

October 7, 2021 (Draft)
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**Re.: Building Condition Assessment
Huntington Memorial Library
62 Chestnut Street
Oneonta, NY 13820**

**BUTLER
ROWLAND
MAYS**

**ARCHITECTS,
LLP**

57 West High Street

Ballston Spa
New York 12020

PH: 518•885•1255
FAX: 518•885•1266
www.brmaarchitects.com

ARCHITECTURE

INTERIORS

ROOFING

Steven G. Rowland, RA
Paul K. Mays, RA

The above-referenced building was visited on September 8, 2021 for the purposes of performing a general, visual assessment of the physical conditions of the building and property. Below is a summary of the observations made on that day as well as preliminary recommendations where appropriate. Mechanical and electrical systems were reviewed separately by Sage Engineering Associates whose report is issued under separate cover. Conditions during the visit were sunny and clear with temperatures in the 80's. The undersigned was shown around the building by Library Director Tina Winstead.

Site

The Library building is located on the property with its original primary façade facing essentially due south. The Library is sited within a public park and as such, offers a pleasant setting with generous lawn areas, walkways and mature trees. Some of the shrubs and plantings closer to the building have become somewhat overgrown. Concrete sidewalks are in fair to good condition. There is a stone retaining wall with concrete steps located at the south-east corner. The retaining wall appears stable and is generally in good condition. Some of the rope-style mortar joints are in need of repointing and the steps show evidence of past settlement. The joints and settlement issues should be monitored seasonally for potential worsening and repaired when possible. There is limited parking on the primary Library site with additional parking available in a public lot to the north. The layout of the on-site parking is such that the Library building is vulnerable to being struck by vehicles. [See Photo 2 below]



Photo 1

SOUTH ELEVATION

There are two additional retaining walls to the north side of the building adjacent the on-site parking. One is a laid up concrete block system and the other is pressure treated timbers. They both appear stable, however the timber wall is beginning to deteriorate and has some damaged timbers, likely from vehicle strikes. The parking areas on-site are paved and striped and are generally in fair to good condition. It is not clear to BRMA how much of the site is the Library's responsibility to maintain.



Photo 2

VIEW FROM ON-SITE PARKING

General Building

The original building is a two-story, wood framed structure with stone foundations with a basement and attic. Its original construction was circa 1880. There is a wood framed addition to the north side of the original building with concrete foundations and a partial third level. North of that is another addition enclosing an emergency exit stair and elevator to provide handicap access to all three levels. This addition is partly concrete unit masonry and wood framing. An unconditioned concrete unit masonry storage garage at the very north end of the building. The Main Entry to the Library is through a wood framed, slab-on-grade, primarily glass enclosed “gazebo” addition at the east side of the Library. Within the gazebo are concrete steps leading up to the first floor level of the Library.

Programmatically, access to the Library is not intuitive, especially the handicap entry. Vehicular access to the site is at the south end of the property with some parking to the west side of the building and more at the north-east corner. The larger public parking lot is up a fairly steep slope north of the Library proper site. The handicap entry located in a recessed alcove on the west side of the elevator addition. Patrons are required to use an intercom device to alert the main desk to their presence and staff activate an electric strike on the door to permit access. While functionally adequate, it is an awkward and somewhat hidden approach, which, to a new patron, may not be readily apparent. The Main Entry gazebo likely is also not readily apparent to newer patrons as it is largely hidden from view when accessing the property by vehicle. The original Main Entry facing Chestnut Street features a strong presence toward the street and pedestrians however, due to its steps and narrow double entrance doors, it only serves as an emergency exit. As such it is essentially unused.

Roofing

The main roof of the Library, including the original building and northerly additions is a white, single ply membrane that appears to be Hypalon®. This roofing appears to be at least twenty years of age and as such, is nearing the end of its expected life span. While no active leaks have been reported, plans to replace this roof should be made within the next three to five years. There are a number of snow retention “fences” adhered to the membrane which were likely added after the roof was in place. Hypalon® and other single ply membranes are prone to allowing snow and ice to migrate and slide off, creating a hazard to pedestrians and vehicles below. Similar protection will be needed when the roof is replaced.

