

Public Meetings – Library Renewal Project – May 2011

On May 17 and May 18, 2011, public meetings were held to discuss the proposed library building expansion and renovation. They included a City Council Work Session, a brief meeting with library staff and volunteers, and three public forums. In all sessions, the firm of Meyer, Scherer & Rockcastle, LLC (MS&R) was represented by architects Jeff Scherer and Amanda Aspenson, who presented slides and explained features of the schematic design accepted by the Library Board of Trustees. (Ms. Aspenson spoke at the 2 p.m. meeting on the 18th; Mr. Scherer gave the other presentations.)

The architects began with a quick review of the library's current circulation statistics, collection volume, and usage statistics, the need for an expansion project, and an explanation of the solutions proposed by their design. Scherer explained that even though this would be the fourth addition project in the history of Ames Public Library (APL), his goal was to have the entire building be as good as new, with certification at the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Silver level, if not LEED Gold. Space allocations will remain proportionally similar and the building is designed for the same staffing level. Only 43 new computers are planned, but power will be available to all desks to accommodate laptops, netbooks, and other devices. He stated that, as libraries change in their methods of content delivery and with some even lending laptops for use in comfortable spaces, fixed computer stations are less likely to be needed.

Scherer and Aspenson showed photos and quickly reviewed existing conditions at the library, noting that the walls along the former paint store (where the rain garden is now) are made of concrete block with only one inch of insulation. They were designed to be destroyed in 2004, when the next addition was anticipated to be built. The plaster skim coat and flashing on the walls and the clerestory have deteriorated. They also pointed out that the character of the atrium in the historic section was modernized during the 1984 renovation. It originally had a terrazzo floor and different lighting; the idea this time is to restore it as much as possible and show its historical significance.

The footprint of the proposed building was reviewed from a bird's-eye perspective, and it could be seen that the protruding facades of the 1984 section would be kept, and interior space would be gained on the south and east sides of the main floor by filling in the recesses. A new alley configuration has been designed and safety concerns about the bookmobile will be alleviated by having a drive-through garage. Drop boxes for library and postal materials will be included. No spaces will be added to the parking lot north of the library, but perimeter landscaping and the crosswalk at the corner will be improved. The northeast corner of the library property will also be re-done so that the entrance to the building is at the street level. Once inside, visitors will go down a very slightly-sloped ramp to the library's main floor.

The architects used some historical photos to show where a loading dock and portions of the second and third additions on the south side of the library were demolished in 1984. That area, which now connects the old and new sections, will be completely reworked and a new two-story-high lobby will be created. A new glass elevator and a staircase will provide access to the upper level. Part of the original south wall of the Carnegie building will be re-exposed and a "ghost" of the section that was demolished

will be etched into oak paneling. The new connection will resolve APL's problem of varying floor heights and also artistically celebrate the building's history.

The Farwell T. Brown Auditorium will be moved to the front of the building, adjacent to the entrance. The walls will be made of high-efficiency glass to allow in natural light. The room itself can be fully lit, dimmed, or completely darkened, and a Skyfold wall (which would accordion up and down) will allow it to be divided in half and acoustically separated.

The architects explained which sections of the building would be renovated, where completely new construction would take place, and where the second story could be created out of existing space (over the existing auditorium, for example). The 1984 addition will be gutted and scoured. The exterior will be thermally enclosed and much more natural daylight will be captured. Completely new wall treatments, ceilings, roofs, mechanical and electrical systems, and LED lighting will be installed throughout the building. Occupancy sensors and automatic light leveling will add to energy savings.

The lower level is more "ceiling challenged" and will be used for youth services and a new teen area. There will be lower shelving, but much more light. The columns can't be eliminated, but the pre-cast concrete covers are removable, so the columns will be covered with wood to lend a warmer feeling and take less space; staff will also be able to see around them better. There will only be one entrance, so it will be easier for parents to keep track of their children.

Adult services, reference materials, study rooms and browsing areas will be upstairs, where the ceilings will be 12 feet high. Study rooms will have high windows; browsing areas will have a more residential feel than they do now; task lighting will be available at work areas. It will be possible to look down into the lobby and across to the historic walls. Catalog and self-check stations will be sprinkled throughout. Two rooms in the 1905 section that are now used by staff will be turned into meeting rooms, and the Board Room will be relocated into a part of the building that can be kept open to the public.

