

May 2009 Public Meetings: Help Shape the Future of the Library

A third series of public meetings was held during the month of May to engage citizens in a discussion about expansion possibilities for the Ames Public Library. The meetings were held as follows:

- May 19, 2009, at 7:00 p.m. in the Farwell T. Brown Auditorium of the Ames Public Library, with 33 members of the public, five members of the library staff, and Library Trustee Harry Budd in attendance.
- May 20, 2009, at 10:00 a.m., in the Farwell T. Brown Auditorium of the Ames Public Library, with 16 members of the public and four members of the library staff in attendance. Sherry Meier, of the Library Board of Trustees, was also present.
- May 20, 2009, at 2:00 p.m., in the Green Room of the Northcrest Community, with 16 members of the public, Library Trustee Dudley Lockett, and two members of the library staff in attendance.
- May 18, 2009, at 7:00 p.m., in the Community Room of the Ames Public Library, with 12 members of the public in attendance. Three members of the library staff and Trustee Al Campbell were also present.

At all meetings, Library Director Art Weeks welcomed the guests, made introductions, and turned the program over to Jeffrey Scherer, principal architect with Meyer, Scherer & Rockcastle, LTD (MS&R). Scherer said that the purpose of the May meetings was for the groups to start to polish some of the ideas that were roughed out in previous meetings. He explained that the process would continue throughout the summer, in the hope that by fall the community will have come down to a final option that will have been shaped by everyone's input.

Based on the charge given him by the Library Board of Trustees in March, Scherer presented conceptual ideas for three library building options: Option A, a renovated two-story structure at 515 Douglas with the exteriors of the 1904 and 1940 libraries left intact; Option B, a three-story structure at the same site also leaving the 1904 and 1940 libraries intact; and Option C, a new four-story library and attached parking garage across from City Hall on Clark Avenue.

Because the floors of the different sections of the existing library are at multiple elevations, Scherer said that under Options A and B the historic floors would remain where they are and the first floor of the south section would be raised to the level of the street on Douglas Avenue. The plenum between the new floor and the existing slab would provide access for power, ventilation, and data lines; ambient light would be captured and reflected off high ceilings.

The historic exteriors would not be changed, except for upgrades to the roofs and windows. To accommodate the different floor heights between the old and new sections, the intermediate zone would be used for restrooms, stairways and elevators. Landings could be constructed at the appropriate levels and elevators could have front and back doors to allow easy access to the different levels.

Option A

Option A involves the idea of closing Douglas to through traffic. New portions of the building would extend over the entire south portion of the library's half block between 5th and 6th Streets, and across Douglas Avenue. The design provides a vehicle turn-around and drop-off area east of the building in the south end of the block, and a new civic plaza adjacent to the original library

that would offer a shaded, public park on the north end. The portion of the building over what is now Douglas Avenue would be glass, so that one could look through it or walk through from one side to the other.

Option A requires some collaboration with the Elks Club and changes to allow for installation of a new parking area. The space between the Elks Club and the funeral home (the area presently occupied by a white house which is up for sale), would be used for parking, but overall there would be a net loss of 13 parking spaces in the immediate vicinity.

Scherer explained that, at this stage, the architects have put areas of the library into big blocks for planning purposes. He said they decided the older section, where it's dark and cool, would best be used for mechanical and information technology areas. The zone in between would have stairs, elevators with front and back entrances, and toilets. A café area, gallery, and meeting room were shown in the east extension, and these areas could possibly be open at times when the main library is closed. The open space in the plaza could be opened up to accommodate a big reading, festival, or book sale.

Additional details about this concept included Youth Services on the first floor, as well as staff work areas along the west side, next to the book return and bookmobile. The east side of first floor would be open, flexible space. The historical section of second floor would house a meeting room, staff break room, and the administration and technical services offices, which don't require as great a floor loading capacity. In Option A, a lounge overlooks the civic plaza and the green roof over the new meeting room. Future expansion could also occur on the east side.

Pros and Cons of Option A (comments from all groups):

Plus	Minus
New civic plaza	Impact on Elks Club
Safer for foot traffic	Complications closing Douglas
Calms down Douglas	Handicapped parking
Includes roof terrace	Teen and audio/visual spaces should be switched
Central Information Commons	Access and parking for funeral home impaired when library is closed
Keeps library in current location	Puts traffic pressure on alleys
Retains historic libraries	Requires relocation of the library during construction
Youth Services on first floor	Less parking
More visible on Douglas – connect to city	Handicapped persons would have to use elevators
Design connects library to adjacent art and historical communities	Reduced circulation on Douglas changes bus routes, could force drivers onto Duff
Outdoor plaza broadens the nature of the library	Requires acquisition of property and cooperation of Elks and First United Methodist Church
	Fire protection may be compromised

Option B

Option B also keeps the historical buildings, but the new south end of the library is set back from the street, as it is now, with an elongated plaza along Douglas Avenue. New handicapped spaces and parking (with net gain of 16 spaces) would be added in the area presently occupied by the white house. A “speed table,” gates, or automated bollards would be used to block Douglas and create a pedestrian-friendly entrance to the library, but still allow through transit of emergency vehicles or busses. This concept gives the historical building more prominence.

The Option B library would have three stories, with space on the main floor for a technology/information commons, magazines, newspapers, DVDs, and quick “in-and-out” transactions. This floor would have a more retail feel and could have extended hours. Staff areas would be located on the west side. The large meeting room would stay in the same place as the existing auditorium, but would extend westward all the way to the loading dock. Future expansion could incorporate the plaza area on the east side.

