

Response to City's request for answers to questions regarding plans for the Lawrence Public Library

Prepared by Steve Clark, reviewed by Bruce Flanders

Preface

These questions are both wide reaching and narrow in focus. Many suggest further financial analysis of cost impact to the city and evaluations such as predicting actions relative to the voting public. As an introduction to the answers that follow, let's not miss the forest for the trees. The Library Board felt its overall role in this process should always be focused on evaluating proposals mainly from the position of what location provides the best Library service to Lawrence, Kansas. Any recommendation is the Library Board's solely. And any recommended location does not infer an exhaustive analysis of all the considerations that the City might want to place on the table. The City's desire to seek private partners and the evaluation, negotiation and eventual execution should most appropriately remain in the City's hands as they will be the eventual partners with any private entity. If the recommendations by the Library Board are not chosen as the appropriate course to take, the decision to pursue more information from one, two, three, or all four developers or to move on with a publicly funded option only, should be addressed by the Commission as alternate courses.

Based on this focus on Library services, the Library Board and its sub-committee addressed three topics as stated in the report delivered to the City dated December 14, 2006:

- 1. "To present an appropriately sized plan for the future central Library in downtown."*
- 2. "To determine which downtown site offers the opportunity for the best Library services for Lawrence, Kansas."*
- 3. "To determine generally which downtown location is best for Lawrence, Kansas as a whole."*

The same report then made three recommendations for proceeding:

- 1. "Recommend the Eldridge Redevelopment Plan site location as the best for delivering Library services in the future."*
- 2. "Request that due diligence on the feasibility of moving the post office begin immediately."*
- 3. "Recommend that the City budget for operations in 2009 be set at \$5 million."*

Again, this effort was focused on location. The recommendation for a location does not endorse a specific developer. As an example, the city could take on moving the Post Office, or incorporating that Post Office into its building, and build on that site as a public entity without any developer assistance. Whatever the direction, it is the hope and the understanding of the Library Board that the City Commission would engage in a dialogue on the future of Library services as it relates to the consideration to either pursue redevelopment possibilities or to provide facilities in a more conventional way by simply issuing bonds on its own.

Submitted by David Dunfield, GLPM Architects

1. What are the costs of land to the city for each of the developer proposals?

The land costs were not specifically requested as part of the City's RFQ. The bottom line of each option, relative to the City's portion of the expense, is stated in each proposal. But further information may be desired by the City Commission.

The Library budget is established and should be considered equal from one proposal to another.

Land costs are only one of the many considerations in evaluating the proposals. And of course this is one of the main questions relative to redevelopment; what is it worth to the City to encourage redevelopment through the Library project and what form does that take? Much is left to be negotiated within each proposal.

2. What is the market value of the current library property, and what options will the city have in either using or selling it under each of the developer proposals?

This was not part of the Library's report but could be added.

3. Combining the first two issues above, and accepting the idea that the costs of constructing the building and 260 parking spaces will be equal in each of the four proposals, what are the likely cost differences among the four sites? Please calculate the costs based on either case: selling the current library property or maintaining it as city property.

This was not part of the Library's report but could be added.

4. Is there also a possibility of substantially cutting the public cost of the project by utilizing parking capacity that already exists on New Hampshire Street, reducing the number of new parking spaces required?

Characterizing it as "substantially cutting the public cost" will require a judgment call on the City's part. The City will need to decide if utilizing parking spaces already paid for with City dollars (or are we still paying off bonds on this parking garage?) under an existing private-public partnership agreement should be characterized as providing savings for tax payers.

5. Why did the report discount "marketability" as a criterion? Isn't the ability to build public consensus around the site selection critical to its success?

Marketability was not discounted. The library Board's focus was on location. The Library sub-committee determined their role was to recommend the best site for Library services and to allow the City Commission, the body ultimately responding to issues of public voting, to consider this criteria if they so desired and their own way.

6. How would proposals to use public funding methods for private development affect the chances for voter approval?

It depends on the desirability of redevelopment, the quality of the proposed plan, the salesmanship prior to voting, and all the components of an overall successful solution.

7. Why was escalation not used as a criterion? Please analyze the realistic sequence and schedule of actions needed to implement and complete work on each of the sites and provide an estimate of the relative cost of inflation to the construction budget of each proposal.

