

Ferndale Public Library Renovation and Expansion Plan
Background and Rationale
Step 1
June 26, 2008

Introduction

On Monday, June 16, 2008, City Manager Bruner, City Attorney Christ, Library Director Raber and Community Development Services Director Scheer met to discuss and outline a process for the City Council, Library Board and Plan Commission to deliberate toward and render decisions regarding the proposed library renovation and expansion consistent with the Municipal Planning Act and Ferndale Code of Ordinances. On June 20, 2008, City Manager, Library Director and Director of Community Development Services issued a memo recommending a process to their respective public bodies (City Council, the Library Board and the Plan Commission) for a deliberation and decision-making process ending with site plan approval, including the following statement:

Step 1 – Approval of the location, character, and extent of the Ferndale Public Library

The Municipal Planning Act and Ferndale Code require the Plan Commission to review the location, character, and extent of the proposed library building before it is constructed or authorized. We recommend that the Library Board submit a plan regarding the location, character and extent of the proposed library building. We believe that a detailed site plan is not required at this point but the Library should include enough information for the Plan Commission to render a decision and fulfill its duties under the Municipal Planning Act and as set forth in Section 2-41(2) and (3) of the Ferndale Code.

In accordance with this recommendation, the Library is submitting this document and supporting material to ask the Plan Commission to approve the Location, Character and Extent of the Library's Renovation and Expansion Plan.

The material submitted does not constitute a Site Plan nor is the Library asking for Site Plan approval. As agreed, that action will occur at Step 2.

Background—Planning for Library Renovation and Expansion

In late 2005, the Ferndale Public Library Board initiated a strategic planning process, including an assessment of community library needs, evaluation of library services and facilities and the development of short term and long range service plans. A Strategic Planning Committee was formed. This Committee included a City Council member, Library Board candidates, the Directors of the Ferndale Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Development Authority, members of the Library Friends and library users. (See Appendix, Items A and B)

The Library Board also engaged a consulting firm, The Library Training Network, headed by Dr. Joseph Mika of Wayne State University's Library and Information Science program and Robert Raz, former Director of the Grand Rapids Public Library. This firm provided guidance regarding a variety of planning issues, including facilities planning and development. A community survey was conducted and building issues were identified as very important. (See Appendix, Items C and D)

The Library Training Network recommended, among other actions, that the Library Board seek a millage increase to better support library services and develop plans for renovation and construction in order to provide services needed by the citizens of Ferndale. (See Appendix, Item E)

By early 2006, the Library Staff, Board and Strategic Planning Committee wrote Vision and Mission Statements and created a detailed Strategic Plan that addressed a variety of goals including facilities. (See Appendix, Item F) By late Summer of 2006, Library Design Associates of Plymouth, Michigan was engaged

to provide advice regarding functional space planning for the Library. (See appendix, Item G)

At its meeting of December 21, 2006 the Library Board, after careful consideration of a number of excellent proposals, voted to engage the services of Penchansky Whisler Architects for the redesign of the Library building and a Building Committee consisting of Library Board members, staff and citizen representatives was created. (See Appendix, Items H, I and J)

In January of 2008, Penchansky Whisler presented to the Library Board a cost estimate of renovating and expanding the current building consistent with Leadership in Energy and Environment Design (LEED) Standards with the goal of obtaining Silver certification. The LEED evaluation was updated in May 2008. (See Appendix, Item K)

In January through March of 2007, Penchansky Whisler worked with the Ferndale Public Library Building Committee to explore all the options to renovate and expand the Library. They presented the options to the City Department Heads for input and conducted public input sessions. Six options were identified and considered carefully. The goal was to consider a number of alternatives in order to select one that best met the needs of Ferndale and its library users. (See Appendix, Item L) This process resulted in the selection of the renovation and expansion proposal presented here.

At the City Council meeting of January 22, 2007, Council approved the ballot language of a Library Millage Proposal that was put before the electors of Ferndale at the May 8, 2007 election. (See Appendix, Item M) A number of documents were prepared to explain the Library Improvement Plan, including the need for a renovated library, the nature of the project, the ballot and its provisions. (See Appendix, Item N) An animated web video file was also

created to provide a visual representation of the proposed renovation. (See Appendix, Item O, screen captures). This information was distributed by a variety of means including the Library's website. (<http://www.ferndale.lib.mi.us/> Last accessed June 25, 2008) The Library millage increase was subsequently voted on favorably by the citizens of Ferndale.