On both floors, areas that are used only as work areas will be configured along the alley or in the lower level of the historic section, and it will be possible to restrict public access to these areas. It would also be possible to keep portions of the lower level open, even if the upstairs were closed. Automated materials handling machinery is not included in the cost estimates for the building, but the building is configured to accommodate it later.

Scherer explained that the goal was to keep the project below \$20 million, as a result of the information learned by the public polling done last fall. About \$13.1 million of the budget is for actual construction, with approximately ten percent more for contingencies (since no destructive testing or environmental studies have been done). The aggregate cost for construction over the whole building is \$193 per square foot. He said that figure could be compared to an average cost of \$260-\$265 per square foot for library construction in Iowa. The total project cost in Ames' case is \$275 per square foot, which compares to the Iowa average of \$350-\$375. Scherer stated that retaining the useful parts of the existing structure was saving Ames somewhere between \$4 and \$6 million.

During the meeting with staff, there was discussion about access to the youth area, alley configuration, ceiling heights, location of certain collections, storage spaces, and shelter areas. Questions that were fielded throughout and after the public presentations appear below.

May 17, City Council Workshop at City Hall
All Council and Library Board members present

Q: How will the capacity of the Farewell T. Brown Auditorium and the upstairs meeting rooms change?

Scherer: The auditorium will be approximately 35 percent larger and will accommodate 250 people, whereas the present auditorium has a maximum occupancy of 142. It is also designed so that it can be divided in half, so two groups of 125 can meet at the same time. Two rooms upstairs that are presently used by staff as a lounge and office space will become seminar rooms, and the Board Room will be moved into an area that can be open whenever the library is open.

Q: Are there at least some things, such as HVAC, that would have to be paid for at the library, even without an expansion or renovation project?

Scherer: Yes, there are sections of the clerestory where the flashing has deteriorated, the roofing is bad, the walls on the west (where they planned to build an addition in twenty years) are weak, new ADA laws went into effect last March 15 – you have a lot of issues. I would estimate that about 42% of the construction budget is dedicated to replacement of the mechanical and electrical systems. We are proposing to install chilled beams and to maximize energy efficiency. Each situation is unique, of course, but when our firm estimated a similar project in Madison, it looked as if they would need to spend at least \$10 million just to make repairs. There comes a point where communities have to decide whether to patch and pray or fix and celebrate.

Comment: It may be time to think more expansively and make the building more useful, especially in light of the need to spend some money anyway. You did a nice job of listening to concerns, especially of those who worked on or wanted to retain the 1985 building.

Q: Is it true that the operations cost of the new building would be flat?

Scherer: We believe that to be the case. The staffing can remain the same, because staff will have offices close to the areas they serve and will have good lines of sight across the public areas. Lighting, heating, and cooling costs in the 77,000 square foot building can be done for the same amount being spent now to heat and cool 49,000. We will be capturing daylight, introducing high-efficiency glass and energy-efficient lighting, using geo-thermal heating and cooling, insulating the walls and replacing the roofs.

That said, what we have seen in other communities, is that once the new building opens, the demand increases and if the public demands longer hours, you could have a cost increase for that reason.

Q: Will the reduced square footage (as compared to the earlier model) impact the size of community gathering space?

Scherer: There will be two additional seminar rooms, in the part of the building where the staff lounge and an office are now. There will only be four study rooms, and with the scaled-back model we are now looking at, the spaces for collaborative work have been reduced, but we have limited the number of columns in the second story and that will allow for spaces to be reconfigured in the future. If there comes a time when the collection size is reduced, the area could be made into study or work space.

Q: At \$275 per square foot, how does the cost compare with other projects you know about?

