a. Four Galleries
- b. Research Area
- c. ADA Bathroom
- d. Kitchenette
- e. Four Exits
 - a. Each Side of building
 - b. One ADA Ramp





Galleries

John and Patti Dirlam Gallery
Martin and Melissa Padley Gallery
Stanley E. Pratt Gallery
Edith and Paul Babson Gallery