

# Committee solidifies plans for updated Old Town Hall

By **AMANDA PINTO**

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STAMFORD—City officials last week huddled around a doll house-sized model showing proposed renovations to Old Town Hall during a meeting to discuss plans to update the historic building.

The Old Town Hall Redevelopment Agency [OTHR] held its inaugural meeting on Aug. 17, and as members viewed the three-dimensional design for the first time, they focused on the large glass sail that would connect the existing structure to a more modernized addition.

“The building has essentially been hibernating for 20 years,” Director of Economic Development Mike Freimuth said. “I personally wanted something exotic — not to the point of destroying the building — we’re waking it up.”

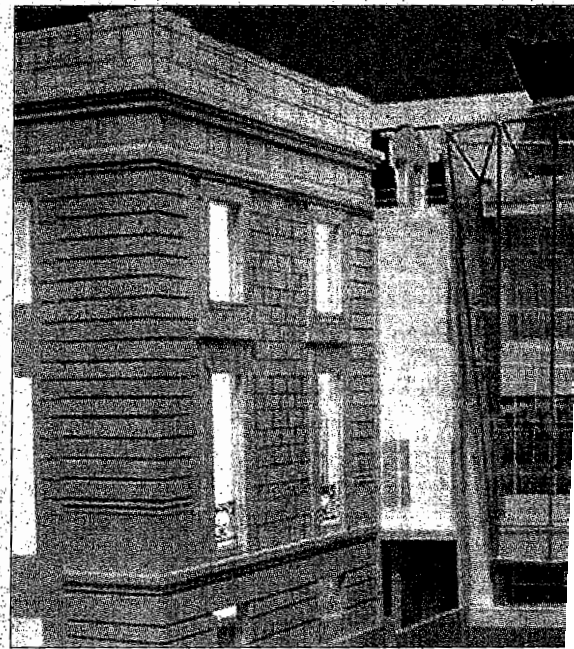
In 2005, Head of Engineering Antonio Iadarola told The Stamford Times that the only serious structural modifications would involve allowing handicapped access. The proposed triangular glass addition that would face Heritage Park will provide such access, while also adding aesthetic appeal, Freimuth said after the meeting.

The renovated Old Town Hall will house both public and private space, with about 20,000 square feet available for private tenants, according to the city’s Request for Proposals [RFP]. Tenants were required to submit proposals by Aug. 19, and after the committee reviews the applications, it will

hold interviews for prospective occupants. The RFP states that tenants will begin their leases on Dec. 1.

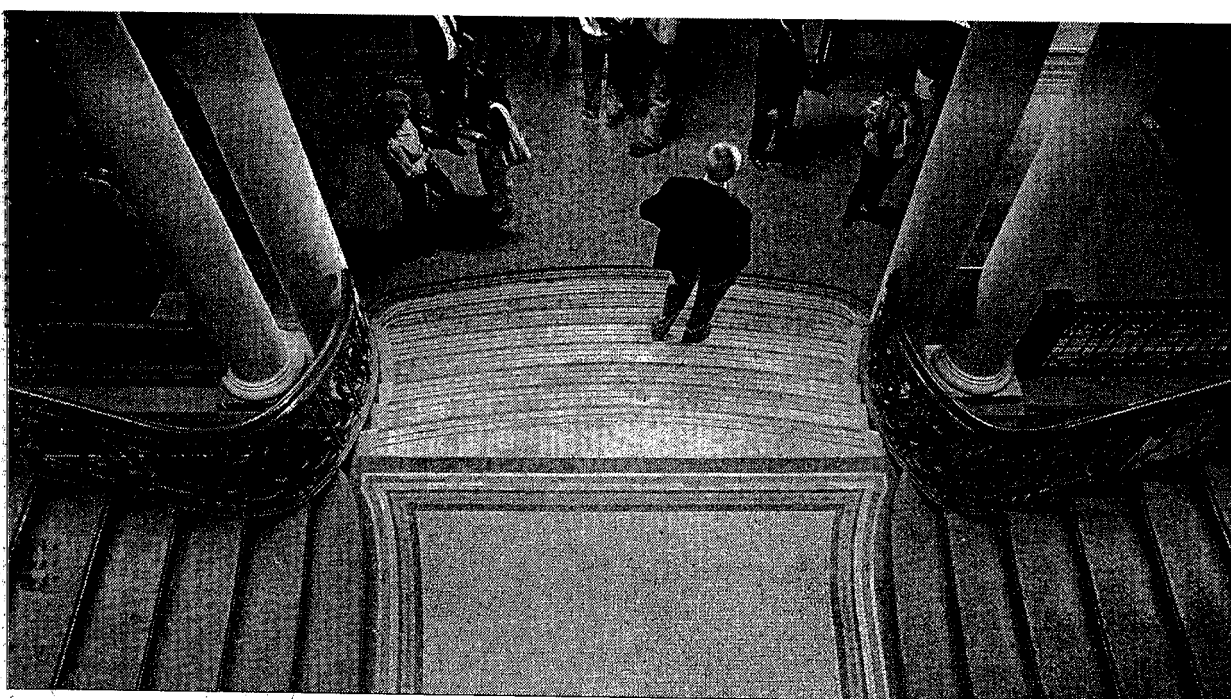
Fuller & D’Angelo Project Architect Marc Harary explained that current plans call for an entrance through a

