To: Joe Valentine

From: Doug Koschik

Subject: The Baldwin Public Library Building: A Positive Move Forward

Date: January 15, 2015

The purpose of my presentation at the long-range planning session on January 31, 2015, is to update the Birmingham City Commission on the process the Baldwin Public Library is undertaking to improve its building. The Library's efforts are currently centered on making major improvements to one section of the building—the Adult Services area.

History

At the January 2012 long-range planning session, I gave a presentation about the Library building, which last went through a comprehensive renovation and expansion in the early 1980s. I noted that the Library's recently adopted strategic plan had called for the development of a building plan, which the Library had accomplished after conducting a community-wide survey and statistically comparing Baldwin to other similar libraries. I said that my presentation was the start of a conversation with the City of Birmingham about how to improve the Library building. Note that this conversation is still going on today.

In my 2012 presentation I listed the following overall goals for the Library building:

- Provide enough space for a library of high caliber to carry out its services
- Arrange the space in a logical, usable manner
- Make the building aesthetically pleasing

I also noted specific space needs:

- More space for Youth Services
- An increase in study and collaboration space and a decrease in space for physical collections

Among the improvements I listed as important were:

- Improved handicapped accessibility
- Enhanced lighting and acoustics
- Better layout and "wayfinding" aids, such as signage
- Improved layout of shelving to improve browsability
- Service desks that are more up-to-date and functional

Finally, I laid out three options for moving forward:

1. Continue the current practice of ongoing maintenance and modest, discrete improvements

2. Undertake a comprehensive renovation and repurposing of space within the existing footprint
3. Plan a full-scale building renovation and expansion, based on the needs of the community

The City Commission did not chose an option at that time, but established a Joint Building Committee and charged it with determining "which path is most desirable" based on benchmarking and other research. As a result, a Joint Library Building Committee was established. It conducted further research, carried out focus groups and community forums, commissioned a study of the library of the future, and hired a consultant to develop a "library program" for a renovated and expanded building. In 2013 the City Commission agreed to issue an RFP for architectural services to develop a plan that fulfilled the library program. That plan ended up calling for the elimination of the Library's 1960 and 1981 additions; the construction of a new building along Merrill Street, attached to the original 1927 building; and the renovation of the 1927 building. The plan increased the building's size by 16,600 square feet and would have cost $21.5 million.

That plan was presented to the voters in May 2014. While it was a well-thought-out plan, one that fulfilled the objectives that the Library Board and City Commission had set in the previous two years, it still got defeated by a resounding margin—76% to 24%.

Genesis of Current Project

Many reasons have been advanced for the "no" vote in May, but the Library Board believes the primary cause was the cost of the project. A secondary cause was probably the size of the proposed expansion.

The extent of the defeat definitively rules out any prospect of reviving the idea of a complete building renovation and expansion in the foreseeable future. It also guarantees that the 1981 Birkerts Addition will continue to be part of the Library building. We are now left with two viable options: either to do nothing or to renovate existing space. Doing nothing is even less desirable than it was three years ago since the building problems we had identified previously still remain, and in certain cases have become even more pronounced. In addition, we would like to note that at least some opponents of the $21.5 million plan have come forward to say that the Library has actually made a good case for improving the building and that they would not object to a scaled-down project.

Therefore, the Library Board wishes to proceed with a modified version of the second option listed above: pursue a renovation and repurposing of the existing space within one section of the Library—Adult Services. Other sections of the building will, we hope, be addressed at a later date. Such a plan would reflect Andres Duany's advice that we achieve the Library's building ultimate goals through a series of small steps.

What the Library is proposing at this time would, admittedly, not address some major issues, like the space needs of the Youth Room, the front entrance, and ADA-accessibility in certain parts of the building. It would, however, update and improve the section of the Library that serves all adults, including seniors. The project would concentrate on the main floor of the Birkerts Addition, an area

where few physical improvements have occurred in over 30 years. The Library intends to reallocate space within that area; establish small group study rooms and collaboration spaces; improve the shelving arrangement so that collections can be browsed more readily; improve the technological infrastructure; increase technological offerings; and make the whole area more inviting.

