

Heritage Resource Management Plan for the Newport Library 405 Seventh Avenue Newport, Minnesota



Newport Heritage Preservation Commission

Heritage Resource Management Plan for the Newport Library

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PART I INTRODUCTION

Built in 1868 as the Newport Baptist Church, the subject property has been occupied by the Newport Public Library since 1897. It is a one-story frame building with a simple rectangular plan and a gable roof. Other historic character-defining features include the paired entry doors with arched transom, pointed arch windows, wood cladding, and stone foundation walls. Essentially a vernacular building, it illustrates nineteenth century pattern book design concepts associated with the Gothic Revival aesthetic. The exterior of the building has been altered somewhat from its original appearance, most notably by the removal of the belfry and residing. The interior has undergone more substantial remodeling but nevertheless retains much of its historic character.

This heritage resource management plan provides property-specific guidance for decisions relating to the preservation, protection, and use of the subject property by the City of Newport. It is intended solely for use by city officials and others responsible for management of the property.

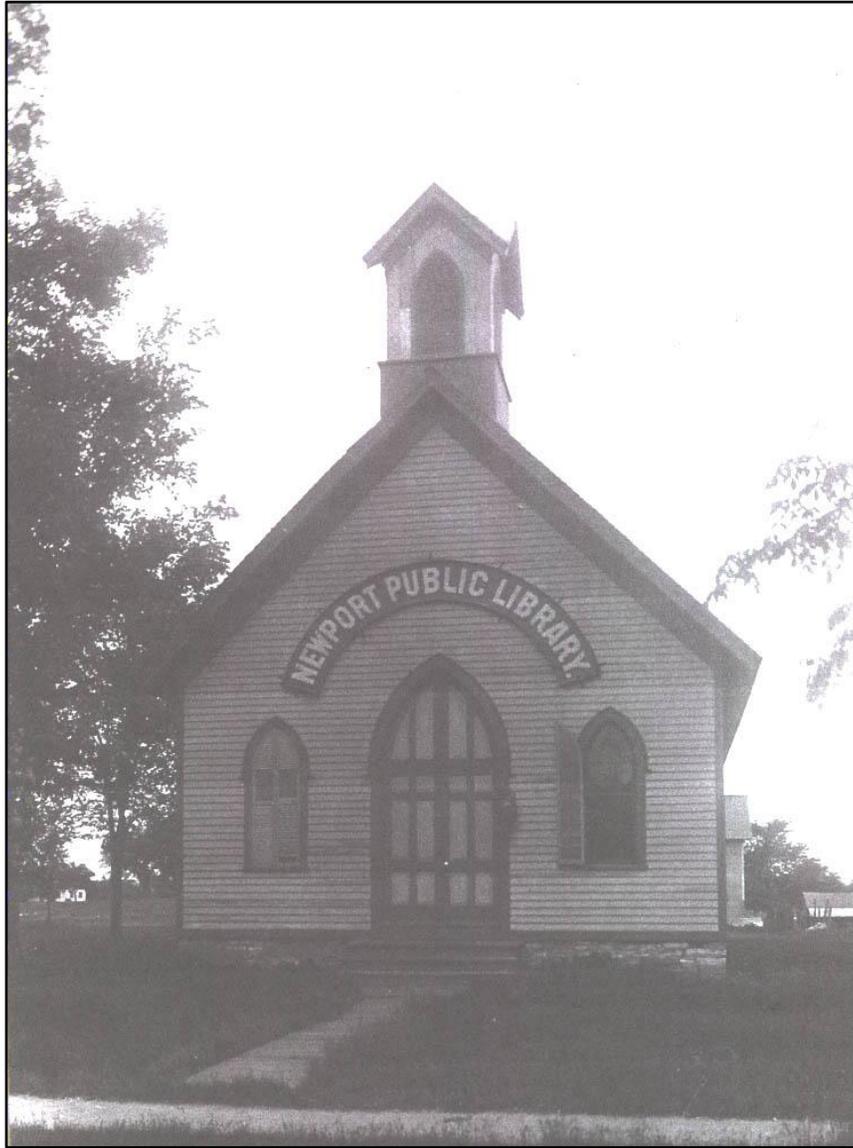
The conceptual basis for heritage resource management at the Newport Library is predicated upon the following assumptions:

1. The Newport Library is a historically significant, nonrenewable heritage resource, the preservation of which is a responsibility of city government.
2. The historic property will be protected, maintained, preserved, and rehabilitated in a manner that is consistent with its historical, architectural, and cultural values.
3. Property management decisions will be guided by the goals and policies set forth in the historic preservation element of the city's comprehensive plan.