Library B would be progressively quieter as a person went upward. The second floor includes children’s areas, adult fiction, large print collections, and adult seating. The older sections would offer meeting rooms and offices for administrative and technical services. The third floor would house non-fiction and special collections.

During the course of the meetings, many people felt that the narrower building offered less flexibility and that more public space should be available at the ground level. The wider plaza in Option A was also more appealing. Scherer had several ideas that would accomplish those objectives. Under a revised scenario, he suggested that the outside east wall could remain and the children’s area would stay where it is now, along Douglas. All the adult materials could then be housed on second floor, and a second floor roof terrace could be considered on the east side.

Pros and Cons of Option B (all groups)

Plus	Minus
Douglas can be open	Bookmobile access
Green space and plaza	Youth on second floor
More parking than A, better handicap access	Alley congestion
Drop off	Relocation during construction
After hours use	Elongated plaza not that appealing, might not be well used
Flexible	Less attractive entrance/less personality than Option A
Keeps library in current location	Narrower building gives fewer options for flexibility than Option A
Quiet third floor offers traditional library space	Lack of parking
	Would need to acquire property

Option C

Option C moves the library to Clark Avenue, across from City Hall, and includes 192 parking spaces in an adjacent structure. The proposed library building would have four stories and four levels of parking. Each level of the parking deck would be half the height of a floor in the library so visitors could enter directly into the second or third floors of the library from the appropriate decks of the parking structure.

Scherer said the Option C site plan allows for entry to the parking ramp from 6th Street; the bookmobile could enter from the north, drive through the library garage, and exit on the south; and the drive-through bill-pay lane in front of City Hall could be remodeled to include a library book drop, from which materials would be moved through the tunnel via conveyor to the handling area inside the library. The parking deck could expand vertically, as needed, or the library could expand over the ramp area, if society were less car-dependent in the future. Scherer said that library staff liked the idea of adding a roof garden on top of the parking garage.

Although the drawings showed the library entrance at the south end of the block, Scherer said he felt it would be better to place it in the middle, opposite the front doors of City Hall. Public space for a small café and browsing area, circulation desk, and an area to pick up items on hold could be located on the west side of the library's first floor; working space would be on the east side. Second floor would house youth services, with an entrance off the third level of the parking garage. Third floor would offer adult services. Library administration, programming/meeting rooms and a terrace facing south would be found on fourth floor. A very small fifth level would be home to the mechanical systems. Under Option C, the existing library building could be used for another purpose, and that would need to be discussed so people felt comfortable with it.

Pros and Cons of Option C (all groups)

Plus	Minus
Synergy with City Hall & auditorium	Entry location in wrong place
Book Return	Four stories
Entry from garage on 2 nd or 3 rd level	Parking may not work across street
Ramp is expandable	Location may upset some residents
Tunnel exists	Location removes "activity" from east end
Bookmobile can drive through	Reduces synergy with the Octagon and Historical Society
Stay in existing building during construction	Behavior/sanitation issues in the parking structure
More parking spaces	Ramp could obscure City Hall
Moving would be best way to save historical buildings	HPC felt a library move would endanger the historic buildings
Roof terrace	Too little conversation about disposition of the current library
Cost of building itself is lower; size is 4,000 – 6,000 square feet smaller	Cost comparisons with A and B not accurate since C includes parking structure
Does not require the acquisition of property	
Retains existing building for other civic uses, e.g. multi-cultural center	

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Throughout the May 19 and 20 presentations, members of the audience were encouraged to ask questions and participate in discussion with Jeffrey Scherer, principal architect with Meyer Scherer & Rockcastle, LTD. Because the format of the meetings was conversational and many questions were asked more than once, some of the answers have been consolidated.

May 19, 7 p.m. = Group 1

May 20, 10:00 a.m. = Group 2

May 20, 2 p.m. (Northcrest) = Group 3

May 20, 7 p.m. = Group 4

Questions about Option A (from all groups):

Question (Group 1): What happens in the bookmobile area?

Answer: In Option A, the bookmobile enters from the south, makes a left turn as it leaves the building, and exits to the west (on Kellogg). People using the book drop-off come in from the north, as they do now, turn right and exit to the west.

Audience comment: This still doesn't accommodate the bookmobile very well.

Scherer: We realize that is a problem, but we have allowed for the size of the vehicle and its required turning radius. At some point, it might be possible to trade some portions of the west half of the block with the First United Methodist Church so that the library could construct a better loading area for the bookmobile.

Question (Group 1): Can you explain what you said about lighting?

Answer: If possible, the building would be designed so that it could operate during the day without electric lights. Ambient light would be captured and reflected off ceilings. Fixtures would also be mounted 30 inches below the ceiling so that light directed upward reflects off and comes back down to the floor. These methods make it so that light does not seem to come from any one source – there is no glare on computer screens, the book stacks may be oriented in any direction, and 100 percent of the ceiling is acoustical.

Question (Groups 1 & 4): Does this option reduce available parking?

Answer: Yes, Option A removes 38 spaces of Elks' Club parking and replaces it with a new 25-space lot. The space between Elks Club and the funeral home would be redesigned for parking, but we still end up with 13 fewer places. Option B adds 16 spaces and Option C adds 169 because it includes a parking garage. A parking structure could be included on A or B, if desired, and would really give you a better apples-to-apples comparison. (It was included in Option C because the building would remove 88 existing stalls.)