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**NEW TOWN HALL** This photo depicts the for the Old Town Hall. A new committee the building will be renovated.

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**OLD TO NEW** Above, Stephen Osman, chairman of the urban redevelopment commission is framed by the sets of stairs in the Old Town Hall on its 100th birthday last year. Below, an architectural rendering of what could be.

# Old

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museum gallery, with glass doors leading toward building's main staircase. Under current plans, only tenants would be able to pass through those doors, Harary said. Some OTHRA members expressed concern that new plans cater to tenants at the expense of public access.

"I'm horrified that the public is going to be excluded from where the staircase is," Former Speaker of the House Moira Lyons told fellow members. "I'd always envisioned they'd be able to walk around."

Freimuth said the committee also needs to consider how unlimited public access could impact tenant privacy.

"If we bring in tenants who are going to pay their freight, we need to secure them and not let people just go walking around their space," he said.

Lyons, however, said OTHRA should revisit the issue, allowing the public admittance to the staircase at the focal point of the building.

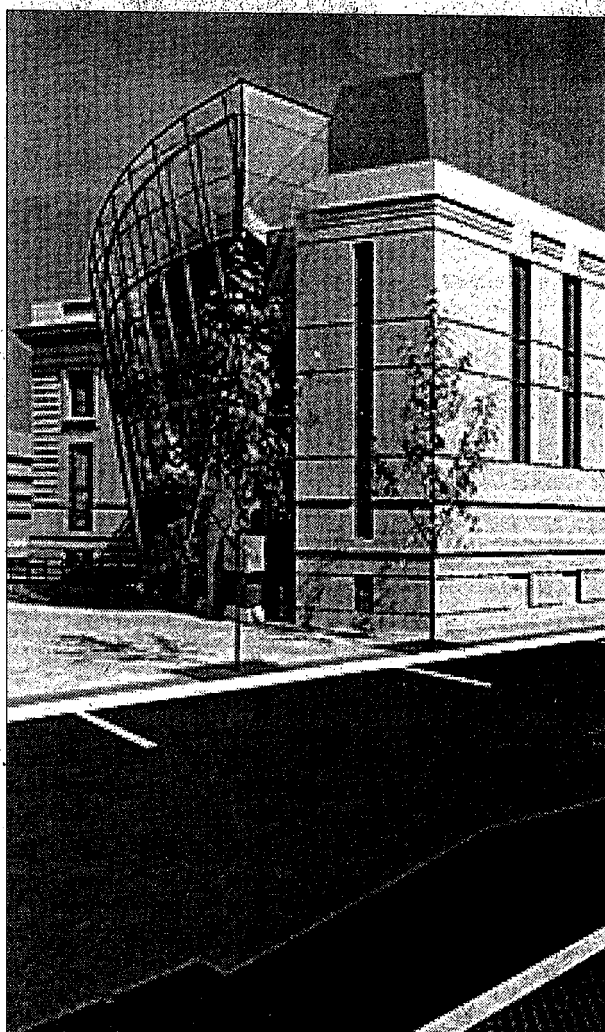
"I don't like [the current plan] and I don't think the public will like it, how they're locked out. That's how I think they'll view it," Lyons said.

Harary, who called the access debate an operational concern rather than a problem that would call for structural changes, said the project has been complex because of the need to preserve the old building's history while creating a modern addition.

"This is probably one of the most complicated projects that I myself have ever worked on," Harary said after the meeting. "The concept is going to be that you're going to be able to tell when you go from the restoration — the old interior — to the new building."

The Mayoral Steering Committee, which was responsible for the renovation before an ordinance to create OTHRA passed on May 8, signed off on the current architectural plans in April. OTHRA must still give the plan its blessing, Freimuth said.

Jeff Pardo, of the city engineering bureau, said the sidewalks have been finished, and the front plaza is



ed cost is \$14.5 million, and the city is about \$1 million short, Freimuth said.

"There still may be a gap between what we finally design and what it costs to construct," Freimuth said.