4. Planning for adaptive use of the property will emphasize conservancy and public accessibility.
5. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties will provide the basis for evaluating the appropriateness of projects that will have an impact on the appearance, condition, historic significance, and integrity of the property.

The management plan consists of four parts. Part I consists of a brief description of the property extracted from heritage resource survey and other planning documents. Part II summarizes critical administrative and planning data pertaining to the library, including a statement of general preservation objectives and priorities. Part III presents an outcome-based plan of treatment based on best management practices. Part IV is a "punch list" or action plan for implementation.

The plan looks at all aspects of heritage resource management, including building maintenance, rehabilitation, and interpretation. It is not a static document. City officials should periodically review the management plan to ensure that the planning assumptions and performance goals remain valid.



PART II ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

Name

The historic name of the subject property, i.e., the name that best reflects its historical significance, is the Newport Library. It was originally the Newport Baptist Church. Since the 1990s it has been commonly known as the Newport Branch Library of the Washington County Library.

The Newport Library has been assigned number WA-NPC-010 in the statewide inventory of historic resources maintained by the State Historic Preservation Office, Minnesota Historical Society.

Location

The Newport Library is located at 405 Seventh Avenue in the City of Newport (PIN 550308284).

Owner

The library building and grounds are owned by the City of Newport, 596 Seventh Avenue, Newport, MN 55055.

Since 1981, the Newport Library has been administered by the Washington County Library as a branch library within the county-wide system. The library is currently operated under a programmatic agreement between the City of Newport and the Washington County Library Board that was last revised in 2002.

Historic Use

During its period of historical significance (1868-1965), the subject property functioned as a church and a public library.

Current Use

The property currently functions as a public library and is operated as a branch of the Washington County Library system.

Heritage Landmark status

The subject property was designated a Newport Heritage Landmark by City Council resolution on May 15, 2003.

As a matter of policy, all City of Newport projects are subject to design review by the HPC for their effects on significant heritage preservation resources. Compliance with the city's heritage preservation codes and comprehensive plan is mandatory.

Historical Significance

The Newport Library meets established criteria for historical significance on the basis of its association with events that have made an important contribution to the broad patterns of local history. Specifically, it is locally significant in the area of social history because of its links to the Newport Library and Reading Room (established in 1889), the Newport Woman's Club (1892-1971), and the broad patterns of settlement and community development. It is also significant for its architectural history values as a rare, well preserved example of nineteenth century religious architecture which shows the influence of both vernacular and stylized design modes.

Preservation Vision

The Newport Library will be preserved in place and rehabilitated for the benefit of the citizens of Newport and surrounding communities. The City of Newport will be the responsible governmental agency for all decisions relating to preservation, protection, rehabilitation, and maintenance of the property. It is anticipated that the Washington County Library will continue to administer and use the building as a branch public library. However, because staffing and budgetary constraints will probably force the county to curtail library services, the city and the county will need to explore sustainable alternatives to traditional public library programs. Key elements of the long-term preservation vision include, but are not limited to:

- Provide a compatible use for the property that requires minimal alteration of the building exterior;
- Rehabilitate the exterior and interior to allow an efficient contemporary use while preserving those features which are significant to its historical, architectural, and cultural values;
- Restore the original clapboard siding, lancet windows, and belfry;
- Integrate an appropriately designed addition that is architecturally compatible with the historic building; and
- At such time as it is no longer needed for a traditional public library, provide for a compatible reuse that requires minimal alteration of the building and its site.

In the short term, preservation efforts will need to emphasize maintenance and repairs, as well as planning, rather than accurately recovering the form and details of the building as it appeared at a particular period of time. At present, the preservation treatment concept does not encompass full-scale restoration of interior features.

General Standards for Preservation Treatments

All work will be carried out in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.¹

Functional Constraints

Historically, there has been a significant shortage of space for both library patrons and staff. Library service is further constrained by inadequate restroom facilities (the single unisex toilet room is located behind the staff service area).

Some of the building's obvious shortcomings could be overcome by creating a new "virtual library" that would emphasize digital collections and online access to information resources in a self-serve environment.

Accessibility Issues

In its current configuration, the historic building does not meet the standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for barrier-free wheelchair access.

¹The current standards for preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction were developed by the Department of the Interior in 1992 and codified in 1995 (Title 36 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 68); see Kay D. Weeks and Anne E. Grimmer, *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring & Recycling Historic Buildings* (Washington: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1995). The City of Newport has adopted the Secretary of the Interior's Standards as its authoritative guide for design review.