Question (Group 4): How could we deal with the parking problem here?

Answer: It would be possible to construct a parking structure where the lot is north of the library, on the other side of 6th Street. We might also relieve some pressure on short-term parking by having a drive-through holds pick-up in the alley. If it were possible for the City and the

Methodist church to trade two parcels on the west side of the lot, we could also create a drive-through at the south end of the alley and re-do the parking at 5th and Kellogg.

Question (Group 1): What boundaries do you have between different areas in the new section?

Answer: You can think of the boundaries between rooms as being sort of like state lines – don't really see them, but the areas are different. At this stage, it is most helpful just to consider these lay-outs as rough, first-pass definitions of the relationships between departments.

Question (Group 1): What would you use the gallery for?

Answer: We thought of it as a modest place next to a coffee shop for works from local artists, book-related displays, historical photos, rotating exhibits, etc.

Question (Group 1): Why have you included areas on other side of Douglas that aren't included in our library here? Are those rooms even needed?

Answer (Library Director Weeks): The library now does have Literary Grounds (the Friends book store and coffee shop) and the APL Teen Zone, in what was originally gallery space.

Answer (Scherer): Libraries evolve over time and features tend to come and go. Modern libraries are being designed to include space for social things such as gatherings or even weddings, and to offer opportunities to do different kinds of programming. We're showing the meeting room on the east at twice the size of existing auditorium, but if you have 350 people show up for a large author event, you can spill also out into the lobby area.

Comment (Group 1): Thank you for this. You have done a terrific job with this option.

Question (Groups 1 & 4): Is having youth services on ground floor a plus? Isn't putting the adult section on second floor going to increase elevator use for handicapped?

A: When you go above 45,000 square feet in a library, you need to have two levels, and there are differing schools of thought on where to assign divisions. If children are on the upper level, you get kids running up and down stairs, parents struggle with strollers in the elevators, and those with more than one child have more trouble if one breaks free. A negative of having children on first is that there is less security, so architects have to be careful about the entrance design. We've found that the day-to-day inconvenience is less when adults have to go upstairs.

Audience Comment (Group 1): If adults were on the first floor, we'd end up with kids on both levels.

Scherer: It's an option to do it either way. Princeton's library has children on the second floor and they are happy with the arrangement.

Audience comment (Group 1): I like the way you put staff on west side where they can concentrate on their work.

Audience comment (Groups 1 & 4): Another plus about this design is that it brings The Octagon and arts community back in and creates sort of a campus.

Audience comment (Group 1): Ames doesn't really have a public place in downtown. Offering the plaza in the library expansion is another way to broaden the nature of the library.

Question (Group 4): Would the Elks Club be gone in Option A?

Answer: No. We decided not to assume the library could take over land owned by the Elks Club or First United Methodist Church unless they offered it. If they expressed an interest, we could pursue it.

Question (Group 2): Has anyone suggested buying the Elks out?

Answer (Weeks): I have talked to them, but they haven't expressed interest in selling. The Ames Historical Society also approached them in the past. The Elks have done some renovations and, as far as we know, are planning to stay.

Question (Groups 2 & 4): Is it possible to close Douglas?

Answer: It is possible; whether or not it is politically feasible is unknown. We are also not sure about the utilities under Douglas, but expanding in that direction does take some square footage pressure off this lot.

Question (Groups 2, 3 & 4): Could Douglas be left open with a skywalk across the street?

Answer: I'd advise against that, but it's something we could look at. People tend to just walk across the street and ignore the skywalk. In Option A, it would also disassociate the meeting room from the rest of the library and would require dedicated staff.

Question (Group 2): What about fire access with a building that goes across Douglas?

Answer: There must be access from all sides and I think this should be okay; there is access from all the alleys. That is something we would definitely need to check with the fire marshal; the alley is pretty narrow.

Audience Comment (Group 4): Another problem with closing Douglas is the proximity of the library to Duff Avenue. If circulation is reduced on Douglas, drivers might end up having to go onto the arterial to get around; that would increase traffic on Duff. Closing Douglas would also create a dead zone and require re-routing of busses.

Question (Group 2): Where would the library go if it had to move during construction?

Answer: We have not looked into that in Ames. Nationally, we find there are plenty of big box stores that are empty.

Question (Group 3): What's the impact of A on the time the library would not be open?

Answer: It would be necessary for the library to relocate for a year and a half or two years during construction. It would require moving everything twice, and we've included \$1.5 million to cover the cost of rent and moving. There is concern on the part of staff that programming would be affected.

Audience comment (Group 2): I was originally for keeping the library here, but I now believe the disruption involved in having to temporarily relocate is a huge negative.

Audience comment (Group 2): One negative of staying here is moving the books twice, but I have trouble seeing the library in a different location. To me, that negative is just an obstacle that has to be dealt with.

Question (Group 4): Would relocation be *required* if construction took place on the current site? Couldn't the work be phased out?

Answer: There is so much that needs to be worked on, it would not be safe for the staff or the public to be here while construction takes place. I know of one library where they did not rent a huge space; instead, they put the books on semis and retrieved on request the materials that customers wanted.

Audience comment (Group 2): The positive thing about either Option A or B (over Option C) is not having such a large amount of activity concentrated in one part of the downtown area.

Scherer: That is really an urban design question the City needs to deal with. The downtown district in Ames is really only about three blocks by four or five. Three blocks is not that far – most cities would give no weight to that distance. In terms of other cultural activities, though, that may be a consideration.

