

The Public Library of Cincinnati & Hamilton County: Building Our Library's Future
December 4, 2017, 6:00-7:30pm – Community Meeting

Questions from the audience:

- How was the current use of public space in the North building, stated as 24%, determined?
 - By adding together the public space occupied by the four public departments. This equates to 32,000 square feet or 24% of the North Building space.
- Specifically, what transactions (e.g., reference questions, program attendance, items borrowed, computer sessions) were used to measure the “intensity of use” per square foot that determined the average for branch libraries (31/sq. ft.) and the Main Library (6.9/sq. ft.)?
 - The four listed in your question. These are the same four transactions used by the Ohio Library Council in their ROI study to compare Ohio libraries to libraries across the country. We also ran the numbers including visit counts since this was asked about so frequently and found that the transactions per square foot increased to 9 for Main and 44 for branches. This was reported at the October Regular Meeting.
- Considering people may spend more time at the Main Library for things that were not counted in the intensity of use calculations, have you considered using a method that accounted for every visitor?
 - We also ran the numbers including visit counts since this was asked about so frequently and found that the transactions per square foot increased to 9 for Main and 44 for branches. This was reported at the October Regular Meeting.
- Why not use more space in the North building for things like expanding the current MakerSpace?
 - The only way to do this would be to relocate other services to the South Building. The non-public space in the North Building cannot be easily or inexpensively converted to public space.
- How could the community be assured, if the North building were to be sold or otherwise repurposed, that the South building wouldn't also close eventually? How long until the library moves out of downtown completely?
 - We feel very strongly that keeping a Main Library downtown is important for our community and our Library. We have no intention of closing the Main Library or moving out of downtown completely.
- Has the library looked into leasing space within the North building to outside interests instead of selling the building?
 - We have not looked for specific tenants but have indicated that when considering re-purposing we would look for possible retail/café space. Other tenants could also be considered.
- What are the economic reasons for selling the North building? If selling the North building doesn't fill the funding gap, why consider selling the building?
 - The primary reason for considering selling the North building is we simply don't need the space. It isn't responsible to continue spending money for space that's not being used when we can offer all the same services in the Main Library without the North Building.
- What other funding methods for the facilities plan have been or are being pursued? Does it include selling another building?
 - No. We are looking at fundraising through the Foundation and future levy funding.

- How much is currently spent operating the North building (e.g., utilities), and how does it compare to the estimated costs of a new operating center?
 - Utilities are approximately \$400,000-\$450,000 annually. There are also savings realized through custodial reductions. Additionally, operating efficiencies would be realized by relocating support services to an operations center. Current rent estimates for the operations center are less than the utilities in the North Building.
- Who are you selling the North building to?
 - We do not have a buyer. Selling the building is only one option under consideration.
- What is the anticipated population growth downtown, and how is it taken into consideration in the facilities plan?
 - We don't have projections for population growth just for 45202. However, despite the increase in population in recent years visits to and computer use at the Main Library have declined significantly over the past 5 years.

Main Library visits:

2012: 1,328,041

2016: 1,068,374

Decrease of 19.5%

PC use at Main:

2012: 587,322

2016: 374,274

Decrease of 36%

- How will relocating the children's space from the North building affect child safety?
 - We expect child safety to be improved. We are considering locating the Children's Library on the 2nd floor making it easier for caregivers to visit both the Popular Library and Children's Library while at the Library. In October we conducted brainstorming sessions with staff. Staff felt that it was important to place the Children's Library:
 - in close proximity to the Popular Library
 - away from entrance doors and avoid having it on the first floor
 - put children's and teens in close proximity to one another for family visits
- How is my local branch going to be affected by the facilities plan? Where can I find specific information about what is planned for each branch?
 - Specific information on each branch is located on the Facilities page on our website www.cincinnati.library.org/info/facilitiesplan.html
- Considering making all 41 locations fully accessible is a large part of the facilities plan, what grants have been applied for to fund accessibility?
 - We have applied for grants in previous accessibility projects and found that very little funding was available. We will look for additional grant funding as we move forward.

