

HISTORIC NEW ENGLAND

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HISTORIC NEW ENGLAND LAUNCHES TRANSFORMATIONAL PUBLIC/PRIVATE REDEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE IN MASSACHUSETTS GATEWAY CITY OF HAVERHILL

Historic New England Center for Preservation and Collections to form centerpiece of proposed cultural district; Bold vision unveiled to support community, social, environmental, and commercial revitalization

HAVERHILL, MA, JUNE 29, 2023--Historic New England, the largest and most comprehensive independent preservation organization in the United States, is launching a transformational redevelopment initiative in Haverhill, Massachusetts, it was announced today by Vin Cipolla, president and CEO.

Plans include reimagining over three acres of historic buildings and vacant property in the heart of downtown Haverhill at the doorstep of Commuter Rail and Amtrak. The new cultural destination and mixed-use district offers approximately 600,000 square feet of potential development, anchored by the new Historic New England Center for Preservation and Collections. The organization owns the world's largest collection of New England artifacts.



Design concept rendering, TenBerke Architects

[The Haverhill Center](#) will feature creative exhibits from Historic New England's 125,000-piece collection of historic objects, 1.5 million archival documents, interactive programming, demonstrations, and other activities. Early design concepts also include retail and commercial space, artist live-work space, housing and a hotel, and other uses. The organization is building a team of experts and is launching an effort to attract public and private partners to realize redevelopment of the area. The new cultural district will strengthen local

and regional businesses, arts, environmental and social institutions, and significantly draw new visitors and revenue to the area.

“We are committed to establishing a very public presence in Haverhill,” commented Cipolla. “Historic New England is an extraordinary organization with thirty-eight museums across the region, majestic farms and landscapes, and award-winning programs for both children and adults. We believe it’s now time to open our collections headquarters in Haverhill, reimagined, to a wide audience with exhibitions and education programs, to benefit the local community and visitors from around the region and the world. Our downtown real estate can be activated to make a dynamic contribution to Haverhill’s center, while helping us carry forward our mission to share New England’s history.”

Added Cipolla, “As a cultural leader, we have a rare opportunity to generate social capital and cohesion in Haverhill by leveraging our extensive collections and physical spaces in partnership with other public and private organizations. We envision using culture as a catalyst for developing dramatically improved amenities that contribute to a more sustainable, livable, and resilient city, anticipating that the impact of the downtown cultural district will reverberate internationally. Given Haverhill’s easily accessible location in New England, this district presents a major opportunity for transit-oriented mixed-use development in the city, with a nationally recognized civic and cultural institution at its heart. We look forward to being a strong part of the continued revitalization of Haverhill’s downtown.”

Noted Deborah L. Allinson, chair of the Board of Trustees of Historic New England, “With the expanded and reimagined Center for Preservation and Collections, a key strategic priority for our Board, we will be helping to fuel revitalization in Haverhill. Culture has proven to be an extremely successful driver of economic impact and public engagement both in Massachusetts and around the country, adding some one trillion dollars to the US economy in 2021, and 135,000 jobs in the state. We expect that local business, cultural and educational communities, as well as Haverhill residents, will experience powerful, positive impacts from this initiative and our investment.”

Haverhill Mayor James J. Fiorentini added, “We are thrilled with this incredible and transformative development, the latest and one of the best of our twenty-year efforts to redevelop downtown. We rezoned downtown years ago making projects like this possible, but it took Historic New England and their team to bring it to fruition. Historic New England’s bold, future-oriented vision for this new cultural district is tremendously exciting given its potential impact on strengthening the many facets of the greater Haverhill community. This project puts Haverhill, once again, on the map and will bring thousands of visitors every year to our downtown and will be an incredible boost to our downtown restaurants and businesses.”

Representative Andres X. “Andy” Vargas added, “Historic New England’s cultural leadership will play a vital role in the ongoing revitalization of Haverhill, and beyond. It was an honor to secure state funding for their Haverhill expansion. My office is pleased to be partnering with Historic

New England CEO Vin Cipolla and the organization on a vision to deliver resources, cultural amenities, and revitalization to Haverhill's downtown transit center. I'm looking forward to the cultural and economic impact of their expanded offerings that will draw people to downtown Haverhill."

