Staff Assessment of Preliminary Floor Plan

After the last Library Building Committee meeting, John Freidin tasked the library staff with the following assignment:

"The Library Building Committee is obligated to do all that it can to be certain that a preliminary design meets all of IPL's space needs – especially for computer users and children, tweens, and teens -- while not including space that is either unneeded or larger/more expensive than needed. Furthermore, the committee needs to know whether the current plan fails in way to locate spaces in the best possible fashion – for safety, the convenience of patrons, staff efficiency, noise/quiet, and user traffic."

John's request includes three distinct questions: 1) What does the plan do well? 2) What additional spaces/reconfiguration of space is needed? 3) What spaces are unnecessary? In order to address John's assignment, on Thursday the library staff met for an hour to evaluate the preliminary floor plans of the so-called Courtyard proposal. Subsequently, Tricia and I reviewed the staff feedback and discussed the floor plans among ourselves and we have summarized their conclusions below.

What does the plan do well?

The proposal provides many improvements: an expanded children's space, moved out of the basement level; a larger, above grade meeting room with a higher ceiling and natural lighting; lower, display shelving for the adult collection; ease of access from both the front and rear of the library, including a spacious plaza; a community reading room with a clear line of sight from the main desk; centralized mechanical system and storage; adequate restrooms above the basement level; a new modern addition that highlights the beauty of the historic building and does not encumber existing parking.

What additional spaces/reconfiguration of space is needed?

The original library poses a number of challenges. How best can we use this beautiful gem of a building? The first and second floors of the original library appear best suited to quiet reading. Our library users typically use the Vermont Room and our reference room for quiet reading, and the original building lends itself to this kind of activity. However, we may need to use a portion of the old library for stacks, since the approximately 2000 SF of stacks in the new building do not appear large enough to house the adult collection.

Allocating space in the basement of the original poses a number of challenges. MCTV currently occupies 760 SF on the third floor, 500 SF less than main portion of the basement floor. Other services will need to be housed in this area as well.

Where will staff space (discharging, workroom, staff restroom, and breakroom) be located and how this will complement our workflow? The atrium cut-outs, while beautiful, make programming the space difficult and seem to take away valuable floor space (well over 1,000 SF between the 2nd and 3rd floors).

We will also need to change how we staff the new, enlarged library. Closing the library each day will require more time and possibly more staff. If we locate a computer lab on the ground floor with MCTV, we may need to staff that area as well.

There is debate about which floor is most appropriate for youth services. Some felt that the first floor might be best suited for youth services. The elevator will be necessary for parents with strollers whether the children are on the second or third floor. Staff will also require the use of the elevator for shelving books, so we expect the elevator to be in constant use. Others felt that placing children's services were not compatible with

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the other functions of the first floor (main entrances to the library, community reading room). In particular, the children's floor would be a loud space, filled with children's toys and activity.

Staff members agreed that teens should be given their own dedicated space as per the strategic plan. There was much debate about the best location for the teen space. The teen collection is maintained by youth services, and it would make most sense to locate the collection on the same floor as youth service but separate section.

What spaces are unnecessary?

On reviewing the space analysis, we cut a total of 1800 SF from the program, but added an additional 300 SF for adult shelving, resulting in a total cut of 1500 SF from the program. We eliminated the following spaces:

- Additional computer space (300 SF reduction) - With the rise in personal devices, we feel the need for technology space will be accounted for in various quiet zones.

- Quiet and Collaborative space (350 SF reduction) - Leaving 900 SF for nooks (carrels), small 3-6 person meeting spaces, and 1 larger collaborative space

- Additional meeting space (200 SF) - Leaving 300 SF either to expand our large meeting room beyond the current size or to add an additional small group space.

- Technology & maker space (250 SF) - We do not have a history of hosting a maker space at the library, and it is an open question whether such space is viable at the library.

- Entry Lobby (200 SF reduction) – Leaving 200 SF as a "foyer" to the lobby. The current lobby is adequate in size, considering that new materials (now housed in the lobby/reading rooms) will likely be housed in the new community reading room.

- Storage for youth services (100 SF) - Cut in half.

- Reference Room (400 SF reduction) – Leaving 200 SF to accommodate the microform machine and other collections.