The roof on the single story original entry porch and over the Juvenile Fiction area is a somewhat newer single ply EPDM membrane. While in reasonably serviceable condition, and not actively leaking, it does not appear drain well which shortens the expected life span of the membrane and increases to potential for leaks. As such, if a reroofing project is undertaken for the main roof, it is recommended that this roof also be replaced and its drainage improved with tapered insulation.

Lastly, the gazebo roof, elevator/stair tower and storage garage roofs are an architectural asphalt shingle and appear to be approximately ten to fifteen years old. The north-west corner of the garage roof has an area that appears to have been repaired (reason unknown) as the shingle color is slightly different. These roof areas should remain serviceable for at least another ten years.



Photo 3 MAIN ROOF LOOKING ±NORTH



Photo 4 MAIN ROOF LOOKING ±SOUTH

The northern additions and garage roofs all have gutters and downspouts. The single story EPDM roof to the south has internal drains with external downspouts. Some downspouts discharge at grade while others discharge to below grade pipes. It is unknown where the below grade piping discharges, but is likely to the municipal storm sewer system. Gutters can lead to maintenance headaches, however given that the majority of the building is above the tree height, this is less of an issue. Gutters can contribute to ice damming in the winter.

Exterior Walls

The exterior walls of the Library are particularly difficult to assess. With the exception of the painted concrete unit masonry walls of the stair/elevator tower and storage garage, the Library is clad with vinyl siding that is likely installed over an original cladding of wood clapboards. When installed, some attention was paid to maintaining the more ornate wood trims of the original building. From a purely historic preservation standpoint, the vinyl siding is a mistake. It was undoubtedly installed to eliminate the maintenance cost of scraping and painting the clapboards every several years. However, it precludes observation of the conditions beneath the vinyl. The true historic character of the building is lost with the application of vinyl siding and associated flashings which conceal wood trims at the roof eaves and other locations. The condition of the vinyl is fair to satisfactory. There are displaced or broken sections in a few locations which could be repaired. The exterior walls were reinsulated as part of a 2019 asbestos abatement project, as such any additional insulation efforts would likely result in no appreciable energy improvement.

The remaining wood trims, columns, lattice work are in need of scraping and painting. Some of the wood trims and lattice work, especially at the original front entry porch are quite deteriorated and in need of repair/replacement. Of particular concern is the south-west column of the porch. There is significant sagging evident in the porch floor. The source of the sagging could be deteriorating foundation/pier or rotting of a wood column. It is recommended that a skilled carpenter be hired to partially dismantle the wood trims in this area so that the internal structure and foundation of this area of the porch can be further evaluated by a qualified structural engineer.



Photo 5

FRONT PORCH COLUMN

Windows

The majority of the windows of the building are aluminum clad wood replacement units with insulated glazing. They are a fairly good quality window and are in good condition. Most of the windows are operable double hung units. There are fixed and casement windows in the elevator tower addition. It is worth noting that in many locations, the sills of the windows are lower than eighteen inches above the floor. The Building Code requires windows with the bottom edge of the glass eighteen inches or lower to the floor must have tempered safety glass. The etched label visible on the units does not appear to indicate the glass as being tempered. There are films available that can be applied to existing glass to allow the glass to be considered safety glass. In addition, BRMA's standard for operable windows that are close to the floor is to have a window opening control device to prohibits the window from opening more than four inches. There are retrofit kits available for this purpose. A skilled glazing contractor could be brought in to provide these services.



Photo 6

TYPICAL WINDOW

Exterior Entries/Exits and Doors

The Main Entry to the Library is through a gazebo-like addition on the east side of the building. While it is functionally adequate, it does have some shortcomings which are difficult, if not infeasible, to correct. There are two pairs of thirty inch wide doors at the north and south sides of the gazebo each of which have one "active" and one "inactive" leaf. The Building Code requires a thirty-two inch minimum clear opening for an egress door. The same width shortcoming exists at the exit doors out of the Library going into the gazebo exit. In addition, there is a single step from the slab-on-grade of the gazebo to the paved parking surface to the north and to the sidewalk leading away from the south side exit. This represents a trip hazard, which is marginally addressed by the addition of steel pipe guard rails outside the doors. Furthermore, the thresholds of the doors themselves have an approximately one inch high lip which can also be a trip hazard.