It should be noted that already, in the past several months, the Library has taken steps, on its own, to improve its facility. It has ordered a range of new shelving that will result in a more orderly and attractive Youth Room—an area that will otherwise not see a major upgrade for several years. In order to improve its technology, the Library has signed contracts to replace and upgrade its switches and wireless access points, and also to purchase and install IP phones, which will bring its telephone system up to date with the City's. To improve its virtual presence, the Library has chosen a vendor to redesign Baldwin's website. And the Library is still exploring the possibility of a curbside book drop.

In summary, the plan currently being proposed by the Library would not increase overall building space, but would, in one major part of the facility (Adult Services), make it more functional. This will, we hope and expect, help to establish the Library more firmly as a knowledge center and hub of activity in the City. If the public receives these innovations positively, it will be more likely, in the future, to support additional projects involving the Youth Room and the front entrance, as described in the Library's Vision for the Future. Those potential future Library projects would be coordinated with other City projects. And the overall cost will be far from the $21.5 million of the full renovation and expansion.

Vision for the Future of the Building

In preparation for its proposed new project, the Library Board has developed and approved a "Vision for the Future of the Baldwin Public Library Building." That document immediately follows this narrative.

The vision is summarized in its initial sentence: "The Baldwin Public Library wishes to undertake a building project that will provide it with a well-designed, forward-looking, technologically advanced, and visually exciting space to carry out innovative library services in the 21st century." The project consists of three phases over an undetermined number of years, beginning with the Birkerts Addition (this project), and then moving on to a renovation of the Youth Room, and finally a renovation of the public entrance, lobby, and Circulation Department. Phases 2 and 3 could involve some external construction.

Scope of Work

The Library is in the process of developing an RFP for professional services to design and carry out an interior renovation of the Adult Services section of the Library. The RFP asks for a fixed-fee proposal for a conceptual/schematic design, as well as a fee-structure quote for the actual design development, compilation of construction documents, bidding, and construction administration of the work.

The RFP calls upon the design professional to provide floor plans and interior concepts, including lighting and furnishings; assessments of needed mechanical and electrical work; a project phasing plan and construction timeline; and an estimate of total project costs, including a line-by-line breakout of all fees, architectural costs, construction costs, furnishings, technology, and contingencies.

The work might be carried out in two more stages, based on availability of the funding. The scope of work lists the following project objectives, but makes clear that they are starting points for discussion, not prescriptions. The Library is eager to receive innovative, creative, and cost-effective solutions to designing a "library of the future" in a cost-effective manner.

Project Objectives:

Unless another other location is mentioned, all references below are to the main floor of the Birkerts Addition.

Freshen the Interior and Furnishings

1. Coordinate the design and colors for all interior features, including walls and carpeting.
2. Replace the carpet on the main floor of Birkerts, except in the Teen Area.
3. Determine what furniture can be re-used and what should be replaced.

Redesign the Shelving

4. Calculate the proper amount and layout of shelving for the physical collection over the next few years, based on input from Baldwin on the nature and the size of each part of the collection.
5. The shelving should accommodate Baldwin's "neighborhoods" concept in order to promote browsing.
6. Design a shelving configuration that is more logical and aesthetically pleasing than the current one. Make the shelving work with, rather than against, the curved wall of the Birkerts Addition.
7. Integrate the oversize books into regular shelving.
8. Use the existing shelving, but investigate physical changes. See if the shelving height can be shortened since the top shelves on the current ranges are not used.
9. Leave the current "pull-out" audiovisual shelving along the curved wall.
10. As demand for physical items diminishes in future, need for shelving space will diminish also. That will free up space for study and collaboration. Design a space that is flexible, that will allow shelving space to be transformed into other kinds of uses in the future.

Improve the Lighting/Acoustics/Seating/Feeling of Openness

11. Improve the lighting.
12. Improve the acoustics in order to accommodate the need for both quiet space and active collaboration space.
13. Re-configure the seating in some areas to foster informal discussion and collaboration.
14. Investigate raising the ceiling and exposing what is currently above the ceiling tiles.
15. Investigate opening up the old windows (perhaps convert some into passages) between the 1927 building and the Birkerts Addition.

Design a Comfortable Interior with Logical Layout

16. Improve the layout of shelving, seating, study rooms, etc., in order to promote instinctive wayfinding.
17. Install effective signage.
18. Suggest print and electronic aids to guide people through the building.
19. Make all newly designed areas ADA-compliant.
20. Improve sight lines, so that staff can easily supervise activities.
21. Improve the interior lobby and the stairs to the basement in order to enhance lighting, aesthetics, and wayfinding.

