

July 6, 2012

AADL Facilities Committee recommendation to the AADL Board:

It is the recommendation of the Facilities Committee that a bond proposal for \$65 million for the replacement of the Downtown Library building at its current location at Fifth and William be placed on the November 6, 2012, ballot. This recommendation will be brought forward at the July 16 Board meeting of the AADL with an accompanying resolution.

On April 16, 2012, this Committee was charged to gather information needed to make recommendations to the Board about AADL's facilities, including but not limited to a review of information gathered in the past about the condition of the Downtown building.

Our work included a review of planning and study documents dating back to 2007, as well as a review of the history of the building and its two renovations, the last of which was completed in 1990. The current facility comprises 110,000 square feet over 5 floors.

We found that the decision to suspend the project in 2008 due to the severe economic downturn in the state and nationally was prudent; however, the work that had been done prior to that decision was comprehensive and forward-thinking in ways that greatly facilitated the deliberations of this Committee.

The Board of AADL adopted a strategic plan in 2010 that stated clearly in its *Strategic Initiative VI, Facilities Goal 1: Renovate or replace the downtown library with attention to the condition of the existing building; tax base; revenue stream; development of surrounding properties and demographics*. In March of 2012, the Board commissioned an EPIC-MRA telephone survey that

included questions that specifically queried voters' willingness to fund a replacement or renovation of the Downtown Library through a bond proposal. The results of this survey were positive enough to lead the Board to form our Committee and to begin a community discussion about the Downtown Library.

Since April, we have reviewed the EPIC-MRA survey results, participated in the three community forums held at the Downtown Library, reviewed the Providence Report from 2007, and had the 2008 cost estimates reviewed and confirmed.

We have made the following findings:

- Our community continues to feel that the Ann Arbor District Library's Downtown location is a vital hub to our community. In conversations with community leaders, they are virtually unanimous in supporting steps to ensure our library can meet the needs of this community for the next 50 years.
- Our community believes that the downtown library remains as relevant – or more so – today as in the past, regardless of the development of the internet, ebooks or other technological developments.
- Use of the downtown library continues to be extraordinarily high. The average number of yearly visits to the Downtown Library over the past five years was 606,173. The average yearly number of library-sponsored events Downtown for the past four years was 441.
- Our examination shows that the building has been well maintained given its age. Many of the flaws now visible are

the inevitable result of age, changing technologies and shifting needs and interests of the public. While ADA compliant, the building is grandfathered, and does not present the public with universal access.

- A key message that the staff and the public, through the forums and conversations, have brought to this Committee is an understanding that the building in its current form constrains service implementation. Decisions are made around the building's room sizes and configuration. We can go on as we are, but we cannot do more -- and more is what our community is expecting of us and is saying to us, too.
- Among the key shortcomings that have become increasingly evident are:
 - We do not have a children's room that reflects the modern family's use of a public library.
 - The library's current configuration does not lend itself to efficient use of staff to maintain a presence in all public areas of the facility, creating security concerns. A more efficiently laid out library could reduce operating expenses, or allow staff to be utilized in ways that better serve the public.
 - AADL has a national and international reputation for its use of technology in public library service delivery. The need for cabling will not go away with advances in WiFi, and this building is as technologically enabled as it can be. It is important to remember that technology delivers to our patrons, and it is a backbone in a modern library system. Our ability in the current facility to add more cable is severely constrained. Additional cable capacity is vital to ensure that our patrons, those who visit the Downtown library physically

and virtually @ aadl.org, have satisfactory online experiences with the Library.

- We do not have an auditorium at all, much less one that can seat the size audiences that Ann Arbor can and does draw.
- Our community likes to meet and talk together and the public library remains a space that is trusted and known to welcome all comers. That we are a first choice of a meeting space for many groups is not a surprise, and we should be. What we cannot do is meet the demand or to even come close and we should be able to do that, too. We expect that demand to increase, as citizens and organizations look for spaces to meet face to face for community events, planning, tutoring and other vital activities. In the past three years, there has been a 21.8% increase in the number of occurrences of outside organizations who book rooms Downtown for non-library sponsored events, rentals or events. The total number rose to 363 occurrences for the 2011-2012 fiscal year.
- The Ann Arbor News Archive is currently housed offsite and is not publicly accessible because there is not space Downtown, nor are we able Downtown to control the environment for this archival collection.
- Last but not least, there is the book and reading. The public has told us we need a modern quiet reading room, to provide the quality experience they demand. They also have made it clear that the library must do everything technologically that it needs to do to meet the needs of the community – but not sacrifice the book. We recognize that books will take up less and less space over the course of this century, but we still have them in the hundreds of thousands, and will house them in a new library.

- Our review found that the 2008 cost estimates are accurate for today's construction market. At that time a new 160,000 square foot building would cost \$71 million and a project renovating the 1990 portion of the building and replacing the 1958 building with a four-story addition would have cost \$65 million. These estimates included the costs associated with moving out, operating in temporary locations, and moving back into the new library. The difference is less than 10%. There are clearly economic benefits, long-term and short-term, for building now.

The committee also took our financial practices into consideration when making this recommendation. The AADL does not levy the full millage allowed by the voters, and has not done so for several years. We levy 1.55 mills, but could levy 1.93 mills. Because there is a voted operating millage in perpetuity that will cover the operational costs of any new facility, as evidenced by our branch building experience, we do not need to ask the voters for an additional operating millage. Ann Arbor has historically valued and funded a library system that reflects the community's standards for education, learning, and literacy. Since 1866 when the Ladies' Library Association opened the first public circulating library in Ann Arbor, those fortunate enough to be in positions to secure a positive future for the library have done so. Sometimes the choices were clear; other times, not so clear. They were always important and rarely without controversy.

In 2012, the decision to replace the building rather than to replace a portion of the building and renovate the remainder is another critical decision point for the leaders and citizens of the Ann Arbor community. Placing a bond proposal on the November ballot, at a time of the highest turnout of voters, will give citizens an opportunity to move their library forward, once again into a new

century and into a technological age that Andrew Carnegie could not have envisioned in detail. Mr. Carnegie would recognize the mission of access to knowledge and a place to bring together ideas and thought into discussion, and eventually into action. The people of Ann Arbor know well the value, economic and social, of such a mission.

Whether it is for an individual taking an online test in order to apply for a job, or a difficult community discussion on race relations in 2012, storytime for preschool children, a maker fair, comic convention, exhibits, individual study and research, or public meetings, the Library Board can say that it is reasonable to construct and operate a new facility designed as best possible to meet the needs of the community for 2012 and for 2062.