Question (Group 2): There is other space available downtown, space that's for sale on Burnett. How much space does the library need?

Answer: We are looking at 94,000 square feet now. When we get to the schematic design phase, we will look at what can be squeezed down. But square footage is not the only issue; the shape of the library must accommodate the work that is done inside.

Question (Group 3): One of the negatives you have listed under Option A is that handicapped persons would have to use the elevator. Wouldn't that be true for all the options?

Answer: Depending on which part of the library a person wanted to use, yes. A library of the size we are talking about needs to be on more than one floor.

Audience Comment (Group 1): Staying here (at 515 Douglas) has its arguments, but it looks to me as if the building will be "gerrymandered," with bits and pieces cobbled together. The argument that we should have something new for the 21st Century seems to have a fit.

Question (Group 3): Was there any discussion about tearing down the old parts?

Question (Group 4): Last time it seemed that the historical sections seemed insignificant and no one cared about them. Why are you now talking about saving them?

Answer: Since then we've been told that the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) and others are concerned. HPC would also like to add the building to the historical register. Library staff and I are planning to meet with the group tomorrow to see how we might work with their goals. They also indicated that the limestone exteriors of the library, post office, and City Hall create some rhythm...so we decided to proceed on this site with the exterior walls intact.

Follow-up Audience Comment (Group 4): Even in a new building, you should be able to create something that would compliment the other buildings but have a very efficient design. Is it really the best move to try to work around these old walls?

Scherer: The goal is to think about what is in the best interest of both parties – short term and long term. The utility of the building and its practical efficiency may collide with the aims of historic preservation. The economics collide, too. This is really a community question.

Follow-up Audience Comment (Group 4): At the last meetings, the sentiments were not in favor of keeping the old sections. Now it seems you're trying to turn that into an objective.

Scherer: You can look at the factual things, but there are always subjective aspects, as well. People may want to ask "What is the artifact?" "What is its relationship with other buildings?" The community needs to consider the whole picture.

Questions about Option B

Question (Group 1): How much of the year can an outdoor reading area be used?

Answer (Scherer): It's really more a question of what you value in that compressed period of time you can be outside. A lot of city services wouldn't be offered if the only consideration were how much time something could be available. Ames is building a large aquatic facility that will probably be open no more than a few months each year. We have found that when space is designed correctly – with wind protection and shading – outdoor spaces get used, especially in the hours between 7:30 and 9 o'clock p.m.

Answer (Weeks): The library in Anchorage has an outdoor area, and it is heavily used.

Audience Comment (Group 1): Outdoor areas have a visual value in any season.

Question (Group 1): Would it be possible to make a three-season sun porch area outside?

Answer: That could be done. There are options for pull-down wind screens and shade creation. In Telluride the southwest corner of the outside terrace is in use year-round because the altitude allows for a lot of solar gain. A terrace is also good for events such as readings or book groups. Certainly, there will be times that it's too hot.

Question (Group 1): Where would café and book sales areas be in Option B?

Answer: The book sales area, café, and entry would be immediately south of the oldest section of the library.

Audience Comment (Group 1 & 2): The skinny plaza on the east side doesn't have the appeal of the one shown in Option A. I'm not sure people would want to use it.

Question (Groups 1): Why does this Option keep Douglas open for traffic? We could use Douglas for the plaza area (if it were closed).

Answer: We thought about that – it would be nice. In Holland, they have hydraulic posts that can be lowered in order to provide emergency access. Earlier today, staff talked about having the

children located downstairs, an outdoor terrace above, and creating a more square plaza, including street space. That seems like a worthy idea; it seems to me we would have to create a proper street-width in alley between Douglas and Duff, though.

Question (Group 1): Right now we have handicap parking right outside the door. The way it's shown in Option B, it appears to be a long way away.

Answer: I think it would be possible to put handicap parking on the east side, in the south half of block adjacent to building.

Audience Comment (Group 1): To me, Option B does not have as attractive an entry as Option A.

Audience Comment (Group 1): The thinner (narrower) building seems to give fewer options for flexibility relative to the first one.

Scherer: I agree that would be harder to juggle space inside.

Audience Comment (Group 1): I cannot get a handle on how this option functions.

Scherer: This may not be the best idea. Remember, I am not tied to any of these...we just wanted to throw some ideas out to generate conversation and see where we could go.

Audience Comment (Group 1): I think Option A, with the open space, has more personality. Option B looks blah.

Question (Group 1): Why does the bookmobile have to be parked in the library? It seems like it causes a lot of problems.

Answer: Parking the bookmobile is not the problem; it's the problem of loading the books. Volunteers come in and scramble to get it loaded. They are going up and down steps and carrying books quite a distance. It is very important to get it right the next time; the dock you have now was never right.

Question (Group 1): Does this option gut the interior?

Answer: No, we're suggesting that everything south of 1904 and 1940 buildings is coming down. In part, it's to change the level of the floor, for the reasons we discussed earlier. We are looking now at a building that can stay here for 100 years. Also, it's much less expensive to clean this all out and start over than to work around all the pilings and existing structures.

Question (Groups 1 & 4): Why are you making the mechanical area so large?

Answer: Please remember that the drawings you are seeing are just conceptual. Although we do need space for storage, mechanical systems, etc., as we get a more definite design, our goal will be to work the square footage down as much as possible in an efficient way. We are showing more space for these systems in Options A and B because adding on to the older areas is less efficient than starting from scratch.

