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Holyoke Library honored by Preservation Mass. with Tsongas Award

May 14, 2015 - Construction Design & Engineering

Finegold Alexander Architects' Holyoke Public Library renovation and addition project was given the Paul E. Tsongas Award from Preservation Massachusetts. Preservation Massachusetts' highest honor is named in honor of the late Senator Paul Tsongas and has been given out since 1987.

The project team, including members of Finegold Alexander Architect, the City of Holyoke, and the Library, received the Award at Preservation Massachusetts' annual Paul E. Tsongas Awards Dinner at the Fairmont Copley Plaza. This annual event recognizes and celebrates the efforts and accomplishments of those individuals and organizations that have made significant contributions to preserving the Commonwealth's historic resources. Additional team members include Fontaine Bros. for construction, and Stefura Associates, Inc. for interiors.

Designed by James Clough as a gift in honor of his daughters, the Holyoke Public Library was built in 1902 and is situated in an historic park. A lack of funds, the passage of time and faulty drainage made 40 percent of the interior unusable by the time the library began renovations. The library worked with the Finegold Alexander to create a design that preserved the functioning sections of the historic building, selectively demolished an outdated and potentially dangerous stack wing, and added a larger, compatible addition.

The renovation and addition reflect a significant understanding of how a public library functions in today's society. The new addition and historic renovation of the original library were successfully combined to create a spirited sense of spaces, relegating neither new or old to a subordinate position. The project featured many sustainable design elements and is slated for LEED Gold certification.

The project coordinated closely with the Massachusetts Historical Commission and the Holyoke Historical Commission and benefited from their input. Careful research, attention to detail, and experienced personnel enabled the great success of balancing historic significance with current needs. The library now has 40,000 s/f of space in which to provide services to patrons. Many of the historic features were preserved, including interior murals, and the library now meets Americans with Disabilities Act mandates.

The theme for the 2015 Tsongas Award was "And the Award Goes To" that celebrates the culmination of many years of hard work, investment, vision and collaboration: the completed and restored building.

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