Photo 4

SOUTH GAZEBO EXIT/ENTRY

The original entry/exit pairs of doors leading out the south façade of the original building, while historically significant and ornate, each are only twenty-nine inches in width, have historic, etched glass which is not tempered, and the operable leaf on the exterior pair is very difficult to open. These doors currently function as an emergency exit only. However, given their inadequate width, functional difficulties, and the presence of storage cabinets in the vestibule, which constrict the egress path, they are not ideally suited as a viable exit.

The handicap accessible entrance, while not ideally located as stated earlier, is in good condition and functions well. The emergency exit stair at the north end of the building, while functional, contains several Building Code issues. To begin, the stair does not function as a handicap accessible path of egress. To function as such, each floor level requires an area of refuge to allow a wheelchair-bound person to wait for emergency personnel assistance without impeding the exit path. The area of refuge also requires a two-way communication device. In addition, the stair does not meet the minimum forty-eight inch clearance between the handrails. Furthermore, the current handrails are not code compliant in several ways. They are not continuous, they do not return to the walls, they do not meet the minimum height requirements, they do not have balusters or other means to prevent the passage of a four inch sphere, nor do they have the required top and bottom extensions. In addition, one handrail is currently detached from the wall.

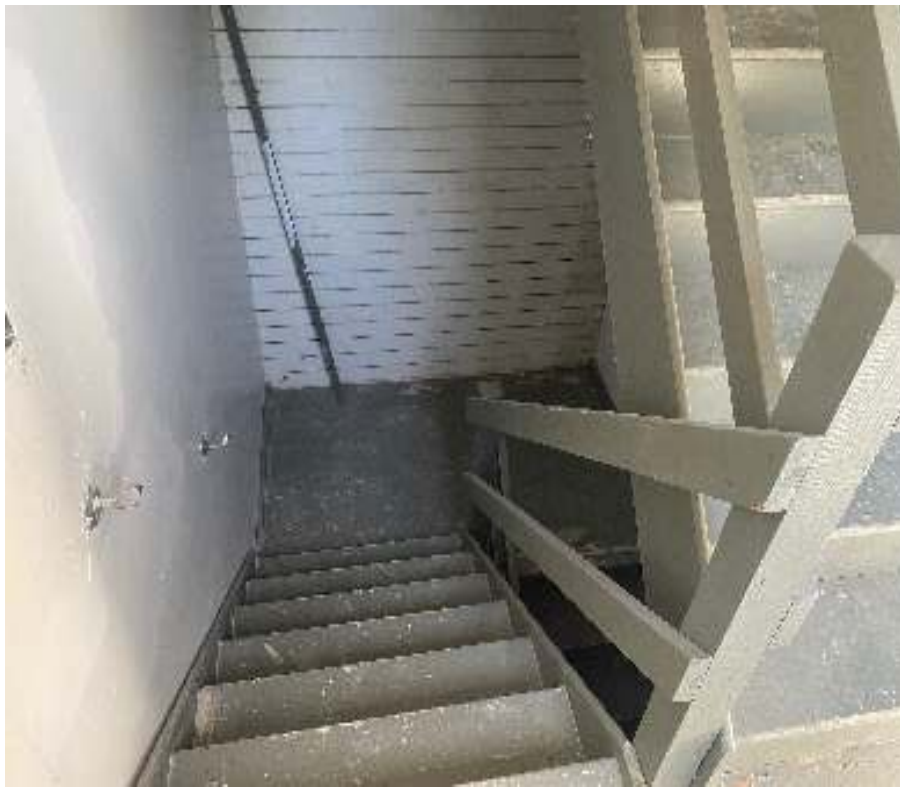


Photo 8

NORTH EXIT STAIR

Interior Environment

Finishes: The Library interior spaces are generally in satisfactory condition. Walls throughout are primarily plaster and drywall. They are in good condition. Floors are primarily carpeted and the condition of which varies from fair to poor for older areas or high traffic areas to relatively new in some areas. There is also relatively new luxury vinyl flooring adjacent the Main Circ Desk as well as the second floor multi-purpose room. The toilet rooms have ceramic tile and it is in satisfactory condition. There are a variety of ceiling types. Some recently renovated areas have drywall ceilings and are in good condition and some areas are likely plaster. There are varied types of suspended acoustical ceilings around the building, which vary from good to fair condition and vary in terms of aesthetic quality. Areas of the original historic Library portion still have ornate trims with a dark stained finish. They are dramatic and largely in fair condition and remain as unaltered, original construction, albeit many are now concealed behind stacks. There are areas of trim that have been damaged or otherwise altered over the course of time. Repairing these pieces is likely cost prohibitive. If any larger scale renovations are undertaken, it may be feasible designate specific spaces in the building where trims could be repaired to their original distinction using pieces of trim acquired from other areas of the building. The original, ornate wood stair connecting the first and second floors is still intact and is in satisfactory condition. Its handrails do not meet current height minimums and some sections are somewhat loose and wobbly. A skilled carpenter with historic restoration experience may be able to tighten the loose balusters.

Handicap Accessibility: Vertical accessibility to all floor levels of the building, including the basement but not the attic, is accomplished via the elevator. No issues with the elevator have been reported. The Main Floor restrooms have handicap accessible improvements, but they are not considered fully accessible. The rooms lack some required grab bars and accessible accessories. Lavatory piping is not insulated and the minimum accessible turn radius space is inadequate. The Staff restroom on the second floor is not accessible. There is no accessible height counterspace for Staff or Patrons at the Main Circ Desk. Stacks and other furnishings or contents impede minimum clearances and some stacks exceed the maximum overhead reach heights.



