

Historic Preservation Commission Analysis of Impact of Sites A & B on Existing Historic Resources

Review of Architect's Concept Options A and B for the Ames Public Library Expansion

The Historic Preservation Commission was asked by the Library Board of Trustees to give input on the options that Mr. Scherer presented to the community in the June 16, 17, and 18 sessions. What follows is the Historic Preservation Commission's list of pros and cons of Options A and B with regard to their impact on historic resources in the downtown. Note that the comments below do not address *all* possible pros and cons, only those the commission sees as related to preservation issues. Also note that it has been determined that the 1904-1940 library building is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places and the commission has voted to recommend that the City pursue such a listing.

The Pros and Cons of Option A

Pros

- This plan is in scale with the other historic buildings that surround it (three to four stories) and the other buildings would balance the addition of a possible third story in the future.
- Old Town supports the building of parking deck that is within scale and of a suitable design to blend with the neighborhood, supports keeping the library at its current location, and supports keeping 6th Street open.
- Gives the City the opportunity to incorporate a new structure with the historic library structure, which is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.
- A building that has continuously had one use and a plan that supports the continuation of that use are clearly in line with preservation.
- The library has been a very good steward of the building – it is very obvious that the historic fabric has been well maintained by the tenant, and that is the kind of tenant that the HPC would like to see in the building; somebody that will take the older part of the building seriously.

Cons

- This plan, which is somewhat dependent on the Methodist church expansion project, assumes the demolition of what used to be the old Fareway Store, which is a potentially historic commercial building.
- It might be financially prohibitive to keep the library in its existing location and preserve the historic part of the building, especially given the technology and other needs of the library in the future and that the integrity of the old library building is unknown.
- How much affection people have for the 1984-85 portion of the library (which is not yet historic and not part of the Commission's site analysis) could figure into the cost associated with preserving the smaller, older portion of the building.

The Pros and Cons of Concept B

Pros

- Moving the library to Clark Avenue still keeps it inside the civic corridor and does not require the building of a separate parking structure that will possibly impact other resources in this area.

- New construction will help the city avoid many of the problem issues associated with maintaining and upgrading old construction.
- New location could free up the existing library building to be put into private hands, possibly an owner with monetary resources to preserve the older section of the library.
- Site is still connected to the Main Street Cultural District. It simply changes the transportation artery from Douglas to Clark.
 - A negative aspect of this change, however, is that it would also have impacts on the historic district to the north. We are changing traffic patterns by creating more congestion in the new location and less congestion in the existing location. Old Town has had traffic problems in the past.

Cons

- Proposed massing is out of scale with the other buildings currently in this location (City Hall, a National Register listed resource, is a two-story building approximately 30' high.)
- Proposed height and massing cut off sight lines to the rest of the 6th Street civic corridor.
- Traffic impact, not only on the residential neighborhood to the north, but on the whole movement of commercial traffic in that area, which is already very heavy because of the grocery store. To move a use of the magnitude of the library, mix up traffic patterns, and dramatically increase the traffic in this area could impact both the Main Street area and the historic district to the north
- Impacts on the Main Street District. With Ames's designation as a Main Street Iowa community, preservation becomes paramount because it is a focus of one of Main Street Iowa's organizational principles.
 - This site potentially endangers the historic library that would be vacated, which is not a preservation-friendly action.
 - If the library moved, and if there were no planning on the City's part beyond sticking a For Sale sign on the old building, the old library building might sit empty; that would detract from that area, including the Main Street district.
 - Or there could be a possibility that, if the property were purchased, it may be demolished because the building doesn't lend itself to many private uses.
 - There is already concern about the deterioration of the buildings on the east end of Main Street, and if the current library building were left empty, it could exacerbate conditions at the east end of town.
 - Altering the public corridor is a concern from a historic preservation standpoint. Taking a wider view from the community planning standpoint, the library has had a significant impact as an anchor on the east end of the Main Street Cultural District. It is hard to imagine a tenant that could serve all those purposes as well as the library.
- An increased expense to the taxpayer if the building is not sold because the maintenance must continue to be paid by the city government, the owners of the building.

NOTE: The HPC believes that, if Option B were selected, there should be some kind of exit strategy from the old library because Option B endangers the historic building and leaves maintenance costs in the hands of the City.