Phasing was considered and weighted and the committee felt that in doing so it covered escalation in their evaluation.

Larger redevelopment projects will take longer than smaller ones. Whether that means they cost more is more an interpretation of value for what you receive versus "cost." Longer could be better in the end.

8. Why is the Eldridge proposal given a "plus" for possible future off-site public parking of unknown location and number, while the 9-10 LC proposal is given a "mixed" evaluation for noting that an off-site public parking structure already exists across the street from their site?

The 9-10 LC proposal was not given a "mixed" evaluation and noting that an off-site public parking structure already exists across the street was not identified as reason for such an evaluation. Specifically, the 9-10 LC proposal, along with the 800 NH and the Current Site proposal, was given a checkmark. The committee used this mark as a ranking that meant the basic criteria was met.

9. Have there been contacts between the development teams and their potential neighbors? What responses have been received?

Yes. Neighborhood responses were not specifically requested as part of the City's RFQ.

10. Has the planning department reviewed the proposals for their conformance to existing regulations?

Not formally.

11. Is it accurate to infer from the consultant's study that all four of the sites under consideration are capable of meeting the library's proposed program?

The program is a very long document. It would be unlikely that any proposal will meet all 144 pages of requirements. For example, the program suggests a building foot print of approximately 60,000 sf; or roughly 2 ½ stories. The 9-10 LC proposal does not meet either of these programmatic requirements but certainly it was kept in the group for consideration.

12. The Eldridge Redevelopment proposal has the largest private component and the least detail. Before the city commits to the public investment in the post office site, shouldn't there be some careful scrutiny of the private development that accompanies it?

Yes. From above: The City's desire to seek private partners and the evaluation, negotiation and eventual execution should most appropriately remain in the City's hands as they will be the eventual partners with any private entity. If the recommendations by the Library Board are not chosen as the appropriate course to take, the decision to pursue more information from 1, 2, 3, or all four developers or to move on with a publicly funded option only, should be addressed by the Commission as alternate courses.

For example:

- The proposal includes private redevelopment on several public parking lots along Vermont. Is the Eldridge team proposing to purchase that land from the city?
- How would the various land transactions be conducted, and in what sequence? Does the city's commitment to the post office site also commit the city to transfer property to the developer, and if so, which properties exactly?
- Many questions should be explored concerning parking in the Eldridge proposal:
 - o Based on the proposal's \$16.5 million parking budget and Gould Evans' estimate of \$20,000 per space, the gross total of parking provided in the proposal (in addition to the 260 library spaces) is 825. Is this a reasonable inference? How many of these spaces will be private, how many public?
 - o The proposal will remove around 385 public parking spaces along Vermont Street. Will those be replaced at no cost to the public?
 - o How many net new public parking spaces (outside the new library garage) are proposed?
 - o How much parking demand would be generated by the proposal, which includes 250 residential units and 100 hotel rooms, conference space, and 250,000 sf of retail and office? Is private parking required to meet part of this demand (for condos and hotel guests, for example)?
- The proposal states that no public funds are required, except for the library and its parking garage. Will the developer verify that it is paying the costs, not only of the post office relocation, land purchases, and all the public parking, but of all other required public improvements as well?
- Should the city accept the developer's view of the market for this major addition to downtown, or should it be independently studied?
- How does the city assess the financial risk posed by entering into a public-private partnership of this large scope?

13. How are "visibility and security" impeded by a multi-story design?

This was assessed generally since the Library has not been through the design process. According to all three of the library consultants involved in the project, more contiguous floors on fewer levels can improve visibility and security. Stated a different way, smaller less flexible footprints on multiple levels challenge the efficient delivery of service, and challenge visibility and security for the same operational dollars. Given the current relative level of operational funding, this consideration received a great amount of interest.

How much of the current library space is visible from any single service point?

A single service point was not a criterion nor has the current Library been cited as the model to follow relative to visibility.

Isn't it the nature of a library that it creates many secluded areas which are both beneficial to patrons and burdensome to security, and that the larger the floor plate, the longer it takes to survey the entire floor?

This may have been true for some Libraries of the past, but not necessarily for Libraries today or in the future. It depends on the service goals and design goals of the particular Library.

