City Hall Notebook: MCPHS parking plan praised

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Speaking of the Historical Commission, it met for informational purposes with representatives of MCPHS University to discuss the school's plans to gut a building it owns at Mechanic and Commercial streets and create what amounts to a parking garage on the ground level while preserving the second-story office for future school-related use.

MCPHS had originally thought about razing the building, which was constructed in 1926, to make way for much-needed surface parking for the university's newest program, the New England School of Acupuncture at 19 Norwich St.

But Todd E. Brodeur, a lawyer representing MCPHS, said the university re-thought those plans and worked with Preservation Worcester on coming up with a re-use plan for the 41,000-square-foot building, which is listed as a Massachusetts historic property.

Commission Chairman Andrew Shveda praised MCPHS for "really thinking outside the box on this" and taking an extra step to preserve the building.

"This is a solution that will give you more than what you would have gotten if you simply tore down the building," he said. "It's a direct reflection on the university and what you care about."

Meanwhile, Commission member Robyn Conroy said she hopes the college's plan will inspire other groups about what can be done with historic properties.

"Anything is better than a surface parking lot," she said.