Improve the Use of Technology and Space Utilization

22. Baldwin will provide the number of computers and other equipment needed.
23. Investigate moving the computer lab from the basement to the main floor. The lab would need to be able to be closed off from the surrounding area when classes are in session, but the computers in the lab must always remain visible to staff. The lab computers will be available to the public when the space is not used as a lab.
24. If the computer lab moves to main floor, consider moving the Adult Services office space from the Grand Hall to the space in the basement currently occupied by the lab.
25. Install a suitable Adult Services desk, with appropriate technology.
26. Review the IT/Tech Services office in the basement of Birkerts to see if greater efficiency can be achieved there.
27. Install the technological infrastructure required by space design.
28. Investigate the inclusion of maker/creator space elements.
29. Baldwin will purchase any needed computers out of its operating budget, rather than out of the project budget. On the other hand, technology equipment needed for small group study rooms and for maker/creator spaces will come from the project budget.

Install Suitable Seating and Small Group Study Rooms

30. In space left over after accommodating the above, install an appropriate mixture of general seating and study space. Put in as many small group study rooms as possible.
31. Small group study rooms/collaboration spaces might go in any of the following areas:
    a. the northwest portion of the Birkerts curve
    b. across from the Circulation Desk
    c. in expanded closets at the north end of the Grand Hall
    d. in space currently occupied by the Gryphon Quiet Study Room and the Adult Services Office
32. Equip the study rooms with state-of-the-art technology and presentation equipment.
33. The Gryphon Quiet Study Room and the current Adult Services Office might remain as two rooms, or else might be turned into one room, becoming an alcove off of the Grand Hall. The two spaces might

keep their current functions or else be changed to other functions. For example, they might be small group study rooms or else house a combination of seating and shelving (say, for large print or non-fiction literature). Baldwin seeks advice on the best use of this space.

Design Flexible Spaces

34. Since libraries and library use will continue to change, design spaces that are flexible and adaptable. For example, create open floor plans, use moveable walls where possible, and spread the technological infrastructure as far as possible throughout the building.

Leave Largely or Completely Unchanged the Following:

1. The "Teen Scene" at the southeast corner of the main floor of the Birkerts Addition
2. The Rotary Room in the basement of the Birkerts Addition
3. The Grand Hall
4. The Youth Room
5. The Circulation Services area
6. Outside entrances to the Library

Baldwin realizes that it might wish to address other building projects in the future—especially the Youth Room, the Circulation Services area, the lobby, and the Library's entrances. There are, however, no definite plans for such work at this time. Any work done in this currently proposed project must be carried out in such a way that possible future building modifications will not be significantly compromised.

Timeline

The Library envisions issuing its RFP by the end of February, selecting a design professional by the end of April, presenting a preliminary plan to the public by the end of August, and having a final plan approved by the end of October.

Cost and Funding

The Library intends to pay, out of its own funds, the cost of hiring a design professional to develop a conceptual/schematic design for an interior renovation of the Adult Services section of the Library.

In the building plan presented at the 2012 long-range planning session, the cost of carrying out a renovation of the Birkerts Addition alone was estimated at $1.35 million. Given that construction costs have risen in the past three years and the scope of work has slightly changed as well, the total cost of the proposed renovation project will probably fall in the $1.5 to $1.75 million range--somewhat higher than the 2012 estimate. The Library intends to be resolute about controlling the scope of the project so that its costs are contained.

The options for funding this project include:

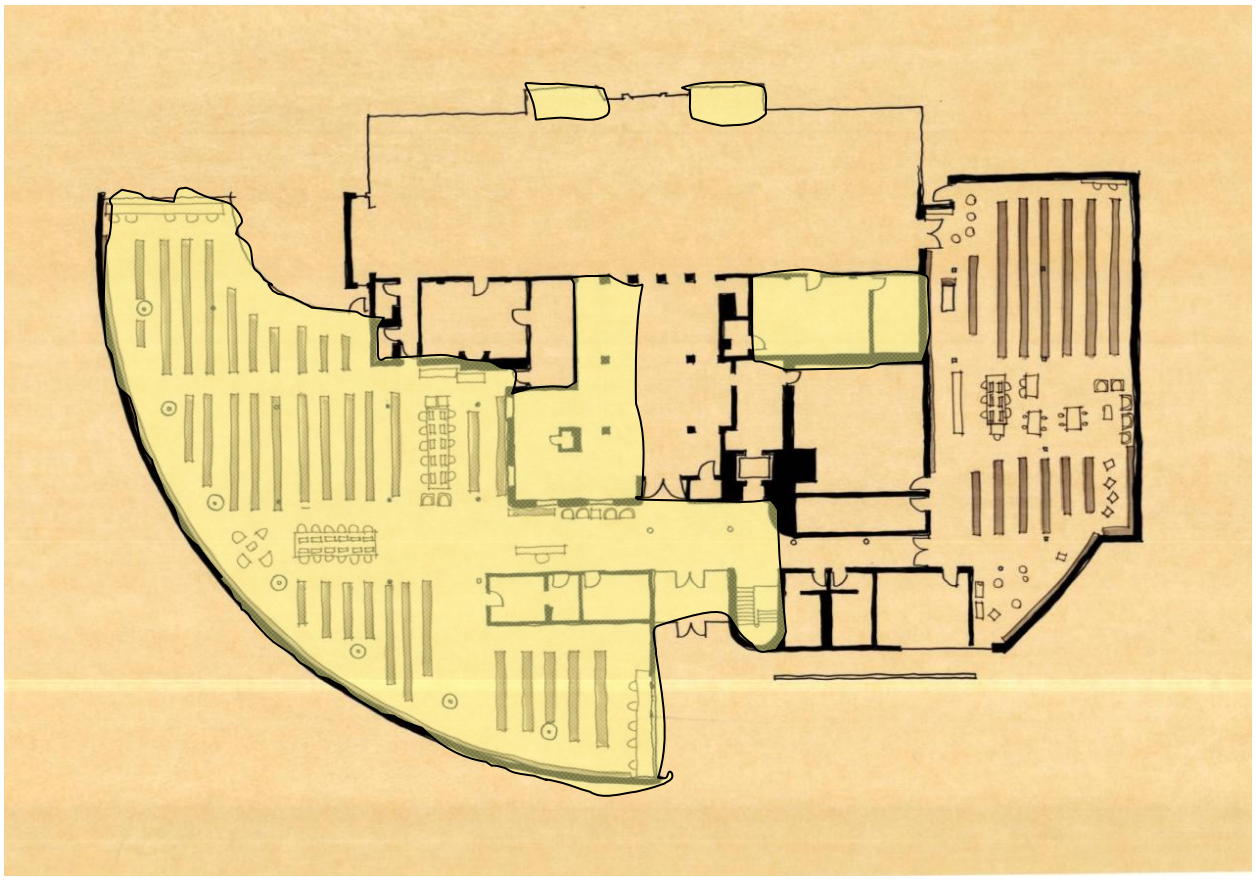
- Spending down part of the Library's fund balance and part of the Library Trust's unrestricted funds
- Increasing the Library's millage rate above its current 1.1 mills
- Obtaining a temporary loan from the City

Conclusion

The Library wishes to be practical. An "ideal" project was turned down at the polls by a large margin. Yet serious building needs remain. Instead of addressing all of these needs at one time, the Library feels that it would be best to address them incrementally, in phases that cause relatively little financial pain and minimize disruption to patrons. Baldwin would like to start with the Adult Services area, a part of the building that has seen few upgrades in over three decades. Such a project involves no exterior construction and no increase in square footage. But it would result in a rejuvenated space, better laid out, with more emphasis on 21st century technology, but still accommodating the traditional library services that Birmingham's large senior population expects and deserves. Such a project would help cement the Baldwin Library's role as a civic center in downtown Birmingham and lay the groundwork for further work on the building at a suitable time in the future.

Adult Services section of the Baldwin Public Library

The main floor of the Birkerts Addition, pictured above, has not been renovated in over 30 years.



The section highlighted in yellow shows the section of the main floor of the Library that would be the focus of the proposed project.

VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF THE BALDWIN PUBLIC LIBRARY BUILDING

The Baldwin Public Library wishes to undertake a building project that will provide it with a well-designed, forward-looking, technologically advanced, and visually exciting space to carry out innovative library services in the 21st century.