14. Aren't there functional advantages as well as drawbacks to "stacking" the floor plates in a large library, namely that travel distances on each floor are reduced, saving staff time and energy?

Staff time moving vertically and inside elevators versus horizontally out in the open is also a consideration. Departments divided by a floor are troublesome.

15. Explain the need for an additional "service point" in the four story proposal. Aren't there four staffed service points in the current library – circulation, children, upper reference, and lower reference? Why can these not be located on each of four floors?

A four story solution requires four service/security points, one per each floor. A two story model, while possibly not desirable, could operate with only two.

Note: These are all very narrow arguments. This is not a science. A specific design has not been prepared in collaboration with the staff of the Library. Please keep in mind that any one of these items could be acceptable as part of a total design that made sense overall. What the Library consultants have programmed and what the established criteria attempts to do is provide maximum flexibility to accommodate changing collections, technology, services and budget constraints during the life of the building and to maximize the chances of success for the Lawrence Public Library.

16. Are there efficiencies in operating expenses associated with the smaller floor plate of the four story building – lower energy consumption and lower reroofing costs, for example?

This was not part of the Library's report but could be added. Or it could be demonstrated by the proposing team as an argument for their proposal.

Submitted by John Reeves, Sabatini Architects

1. I attended a Board of Directors meeting after the second Requests for Proposals (RFP) had been submitted and available on the city's website. A sub-committee for the evaluation of the proposals had not yet been made, and criteria for the sub-committee's evaluation had not been formulated. This is a concern because it is possible that criteria for the evaluation could then be tailored to benefit a specific proposal.

The sub-committee and the Library Board worked hard and with great sincerity to arrive at a recommendation that had Library service for Lawrence citizens at its heart.

The criteria, simply: library function, parking, operational expense, planning concerns and phasing were not new to the discussions over the past 21 months and seemed obvious to the committee.

2. Site cost differences were not considered in the evaluations. The land acquisition cost, construction of new Post Office facilities, and the relocation of the Post Office have not been identified in the Eldridge Redevelopment proposal for the Library. The proposals by 800 New Hampshire LLC and 9-10 LC both identify land acquisition costs within their estimates.

Answered above.

3. Evaluation of the individual Library designs (or concepts) was made, and the final report mentioned that the second submittals by the development teams showed improvement. 800 New Hampshire LLC and 9-10 LC both provided new concepts for the library with site plans and floor plans.

Neither site plans, nor floor plans, nor specific designs of elevations, etc., were required as part of the City's Request for Proposals.

The Eldridge Redevelopment Team offered two possible locations for the Library with neither floor plan nor site plan, but "Library Function" and "Design Impact on Operational Budget" are two of the five evaluation criteria. These categories received a plus and a check, respectively.

The recommended location for the library is clear in the Library's report. Two sites are not illustrated.

Site footprint, floor plate shape, floor plate size, number of stories, site circulation, accessibility, etc., were all components easily discernable for the committee in making its evaluation. The importance of these characteristics was stated in the February 22, 2005 report. Neither site plans, nor floor plans were required as part of the City's Request for Proposals.

a. The evaluation of the Team's proposal remarks upon the prominent location of the entry that is not identified, and offers that a drive up book drop off can be easily accommodated. The basis for this evaluation was created from a lack of information.

The report does not mention the entry as prominent. Specifically it reads, the proposed location, "...allows for maximizing the impact and location of the main entry." In addition, the potential location of the entry is suggested on the drawings by an inset with space allowed for an exterior public plaza as one might have at the entry to a Library.

The Library Board felt that enough information was provided to determine the potential of the site and the ability to maximize the presence of the entry. Other options were given leeway in the evaluation. The Library assumed that changes could be made in the designs to make them more acceptable and many proposing teams stated as such.

b. The evaluation of the "Design Impact on Operational Budget" assumes that the floor plan will function when no floor plan has been provided for review.

The Library Board felt that enough information was provided. Planning criteria such as floor plate size and proportion and potential number of floors were all discernable.

Assuming the Eldridge Redevelopment District Proposal is accepted by the City Commission, I have a few additional thoughts that I hope will be addressed among the City Commission and Staff before a contract is awarded:

1. The Directors of Planning and Historic Resources should both be involved to approve the master plan scenario and create a strategy for its implementation because the recommended proposal affects many blocks that comprise a large portion of the western edge of historic downtown.