Scherer: There are very few others where we have had to deal with all these time periods. (Note: this is a reference to APL's current structure having sections dating from 1904, 1907, 1940, and 1985.) The median cost for construction only, adjusted for Iowa, is \$265 per square foot or \$350-375 per square foot for total project cost. Ames saves roughly \$4 million by retaining the old sections, saving the lineage pieces and history. Our estimates assume the project will be bid in June of next year and the bidding climate is currently quite good. We don't know, of course, exactly what the bid climate will be then, but we have included a contingency fund of approximately \$2 million. That allows for a bidding cushion, but is also needed because we have not done any destructive testing – we haven't checked environmental conditions and don't know what exactly will be found behind some walls or inside hidden areas. Down the road, if funds are left over from that contingency, you would either have some savings or could opt to introduce some new technologies that have been omitted at this point.

Q: Would the new roof support solar panels?

Scherer: We have not included solar panels in the budget, but the roof would be designed to support them. We do anticipate all LED lighting, which will result in a lot of energy savings – right now it comes in at about 40 cents per watt. You've brought up a good point, though, and if you have contingency funds available, you might consider investing in more renewable energy at the end.

May 18, Public Forum at APL, 10-11:10

62 citizens, including trustees Harry Budd, Sherry Bradley present

Q: Will there be a check-out on the second floor?

Scherer: Yes, there will be service locations and self-checks distributed throughout the library.

Q: What is the timetable for the project?

Scherer: We anticipate that the project will be bid by late summer 2012; construction could start in the fall of 2012, and the building would be ready to open in the summer of 2014.

Q: Does the budget include security cameras?

Scherer: The conduit points are budgeted in, but they have not been included – that would be a matter of library policy. As architects, we are trying to take a more defensible approach by introducing low shelves, wide aisles, only one entry to the children's area, and having no hidden corners. Sections of the building not in use can be closed off and no one can wander around in staff work areas.

Q: Will there be a staff person on second floor?

Scherer: There are two stations – one at the top of each stairway – where staff will be present. The staff work rooms will have glass walls, also, so that persons who are working will be able to see if there is someone who appears to need assistance.

Q: What is the rationale for two check-outs upstairs?

Scherer: These are not specifically check-outs – they are service points. The staff would be available to assist in a variety of ways.

Q: Could another service point be put on the back wall?

Scherer: One of the goals was to allow the larger building to function with the same number of staff, so it's not affordable to add another service point. What we have done instead is design a workroom that allows the staff so see what is going on out in the public area.

Q: Where will we be able to access on-line catalogs?

Scherer: Access points are scattered throughout, in the stacks. We are planning to install knock-out panels in the second-story floor so that items can be moved to new places as needed.

Q: Won't it be difficult to maintain energy efficiency with all the glass you are showing?

Scherer: No, we intend to use high-efficiency glass, which is about 30% below the code requirement. Presently, your library only has about two inches (2") of insulation in the roof and one inch (1") in about 40% of the exterior walls, and 50-60% of your electrical demand is lighting. With added daylight and LED bulbs, we can use graduated lighting to reduce electrical demand. The savings will far outweigh the loss from the glass. Another aspect of this is that people learn and function better with more natural light, and people's feeling about security is enhanced when they can see in and out.

Q: What will happen to the library's sculptures?

Scherer: Our firm has not done a complete art inventory, but what you have will be reinstalled somewhere.

Q: Does the budget allow for energy use in this building during the construction?

Scherer: Costs associated with the construction, including energy costs, will be borne as part of the general conditions of the contractor.

Q: Don't you have an awful lot of glass in the plan?

Scherer: According to code, no more than 30% of the exterior envelope can be glass. So we are close to the maximum allowable, but it has been placed in strategic locations. There is only 18% in the historic part, none along the alley. The quality and performance of glass today is way different than it was in

1984 – we recently installed an R7 glass wall in Wisconsin. Glass is wonderful because it makes a space more uplifting, and it's been shown that people feel better and learn better.

Q: How will glass work on the new wall of the Farwell T. Brown Auditorium?

Scherer: The exterior will be made of glass and a spanner panel, and it will be equipped with two types of automatic shades – one for darkening, and one for black-out – so that you will have the option of having it completely clear, so that activities inside and outside can be seen, or dimmed to the extent needed. Most activities will take place in the afternoon or evening and the wall is on the east, so it will not often be in direct sunlight.

