

CONCERNS AND QUESTIONS REGARDING MIXED-USE LIBRARY

8-20-15

1. The following concerns and questions are intended to improve library project results and are based on the understanding there will be a public GO-NO GO vote on the library project in the spring and that very little or no money will have been wasted if the project is rejected by voters.
2. Since it is a library project, will there be a commitment to library users getting convenient, first priority to ALL parking spaces, before both apartment residential and retail parking users?
 - a. This means that library user's parking complaints are resolved by giving them more enforced reserved access to apartment residential and retail parking areas.
 - b. Is this policy now planned, and will it be included in parking agreements? If not, why not?

We are aware of the competing parking demands that exist between library users, retail customers, and residents. We are also aware of the fact that convenient parking is one of the most important features of the library to library users and we are committed to providing first priority convenient parking to users. The library board's primary responsibility is to the library users and agreements that go against their interests would not be acceptable.

Because there are a variety of ways this goal can be accomplished and we are not yet far enough into the design process to have a clear idea of their relative costs and benefits, we do not currently have a parking policy. Developing a solution to the parking problem, by policy, design, or a combination of both is one of our highest priorities.

3. Who has the final say over resolution of library vs. residential vs. retail usage etc. conflicts?
 - a. What is the process to be used for resolving such conflicts so library users are given top priority?

The intent of the mixed-use project is to give the library and its users the highest priority with regard to all decisions. It is first and foremost a library project. Since the plan is still in its earliest tangible planning stages we are still working out the details of the public-private partnership between the City and Ryan Companies.

We recognize that there are potentially competing interests in this arrangement and that the lease-purchase instrument developed to govern the relationships between the mixed-use parties must first and foremost protect the interests of the City, the library, and library users. As the single largest user of the site, the library is in a position of strength.

4. Closing existing 11th street access to the mall parking lot and 7th avenue is a major concern to those living on the south side.
 - a. How will this concern be resolved to the satisfaction of south siders?

Any potential closure of 11th Street would have to be accompanied by an update to the City's adopted Uptown Development Plan and a traffic study. One idea that has been informally discussed by the City Council is to bring 11th and 10th street together further south, providing a direct connection through Marion from Mount Vernon Road all the way to County Home Road and beyond. Other than Highway 13, no other such connections exist.

The study process for realigning 11th street has not started. It would involve neighborhood meetings and opportunities for public input.

5. Why is it realistic to plan on under age 20 library user visits and usage to continue to increase?

- a. More and more of them are getting iPads, Notepads, iPhones and Smart phones etc. that access the internet at low cost.
- b. Why not wait a few years with the library project until such usage trends are better known?

Studies conducted by the Pew Research Center show that although young people use a variety of devices for communication they are more likely to read print books, use books for research, and use the library to get books than older groups.

Pew research also indicate that 72% of Americans live in what they consider a “library household.” Additionally, among parents with minor children living at home, 70% say that a child in the house has visited a public library or bookmobile in the past 12 months.

Taken all together, this means that 72% of all Americans ages 16 and older have either used a public library in the past 12 months or live in a household where another family member or a child is an active recent user of the library.

Market research shows that while the e-book market continues to grow that growth is slowing and stabilizing. Print material is holding its own for adult readers and as of now digital material is cannot substitute for print children’s books.

There no signs that reading books, using print material, and using libraries are in decline and every reason to believe that as Marion’s population increases the use of its library will increase. Marion’s circulation continues to increase year over year rather than declining as would have been originally predicted with the introduction of e-books.

6. How would a mixed-use structure be designed to easily accommodate changes in library, residential or retail space and parking requirements?

The mixed-use building would be developed as flexible space, meaning that fixed walls would be avoided wherever possible. If the library needed more space in the future, it would be as simple a matter as waiting for a lease to run out in adjoining space. If the reverse happened, and the library needed to downsize, library space could be restricted to one floor and the remaining space leased out for other uses.

Marion needs to develop a long term parking plan for the Uptown area. Generally, since this project is in a C-2 zoning district it is not actually required to have off-street parking. This would not be a workable alternative, however. Changes in parking requirements have not in the past been applied to existing uses unless a change is made the building envelope and then the new standards must be met. This means that unless the physical size of the building(s) were to change, parking would be grandfathered in.

7. What are the lessons learned from the existing library building the Board is now dissatisfied with after only 20 years?

Two main lessons were learned. The current library facility opened in 1996 and like almost all libraries built in the mid-1990’s it got caught in between looking forward to the future of library service and looking back at its past.

- **The current building is designed for storing large collections of print material, just-in-case it’s needed rather than efficient collections that provide material just-in-time.**

- The current building did not, could not anticipate radical changes in technology and how they changed the nature of library service
- The current building is a place for things instead of a place for people to meet and connect

From this we learned that library space must be designed for flexibility to accommodate unanticipated change. We also learned that the library must be designed from the inside out. There are interior features of the current building that are clearly driven by the needs of how the building appears from the outside. We learned that form must follow function.

- a. Since the Board says it can't forecast library use or needs beyond 20 years, why does it make sense to build with bricks etc. or costly beauty, aesthetic or appearance enhancements, approaching Taj Mahal characteristics—rather than with functional elegance?