Yes. This would typically happen as a matter of course for these projects in the historic environs of registered properties and districts.

2. Due to the scale of the proposed development, the Lawrence Arts Commission should be consulted for input. The Lawrence Arts Commission, upon their initiative or as requested by the City Commission, may make recommendations to the City Commission regarding developments that may have considerable aesthetic impacts on the city.

While somewhat outside the normal city review process it is certainly the City's prerogative to do so.

3. A budget for the Percent for Art program has not been established in the proposal or RFP. The resolution allows for up to two percent (2%) of the construction cost of public buildings to be allocated for public art funds.

This is also already part of the City's process for carrying out capital improvement projects and could be implemented here.

4. The RFP requests that the Library be LEED certified. Does this notion of sustainable practice affect the rest of proposed development and relocated Post Office facilities?

The Library is showing leadership in this area to provide for improvements in the sustainability of Lawrence's structures. It would be great if the City did as well.

5. The Library is a significant public building, and the City has benefited from the patience and hard work of many design professionals through two RFP submittals. Who is the architect for the Library, and how will this decision be made? To my knowledge, no design for the Library at the recommended site has been made.

No design for any site has been made. The Library staff would need to be intimately involved in any design that lead to a facility that they would have to live with.

The selection of an architect has not been made, nor has the process for making that decision been determined.

Submitted by Jennifer Fister

1. How did this proposal come about? What concerns were there that started the discussion?

It arose out of a desire to improve and evolve the Library services available to the citizens of Lawrence. The Library Board and their consultants have identified many deficiencies in the current structure impeding the delivery of Library services to the public; the main deficiency being lack of space to house the current and future services and programs.

2. Will there be a vote? If I am calculating correctly, it will raise the tax on my house \$60 or so PER MONTH.....

A decision to take a vote would be made by the City Commission and that has not been decided.

3. Are there infrastructure or other building concerns of a serious threat to public safety involved?

Not that we are aware of.

Concerns/Comments:

A. I have never had trouble finding what I needed at our library.

I have never waited in line more than a few minutes to check out.

It is great that you've not experienced a problem utilizing the Library. Most people express their concerns and/or contentment with a facility based mostly on their own personal experience. This experience may not include the entire vast array of services and facility deficiencies that exist at the Library today.

Yes, parking can be a bit of an inconvenience, but that, I do not feel, warrants raising taxes so much for 1 project -- we as a society have in general, it seems to me, chosen to drive ourselves everywhere, and bus usage, while I read it is increasing, does not seem to ever run full...in short -- is that really a concern?

Concern about parking has been voiced as a concern by the great majority of people involved in the process.

B. My LHS student has taken several AP (advanced placement) classes, that required usage of a collegiate level library -- how fortunate to have KU right up the hill. Is this expansion idea involved in any way with upgrading to keep up with that level? If so, WHY? It costs only a few dollars for a pass to the KU libraries -- why try to duplicate service if indeed that is part of this?

This was addressed in the consultants program but in short, the services being accommodated, expanded and improved are not intended to be in competition with the academic library.

C. In watching how our town grows, and what seems to be a disturbing trend toward "bigger,better" Johnson County type appearance i.e. serious urban sprawl, I am concerned that our reasons for adding this tax burden are not in the best interest of our town -- That being said, please know I am a huge fan of the library!! Of course it would be nice to have the same scale of greatness as other towns like us reportedly have, i.e. Boulder, CO. -- but do we have to build just to build because somebody else did?

Lawrence is a wonderful place. The purpose of this project is to continually improve on the amenities of our community so that we can stay a wonderful place and maybe even become a great place. Great cities have great Libraries.

The wisdom of the City Commission in investigating ways of keeping the expansion of the Library downtown could help our city avoid the sprawl you are concerned about.

D. It seems to me that we should consider paying off something we have already charged the taxpayer for before racking up the card yet again....has anyone thought to look at when something else will be paid for? Perhaps this project could wait until then, assuming no asbestos or other threat to public safety with the building....

The City Commission is addressing numerous requests for funding and the Library project will need to be considered within that overall picture.