Historical Documentation

The primary sources of documentary data for this property are the minute books of the Newport village council and library board (1889-present), the records of the Newport Woman's Club (1892-1971), back issues of the *Community Life* (1929-1931) and contemporary Twin Cities area newspapers. Narrative historical accounts are found in the writings of local historian M. Virginia Yelland, which are illustrated with historical photographs.²

No original architectural plans, drawings, or original construction documents are known to exist. Photographic documentation of the building exterior and interior is limited but adequate for planning purposes.

Archaeological Resources

Archaeological survey should be conducted to identify and evaluate the significance of prehistoric or historic cultural deposits which may be preserved intact within the property boundaries.

Archaeological investigation of the stone-lined baptismal pool located under the floor at the west end of the library (believed to date from circa 1868 and used for baptism by immersion until the 1880s) should precede any major structural work.

Artifacts associated with the original building construction and subsequent use of the property may be preserved in situ within the cellar, crawl spaces, and the builder's trench along the outside of the foundation walls.

²*A Century of Library Service in Newport, Minnesota 1889-1989* (privately printed, 1988), and *The Unique Legacy of Red Rock and Newport, Minnesota, 1847 to 1989* (Newport Centennial Committee, 1989), pp. 213-215, 240-242, 283-284, and passim.

PART III

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

The Environment

Decisions relating to new site work must be evaluated in light of the past appearance of the historic property and should be based on actual knowledge, as documented in historic photographs and written records.

Proper site and roof drainage should be provided to prevent water from splashing against the building. Surface runoff should drain away from the building.

Walls

The existing wood siding that is deteriorated should be repaired or replaced, where necessary. If replacement is unavoidable, the new wooden siding pieces should duplicate the existing material in size, shape, and texture.

Clean the siding only when necessary to halt deterioration or to remove stains, graffiti, etc.

The existing siding has changed the appearance of the building; it also may have obscured or destroyed some small-scale historic architectural features and probably conceals damage to the wood sheathing and framing. It should be removed and the original clapboard siding restored.

Roof

The roof shape, which is an essential character defining element of the property, should be preserved.

Ongoing maintenance to provide a weather-tight roof covering and adequate roof drainage should be a high priority.

The original wood shingle roof should be restored. In the interim, deteriorated asphalt shingle roofing should be replaced with new material that matches the existing in composition, size, shape, color, and texture.

The original belfry (bell tower) should be restored.³ The reconstructed belfry should accurately recover the details of the historic structure as documented in archival photographs.

Appropriate gutters and downspouts should be installed and kept in good repair.

Foundation

The limestone rubble foundation walls should be retained without the application of any waterproofing treatment.

When repointing the foundation walls, the old mortar should be duplicated in composition, joint size and profile, color, and texture.

The stonework should be cleaned only when necessary to halt deterioration and using the gentlest method possible.

Windows and Doors

The existing window and door openings should be retained on all elevations. Door and window openings should not be enlarged or reduced window to fit new stock doors or window sash.

³The original church bell was given to the Newport Lutheran Church when the belfry was removed in the 1930s; it is believed to have been retained in the possession of the church, which is located at 900 Fifteenth Street.

Original window sash and frames should be retained, whenever possible. If replacement window sash and frames are necessary, they should duplicate the originals in material, design, and hardware.

The combination metal storm windows and screens should be replaced because they are inappropriate and detract from the building's historic character. The new storm windows and screens should not have vertical or horizontal divisions which conflict with the divisions of the historic double-hung sash.

Wood storm windows and storm doors should be visually unobtrusive and installed without damaging existing frames.

The main entry doors should be replaced with traditionally styled new doors that meet current building and fire safety codes and are visually compatible with the historic building.

Entrances

Historically, the main entrance to the building was through the large double-doors facing Seventh Avenue. This should remain the primary and ceremonial entrance, with or without an ADA compliant wheelchair access.⁴

The existing concrete wheelchair ramp and landing detracts from the historic mood and character of the property and should be removed. Any replacement handicap access ramp should be differentiated from and visually compatible with the massing, volume, proportions, and scale of the historic façade.⁵

⁴As built, the front doors opened into a vestibule, from which interior doors (one designated for use by women, the other by men) led into the church sanctuary. The vestibule was substantially altered when the library was remodeled in the 1960s.

⁵A new entrance located on a secondary elevation may be required to satisfy ADA requirements.

Exterior Finishes

Discover the historic paint colors of the building and repaint with those colors.

Because modern lumber is sized smaller than historic dimension lumber, new wood siding and trim pieces should be cut to match the old pieces exactly.

All exterior wood surfaces should be painted.