Staff Follow-up Comment (Carey): We did not show you the air handling room in the April building tours.

Question (Group 1) What is the traffic count on Douglas? Where are people going?

Answer: We don't have a traffic count and much discussion would be required if you decided to close the street. At this point, we were interested in learning whether or not citizens were even interested in having the architects to investigate the option. We could do the count and get the answers, but we don't want to go to that length if it's clear the idea is not viable.

Question (Group 1): Would you take down the 25-year-old building for reasons other than the problems it has with air handling?

Answer: The layout of the structural grid impedes flexibility. The ceilings are not high enough to allow for proper ambient lighting or harvest of daylight. The east side is not structured to have a floor added above it. The area that will support additional floors does not allow for enough expansion – you'd still be at least 15,000 square feet short. The reality is that it's less expensive to take it down and build a new library in the proper way, than to try to renovate – and you will get a better building in the end. The west half is also too narrow to make changes inside. My professional opinion is that, if we're going to build it, the resulting building should carry you for 100 years and should be flexible enough to allow the library to evolve over time.

* Note that Scherer's answer to a series of similar questions is changed the next day, on page 9, as a result of conversations with the public.

Question (Group 1): Did option A also include tearing down 1985 section?

Answer: Yes.

Question (Group 1): Are Options A and B LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified?

Answer: They are budgeted for a LEED silver rating, but by the time Ames builds, we will probably be able to go to gold. Planning something new from scratch is the most efficient. The Fayetteville Public Library, now with 88,000 square feet, has the same energy bill as it did with 40,000 previously. We can't do that here, though, if we don't change the air handling and other big issues. We've added an extra 4000 square feet in the mechanical areas of Options A and B are needed to bring the existing parts of the building to a higher level of energy efficiency.

Question (Groups 1 & 4): Is there any way to reinforce the walls of the 1984 building to accept a second floor?

Answer: On west side of the building, yes. On east side, you'd have to pay so much to make changes in the underpinning, it wouldn't be worth it. Clean, simple, construction ends up being a lot cheaper than working around all the existing issues.

Audience Comment (Group 1): There was concern about the historic areas on the part of the Historic Preservation Commission, so I'm pleased to see what you came up with.

Audience Comment (Group 1): The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) has requested a historic determination about the building, and the HPC feels the 1940 addition is actually more valuable than the 1904 section.

Question (Group 2): Why isn't a bookmobile drive-through included in the alley on Option B?

Answer: That is something we will consider. The problem is that we don't know when the First United Methodist Church expansion will happen and we don't know how long the church's annex building will be there. If certain things happened on the west side of this block, a drive-through could be created.

Audience Comment (Group 2): It seems like we are giving a lot of weight to a project we don't know will happen, when it seems likely that the library expansion will.

Response (Weeks): The First United Methodist Church has a Web page that shows their proposed building design. They have invested a lot of energy already and we don't want to bully them.

Audience Comment (Group 2): If the bookmobile is that important, those discussions about the alley need to take place.

Question (Group 4): Could the library be expanded into the parking area west of the library on 5th Street?

Answer: The problem is that it is very narrow; you'd end up with a long, dead-end space that would be inefficient and hard to staff. Also, the church's plans call for a big portal window on the south. It would not be very neighborly of us to put a big wall up in front of it.

Question (Group 4): Is it too late for the church to change its design?

Answer: I'm not really sure. They proceeded on the assumption that the City was willing to swap parcels, but I don't believe there is any formal agreement.

Question (Group 4): In the decision-making process, when do you have to know about the Elks and the church? Don't you need something in writing first?

Answer: We are hoping that we'll have a better idea about the possibilities in the next month or so.

Question (Group 2): Has it been determined that the white house (on Douglas) is available?

Answer: Yes, the owners have indicated that it is for sale.

Question (Group 2): Is there no discussion about simply remodeling this building?

Answer: No. We can't get the necessary square footage on this site. My charge was to design a 94,000 square foot building.

Question (Group 2): What happens to the historical part on B?

Answer: The façade of limestone stays the same on both Option A and Option B. It seems as if people would like the main floor on B to extend farther to the east. There are some possibilities for working with that idea.

Audience Comment (Group 2): With Options A and B, I think the café thing is great, but it's not necessary, in my opinion. There are many café's close by and people can bring their own.

Answer: If people believe that is a negative, we can reconsider the gallery and coffee shop.

Audience Follow-up Comment (Group 2): I would have said the same thing a year ago, now I think people would come and use that kind of space and stay at the library. I've seen it in other places and have been surprised at how well used lounge areas are.

Question (Group 2): Is the setback from Fifth Street farther on Option B than it is now, and does it have to be?

Answer: Yes, it is drawn that way, but it doesn't have to be.

Follow-up Comment (Group 2): That is a negative to me; I can't see that being well used outside. I'd let the building come out to the street.

Scherer: We could actually keep the east side intact, but set back the new levels above it to create a roof terrace there.

Question (Group 2): Would you still change the ground floor?

Answer: Yes, we'll do that no matter what. It's important that the floor be at street elevation. The floor is currently one foot, seven inches below grade. But that is actually fortunate, in that we can leave the first floor slab and install the raised floor above it. We would put in new footings where necessary. As I've mentioned, we could still capture ambient lighting off an acoustical ceiling at a 12-foot, six-inch height and install heating, ventilation, and data connections below the new floor.