- What has been done to gather staff, library foundation, and Friends of the Library feedback during the planning process?
 - Main staff in public departments was invited to brainstorming sessions. Community presentations at every library location have been held. Information about the plans was shared at Friends and Foundation board meetings.
- What has been done to inform the public and gather their feedback during this process? What else is planned and when?
 - Community presentations at every library location have been held. We are also presenting at community council and other civic meetings. One-on-one interviews are currently being conducted and a statistically significant survey is planned.
- How was the public notified about this meeting?
 - Via email to cardholders using the Main Library, on the Library's website, on the Library's program calendar and on signage at the Main Library,
- What will be done to inform the public as this process moves forward?
 - We will continue to update the facilities page on our website. All decisions will be made at a public meeting of the Library Board. These meetings are also televised on Waycross and on the Waycross website. The full documents for all Board meetings are on our website www.cincinnati.ibrary.org/info/trustees.asp

Comment Cards 12-4-2017

- The need to create efficiencies w/ central operations make sense (a presented in plan). I question the metric used to calculate usage. How long has that strategy been used?
 - The four items listed were used as part of the Ohio Library Council's statewide ROI in 2015. The metric was developed by Howard Fleeter and Associates as a comparison tool for libraries nationwide.
- I'd like to see a comparative cost/benefit analysis of maintaining the administrative library functions in the North bldg. vs. moving those functions into a rented facility
 - We are still in the process of gathering data on a proposed operations center and identifying which functions will move based on space. It is too soon to say what the hard cost savings will be but there are many soft costs gained through efficiencies.
- Downtown & OTR is growing. This includes families. The North bldg. is unique in its space to be safe for kids. How will this be considered if children's library, Teenspace, Maker space be moved/consolidated into South?
 - We expect child safety to be improved. We are considering locating the Children's Library on the 2nd floor making it easier for caregivers to visit both the Popular Library and Children's Library while at the Library. In October we conducted brainstorming sessions with staff. Staff felt that it was important to place the Children's Library:
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- Why does the Library have so few partners? Why don't you partner with Cincinnati State College and UC and offer classes at the Main Library especially using the Maker Space.
 - The Library has many, many partners including UC and Cincinnati State. We have in the past offered courses for Cincinnati State through Library computers. Such partnerships will still be possible if the MakerSpace moves to the Main Library.
- 1) About a year and half ago, I participated in a focus group (run by Orangeboy company?) about the library. What ever came of that? Where is the info gathered from those focus groups posted or available? 2) Can you provide links to trustworthy research explaining why getting rid of the service desks is a good idea? Intuitively I don't see many positives.
 - Those focus groups resulted in the Library's new strategic plan (http://www.cincinnati.library.org/info/strategicplan_tactics.pdf) The Board approved the plan in late 2016. No we can't provide links to any research regarding the fully mobile service model. Our library is one of the first in the country to adopt this model although more and more libraries are moving to the mobile service environment.
- How can we expand Library services?
 - We can't answer this question without more details. Please feel free to contact me kim.fender@cincinnati.library.org if you'd like to discuss.
- How can the library do outreach to increase use?
 - We're already the 2nd busiest Library in the country! Many of the services previously available only by a visit to the Main Library can now be used from anywhere with Internet access. As we move periodicals, government documents, and non-fiction collections to our stack areas, we make available more public space. We also need fewer desktop computers as Internet use transitions to mobile devices making even more space available.
- A \$4 million valuation of the North building only covers 2-years of the 27 year timeline. Why are we being told the sale makes a serious difference?
 - If the Board votes to sell the building the benefits will include improving the visitor's experience, reducing operating costs and improving operational efficiency.
- How much did the Library Foundation raise to purchase and build the land and North Building?
 - The Foundation raised \$0 for the North building or land. The building opened in 1997. The Foundation was not formed until 2003. The Friends of the Library donated the funds for the aquarium in the Children's Learning Center. All other costs were paid from the Library and Local Government Support Fund, now called the Public Library Fund.
- Is there a way shipping can expand with an addition to where the parking lot where administration parks? If the shelvers that make \$10 and hour have to pay for parking so should administration. I am sure an architect could redesign that along with renovations.
 - Thanks for the suggestion. Several vehicles from shipping already utilize this lot daily.