History and Future

In early 2014, the Baldwin Public Library and the City of Birmingham proposed a comprehensive renovation and expansion of the Library building, a proposal that was rejected at the polls. Now, the Baldwin Library is proposing to continue to live, for the most part, within the footprint of its current physical structure. Since Baldwin will continue to use that structure, Baldwin needs to update it so that it can better accommodate current and future library services. In general, the Library wishes to play to the building's strengths, centering traditional, quiet, reflective activities in the Tudor arts and crafts structure designed by Marcus Burrowes in 1927, and using the modernist Gunnar Birkerts Addition, designed in 1981, to house active and collaborative activities.

We see the work proceeding in three phases:

- Phase 1: A renovation of the Adult Services section of the Library, concentrating on the main floor of the Birkerts Addition, but including some modifications to the 1927 building. This phase will involve no external construction. We will reallocate space; improve the layout of shelving and seating; create activity and collaboration hubs; establish small group study rooms; and promote technological access to information.
- Phase 2: A renovation of the Youth Room, which might involve external construction.
- Phase 3: A renovation of the public entrance, lobby, and Circulation Department, which might involve external construction.

We hope to complete Phase 1 within two to three years. Then we will consider the future of Phases 2 and 3.

Vision of the public library over the next five years

The Baldwin Library has always attempted to be in the forefront of new library services. Through a series of focus groups, community forums, community surveys, library benchmark studies, and research studies of the professional literature, Baldwin has identified many community needs and wants and has envisioned what the library of the future will be like. Among the documents that Baldwin has examined is the Aspen Institute report *Rising to the Challenge: Re-Envisioning Public Libraries*, which is a distillation of current thinking about the library of the future:
http://csreports.aspeninstitute.org/documents/AspenLibrariesReport.pdf

Public libraries need to align their services, as well as their buildings, to the goals of their communities. In Baldwin's case, this means serving a well-educated, fairly affluent, technologically savvy clientele, demographically somewhat older than the average American community. Baldwin strives not only to

provide the services its citizens want, but also to enhance their user experience, both in the library building and online.

Baldwin's vision aligns with two goals established in the Library's 2010 strategic plan:

- Focus on fresh, dynamic services and programs that meet Library users' changing needs.
- Adapt the existing facility for more flexible use and employ technology more effectively in order to improve internal operating efficiency and better serve Library patrons.

It also aligns with three goals set by the Birmingham City Commission in 2010:

- Be innovative and responsive in how services are provided to the community.
- Support the vitality of both the residential and business communities.
- Continue to be proactive with infrastructure maintenance programs and reinvestment in cost-effective improvements to roads, sewers, water mains, and public facilities.

As daily experience shows us clearly, public libraries are no longer primarily storehouses of physical artifacts, but rather:

- Gateways to information in all formats
- Laboratories—places to experiment and innovate
- Learning commons—spaces for collaboration and sharing

As such, public library buildings should include zones that encourage different types of learning. Among these zones are:

- Quiet, reflective spaces
- Active areas, conducive to collaboration and sharing
- Small group meeting and study rooms, with presentation capabilities
- Social spaces—such as a commons, an exhibit space, and a café
- "Touch points," where users come into direct contact with library services—for example, a staff service desk or a touch screen with library event and location information

The Aspen Institute report envisions a number of roles for the library of the future. Public libraries must strive to encourage entrepreneurial learners, the creators of knowledge. The buildings in which libraries are housed need to foster an environment that promotes learning and the access of information, no matter how the information is stored. Staff is responsible for curating the Library's collections and for being prepared to guide, as needed, the learning experience, thereby helping the public achieve useful and productive outcomes.

The Baldwin Library requires a blended design, one that accommodates traditional stacks and quiet spaces, as well as vibrant collaboration spaces. The building must be sufficiently flexible to accommodate the changes that will inevitably come over the years. In this rapidly changing world, it is, in fact, impossible to know for sure what will happen more than five years out, but Baldwin needs to

make sure that it can at least accommodate how people are using technology at the current time and how we believe they will use it in the near future.

Translating that vision into Baldwin's physical structure

To achieve the goals mentioned above, Baldwin wishes to focus its proposed building improvements, throughout all phases of the project, in the following categories. While Baldwin is providing a list of specific objectives, that list should not be considered prescriptive. Baldwin is eager to entertain any and all innovative and creative solutions to the challenge of designing a "library of the future" in a cost-effective manner. Baldwin is also eager to see environmentally friendly materials and methods used in any building project.