Photo 9

MAIN FLOOR RESTROOM

Basement Area: The basement of the building is primarily unoccupied storage space that is inundated with stored contents and debris. Most of these materials could be sorted through and disposed of, if of no value. Much of the materials are combustible in nature and represent fire hazard. At a minimum, stored materials that block and prohibit adequate clearances in front of the electrical panels as required by code, should be eliminated or relocated. A portion of the basement serves as a workshop area for the building's maintenance person. It too is somewhat overwhelmed with stored materials, tools and equipment, much of which could also be eliminated. Mechanical equipment is also located in the basement as well as the elevator machine room. Please see the separate report by Sage Engineering for information regarding the mechanical equipment.



Photo 10

BASEMENT



Photo 11

BASEMENT [Note blocked electrical panels]

Attic Area: The attic is accessed via a steep stair from the second floor. The attic is also loaded with stored contents and debris which should be sorted through and disposed of, if of no value. There is even some abandoned mechanical equipment in the attic that could be removed.



Photo 12

ATTIC

In closing, it should be noted that the building as a whole is generally in fair to good condition. Its foremost shortcomings are largely due to age. There are also programmatic issues for a building of this age and design to provide library services efficiently and intuitively. BRMA will be able to discuss programmatic issues when meeting with the Board Members and selected Staff. If programmatic Library improvements are contemplated, any effort to make localized building envelope energy efficiency improvements should also be included. Disposal of abandoned stored contents and should also be considered.

Recommendation Summary

Immediate scopes (to be addressed as soon funding/timing permits):

- 1) Front porch structural analysis and repairs**
- 2) Debris removal, basement and attic spaces
- 3) Building-wide re-roofing; \$200,000 - \$250,000, plus design fees
- 4) Siding repairs; \$5,000

Two to five year priority scopes (pending funding):

- 1) Programmatic study and conceptual design(s) to improve building access, Children's Library, Restrooms, etc.**
- 2) Selective siding removals to investigate substrate conditions (could be done concurrently with repairs).**
- 3) Ceiling, lighting upgrades; Carpet upgrades.**
- 4) HVAC system upgrades (see separate report by Sage Engineering Associates).**

Additional Investigation/Assessment Recommended *(should be implemented as soon as possible)*

- 1) Structural analysis of original front porch**; \$2,500 - \$3,000 (structural engineer)+ \$3,500 (carpenter)

Items noted with ** indicate scopes that will require additional professional design consideration and input in order to more accurately quantify the work needed. As such, cost opinions for these scopes cannot yet be determined.

Please note that any cost opinions provided are preliminary in nature based only on cursory observations. Cost opinions are based on NYS Prevailing Wage requirements. Should any capital improvements be undertaken, these costs should be refined by the design professional based on more detailed design and information.

BRMA and the undersigned are available to discuss any portions of the report as needed to help the Library Board and personnel gain a full understanding of the findings and recommendations here-in.

Sincerely,



Steven G. Rowland, RA, Principal