Q: Why was the public not involved in the planning of this version?

Scherer: There were three basic reasons: 1) After all the public meetings and studies, we had a very good idea of what the citizens of Ames were looking for and the cost parameters we had to work with; 2) We asked and were told what things the staff felt were essential and could not give up; and 3) We believed that, as architects, it was time for us to take the initiative and make a proposal that could be adjusted. This was really something of a Rubik's cube – finding the balance, staying in budget, and aligning all the different floor heights and grade changes was an incredibly complex effort.

Q: When will the vote take place?

Scherer: That question is tied to the fundraising effort. It's my understanding that if fundraising is successful over the summer— even if the full \$5 million hasn't been raised, but you're well on your way— the vote could take place in November. It wouldn't be necessary to have all the private funding right away, because portions of the budget can be delayed – the purchase of furniture, for example. I would say that it is more critical to take advantage of a favorable bidding climate. It's hard to anticipate the future because once the economic climate improves, the contractors that are left will need to make a profit.

May 18, Public Forum at Northcrest Community, 2 – 3:30 p.m.

23 citizens, no trustees present

Q: What do you mean by the term “circulation?”

Scherer: It is the total number of items checked out from the library. It includes books, DVDs, and audio downloads. Three times as many materials are being checked out from APL now as when the last addition opened in 1985.

Q: How many computers will you put in the new building?

Scherer: There is space planned for 43. That number compares the 28 that are in the library today and four (4) that were available in 1985. It is a measurable increase, but the role of computers is continually changing. We are expecting that fixed banks of hard-wired computers will be gone and more and more

people will come into the library with their own devices, looking for a place to sit down and plug into power.

Q: Is there a kitchen in the new Farwell T. Brown Auditorium?

Aspenson: Yes, there is a small kitchen that will serve both halves.

Q: Why isn't there a second story over the new garage?

Scherer: The garage needs to allow for bookmobile clearance of at least 14'6", so the height of this section cannot meet the level of the second floor.

Q: When there are activities going on inside (in meeting rooms), why would you want to reveal the outside distractions?

Scherer: The room is designed so that, at times, there will be enough daylight that no lights would have to be turned on. Also, it offers the possibility of putting in additional doors to allow access to the street for a public event.

Q: Is glass really going to be more efficient than a wall?

Scherer: Yes, and we have made sure to put it in strategic places. In a library, 50-60% of the energy consumption is from lighting. High-performance glass rejects heat in the summer and accepts it in the winter. We can also use auto-dimming to keep a uniform light level at all times, which is a savings. Most functions in the auditorium take place in the afternoon or evening; there are only a couple of hours in the morning when the sun is a factor, and shades will be installed that either black-out completely or are woven to filter the light. The glazing in the area near the front entrance will allow the original façade to be seen -- it will give a sense of history inside and outside.

Q: What is the difference in elevation from one end of the entryway to the other?

Scherer: It is only about nine inches, along a 62-foot walkway. It will comply with the ADA (American's with Disabilities Act) laws that were effective March 15th; these are now also in alignment with the ANSI (American National Standards Institute) standards.

Q: What resources would be needed to beef up the structure of the front of the building to accept a green roof?

Scherer: I'd estimate it would be in the neighborhood of a quarter million to \$300,000.

Q: What is the reason for moving the Board Room?

Scherer: Seminar rooms are being added in areas that are now taken up by the staff lounge and an office, and we are reorganizing space in the administrative suite to make it more efficient. Bringing the Board Room out of the administrative area will allow it to be used as the other public meeting rooms do at times when the business office is locked.

Q: I see you are showing a glass elevator. What happens when there's a power failure and you have an elevator that doesn't work? How do you get people downstairs?

Scherer: There are two elevators in the building, as well as three staircases. There is no space to include a 250-foot ramp. In an emergency, firefighters or other response teams would assist in helping people out of the building.

Q: Why don't any of the drawings include lighting fixtures?

Scherer: We have not figured out exactly what will be used – we're not into that level of detail yet. It's possible that we could use some historical fixtures in the gallery outside the meeting rooms, but we would use LED lights, so even if the older fixtures were used, there would be less glare than there originally was.