Landscaping

A landscape plan should be developed and implemented. Landscape features such as flower beds, shrubbery, gardens, walkways, signs, lights, and outdoor art should be compatible with the historic building in size, scale, material, and color.⁶

Mature trees and other established plantings that reflect the property's history should be identified and retained unless they are dead, dying, diseased, or pose a safety hazard. Whenever a tree is cut down, it should be replaced with an appropriate species.

Avoid garden ornaments and sculpture which are incompatible with the mood and character of the historic property.

Although they were rare in Newport during the property's period of historical significance, an appropriately designed formal garden would contribute to adaptive use of the property; the preferred location would be the side or rear yard area.

⁶Early views indicate the library environment was not elaborately landscaped, although the building was surrounded by flower beds and shrubbery similar to nearby residential properties. Streetscape views show the building framed by deciduous trees and low hedges. Both Seventh Avenue and Fourth Street were historically lined with elms, maples, and other traditional shade trees.

Flower beds should be used to create continuity between the different outdoor parts of the historic property.

The amount of impervious hardscape should be minimized wherever possible. Paved walkways should not be part of any garden plan. Gravel paths should be used to provide pedestrian circulation inside the library grounds.

The concrete walkway leading to the main entrance contributes to the property's inviting atmosphere and is needed to provide year-round, all-weather pedestrian access.

A detached concrete walkway should be built to connect the front of the historic property with the proposed ADA compliant entrance to the proposed building addition. Brick, concrete, slate, stone, or loose gravel (class 5) would be acceptable materials.

The front yard should not be enclosed by a fence. If the side and rear yards are fenced, it should be a wrought-iron fence not above 3-1/2 feet high to allow visual access to the property from the street.

New street improvements, such as street lighting and signs, should be compatible with the historic character of the property.

Plantings should be used to screen utility installations.

Interior Features and Finishes

Plans for providing patron amenities in the library should seek opportunities to create spaces that are seamless with the building's historic character.

Discover the original paint colors, finishes, wallpaper, and lighting fixtures before undertaking any major renovation of the interior.

The mezzanine level should be removed and the vestibule area should be restored to its pre-1965 appearance.

The false ceiling should be removed and the four chandeliers should be restored to their pre-1940 appearance.

The floor and raised platform at the west end of the reading room (originally the location of the church pulpit and access to the under-floor baptismal tank, subsequently occupied by the librarian's desk) should be restored to their circa 1900 appearance.

Pre-1965 vintage interior features and finishes such as doors, doorways, windows, moldings, flooring, plasterwork, and lighting fixtures, should be identified and preserved in place, whenever possible.

Planning for removal of nonhistoric structural elements should take into account the special problems inherent in the structural system of the building. Weakened or deteriorated structural members should be repaired or, where necessary, replaced.

System retrofits for heating, ventilating, air conditioning, electrical, plumbing, and fire protection should be made as unobtrusive as possible and placed in areas where they are not visible to visitors.

New Construction

A new, architecturally harmonious addition should be constructed on the rear of the historic building to provide an ADA-compliant access and more programmable space. The addition should incorporate an on-grade entrance with a vestibule on the side facing Fourth Street, a basement storage area, ADA-compliant men's and women's restroom facilities, and a barrier-free internal passage to the historic building.

The addition should be visually compatible with the massing, volume, height, façade proportions, and scale of the historic building and construction should not destroy significant historic fabric or architectural details.⁷

The exterior materials and details of the addition should relate to, but not necessarily match, those of the historic building.

The addition should be designed so that if it were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic building would be unimpaired.

Archaeological survey should precede any excavation work that would disturb the terrain around or underneath the historic building.

Construction of a garage, storage shed, or other type of accessory building should not be allowed on the library grounds.

Mechanical Equipment

Modern heating, ventilating, air conditioning, plumbing, and electrical equipment which have no historical counterparts should be placed where it cannot be seen from public spaces.

Installation of fire detection and fire protection systems should be designed to require the least possible alteration to the structural integrity and physical appearance of the building.

Mechanical equipment that is placed on the ground out of doors should be screened from view with fencing or plantings.

⁷ For guidance on the design of additions for historic buildings, see Anne E. Grimmer and Kay D. Weeks, *New Exterior Additions to Historic Buildings: Preservation Concerns*, Preservation Brief 14 (Washington: National Park Service, 1998).

Gas and electrical meters should be located on the back (west) side of the building.

Energy Efficiency

The goals of energy efficiency and historic preservation are important and care should be taken so that one is not achieved at the expense of the other.⁸

The amount of heat loss through the walls is probably relatively small compared to that lost through the door, windows, and doors. Before installing any kind of large, visually intrusive energy retrofit, undertake improvement of the building's energy efficiency by installing thermal insulation in unheated places, weather stripping around doors and windows, sealing foundation cracks, and installing storm windows.