Question (Group 2): On Options A and B, are you keeping the original part and knocking down the 1985 addition?

Answer: When I came to town, that is what I was thinking. Now, after some of the discussions, it seems we might try to keep some of the features and still come out with a modern, flexible building. We don't want to throw anything away unnecessarily. We need to balance the economics of working around some things and still gaining modern function. Of course, aesthetics is another issue.

Question (Group 2): Has the cost of putting the library in another space temporarily been added in?

Answer: Yes. The cost of rent and two moves is included in the prices of Options A and B. The entirely new building would be roughly 50 percent cheaper than the other options, if no parking garage were needed.

Question (Group 2): How long would the library be out, if it had to move out and relocate all the books?

Answer: A year and a half to two years. In Chicago, where we added a second floor to a library, they spent \$1.5 million on rent. Rates may be higher there, but that cost is a factor.

Audience Comment (Group 3) The human cost for the library staff of relocating is greater in both A and B; Option C avoids that.

Question (Group 3): What was the thought process behind making Option B so narrow?

Answer: The narrower building allows for some civic space along Douglas Avenue without closing the street, and that area could also be used for future expansion.

Question (Group 4): Is Option B cumbersome for the funeral home?

Answer: No, Douglas remains open so people can get through from wherever they park, regardless of the time of day. There's a potential problem with Option A if people have parked north of the library and have to go around the building when the library is closed to attend a visitation.

Questions on Option C:

Question (Group 1): Where is the big meeting room?

Answer: There is a large one on first, but space is also available on fourth. Generally, it's better to have a lot of people stay on the main floor.

Question (Group 1): What could you do to make this option more aesthetic?

Answer: There are design elements that can be added. In Fayetteville, the parking structure includes arches that match the building. We also had a contest for local artists and put in some planters. We need to keep most of the structure open to the air, so that a ventilation system doesn't have to be included. One key is to try to make the building and the ramp look like a unit.

Question (Group 1): Isn't there going to be a problem with sanitation in a ramp?

Answer: I think we're always going to run into behavioral issues that can impact the pleasantness of the space. In Fayetteville, they had the same concerns and did not like the idea of a ramp in the beginning; now, five years later, we hear that it is the thing people like the most. It is painted white, well lighted, there are emergency call buttons visible every where, and we put in a slightly higher ceiling so that you can see the library from wherever you are in the ramp. One great thing about the parking ramp is that it reduces the heat sink; the bad thing is that there is a high carbon imprint with the use of that much concrete.

Question (Group 1): Isn't it safer to have everyone come in on one floor?

Answer: There will be a service desk wherever there is a door. In this plan, there is a service desk on every level, so there will be someone there watching every entrance.

Question (Group 2): How many entrances are there?

Answer: Option A has two entrances but just one lobby; Option B also has one entrance; Option C has several entrances, but there would be a service desk on each floor near each entrance.

Question (Group 1): Would the parking ramp work for City Hall?

Answer: There are 88 spaces there now; we'd add 257 to give us 169 more.

Question (Group 1): Would that be enough for the library and City Hall?

Answer: On evenings when there are city council meetings, there will be a lot of demand and pressure on the parking area. During the day, the existing lot is not usually full.

Audience Comment (Group 1): There's also an auditorium and 198 parking places behind City Hall.

Scherer: Ideally, you would want 200 spaces dedicated to the library and another 100 within a five minute walk. Except between 6:00 and 9:00 p.m., this ramp could satisfy both. Of course, it will be full if the auditorium is full, but you can't size the ramp for the busiest of days.

Question (Group 1): Why are we so concerned about the emphasis on cars? I don't think we include parking if we want the bond issue to pass, and we shouldn't encourage building more parking.

Answer (Scherer): I know where you're coming from, but right now there is a disconnect in society between our laziness and our ethics.

Staff Comment (Weeks): It's also true that 13 percent of the library's customers come from outside Ames, and the library gets funding for offering that service.

Audience Comment (Group 1): If you don't provide parking, no one will use the place.

Audience Comment (Group 1): The parking ramp by Mary Greeley has ruined the neighborhood nearby. I think a surface lot with trees allows for the proportion and visibility of City Hall.

Question (Group 1): Has there been any discussion about what would happen to this building if the library were to move to the other location?

Answer: There was some discussion about that today among some members of the library expansion focus group. More probably needs to take place.

Follow-up Comment (Group 1): I think there are lots of people or groups who would like this building – maybe even The Octagon.

Question (Group 2): Could the meeting rooms be broken down into smaller spaces to be used in different ways?

Answer: Yes. We'll include story time rooms, work rooms, and three different size program rooms. We are not at that point in the design yet.

Question (Group 2): If the library built a ramp, would it require paid parking?

Answer: The citizens will have to figure out how to pay for maintenance and upkeep somehow. There are estimates that say the real cost over the 20-year life cycle of a parking deck is between \$100 and \$350 per car per month. People will walk farther if parking is free, but there is also a time when people have a three-minute window and just need to run in to the library to pick something up.

Something to consider is having a drive-up pick-up window. There are automated systems now that can be used 24/7. Library card holders drive up and use their cards to request materials that have been set aside for them. It takes pressure off the short-term parking.

Another idea that came up was to make the library wider on three stories and negotiate for “air rights” to put a parking deck over part of the First National Bank parking lot. When we proposed the idea, the bank did not say “no,” but neither did they appear too enthusiastic.