Functional elegance has always been the guiding aesthetic idea behind our thinking about a new library. The Needs Assessment of 201 stresses the following:

- The building should reflect essential characteristics of Marion as a community. It should be a building that the citizens of Marion can immediately identify as their own: by them, of them, for them.
- The look and feel of the building should manifest three aspects: sociability; clearly identifiable as a cultural and artistic institution; and a warm and comfortable coziness. It should manifest the principal of form following function, and it should not be extravagant. To be otherwise is out of character with Marion.

- b. Why wouldn't a simpler, less costly structure be considered as an option?, which could also enhance public acceptance of the project.

The current design thinking is directed toward building a facility that is considerably simpler and more cost-efficient to operate than the current facility. Libraries, because of the nature of their use and purpose, must be built to higher design standards than ordinary office construction. (See Marion Public Library, Request for Qualifications, Chapter 8 Detailed Library Design and Construction Standards.) Having said that, we are committed to work with Ryan Companies to complete the project in the most cost-effective manner possible while not skimping on standards or safety. If this means reducing the size and scope of plans, that's what we'll do.

- c. How much effort has been made to work around, or get relief, from firewall requirements that seem to be dictating demolishing the existing library building? Have experts at such been consulted? Are they city imposed requirements?

Firewall requirement are only one of many issues that affect the cost of renovation and that make that option less desirable than a new facility. A longer and more detailed list of issues is attached. Firewall requirements are driven by the building code and fire code as adopted by the City of Marion and not directly imposed by the City.

Beyond that, providing itself relief from the health and safety building code requirements is not something the City would or should contemplate. As the local enforcer of the building code and fire code, it would not send an appropriate message to private sector builders if the City started to bend the rules just because of cost. The codes are established through research and input from the public sector and building community to provide a balance between cost of construction and public safety.

8. Why wasn't more consideration given to adding a second floor to the existing library and building a branch library in north Marion, as library architects carefully planned?

It would appear that the information presented in the Gazette was either not complete or just incorrect. The existing library was built with the expectation that it could be added to up to 25%, not nearly 100% as is being contemplated now. To add a second floor the entire roof system would have to be removed which would mean the library had to relocate during construction, adding expense to a renovation project that takes away from square footage in the end product. Existing walls are wood frame and will not support the weight of a second floor bearing the weight of library stacks. The in-floor electronic grid system referenced in the article simply does not exist. The building has an in-floor heating system that would make those type of changes cost-prohibitive.

Building a branch library was considered, but quickly abandoned as not being viable at this time. The main reason is operating cost. Even a smaller branch would necessitate adding many more staffers than a newer, simpler facility, plus increase the costs of building operations and maintenance and grounds maintenance. On a lifecycle cost basis it does not make sense at this time. It is likely that a branch will be needed at some point in the future should Marion continue to grow to the north. However, a northern branch should be looked at in the context of serving Marion, Cedar Rapids, Robins, and Hiawatha as those communities all grow north.

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The biggest challenge with the renovation concept is that it uses a large piece of the limited resource to overcome existing conditions in order to set the building up for the actual improvement and expansion. This diminished financial resource then cannot go as far in providing for expansion, improved quality of library service, added flexibility or defining a destination that will have economic impact.

- Extensive demolition and replacement of the slab to introduce power and plumbing;
- Extensive modification of the structure at the east end to accommodate entry/arrival/mixing functions of the library;
- Modification of the structure at the lines of expansion to support new roof forms that integrate with the existing roof aesthetically;
- Additional structural reinforcing of the roof to support drifting loads imposed by additions adjacent to the current roofs;
- Additional column lines along the edge of the existing building where the additions would be constructed. The expansion is most desired to the east where the existing column lines and structural elements are most contorted. Introducing new structure in this area will result in a forest of steel rather than open usable space, thus defeating the intent to eliminate the bottlenecks in the current plan.
- Extensive partitioning of the floor to provide appropriate fire separations to protect occupants – this will limit the range of functional arrangements now and further curtail the library's ability to modify the layout in the future in response to changing service goals.
- Extensive effort to modify the existing residential suburban forms in a commercial urban area into something that will reinforce the architectural heritage and economic goals of the Uptown / City Park Square section of the City: multiple story, brought forward to the build-to line, viable commercial space (height, depth, access, parking) along the 6th Avenue street edge, continuity of form with the other streets fronting the Square.
- Cost of phasing or interim library;
- Extended construction time for renovation over new construction and the attendant costs;
- Extended age of legacy components maintained in a renovation and the need to budget for and endure the disruption of major upgrades as the legacy components expire;
- Integration and control of new and existing mechanical and electrical systems and the attendant performance and cost challenges;
- Limited ability to shape the building to take advantage of passive day lighting strategies;
- Very large interior area with retrospect to perimeter creates a set of interior environments isolated from major amenities including light, views of the surrounding park and street and the special characteristics that distinguish the site from most locations in Marion.
- Limited ability to support an additional expansion without extravagant expense to undo portions of the original or an initial expansion.



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