In the new section, on the second floor, there will be a considerable amount of ambient lighting. We've included high windows along the east wall. We might want to use sconces in the ceiling on the first floor.

Q: Where is the place a person could eat and read in the new building?

Scherer: There is space for vending machines near the elevator and there may be tables in the Friends area. Food and beverages will be allowed in the building and there will be trash cans throughout.

Q: How will you manage drainage off the roof?

Scherer: The roof will appear to be flat, but have adequate slope to allow for drainage.

Q: Would there be any chance of getting into the library from the west, since there will be a parking lot on that side?

Scherer: That is not in the plan. Another entrance would create another requirement for staffing, and we have arrayed all the work areas along the alley.

Q: Can you explain more about the ramp (at the main entrance)?

Scherer: The new entrance is designed so that a person enters at grade – the same level as the sidewalk – so instead of going down steps or down an outside ramp, as you do now, you enter the building and go down a very shallow slope inside, out of the rain and snow. The mats on the floor will pick up sand, dirt, and other materials that require clean-up and maintenance inside the library. There will be an elevation change of only 18 inches, so it will be easy to manage for anyone using a walker, wheelchair, or stroller. (Note: In one meeting, Scherer stated that the ramp was about 62' long, which is actually the distance from the front entry to the service desk. The ramp itself will be 30 feet long— 50 feet, including the top and bottom landings.)

Q: How much renovation does the building need right now, even if we don't add on to it?

Scherer: Forty to forty-three percent (40-43%) of the budget for the proposed project is just mechanical and electrical, and those systems need to be replaced. The chiller (air conditioner) is well beyond its

expected life span, and it will cost \$200,000 to \$250,000 to replace it. The normal life expectancy, with proper service and maintenance, is ten to twelve years, and yours is now 27 years old. If your referendum fails, a study will have to be done. All systems will have to be changed and my guess is that you'd spend \$2.5 - \$5 million to get it up to standard—and that would be without any change in square footage. You would be adding to the patchwork and still causing a disruption in (library) function.

Q: What kind of chiller are you looking at?

Scherer: We would like to use a geo-thermal heat pump system with a small back-up plant. We want to look into using the alley so we could bring loops into the mechanical room. We've looked at using a star system, where you drill down once and drill outward with "arms" that extend at a 90 degree angle. We'd first have to do a core drilling and test the capacity, but heat pumps are very efficient, simple, have few moving parts, and are quiet.

May 18, Public Forum at APL, 7 – 8:30 p.m.

40 citizens, including Trustees Dudley Lockett, Kevin Stow, and Laura Rawlins

Q: Why have there been no public meetings recently?

Scherer: There were three main reasons for suspending them:

- 1) We were given a lot of suggestions from the community last year;
- 2) The polling done last fall revealed the budget the community seems willing to support; and
- 3) Incorporating the various wishes, understanding the needs of the library staff, and reconciling all the technical problems was very complicated. As architects, we took it upon ourselves to propose a solution that would allow us to balance the budget with all the requirements.

Q: What do National Park Service Regulations have to do with the library? (Following the architect's reference.)

Scherer: A building that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places is under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service. Historic portions have to conform in certain ways and an addition to an historic building is supposed to be compatible, but have unique characteristics so that people can tell which part is which.

Q: Will the renewed building be LEED certifiable?

Scherer: The proposed building is priced at the LEED Silver level; we hope to be able to bring it up to LEED gold. At an earlier meeting we talked about framing the roof to accept solar panels; if there is enough money, the panels could possibly be added.

Q: Will you use Chilled Beam Technology?

Scherer: Yes, the intention is to install a geothermal heat loop in the alley – possibly using a star drill.

Q: How is a seminar room different from a meeting room?

Scherer: A seminar room would have technology to provide for distance learning, have a flat screen and/or a smart board, and could be used by approximately 20 people. Meeting rooms would seat more people. Each half of the Farwell T. Brown Auditorium will have a capacity of 125. The study rooms are relatively small and they would have power and data connections and tables where work could be spread out.