- Freshen the interior (new carpeting, updated furniture, coordinated color and design).
- Redesign the shelving (if possible, lower the height of existing shelving; determine the correct size of the physical collection; change the configuration of the shelving to allow easier browsing).
- Improve lighting, acoustics, seating, and the feeling of openness in order to foster discussion and collaboration.
- Design an interior where users feel comfortable and can easily find their way around (improve the layout; install effective signage; use print and electronic aids to guide people; make all newly designed areas ADA-accessible).
- Expand and update technology (determine the correct number of public computers; move the computer lab to a more visible and usable area; install a suitable Adult Services Desk; offer up-to-date technology; consider a digital creation space).
- Install as many small group study/collaboration rooms as possible, equipped with appropriate technology and presentation equipment.
- Design flexible spaces since libraries and library use will inevitably continue to change.

In Phase 1, specifically, Baldwin intends to:

- Focus primarily on the main floor of the Birkerts Addition.
- Ensure that any work done in Phase 1 will be consistent with future building plans.
- Leave largely intact those areas of the Adult Services section which have been recently renovated and work well, such as the Teen Area and the Rotary Room. The Grand Hall—a pleasant and functional space—but one that has gone largely untouched for 12 years, will probably require some minor modifications.

Vision Approved by Library Board 12/15/2014

Providing opportunities to learn, connect and discover.

BALDWIN PUBLIC LIBRARY BUILDING: A POSITIVE MOVE FORWARD

Presented by Doug Koschik
January 31, 2015

Vision of Future/Improve User Experience

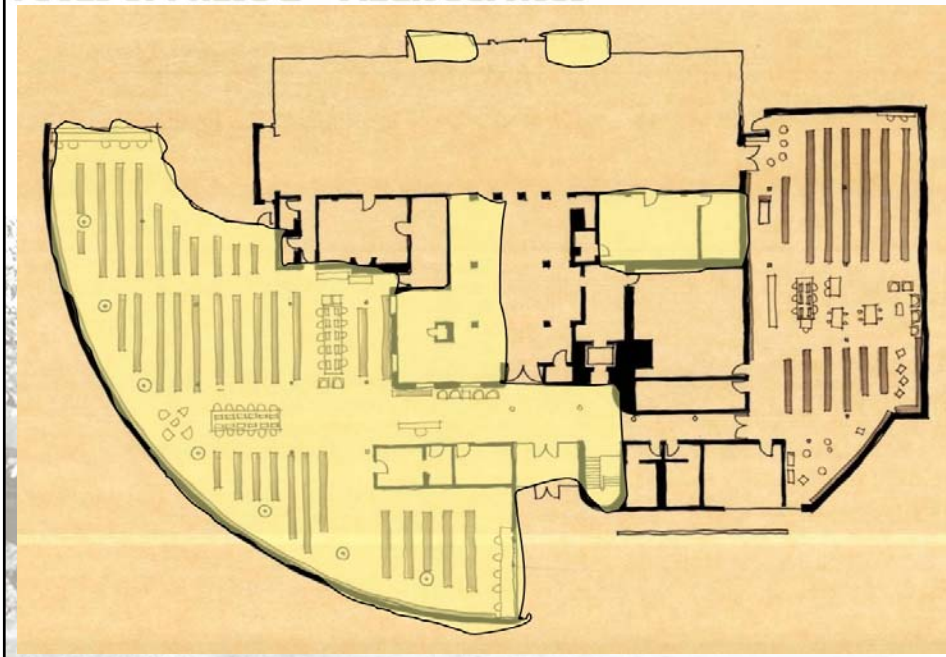
- Serve as:
  - Information gateway
  - Laboratory for innovation
  - Learning commons
- Utilize zones to encourage different learning needs:
  - Quiet and reflective
  - Active
  - Study/collaboration spaces
  - Social spaces
  - Touch points
- Design flexible spaces to accommodate future

Project Renovation Phases

1. Interior Renovation of Adult Services (Birkerts Addition)
2. Interior Renovation of Youth Room
3. Interior Renovation of Public Entrance, Lobby & Circulation

Phases 2 & 3 would happen later, incorporate latest library trends, and be coordinated with other City projects.

