Appleton Public Library

Appleton Public Library Site Selection

Site planning diagrams, evaluation and pricing, and recommendation to the Library Board
Presented April 15, 2014

Engberg Anderson

SECTION 1: Executive Summary

The data contained in this document represents a significant step in the ongoing efforts of the Appleton Public Library Board of Trustees and the Appleton Public Library Administration and staff, in cooperation with the City of Appleton. The focus of this work is to continue the high quality service, collections and facilities the residents of Appleton have come to expect in their library, and to do so in a way that anticipates or allows for changes and advances in those services, as identified in the library's long-range strategic plan, APL 150.

In 2009, Engberg Anderson and George Lawson were hired to complete a program and planning study for a generic library site within the city limits. The conclusions from this exercise, a single, new or renovated/expanded facility that would remain centrally located in the downtown, were embraced by the city and community, and fostered three years of continued study and conversation. From this continued study and conversation, the Appleton Public Library staff and Board of Trustees worked with the community to compile a long-range strategic plan (APL 150) that incorporated the future of libraries and the desires of the community in how their facility would be.

Following that process, Engberg Anderson and George Lawson were again retained earlier this year by the city and library to undertake the process of writing a revised and detailed program for a library that would meet the well-defined goals of the public study, and to test the results of that programming process by producing conceptual layouts for both new facilities and an expansion of the existing library facility. These layouts were objectively evaluated on a list of functional and measurable criteria and clear design directions were developed for each option. After further refinement of these options, relative cost models were developed which, along with a second round of objective scoring, went into the development of a final recommendation for action. The specific steps in this process included the following:

Programming the building:

- Project kickoff with central team representing both the library and city

- A review of the original program combined with collection of new data for each space, service and program in the library

- Structured meetings and review of the above to look at both quantity and quality of space

- Development of a draft building program for review by library staff and city

- Comparison of the program findings with State of Wisconsin and other library standards

- Review meetings, going over all individual departments and spaces, designed to refine details

- Issuance of a final Library Building Program for a 120,000 square foot (+/-) building, along with 13,000 square foot (+/-) space for services of the Appleton Parks and Recreation Dept.

Evaluating the existing building:

- Site visits by Engberg Anderson and their engineering consultants

- Production of a revised Building Assessment Report summarizing structural and building systems (included as part of the final report)

Potential Site Analysis:

- Review of 12 potential sites in the Appleton downtown area

- Establishment of scoring criteria to evaluate site options based on many factors

- Scoring of potential sites by library staff and select board and community members to eliminate inadequate sites and to narrow field of potential sites to three, including the expansion of the existing building (note that site 11 was subsequently subdivided into three site variations, each utilizing two of the three properties on the overall site)

Testing Selected Sites:

- Blocking and stacking layouts of the library/parks program on each of the five selected site options/variations

- Public in-progress open house to share very preliminary layout directions with interested members of the community and to gather a general opinion as to the favored site direction/concept

- Establishment of scoring criteria to evaluate layout/building organization options based on many factors

- Scoring of potential layouts by library staff to establish preferred option in terms of organization, ease of patron and staff use, material flow, site organization, etc.

- Review of potential budgets including site acquisition, demolition and remediation costs, construction costs, FFE, etc. to establish probable project costs

- Review of value index for each potential site to determine which combination of design score and cost yields the best overall building and value for the City of Appleton, which is then recommended to the Library Board

- Library Board recommendation of project site and configuration to the Common Council

Refining the selected site and design (prefunding Schematic Design – the next step):

- Further development of approved option, including test fit of public furnishings

- Development of building massing and site elements

- Development of exterior "character" renderings and elevations, including selection of potential primary materials

- Creation of "interior imagery" intended to evoke the potential character of a new facility

- Review options for LEED silver certification to be incorporated into the cost model

- Development of more detailed cost model

- Development of presentation renderings and PowerPoint tools for presentation and use by fundraising consultant

- Presentation to the Library Board and Common Council

Final Recommendations:

The following represents our conclusions based on the results of this study. The Appleton Public Library and City of Appleton staff should be applauded for the care with which they have maintained the existing building, and the creative ways in which they have adapted it to ongoing changes and improvements in service to the community. The staff has worked diligently to create new and improved environments and programming in a building that consistently works against them with limitations in terms of space, technology, infrastructure and environmental quality. They accomplished all the short-term recommendations that consultants Himmel and Wilson recommended to them in their 2008 study to improve the facility including substantial improvements to material inventory and security. To spite those efforts, adapting to a building and its limitations is a far cry from accepting that the building adequately meets the needs of the program. The option of expanding the existing building places far too many limitations on the delivery of 21st century library service which simply cannot be overcome. While there is sufficient site area to expand the building, the resulting facility would force compromises in terms of public service and staff efficiency and could not provide the quality of environment that the public has asked for throughout this process. It is our belief, however, that the building does have sufficient life in it that it should be considered for other uses by the city or as an asset to be sold for other use.

In contrast, a new facility would permit Appleton Public Library to fulfill the aspirations identified in the APL 150 long range plan from of a community that clearly appreciates and makes full use of their library. The staff would be able to fulfill their core strategy as an essential hub of learning and literacy for the community by facilitating community education and public gatherings, expanding public access to collections and current technology, and building their commitment to being a gateway to learning for young and old alike. They would be able to do so with maximum efficiency, and reduced operating costs. In short, they would not need to "fight the building", but could focus on the work they do best. Finally, a new public library will become the important civic building and anchor for downtown growth that it has the potential to be. In particular, the site which scored the highest in this study, that incorporating the current Trinity Lutheran Church and Fox Banquets & Rivertyme Catering sites (site 3C) represents a real opportunity for the new Appleton Public Library to become both a gateway element welcoming people to the downtown, and a bridge between a growing downtown and development along the Fox River. The public library is truly the most important of civic buildings – and the people of Appleton seem to understand and embrace that. The existing facility opened 33 years ago. Today the City of Appleton has an opportunity to build a public building that lives up to that aspiration and not only makes a commitment to future service, but a statement about the future of downtown Appleton. Based on the scoring, overall costs and value indexes, and the goals achieved by the selection of this site, we strongly recommend adoption of site 3C as the chosen location of the next Appleton Public Library, and request authorization by the Appleton Public Library Board of Trustees to continue development of that site through the Prefunding Schematic Design phase of our work.

SECTION 2:   Study Components

Program Testing – Design Concepts

Test Layouts: In contrast to the previous effort in 2009, the process this time involved the testing of the revised project program on five specific potential sites. These included the expansion of the existing Oneida Street facility, the renovation and expansion of the historic Post-Crescent building and adjacent property on W Washington Street, and three variations on what came to be known as the "bluff site". Each variation involved a combination of two potential properties within the larger site south of where Oneida Street curves north into E Lawrence Street.

The options below were laid out using overall program areas and adjacencies to study the potential to organize the building on each prospective site. All significant areas were incorporated, including the dedicated space for the Parks Department. Each site was reviewed by staff and modifications were made to equalize the design concepts to the degree possible, so that no option was unfairly disadvantaged by an unworkable layout. These concept layouts were then evaluated by the core project team for strengths and weaknesses. The evaluation criteria were as follows:

- **Staff Efficiency (Service Points):** Number, arrangement and location of staff/public service points. The location of associated staff "back of house space" could also influence ranking in this category, both in terms of relationships to service points and to other building elements (entrances, drive up service, vertical circulation, etc.)

- **Expandability:** Ability for the given building or renovation design concept to be readily and easily expanded in the event of increased service demand. Also take into account not just whether there is space to expand, but whether that space is contiguous with parts of the building most likely to require expansion.

- **Collection Organization:** This is the "big blocks" adjacencies. Do we have the major pieces near the things they want to be near? Are things grouped logically, or have space or stacking constraints forced things to be organized in a less-desirable way?