"We look forward to collaborating with Historic New England's exciting redevelopment plans for its expanded presence in downtown Haverhill," said State Senator Barry R. Finegold. "There's no question that Haverhill is poised for culture-driven mixed-use development which can deliver many benefits for the community."

Historic New England has already been working with the Greater Haverhill Chamber of Commerce to enrich its thinking and to connect and collaborate with the business community, talking with CEOs, entrepreneurs, community leaders, makers, and artists. Added Alex Eberhardt, the Chamber's president and CEO, "Historic New England's initiative is good for our business community, with its forward-looking dimensions and commitment to drawing or retaining new visitors and residents to our area."

REIMAGINING THE HISTORIC NEW ENGLAND CENTER FOR PRESERVATION AND COLLECTIONS

The Haverhill Center will dramatically expand and innovatively **reimagine how people experience history** through Historic New England's unmatched [collections and archives](#),



Design concept rendering, Brandon Haw Architecture

dynamically building on the unique attributes of the historic factory buildings, urban landscapes, its proximity to transit, and potential for compelling new architecture. Through **creative, multi-dimensional storytelling and state-of-the-art technology**, the Haverhill Center will **engage visitors' imaginations by exploring and discovering connections between today's world and the history that informs it** with world-class exhibitions, programs, performances, and experiences, as well as **community partnerships and lifelong learning offerings**.

Links between the past, present, and future will connect visitors with such topics as sustainability, preservation, collecting, design, and culture. The Haverhill Center will welcome people from down the street and across the globe, fostering social connections and creative inquiry through dynamic public indoor and outdoor spaces.

Observed Cipolla, "The Center for Preservation and Collections will be so much more than the sum of its amazing parts. We expect that the breadth and creativity of the Haverhill Center's

programs and experiences will not only bring in local residents and those already interested in preservation and history, but also attract thousands of visitors new to Haverhill and the region.

“In telling the full New England story, especially the stories of historically marginalized peoples, together with highlighting meaningful objects from Historic New England’s unparalleled collections and using cutting-edge technology, we eagerly welcome this opportunity to connect our complex past with the present, and to explore their relevance to our collective futures. Beyond opening the superb resources of the Haverhill Center, we anticipate being a gateway to Haverhill and its many businesses, services, and homes, as well as offering many other public amenities. In the coming months, engaging the Haverhill community and hearing their thoughts and ideas will be an important part of our work.”

CATALYST FOR THE GREATER HAVERHILL COMMUNITY



Left: Photo Courtesy Andrew Davis: Right: Design concept rendering, Höweler +Yoon

A major downtown non-profit property owner in Haverhill, Massachusetts, Historic New England recently completed the acquisition of the Burgess Building (143 Essex St.) and two associated lots. In conjunction with the Lang Building (151 Essex St.) and its associated lot which the organization had leased since 1988 and has owned since 2006, Historic New England now owns 3.2 prime acres in Haverhill adjacent to the Amtrak and MBTA Commuter Rail station, situated approximately thirty-five miles north of Boston and near three major highways. The assembly of property offers a development opportunity of a total up to approximately 600,000 square feet, leveraging two large existing historic buildings (comprising 295,000 square feet) and three open lots along Essex Street, a major thoroughfare at the heart of downtown.

In the early twentieth century, the Lang and Burgess buildings constituted one of the largest concrete shoe factories in the world. Historic New England anticipates adapting these factory buildings and its three additional parcels into a vibrant cultural center and partnering with third parties to develop uses such as residential, commercial, entertainment, hospitality, retail, and dining facilities, as well as an improved streetscape that would include public art, lighting, signage, and greenspace.

In 2022, Historic New England asked three world-renowned architectural firms, TenBerke Architects (formerly Deborah Berke Partners), Brandon Haw Architecture, and Höweler + Yoon, to each create a design provocation reimagining how the institution’s campus and unmatched collections and archives could be rethought as well as maximize public engagement. They were

asked to explore how Historic New England’s holdings could be unleashed as a catalyst for a diverse and sustainable Haverhill reinvigoration. Their holistic initial concepts took into consideration Haverhill’s proximity to Boston and its unusually convenient transit access to the region. The provocations represented early preliminary project thinking.