Focus of Phase 1 – Adult Services



Present Adult Services Area

Service Improvements Needed

- Updated technology: wired connections, wireless, bandwidth, electrical outlets
- Improved layout, lighting, acoustics & signage
- More study/collaboration spaces
- New Adult Services desk designed for interaction with patrons in 21st century
- Better use of existing space

How Does Phase 1 Achieve Vision?

Improve user experience:

- Improve lighting/acoustics/openness
- Coordinate design, colors, carpeting, furniture
- Provide variety of seating and collaboration areas
- Enhance signage
- Make all new areas ADA-compliant

How Does Phase 1 Achieve Vision?

Information Gateway:

- Offer all topics, perspectives, formats
- Make shelving more browsable
- Improve technology: wired connections, wireless, bandwidth, electrical outlets

Laboratory:

- Move computer lab to main floor
- Maker/creator spaces: Areas to create videos, music, crafts, robotics

Incorporate Library of the Future Concepts

Top and bottom right photos by Kevin Henegan; Bottom left photo courtesy of Detroit Public Library

How Does Phase 1 Achieve Vision?

Learning commons/social spaces/touch points:

- Add study rooms
- Improve Adult Services Desk

Quiet space:

- 1927 building/Grand Hall

Active space:

- Birkerts Addition

Flexible spaces

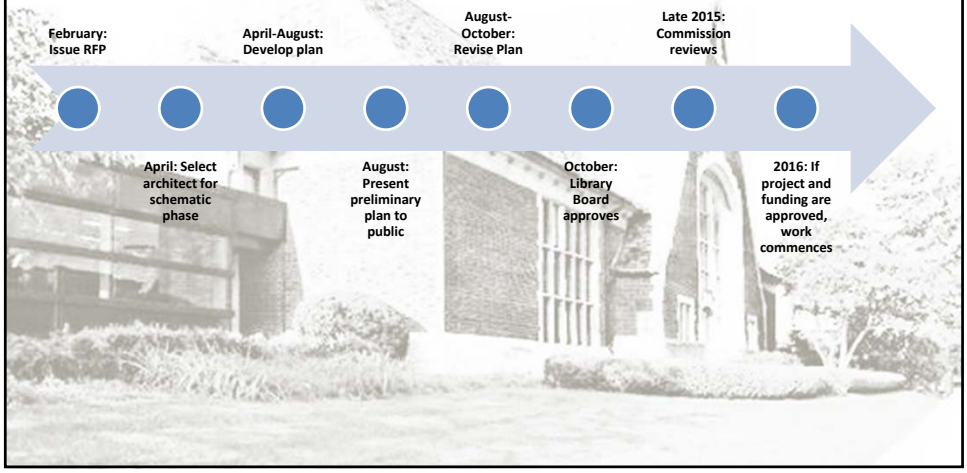
- Open layout
- Explore movable walls
- Update access points for technology

How to Get There?

- Develop RFP calling for:
  - Design alternatives
  - Schematic floor plans & interior concepts
  - Assessment of mechanical, plumbing, electrical, safety & structural requirements
  - Estimate of project costs, including line-by-line breakout
  - Project phasing plan & construction timeline
  - Presence at public meetings to review plans & receive comments
- Obtain required approvals

One Suggested Outcome from 2011 Study

Preliminary Timeline 2015-2016



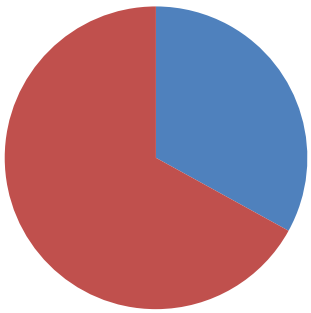
Phase 1 Cost

Library pays for architect fee.

Estimated cost of project, based on 2011 study: $1.5 to $1.75 million

Resolute about controlling scope & cost

Phase 1 Funding Options



Partially spend down Library's fund balance & Library Trust's unrestricted funds by approximately $500,000

Increase Library's millage rate temporarily above current 1.1 mills, but within present voter-approved limit

Obtain temporary loan from City to allow project to be completed at early stage

Conclusion

- Phase 1 project is first step in accomplishment of vision
- Achieves needed improvements in Adult Services
- Cost-effective way to move forward