

CASE STATEMENT

Our Mission

We seek to help our Meeting House, a community landmark, recover its original purpose as a community resource, as well as a place of worship.

The Context and the Opportunity

Rising on the hill above the town, Church on the Hill's Meeting House is an iconic building in Lenox. Dedicated in 1806, it has since attracted many visitors, especially those interested in exploring the nearby cemetery, and it is frequently photographed and depicted in art. The Meeting House marks the northern gateway to the Lenox Cultural District, and its recently restored clock and the bell sounding the hours are beloved features of everyday life in the town.

The Meeting House hosts Sunday morning worship services from springtime through December, but it is often empty and generally underutilized. It offers great potential to benefit the wider community as a venue for all kinds of events, activities, and performances. Although Lenox features other sites for community gatherings, few are affordable to permanent residents; fewer still combine the historical significance, beauty, and exceptional acoustics of the Meeting House.

The Plan

When it opened, the building was known as the Lenox Meeting House. It hosted municipal and community meetings during the week and worship services on Sundays. Today we seek to recover its multiple uses and expand community use of the building. This will entail renovating and preserving the building for future generations, as well as opening it to new audiences for new occasions. Several years ago, Church on the Hill retained Foresight Architectural, a nationally renowned firm specializing in historical renovation, to develop a master plan to improve the accessibility and versatility of the building. The principal modifications involve the interior spaces.

Since approved conceptually by the Massachusetts Historical Commission, the master plan preserves the historical character of the Meeting House, which will continue to house regular worship services. For the building to attract new users—as a venue ranging from community meals to family reunions, holiday celebrations, concerts and dances, theater productions, craft fairs, yoga classes, after-school programs, flower shows, and beyond—the pews will become moveable on new flooring. A full kitchenette will be added, along with more efficient heating and lighting, and new entry stairs. The building will become ADA-compliant, with a fully accessible bathroom, as well as a new entry ramp and lifts to provide access to the front stage and re-opened balcony.

The Goal and the Timing

The cost to restore and revamp the Meeting House will exceed \$1 million. Once construction begins, the project can be completed in less than a year. Organizers, including Friends of the Lenox Meeting House, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, are presently mounting a campaign to raise the necessary capital with the unanimous support of the congregation as well as of many community leaders. The successful completion of this project will preserve the Meeting House as a community landmark that also serves as a vital community resource.