Question (Group 2): How much of the parking ramp would be paid for by the City? I’m concerned that library bond issue would not pass.

Answer: I couldn’t say. Either way, it’s still your money.

Audience Comment (Group 2): There is definitely an advantage in not having to move the library while Option A or B is being built, but that is not a strong enough negative to me.

Audience Comment (Group 2): Relocating to Clark Avenue would be a “tipping” of the activity to one side of the community, and putting a big building next to City Hall is aesthetically negative to that area. The only advantage I see is the lack of the need to move.

Audience Comment (Group 2): But Options A and B both require the acquisition of additional properties, and C does not.

Audience Comment (Group 2): One thing I see here is a question of utility vs. charm. Preserving chunks of this building should not override consideration of building a building for its intended purpose. As a grandmother trying to get small children into library, I’m starting to lean toward C. When you bring small children in, they don’t care as much about the aesthetic value. They don’t want to be out in the cold being lifted over a snow bank in a stroller.

Scherer: Being out of the rain, snow, and bird droppings is one of the reasons the people of Fayetteville are now so happy with their ramp.

Audience Comment (Group 2): What about the idea of putting a parking garage under building?
Answer: The economics are outrageous. I do not think the community would be willing to spend that much money – and there are also ongoing maintenance, lighting, and ventilation issues you’d have to deal with.

Audience Comment (Group 2): Option C appeals to me more and more because we will get an effective interior. I’ve been in Ames ten years, but only since these meetings began have I even looked at what the outside of the library looks like. When we are in Minneapolis, we always go to the mid-town market, partly because the parking is so convenient. Free parking is a big draw. We would get used to a four-story building.

Scherer: This plan could be modified to create an internet café along Clark Avenue. The scale of the building, the ramp, and the overall size can all be tweaked.

Question (Group 2): The parking lot behind City Hall is usually full of city hall employees and people who are exercising. Would they be screened out of a new parking ramp at the library?
Answer: I suspect a public ramp would not be designated for library users only. Nashville has a pay-by-the-hour city ramp, but tickets can be validated for one hour at the library. Naturally, some people cheat the system and it can become an administrative nightmare.

Question (Group 3): In Option C, are the adult fiction and non-fiction sections separated on two floors?

Answer: Yes, that's the way the initial concept is drawn, but there will certainly be many modifications to any design before we finish this process.

Question (Group 3): What was the opposition to four floors on Option C?

Answer: Some people felt the scale of the building could overshadow City Hall, and that it was too boxy-looking.

Question (Group 3): What part can be open after hours?

Answer: Sections of the ground floor.

Question (Group 3): On Option C, could you check out and leave on any level?

Answer: Yes.

Question (Group 3): Has there been any talk about what the old library could be used for and how it could be made more energy efficient?

Answer: The question of how the existing library could be used has come up, and my sense is that people have a great interest in exploring it. I've heard suggestions that it could be used as a multi-cultural center, a place for the arts community, or a social services center. There is work that needs to be done to improve the mechanical systems and energy efficiency.

* [See additional conversations on page 14.](#)

Audience Comment (Group 3): A plus for Option C is that it is the most forward thinking and provides more options for thirty years from now.

Question (Group 3): How much would it cost to make Option C even more efficient than LEED Silver?

Answer: It would take another \$3 to \$4 million to be LEED-certified platinum.

[General Questions & Comments:](#)

Question (Group 1): How many people work at the library?

Answer (Weeks): There are about 70 people and many are part-time. It equates to approximately 40 full-time employees. We have ten professional librarians.

Question (Group 1): How big is the city auditorium?

Answer: It holds 881. It is not the kind of intimate space that serves well for something like an author signing. It also has fixed seats and they are elevated, which is necessary when seating is being provided for more than 350.

Question (Group 1): All your premises are based on an increase in population, right?

Answer: Yes, the call for 94,000 square feet was based on an estimated three percent population increase; we realize it may turn out to be different.

Follow-up Comment (Group 1): Perhaps we are planning a bigger building than we need.

Scherer: The first run projected that you'd need 118,000 square feet. We chose to take the three percent estimation and use a smaller square-foot-per-capita target; that should allow for a margin of error in population growth. Quality of service is not tied just to square footage, either. Our firm recently did a library half the size of this, but with a meeting room twice the size of this one. The amount of square foot per capita was unusual there, but it suited the needs. If Ames only grew 1%, 94,000 would be adequate. We could downsize this if necessary.

Question (Group 1): Are we not going to vote A, B, C.?

Answer: I don't think that's the way we should go. How we feel about the direction is more important than the raw number of votes. It is hard for people to let go of what they care about. They need to take this away and consider the options.

Question (Group 2): Is there, or might there be, any relationship between the library expansion and the Main Street Iowa Project?

Answer: I'd say it doesn't hurt to have the "Main Street Iowa" designation.

Audience Comment (Main Street Cultural District member Tim Coble): It will bring in professionals who have knowledge of tax credits and that sort of thing. They are behind the idea of renovation.

Audience comment (Group 2): The City is looking at the revitalization of Main Street and it requires a deck or ramp. The revitalization of the Sheldon-Munn into loft apartments will require parking. A new ramp on Burnett could possibly accommodate the library, the Town Center, and the Sheldon-Munn.

Scherer: It is important to look at the whole downtown district in terms of parking. The most pressure for parking is when there are big meetings; overall, you will have to consider the levels of convenience, along with the rhythms of use.