Solar panels and similar devices should not be installed on the roof of the historic building where they are visible from the public right-of-way.

Handicap Accessibility

Comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in such a manner that the essential character of the historic property is preserved intact.

Safety and Security

Work with the city building official, fire marshal, and others to investigate alternative life and fire safety measures that respect the building's historic integrity. Comply with all safety and code requirements in such a manner that the essential character of the historic property is preserved intact.

⁸The building was heated with stoves burning wood and coal up until 1952, when an oil furnace was installed in the cellar. The oil furnace was replaced with a natural gas burning forced-air heating system circa 1960.

Adequate fire and smoke detection equipment should be installed inside the building. These devices should not alter important architectural features and historic spaces.

Security measures should not affect the appearance of the property. This includes exterior lighting on the front and sides of the historic building, strong locks for doors and windows, and electronic alarm systems.

Outdoor security lighting should utilize genuine early-twentieth century lighting fixtures or accurate reproductions. Installation of light fixtures should not damage historic fabric. Architectural lighting should employ full cut-off lighting fixtures to promote safety, security, and energy conservation.

Install adequate fire detection and prevention equipment in a manner that does not damage the building's appearance or fabric.

Signage

The design, lettering, and content of signs should be kept simple and straightforward, using simple shapes (which can include symbols) that are sized not to hide important architectural features. The colors of signs should blend with the colors of the building.

Signs, including banners and flags, should be complementary of the historic character of the property and compliant with the city's sign ordinance.

The curved wooden sign over the front doors that formerly identified the building as the "Newport Public Library" (removed in the 1960s) should be restored.

The free-standing lawn sign that was installed in 1993 should be retained until an appropriate landscaping and accessibility design is implemented.⁹

Exterior signs should have the capability of being illuminated for evening visibility. However, internally illuminated signs are not appropriate. Indirect lighting is preferred. Avoid unshielded, high-intensity lighting.

If signs must be attached to the historic building, they should be flush-mounted. Projecting signs would not be appropriate.

Painted window signs should be allowed.

Parking

Parking should be confined to Seventh Avenue and Fourth Street. Parking cars anywhere on the library grounds should not be allowed.

The visual impact of the car parking area that was installed in front of the library as part of the reconstruction of Seventh Avenue should be reduced by installing a planting strip (hedge or flower beds) across the front of the property.

Car parking along Fourth Street should be screened from view from the library.

⁹The original wooden sign was fabricated by the F. A. Marko Sign Company of Newport. The 1993 sign was created by Frank Marko's grandson, Steven Marko.

Historical Interpretation

A visitor information center should be developed at the library to serve as one of the primary outlets for information about Newport heritage landmark properties and preservation.

Interpretive media should include a kiosk, one or more traditional historical markers and plaques, signs, exhibits, interactive modules, brochures, and a website.¹⁰

While the Newport Branch Library is administered by the Washington County Library, the City should continue to retain for its sole use an area within the library for historical displays and exhibits.

Barrier-free accessibility should be provided for all interpretive programming.

¹⁰ See the *Heritage Site Interpretation Plan* prepared by Robert C. Vogel for the Newport Heritage Preservation Commission (July, 2006).

PART IV IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

To implement the Heritage Resource Management Plan for the Newport Library, the City of Newport should:

- 1) Adopt the Heritage Resource Management Plan by City Council resolution as the authoritative guide to be used by City officials and citizens to plan for the preservation, protection, and use of the Newport Village Hall.
- 2) Direct the City Administrator to regularly monitor activities at the historic property and conduct annual inspections of the building to detect any signs of natural deterioration, neglect, wear and tear, or abuse.
- 3) Develop a building maintenance plan which takes into account the historical and architectural character of the building.
- 4) Develop plans and specifications for constructing an appropriate structural addition to the historic building that would make possible an efficient contemporary use while preserving those features of the property which are historically significant.
- 5) Develop a restoration master plan to recover the form and details of the property as it appeared at a particular period of time (to be determined) by means of removal of later work and by replacing missing historic features.
- 6) Partner with the Washington County Library to search for ways to make the Newport Library an exciting destination.

- 7) Search for a nonprofit developer to work with the city to rehabilitate and adaptively reuse the library.
- 8) Identify potential sources of pro bono technical assistance (such as colleges, universities, architectural and engineering firms).
- 9) Establish line-items for building maintenance, repairs, renovation, and capital improvements at city-owned historic properties as part of the general fund budget and appropriate such funds as the city council may deem necessary.