Each of the architects presented dynamic and [imaginative concepts](#) that focused on economic, social, and environmental resilience in the public realm and were presented to some 600 cultural and civic leaders at the Historic New England Summit in Worcester, Massachusetts, last October. Designed to provoke and encourage creative thinking about possibilities in Haverhill, the presentations included enhancing the sustainability of the factories, developing public green spaces/parks, culture-oriented hotels, food options, a visitors’ center, upgrading the existing transit station, and rethinking other transit portals like the Merrimack River and its frontage.

Noted Cipolla, “With the addition of the 143 Essex building, and the two associated development lots, to our other properties, Historic New England now has an unprecedented opportunity to expand and partner in Haverhill. Our two Essex Street buildings currently are home to over thirty third-party commercial and non-profit tenants, as well as our collections, photography labs, conservation studios, and administrative offices. We will be looking for short-term commercial and non-profit tenants that complement our holdings.”

PRECEDENTS



From left: MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA; Powerhouse Arts, Brooklyn, NY, Photo: Albert Vecerka/ESTO

Leading institutions around the world have successfully reimaged and revitalized urban areas using culture as a catalyst including MASS MoCA in North Adams, Massachusetts, and Powerhouse Arts in Brooklyn, New York. Other initiatives are in process across the country and around the world.

HAVERHILL HISTORY



Postcard, c.1910-20 “Burgess, Lang & Co. Mfg. Buildings, Haverhill, Mass. Largest Concrete Shoe Factories in the World.”

Haverhill is one of a group of midsize “Gateway Cities” designated for support by the State of Massachusetts because of their importance to local and regional economies and the opportunities they offer to expand on their historical importance, a deep and authentic architectural heritage, and potential for transformative economic and social redevelopment. Historically, Haverhill was known as the Queen Slipper City, the site of one of the world’s largest manufacturing centers for shoes. With the loss of many of its manufacturing businesses and the subsequent decline of jobs,

generally, in the Northeast, Haverhill is in the process of resetting in order to build on its past and promote its promise.

ABOUT HISTORIC NEW ENGLAND

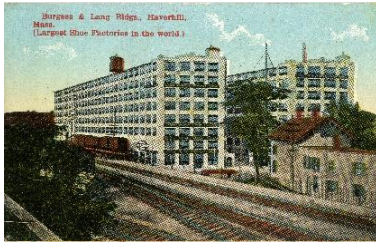
[Historic New England](#), founded as the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities in 1910, is the largest and most comprehensive independent preservation organization in the United States and welcomes hundreds of thousands of visitors each year to thirty-eight exceptional museums and landscapes, including several coastal farms. The organization operates its Center for Preservation and Collections in Haverhill and has the world's largest collection of New England artifacts comprising more than 125,000 decorative arts objects, and 1.5 million archival documents, including photographs, architectural drawings, manuscripts, and ephemera. Engaging education programs for youth, adults, and preservation professionals, and award-winning exhibitions and publications are offered in person and virtually. The Historic New England Preservation Easement program is a national leader and protects 121 privately owned historic properties through the region.

OTIS HOUSE INITIATIVE

Historic New England's transformational redevelopment in Haverhill is unfolding concurrently with the reimagining of its Otis House Boston campus, home to the organization's Library and Archives reading room. The revitalized campus will serve as a gateway to New England history and culture, anchoring the neighborhood with enhanced visitor services and educational opportunities at the 1796 Otis mansion, as well as expanding the uses of the abutting nineteenth-century row houses. This project is happening in collaboration with the City of Boston and the redevelopment of the adjacent West End Branch of the Boston Public Library. The Boston-based, globally recognized architecture firm NADAAA is supporting Historic New England in design development.

NEXT STEPS

In the coming months, Historic New England will be launching a comprehensive capital campaign with the Haverhill Center transformation as a foundational part of this effort. Community conversations soliciting input from the public in Haverhill and surrounding areas also will begin during this time. As part of getting to know the Haverhill community, Historic New England will be sponsoring or participating in Haverhill and regional events ([upcoming events](#)) over the summer, including the Haverhill Farmers Market in downtown Haverhill and Merrimack Valley Black and Brown Voices Black and Brown Owned Market at the Center for Preservation and Collections.



Past



Present



Future

From left: Postcard, c.1910-1920 "Burgess & Lang Buildings, Haverhill, Mass. Largest Shoe Factories in the World;" The Historic New England Haverhill Center today; Design concept rendering, TenBerke Architects