In early 2008, a revised time line for the Renovation Project was developed and distributed. Building Committee meetings were scheduled and open to the public. (See Appendix, Item P) At its regular meeting of February 28, 2008 the Ferndale City Council amended its lease with the Ferndale Public Library granting consent to the Library's proposed improvements. It also acted to pass a Library Bond Cost Repayment Agreement approving the renovation Project and agreed to issue and sell bonds in the amount of \$4,700,000 for the Project.

Location, Character, Extent

The essence of a building project necessarily engages the location, character and extent of the project. Any building but especially a public building represents a discursive event. It is a moment in an ongoing conversation between a municipality and its citizens and plays a vital role in establishing and maintaining a relationship between these parties.

The physical message of a library is as important as the programs and services the library provides. A library building must communicate its purpose, significance, accessibility, and usefulness to the public. Location, character and extent are important elements of the vocabulary of this conversation. We believe the proposed Library Renovation and Expansion Plan effectively deploys this vocabulary and will successfully communicate a positive message to the citizens of Ferndale, encouraging them to use the library and take pride in their city.

Location is a relatively straightforward element and will be dealt with separately. Character and Extent, however, are closely related and not entirely distinct elements. They will be addressed together.

Location

The Ferndale Public Library asks the Ferndale Plan Commission to approve its request to renovate and expand the Library Building in its current location at 222 East Nine Mile Road for the following reasons:

- The Library has a historical and well established identity at this location.
- The site is appropriate to the Library's function and clientele.
- The location is central to the heart of Downtown Ferndale providing high visibility and equal accessibility from all parts of the City.
- The central location of the Library contributes to the diversity of Downtown uses and establishes for the City of Ferndale a strong identification with the City's cultural and educational aspirations.
- The central location of the Library makes it easily accessible to business, government and other users of the information that is vital to their goals.
- Renovating the building at the current location takes advantage of and preserves the aesthetic and historical character of the present building and reinforces its identity and presence in the City.

In addition to these reasons, precedents for maintaining the Library at its present location exist.

Ferndale Land Use Plan, January 1998 (Currently in effect)

- Section 5.3 identifies the Library's location at 222 East Nine Mile Road.
- Section 6 identifies the Downtown Planning Area as the major activity center for the City. It also states that Downtown is the focus of the community, providing a sense of identity to residents. A diversity of uses and improved architecture is identified as means of restoring Downtown Ferndale as a vital activity center.
- Section 7 states that Downtown should be a pedestrian friendly area and recommends a mix of uses and activities, including cultural uses and activities.
- Section 8 specifies that the City should encourage office, public and cultural uses in the downtown section east of Woodward Ave. It identifies that area as the location of the Library. It states further that removal of buildings should be discouraged and the addition of new buildings encouraged along major business streets. It observes that the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the federal tax law suggest any building 50 years or older may be regarded as historic, and that the City should encourage adaptive reuse of older buildings for new uses.

Library Building Lease

- The Library Building Lease dated February 26, 2007 between the City of Ferndale and The Ferndale Public Library specifies the Premises to be 222 East Nine Mile Road.

Amendment to Lease

- The Amendment to Lease dated February 25, 2008 identifies the location of the Library as 222 East Nine Mile Road, grants the Landlord's (City) consent to the proposed improvements, indicates that the Premises shall include the improvements and affirms the Lease.

City of Ferndale and Ferndale Public Library Bond Cost Repayment Agreement

- In the City of Ferndale and Ferndale Public Library Bond Cost Repayment Agreement, dated February 25, 2008, the City specifies the location of the Library as 222 East Nine Mile Road, approves the renovation Project and agrees to issue and sell bonds in the amount of \$4,700,000 for the Project.

Character and Extent

An effective and efficient library building must be planned in response to functional and capacity requirements, spatial adjacencies of related activities, and aesthetic considerations. All must be related to support the library's mission.

The current Ferndale Public Library building was erected in 1954 and it possesses some admirable design characteristics. Its one floor open floor plan creates a sense of intimacy and community, allowing simultaneous use by a variety of users. It provides easy access to collections and services and allows a small staff to effectively work the building. It communicates accessibility. From the exterior the large windows invite people to come in and from the interior provide a sense of place in the City.