- How can you sell a building that was built with public monies (taxes) & just sell off without asking the public to either vote or at least talk about in a public forum? (This – meeting that really seemed run in a draconian fashion -----Library personal ran the show. No clapping? Really!)
 - The Board will carefully consider the community input received before making a decision. Ultimately, Ohio law gives the Library Board authority to make this decision.
- Who is in consideration to theoretically be sold the building if it is sold?
 - At this time we have received no offers and the Board has not decided to sell the building.
- Why don't you care that the public is against this? Please stop privatizing public space! Why do you put the interest of corporations and the wealthy over your community?
 - The Board will carefully consider the community input received before making a decision. Ultimately, Ohio law gives the Library Board authority to make this decision.
- How much maintenance and repair is needed on the North Building? Is there a report available concerning these issues?
 - This information is included in the appraisal: http://www.cincinnati.library.org/info/appraisal_2017.pdf
- How do the PLCHC Board and administration plan to demonstrate fiscal responsibility on an ongoing basis? Stating that there is no money for all the capital needs. Failing to maintenance of facilities since 2000 and selling the north building do not demonstrate good public steward ship.
 - When our funding dropped by about 25% in 2000 we could no longer afford all the maintenance needed. Although our community supported overwhelmingly our tax levy and renewal, the funds only replaced what was lost from state funding. Our operating budget in 2017 is the same as in 2000. There are only two choices – reduce expenses or increase revenue. It is our plan to secure additional funding to bring all branches up to the condition they should be in and be able to maintain all facilities for the next 10-15 years.
- Does the public have a say in the sale of the North Building? Will it be sold no matter what?
 - The Board will carefully consider the community input received before making a decision. Ultimately, Ohio law gives the Library Board authority to make this decision.
- What exactly are the direct and indirect connections between the Library's trustees and 3CDC, Kroger, etc.? Why do you think tonight's comments so often described the details of this proposed sale as suspicious? Please get back to:
 - The only connections we know of are: Bill Moran worked at Kroger before going to Fifth Third Bank. He is also a member of the 3CDC Development and Finance Committee. If a Trustee is aware of a conflict of interest they abstain from that vote.
- This meeting protects the board from criticism and provides zero answers. When is the next public meeting on this issue and how will you do better?
 - The date for the next community conversation is December 27, 6:00 pm at the Main Library.

- The plan has been in the works and on the board's radar for over a year. Why is this the first public meeting in the Main Library to specifically discuss this plan?
 - The plan has been discussed multiple times at the Board's Regular meetings. In fact, many have attended both the August and October Regular meetings to voice their concerns.
- How much money is being spent on retaining Burges & Burges Strategists as opposed to updating facilities? Why aren't the director and board answering the questions themselves?
 - Burges & Burges is providing numerous services over a 6 month period for \$36,000 plus up to \$4,000 in expense reimbursement. Public hearings typically are a time for members of the public to voice their opinions.
- How much was that horrid moderator paid to alienate the entire audience and why?
 - We're assuming you mean Jill who moderated the community conversation. Burges & Burges is providing numerous services over a 6 month period for \$36,000 plus up to \$4,000 in expense reimbursement. Public hearings typically are a time for members of the public to voice their opinions.
- Who oversees the appointed trustees, to be sure their budgets aren't squandered like corporate budgets are?
 - The Board and staff take their stewardship responsibilities seriously. The Ohio Revised Code lays out the structure and duties of the Board. The Library is audited annually by the Auditor of State. The Library's Fiscal Officer is legally responsible for the expenditure of Library funds. Our Comprehensive Annual Financial Report and Audit are posted annually on our website and presented at a Regular Meeting of the Board. (<https://ohioauditor.gov/auditsearch/search.aspx>)
- When will the public be able to interact directly with the board and ask questions?
 - The Board was listening carefully to all comments and questions posed December 4. All Board meetings are open to the public. The next community conversation is scheduled for December 27 at 6:00 pm.
- How can we have a public meeting w/ Board?
 - All meetings of the Board are public and include time for public comment on the agenda. An additional community conversation is scheduled for December 27 at 6:00 pm.
- Why are there such large differences between the appraisals of the North Building?
 - We can't answer this because we did not develop the appraisals. The opinion of value and appraisal are both on our website.
- How was the decision made to renovate Hyde Park over others?
 - Many branches will be renovated/relocated as part of this plan. Based on the condition and appearance of the branch, it was deemed most critical after the other branches (Mt. Healthy, Elmwood Place, Greenhills, Miami Township, Madisonville, Price Hill, Walnut Hills, Norwood, Wyoming and College Hill)
- What is the process including time frame / timeline for the FINAL decision on the repurposing /sale of the North Building?
 - There is no specific process or timeline.

- How will overcrowding be handled when services are combined/merged into the South building?
 - The use per square foot will still be significantly below the branch average when the 4 departments from the North building are relocated to the South building. We estimate the use per square foot will increase from 6.9 to 7.6. The average for branches is 31.
- What was done with the proposed plans/usage for the North Building given to the Board at meeting at Mt. Healthy branch a couple of months ago?
 - The notes have been compiled into one list and compared to services already offered.
- Can you provide a copy of the presentation given at the meeting?
 - The presentation is already on our webpage (http://www.cincinnati.library.org/info/presentation_communityconversation.pdf)
- Can you provide specific details/data for the info presented during the slides (e.g. branches by age, renovation history, your projected “usage” calculations, etc.)
 - The branch age data was pulled from each branches’ web page. The spreadsheet with actual use data and the per square foot use calculation is on our webpage. The use data was pulled from our statistical reports included in the Board reports. All of this information is on our website.