

## DESIGN ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING #4

### Cambridge Public Library Main Library Expansion Project Phase 2

Morse School Cafeteria

DAC Members present: Co-Chairs Rich Rossi, Alan Burne, Ruth Butler, and Elizabeth Gibb; Janet Axelrod, Roger Boothe, Ted Carpenter, John Gintell, Arlyne Jackson, James Roosevelt Jr., Hugh Russell, Lynn Shirey, Charles Sullivan, Victoria Solomon.

#### **Introduction** by *Alan Burne*

- The meeting will focus on the programmatic fit of the program inside the building envelope, and show the current status of the Landscape design. The meeting will not focus in on the exterior facades of the building.

#### **Process Update** by *Susan Flannery*

- The Library Staff has been working with the Architects to achieve an appropriate distribution of functions throughout the building. The staff has been very enthusiastic about the design, and though the design to be shown at this meeting is basically a first draft, the staff does not anticipate that they will request any significant modifications to the current design.

#### **Overview** by *William Rawn*

- All of us share the goal that this be the best library possible; best in functionality, best in serving a very diverse community, best in design.
  - This meeting will focus on the beginnings of the architectural design, starting from the inside-out. The exterior facades of the building will be discussed at the next DAC meeting on 9/10/03.
  - When we were interviewed, we talked of a project where budget realities suggest we get to do 3-4 things special (the rest conventional). Maybe we get 5-6. We need everyone's help in making sure those 4, 5, 6 things are maintained through an incredibly pragmatic process.
- **Architectural Goals:**
    1. A Populist library in a very democratic place.
      - A place of opportunity
      - Celebrate an egalitarian culture
      - Capture Cambridge history of welcoming an ever-changing population
    2. Library in the Park.
      - Building and landscape should be mutually supportive, with each enhancing the other.
      - Building should provide an appropriate edge to the park
      - Provide interior experience of being connected to park
    3. A Library.
      - It should be immediately clear that this is a Library, not a community center
      - You should see books at the entry, and be welcomed to the process of reading.
    4. Belief in natural light
      - Critical addition to the quality of life inside space
      - Day lighting provides necessary contribution to ecological sustainability
      - Welcome in New England winter

5. Openness and Accessibility – very important values (refers back to point #1)
  - Welcoming, warm, friendly, embracing
  - Not intimidating, not elitist
  - Easy to orient oneself, easy to understand
  - Transparent: view into building – view thru building
  - Not incidentally – critical for staffing of library
6. Connection between new and old
  - Very vibrant in both. Equal strength or activity
  - Appropriate balance between seamless program and discrete connection (protecting architectural integrity of old building)
  - Creating set of spaces that do not exist in old building
    - a) At grade-connect to park
    - b) Normal light and views out
    - c) Large open spaces rather than smaller defined space

#### **Design Presentation by Cliff Gayley**

- After a quick presentation of the basic massing and program distribution of the building, reviewed in previous meetings, the floor by floor program fit was presented, as follows:
  - Basement Level: Meeting Rooms and Mechanical
  - Basement Mezzanine: Fiction Stacks and Staff
  - Ground Floor: Most public functions, browsing, A/V, Young Adults, Periodicals, Info Commons.
  - Second Floor: Administration, Reference, Nonfiction
  - Third Floor: Children's
- Photomontages of model photographs were shown to give an idea of how the spaces might look and feel.
- The circulation routes to the meeting rooms were described, illustrating how people will access these public functions when the Library is open, and when it is closed.

#### **Design Presentation by Pamela Hawkes**

- The connector to the historic building was illustrated in a Photomontage.
- Program uses such as the Information Commons and Young Adult have been carefully selected to draw people into the historic building.
- Historic Photos were compared with the cluttered current conditions, showing how the grand spaces may be restored to their former glory.

#### **DAC Comments**

- *Lynn Shirey:* Are all spaces handicapped accessible? *Alan Burne:* Yes, *with the exception of some mechanical spaces.*
- *Ruth Butler:* "Fabulous". Likes how the Young Adults and Children have been given interesting spaces. Likes café visible, but not at entry. Wants Cambridge Room to allow display as well as reading. What growth is reflected in the shelving? *Susan Flannery:* *We reviewed growth for past 10 years to project growth for next 20 years. These numbers vary by department. It is anticipated that not all shelving units shown will be in place on opening day, to allow for flexibility.*
- *Roger Boothe:* Hugh Russell asked to have it said how pleased he is with the design, and the flow from one space to another. There is the clear potential for a magical space.
- *John Gintell:* Very positive. Thinks Children's space will be very special. Prefers print reading to computer use in historic delivery room (10 Commandments area). Cambridge room should be like mini museum of the City. Will we be ok without a service elevator? Will elevator finishes survive the traffic from service uses? *Susan Flannery:* *We don't*

*have one now, and probably can't afford one. The finishes in the Boston Library Addition have held up very well.*