- **Materials Flow:** Imagine materials entering and leaving the library, through ILL, O.W.L.S., returns and traditional patron circulation/checkout. Are the relationships between spaces such that material can be moved efficiently, without unneeded extra effort or steps?

- **Accessibility:** Libraries should be conveniently located with respect to the planned center of the service population. Easy vehicular, pedestrian, mass transit and bicycle traffic patterns should be considered. Locations of targeted user groups, especially those with mobility or access issues, should be considered. Location of the facility may influence the extent to which certain elements of the population use the facility. The elderly and young children are examples.

- **Public Wayfinding:** How easy would it be for the public to self-serve in a particular layout? Could they understand the collection organization? Could they find what they need, either materials or resources? Can they easily locate staff when self-service is not enough, or not appropriate?

- **Merchandising Collection:** Are elements of the collection arranged and located in such a way as to help "move the merchandise"? Put aside shelving types for now as that will

come later. Are holds, new materials and special collections prominent enough to help encourage circulation?

- **Adaptability / Flexibility:** This is obviously not a permanent layout - things will change and shift in the future. Does the organization of spaces - public and staff - allow for future modification and rebalancing of collections? Are there built obstacles to flexibility (i.e. circulation, plumbing, other fixed components in the way)? Could technology areas easily expand? Are mechanical systems proposed in functional locations?

- **Quality / Character of Space:** Does the particular layout lend itself to creating some special library spaces? Does the overall building layout allow for some intentional design options.

- **Image / Civic Presence / Identity:** Consider the building approach and entry, and the likely "front" of the building. Does it afford opportunities to create a building with a strong civic presence?

- **Site Amenities:** Can the site accommodate design elements that would improve the function of the building or provide features or amenities that would be attractive and useful to patrons? Spaces such as a children's reading garden, outdoor seating areas, potential bike amenities, easy materials and patron drop off all improve the appearance, function and overall use of the site.

The matrix of review criteria also included a composite score numerically equivalent to the topics covered in the first site selection exercise: initial site size, visibility, image, public perception, adjacent uses, adjacent development potential, safety perception, site geometry, ease of construction, cultural, residential and business synergy, and potential control of the site. These factors were aggregated and given a reduced composite score, since all selected property options had scored well in the first review. This was to prevent those prior factors from having undue influence on the outcome of this stage in the review.

The options were then scored using this evaluation matrix, comparing each layout. Scores in each category were weighted, in consultation with staff, so that issues of greatest importance drove the overall ranking over less significant, but still important criteria. The results of the ranking follow this document in the table entitled Building Concept Evaluation.

Program Testing – Cost Analysis

Cost Models: With the ranking completed, a simple cost matrix for each option was also developed. This table included costs for site acquisition based on assessed value and other factors, site preparation costs such as building demolition or remediation of contamination, construction costs including design and related fees, FFE (furniture, fixture and equipment) costs, and relocation and temporary space costs as needed. Potential offsets such as tax credits were not factored in at this time as this is a municipal facility and such pursuits are less common and potentially complex. While these costs are at this point overly broad due to the early stage in design, they are a useful tool in comparing the overall concepts to look for unusual cost factors or extra expenses that might burden any one option. Costs are estimates only, and based on assumptions and available data. All are subject to change and should not be interpreted as final estimates of the cost to develop any given site. Further investigation of the selected site will reveal additional information, and a more detailed analysis of the costs associated with the final selected option will follow the Prefunding Schematic Design phase of this project. The total probable project costs for each site are described in the table entitled Site Development Cost Matrix.

Program Testing – Objective analysis

Overall Value: In the end, it can seem appropriate to evaluate a site simply on lowest initial project cost or most attractive site, or most functional layout potential. The best projects result from an effort to blend these goals and to weigh them against one another in an objective way to evaluate the sites in total.

The final step in the comparative evaluation process was to identify a value index for each site option that weighs the cost of each against their anticipated performance. A higher value is preferred. The results are included on the Value Index Evaluation that follows.