The current building has several problems. It is simply too small to meet the library service needs of Ferndale's citizens. There is not enough space for appropriately sized collections, public access workstations, needed service points, seating or effective and efficient staff productivity. The building shows its age. Its infrastructure is inadequate to provide for the volume of customer traffic and the changing nature of library services. It does not provide the space or the features needed to meet the library resource needs of Ferndale either now or in the future.

Appendix Item Q is a Venn diagram showing ideal-type spatial relationships between service points in a typical one story library building. "Library areas and sub-areas are shown in the diagram as either adjacent (overlapping circles), close to each other (connected with a solid arrow), in line of sight (connected with dashed arrow), or away from each other (connected with an arrow that has both dashes and dots).¹

The proposed one story Library Renovation and Expansion Plan reflects this ideal-type arrangement of adjacencies to a remarkable extent. The Plan's variations from this ideal type reflect local imperatives unique to the Ferndale Public Library's situation and the needs of its users.

Public buildings need to have a special character. They are statements by a community about the kind of a community it believes itself to be. We believe that the proposed Library Renovation and Expansion Plan successfully addresses current problems, preserves the aesthetic and historical character of a building that is of great value to its community, and makes a positive statement about the character and nature of Ferndale.

¹ Cheryl Bryan, *Managing Facilities for Results: Optimizing Space for Services*, Chicago: American Library Association, 2007, pp. 33-34.)

For this reason and those provided below The Ferndale Public Library asks the Ferndale Plan Commission to approve its request to renovate and expand the Library Building in accordance with character and extent represented by the submitted proposal.

For Library Users, the Plan:

- Is user-centered. It identifies and assigns library user need as the Library's first priority and effectively communicates that priority.
- Increases accessibility to library services and materials and enhances merchandizing appeal of library materials.
- Enhances and reinforces service point relationships and adjacencies allowing for more effective and efficient service.
- Allows for the more effective and efficient flow of people through the building and allows users to easily identify and locate library functions and services.
- Increases the Library's capacity for providing access to the Internet and addressing issues of the Digital Divide.
- Enhances the accessibility and flexibility of use of Library meeting room space.
- Creates appropriate spatial capacity and relationships necessary to provide the priority Library Service Responses chosen by the Strategic Planning Committee (See Appendix Item R)

For Library Operations, the Plan:

- Locates staff work and media storage areas close to public service points allowing for more effective and efficient service support and material security.
- Reduces unassignable space to an optimal minimum and increases building use and service efficiency.
- Allows for future expansion of collections to meet growing and new demands for library materials and services.
- Allows a small but well-trained and dedicated staff to provide personal and exemplary customer service.

For the City of Ferndale, the Plan:

- Is environmentally friendly and energy efficient. It will allow for the possibility of obtaining a LEED Silver Certificate. (See <http://www.usgbc.org/>)
- Enhances the Library's ability to be fully compliant with ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) requirements. (See <http://www.ada.gov/stdspdf.htm>)
- Strikes an optimal compromise between the need for Library expansion and the preservation of community green space.
- Preserves the admirable characteristics of the current building, including its inviting qualities, its intimacy and its feeling of community participation while increasing capacity and relieving overcrowding.

- Addresses survey results provided in the Ferndale Land Use Plan, January 1998 indicating that public services, including the Library, are among Ferndale's strengths but that amenities, also including the Library, are an issue
- Addresses Section 7's goal of the Ferndale Land Use Plan, January 1998 to achieve the development of an attractive and functional revitalized downtown by recognizing the unique character of one of City's historical buildings and emphasizes that character retaining and reusing a great portion of the original Library building. It encourages a pedestrian friendly area and a mix of uses and activities, including cultural uses and activities.

The City of Ferndale is in some ways engaged in a competition with other communities. Given a context of limited resources all Michigan communities seek to be places where people want to live. They seek to enhance the quality of life and promote economic development. Regarding some aspect of community development, our peer cities are ahead of us (See Appendix, Item S), but Ferndale is doing more than holding its own. It is on a path to achievement.

The proposed Library Renovation and Expansion Plan will add value to our community. It will help to make it an attractive place to live and work and it will allow the Ferndale Public Library it to become one of the best libraries in Michigan, a leader among its peers, and a living, working symbol of Ferndale's commitment to the welfare of its citizens and the values of a democratic culture.

We believe that the Library has made its case for the Location, Character and Extent of the Library's Renovation and Expansion Plan and we ask the Plan Commission to give its approval under Section 9 of the Municipal Planning Act.

Submitted by Dr. Douglas Raber for the Ferndale Public Library Board.