- *Janet Axelrod:* Nice to review the 6 Design Goals, and the design seems to fulfill them. Facades should be interesting, beautiful, and modern; as nice from the outside as the inside.
- *Elizabeth Gibb:* Plans flow easily, and connection between new and historic makes it feel like one structure. Computers in the existing spaces are nice, as these rooms do not have big windows. The design looks great, the entry works well, and the view through the building will help the feel of the area to the north of the building.
- *Ted Carpenter:* Remarkable, wonderfully playful, seamless interweaving of old and new. Design belies the difficulty of resolving the grade changes. Digital Media rooms should be designed for maximum flexibility in the future, not just computers on desks. Café may be in too important of a space.
- *Jim Roosevelt:* Really great approach. Would like summary of design goals on web.
- *Charles Sullivan:* An exciting milestone. The next step will be the review of how the historic interior spaces will be renovated. No particular concern about putting computers in historic spaces, so long as system is designed for flexibility. Look into allowing Cambridge Room to maximize display.
- *Arlyne Jackson:* Would like comfortable seats at the computer stations, to allow mixed use. Will noise be a problem coming through the open stair to the quiet second floor?  
*William Rawn:* *We will have an acoustic engineer study the issue, and enclose portions of the stair with glass if necessary.*

#### **Landscape Design Presentation by Michael Van Valkenburg**

- Showed historic photos of street condition, showing previous views to the library, unobstructed by low branches, as is the case today.
- Showed a series of images describing desire lines through park, and their potential implications on possible path locations.
- Would like to soften the feeling in the park by removing the high granite curbs along the paths.
- Goals are to make the design simpler, and feel safer.
- New trees can be added which are limbed up, to provide a sheltering canopy above, while still retaining clear views through the park.
- Presented a variety of planting options, showing varying degrees of new planting along the perimeter, and in front of the historic building.
- Presented potential locations of plazas
- Proposed idea of removing the concrete wall, and replacing it with something more appropriate.
- Presented three potential locations for the tot lot.

#### **DAC Comments**

- *Jim Roosevelt:* Likes idea of limbed up trees, allowing transparency at eye level
- *John Gintell:* Would like development of path from Cambridge Street to Library Entrance, and the inclusion of lots of space dedicated to bike racks. Landscape should address the fact that you should not enter the building through the old entry. Emphasized the need for lots of shade.
- *Ruth Butler:* Likes the idea of being able to see the Library from Broadway, so the removal of trees required for the construction of the underground garage is ok. Prefers the tot lot near the existing tennis courts.

- *Victoria Solomon*: Concerned about the space between the tennis courts and the addition. *Alan Burne*: *The design team is working with the High School, and recognizes that this will need to be focused on to create the safest solution.*
- *Ted Carpenter*: Likes ringing the perimeter with limbed up trees, especially along Ellery Street, which is not an attractive edge currently. Likes how apparent park size has doubled. Likes Tennis Court tot lot location because of proximity to Library; does not like tot lot location near the high school, because of bad language inevitably used within earshot.
- *John Gintell*: Would tot lot location near Tennis Courts block view of matches? *Michael Van Valkenburg*: *A design solution could probably be developed to accommodate both.*
- *Roger Boothe*: Likes tot lot location near Broadway.
- *Jim Roosevelt*: Tot lot location near High School would probably get in the way of the path from Cambridge Street to the Library.
- *Elizabeth Gibb*: *The tot lot location near High School would not get sunlight in the winter. The location neat the Tennis Courts is preferable, as it is a clean solution, which heals many of the problems that exist there now.*

### Public Input

- Suggestion: Park should not feel like a front yard to the Library, and should respect a community feeling.
- Suggestion: The design should limit the appeal to skateboarders.
- Suggestion: Area to North of building should be made to feel safe.
- Suggestion: Make Children's path to the third floor as direct and non-threatening as possible.
- Suggestion: Old Entry to Library should have a design resolution that will keep it from being abandoned.
- Tot lot at Tennis Courts would encroach on existing park space.
- As many residents of Cambridge live in dwellings without a view, the idea of the Library opening out to the park sounds very appealing.
- The design seems safer than what is there now.
- Architect's efforts to listen to the community are evident.
- What about the two large beech trees? *Alan Burne*: *The tree near the Library will be protected. The garage's effect on the tree near Broadway is being reviewed, as is the financial burden on the garage to keep that tree in place.*
- The Limbed up trees at the perimeter seems to be a good idea.
- How much will the project cost? *Alan Burne*: *We are expecting to get a cost estimate by the end of September.*
- Suggestion: Design seating for High School students to be similar to walls, as they may not like benches.
- Suggestion: Does it make more sense to have people read printed matter in the historic spaces, rather than digital media?
- Suggestion: The staff should have a beautiful working area.

### DAC Comments

- *Elizabeth Gibb*: Likes idea of Children's Department on its own, special floor, and does not believe that it will be a problem to provide age appropriate access.