Audience Comment (Group 2): I have a concern about another empty building in Ames.

Audience Comment (Coble): This 50,000 square feet should be looked at as potential for a multi-cultural center. It could be used for ACTORS, Ames Children's Theater, choral groups, the genealogical society, and a place with public restrooms. Don't think of this as an empty, falling apart building. The community could come together to use it.

Scherer: It might be worth having a targeted focus group consider what could happen to this building. The answer to the question will be tied into the solution for this building. I've heard that a human services campus has been brought up, but it needs to be managed carefully. As an outsider, I'd say that moving the library two and a half blocks west should not leave an empty hole here. And whether people want to admit it or not, one person has stated to me that the east end of Main needs to come down.

Coble: That area is quite derelict, but it does have historic value and could be eligible for historic tax credits.

Scherer: So, what if the east end of Main Street were the home of the new library, the new gateway to the downtown?

Audience Comment (Group 2): That would be a far better-looking approach to the City!

Scherer: A few years ago, Austin, Minnesota, was really run down. The downtown was a terrible part of town, full of gangs and undesirable elements. The Hormel Foundation and the City decided to build a park and, instead of retaining the Carnegie building they had, they suggested building a new library. Pretty soon all the bars were cleaned up and became restaurants, and the old, derelict theater is now a vibrant community theater. The Ames Public Library gate count (of customer entries) is 30 thousand plus per month -- any retailer would die for that! A new library could be a bookend on Main Street.

Audience Comment (Group 2): Could that be Option D?

Staff Comment (Weeks): My guess is that the City Manager would probably not want to take any Main Street properties off the tax role.

Audience Comment (Group 2): Still, it would be appropriate to look at something like that as a matter of image.

Question (Groups 3 & 4): Have costs been calculated?

Answer: All three options are within five percent (5%) of each other with respect to cost. The price of the parking ramp is included in Option C because we would have to replace the 88 spaces that are now available across from City Hall (in Lot N). Options A & B do not meet the parking configurations that would be ideal for a library of the size we are planning, but it would be possible to build a ramp on Douglas. That would add about \$5 million to the price tags on Options A and B.

Follow-up Audience Comment (Group 4) Plans A and B also require collaboration with the Elks and First United Methodist Church. If we have to purchase land from either of them, it would add another presently unknown cost.

Scherer: Option B can work without the purchase of the Elks or changing their property. The lot the house sits on could be used for parking and, eventually, if the Elks were to move, it might be possible for the library to expand into that lot. Option A does not work if the Elks are not willing to work with us. Our plans will be complicated if the church's annex remains where it is, although their building plans do call for a swap of that parcel and the city-owned parking lot between the two church buildings.

Audience Comment (Group 3): In terms of external aesthetics, A and B look "gerry-built" and C looks like a big box.

Question (Group 3): How will the library handle e-books?

Answer: We can't design everything now for the future; the key is that the internal design must be as flexible as possible.

Question (Group 3): Are all three options similar with respect to security inside the library?

Answer: Yes, the three options are equivalent in almost every respect, including security. There are staffed desks adjacent to the entrances.

Question (Group 3): What's the energy efficiency for the three options?

Answer: There is less efficiency in A and B because we have to work with the old buildings. The new building in Option C could include a very modern, efficient HVAC system – the whole building could be geo-thermal with chilled beams and radiant heat.

Question (Group 4): Which building do you prefer?

Answer: I don't want to express an opinion and I will not present anything that will "lead" to a decision. LEED certification and overall efficiencies are important to me. One critical comment I'd make on Option C is that I would now prefer it to be three stories. I can see a better scheme which would include all adult services on one large floor plate over the parking garage. That would allow fiction and non-fiction areas to be on the same floor and keep children's services all on one floor. An additional story could be added in the future. Also, there is a trend around the country to keep parts of library buildings open late, so the idea of putting an internet café on the ground level for that purpose has merit.

Question (Group 4): The idea of bringing food into a library used to be anathema – what happened to that mind set?

Answer: Some libraries still don't allow food, but libraries evolve. They found that allowing food in actually keeps the library cleaner because people don't sneak it in and, for the most part, they are responsible about cleaning up their messes. Prohibition of food means that people sneak things in and then they stuff it into the shelves. And there is really no issue with respect to damage to the materials – there is no control over what happens to books once people take them home. So food is not a book-related question; the bigger impact is on the building's infrastructure. The thinking now is to provide for food -- accept it and provide a proper place for it. I know of a library that allows beverages, but only in the library's containers that are available for purchase. It's a money-maker.

Question (Group 1): How high this ceiling (in the Farwell T. Brown Auditorium)?

Answer: About 18 feet.

Question (Group 4): What will happen when you come back?

Answer: I hope to bring back two options; the Library Board will have to pick a direction. All these options are relatively equivalent, but a lot of civic design questions remain. Our next meetings will be June 16 and 17.

Audience Comment (Group 4): I have a hard time visualizing the options with these flat diagrams; it's much easier to see the relationships when you draw on the board.

Scherer: When we reach the schematic design phase of the project, we will have more public meetings to look at three-dimensional models, talk about windows, energy conservation, etc. At some point we will put you through a Rorschach-type exercise to test your perceptions and find out what physical attributes are appealing to the community. Eventually, we will talk about interior furnishings and furniture, let you look at samples of brick, and so on.

Question (Group 2): Will the information you're showing be available on website or newspaper?

Answer: Yes, the slides and lists of pros and cons will go up.