Q: Is there any way we could have non-permanent walls between the meeting rooms on the second floor?

Scherer: Yes, that would be possible. We chose not to design them that way because they are historic walls. The idea was to restore the rooms to have their historic character, but temporary walls are an option that could be considered.

Q: What is the purpose of the gallery (atrium)?

Scherer: Since there is a lot of meeting space in that area, a practical use for the gallery would be setting up tables, serving food, etc. It was impractical, almost impossible, to make anything else out of what was originally the lobby.

Q: Could anything be added in the design to make it (the gallery) more useful than it is today?

Scherer: My design intuition is that it should just be preserved.

Q: Is there a basement in any part of the building?

Scherer: There is an old boiler room that is reached by way of stairs that are permanently wet due to seepage. There is equipment down there, as well as an old coal chute from the alley. My preference would be to get rid of it completely.

Q: Can you go from 48,500 square feet to 77,500 with the same amount of staff?

Scherer: We believe it is possible; we were charged with coming up with a design that involved no change in the cost of operations. The jobs being done by staff will be redefined to some extent because of the way the service desks work, and also because office spaces are designed to allow someone working in an office area to see if someone is looking for assistance, so they can come out and help.

That said, our experience is that the new building will cause an increase in usage. If you end up meeting a demand for extended hours, then you'll end up adding to your operating costs. The new library in Amsterdam (Holland) opened two years ago. It's now open 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. seven days a week, and it has two bars and a restaurant inside.

Q: How does the new Farwell T. Brown Auditorium compare to the existing one?

Scherer: It will be roughly twice as large. You now have 1800 square feet and a capacity of 142; the new space is approximately 3000 square feet and will accommodate 250. It can also be divided in half, to accommodate two groups of 125. It will also have a small adjacent kitchen.

Q: How high will the ceiling be in the lobby?

Scherer: The area near the service desks is about ten (10') high, but will be two stories on the north side, where the original wall and "ghost" piece around the elevator are exposed, and it will be open to the upper level along the staircase.

Q: Since you are going to remove the interior walls in the '84 section, is there any way to reinforce the building so we could build overhead later?

Scherer: The building rests on drilled piers and we now have to live with the economic decisions made in the 80s. The section west of the clerestory is the only part that can bear adequate load for more stories.

Responding to remarks indicating that the public was not given that information in the 1980s, Scherer said that he had called George Lawson and discussed the issue with him. He said it was documented that expansion was only planned on the west portion of the lot, and the foundation and walls were built accordingly. The decision was based on the desire to live within certain means. The difference this time around is that the changes in library service are likely to be much greater in the next 25 years, and the expansion design allows for that. Wherever it is possible, pillars will be excluded and the space will be much more readily transformed to meet whatever the community's needs are at the given time.

Comment: It is very pleasing to hear that you are planning to make solar energy a possibility and that you're looking into geothermal heating and cooling.

Q: What is the timeline for the project?

Scherer: If the citizens vote yes in November – and that is partly dependent on how fundraising goes this summer – we would look at holding meetings for design and development in January through April of 2012. We would use the summer to work on construction documents. You could probably take bids in October, and then plan on 18 months or so for construction. It would be possible to open mid-summer in 2014.

Q: I'm concerned about the cost and why so much work has to be done (not clear)...

Scherer: The building you have now has almost no insulation, and there are no thermal barriers in the walls. We will insulate, use high-efficiency glass, replace all the roofs, and put in better drainage channels to upgrade the whole exterior. Right now we are not looking at reusing furniture or book shelves, but that could be a possibility.

Q: In what other ways will the new building be more efficient?

Scherer: The lighting alone will be 50% more efficient. LED lighting is much less expensive, and we can use auto-dimming and harvest much more daylight. The new building will have .85 watts per square foot. The code allows 1.05 watts per square foot; right now you are at a density of about 2. (Note: Lighting power density is the maximum allowable lighting density permitted by the code. It is expressed in watts per square foot for a given occupancy/space type.) Thermal barriers will also be in place to prevent the transfer of heat.

Q: How will the construction affect other older buildings around here?

Scherer: There should be nothing that puts them at risk.

Scribe: Karen Thompson