

Meeting Minutes
Randall Library Building Renovation Forum
November 18, 2021 7pm
via Zoom and at Town Building

Committee members attending: T. McAndrew, K. Copeland, M. Hillman, L. Lavina, B. Patuto, P. McManus

Committee members absent: J. Salvie

designLab attending: Erick McGartland, Bob Miklos, Mary Ann Upton, Ben Youtz

Other attendees: Approx. 30 attendees in addition to those listed above.

Meeting called to order at 7:05 pm

Welcome

by Ben Youtz and turnover to Tina for introductions

Tina McAndrew - Introductions:

Listed RLBC members (on screen)

Brief synopsis of work of the RLBC since inception

Intro of designLab team

Agenda and designLab Introductions

Walk through the evening's agenda (agenda on screen)

Introduction of designLab as a firm, areas of focus, and some building work of note in the area.

Spoke in some depth about the West Branch Library project in Somerville for its similarity to the Randall Library project.

Transition to a look at the process timeline from the forum forward to possible construction. And then walked through their timeline since signing on, to today with details about how they arrived at the concepts presented tonight.

Building Assessment and Findings (Ben)

Site and Landscape:

Site is prominent and has potential for more useable social space for the town and patrons. Library entry is not the most welcoming, opportunity for rethinking that. Two outdoor areas and not well utilized and there are challenges with using them.

Accessing the entrance is awkward and requires walking in the road, and for those needing the ramp, they must travel past the entrance to get to it.

Inside, there are other challenges. There are many leaks in both buildings, masonry is generally sound but deficiencies need to be addressed. A lot of accessibility issues inside from lack of elevator to improper door handles. Acoustically there is a lot of noise transfer between the levels and areas.

Mechanical/Infrastructure:

(many details provided on screen) If any work is done on the building, the fire suppression systems need to be updated. Many systems are beyond their useful life, electrical boards, electrical rooms, evaluate septic system, incomplete fire alarm notification coverage.

Structurally, one of the biggest issues is the two main levels cannot adequately support a library collection. The roof of the addition does meet code for load capacity. Renovation strategies need to address all these issues.

Challenges to Providing Programming: (Tina)

Lack of quiet spaces, cannot hold multiple meetings at one time. Students from Hale are returning, children are in for craft and story sessions. Children's spaces are disjointed because of load issues. Trying to create a teen space where they don't disturb others. The current layout is not able to meet the needs of today. The goal is to create more flexible areas to meet changing needs.

Community Feedback Findings (Ben)

Recapped the use of boards for gathering data, as well as survey online. Estimate 100-150 people participated overall. Presented a graphic image showing the areas of preference in the feedback: Children, teens, study/quiet reading and outdoor spaces.

Guiding Principles, Program Summary and Inspiration Images(Mary Ann)

Guiding Principles (From the synthesis of all the feedback):

- Accessible and inclusive
- Integrated architectural experience
- Variety of programming spaces for existing and new patrons
- Address the building envelope, building systems and maintenance issues
- A welcoming landscape and entry experience

Program Summary:

A graphic representation of what the building has today and what feedback shows patrons want. These combine to the full program statement that guide the building planning.

Inspiration Images:

Visuals of areas patrons have expressed a desire for and what they look like in other libraries. Staff workspace, children's areas, quiet workspace, teen space and the exterior were highlighted.

Review Concept Designs (Ben and Mary Ann)

Introduction: These are three initial strategies that repurpose the building in different of ways. The square footages are approximate, not dialed in yet and will be informed by further planning and shifting. The materials and architectural palette are suggestions but will also evolve. Nothing you see here is set in stone.

Visuals of each option presented shows a lower level and street view, upper-level view and a summary of what is achieved out of the full program statement. That is followed by an illustrated view of the full exterior for each concept.

Option A: Reuse the current building. Maintain the building envelope/footprint and interior as is, make all mechanical improvements, reopen the original entrance with a path and possible ramp to that entrance. The amphitheater space would go away. Improve patron safety and access along Common Road. Reconfigure the ramp access to be closer to the parking area.

Option B: Renovate the 1975 addition, squaring off the footprint and raising the height of the addition to acquire more useable square footage. Includes adding a small wing in the children's area in the location of the outdoor amphitheater. Make all mechanical improvements, reopen the original entrance. Improve patron safety and access along Common Road, suggests that Common Road becomes one way, with one lane of traffic and one of parallel parking.

Option C: Remove the 1975 addition and rebuild for better building quality, improved efficiency, and flexibility of available space. Historical space retains its character and is used for quiet reading and small study spaces. All programming goals are achieved. Makes all mechanical improvements, reopens the original entrance with an accessible path and useable outdoor space. Improves patron safety and access along Common Road, including a reconfigured plaza that wraps around the front corner of the addition. Suggests that Common Road becomes one way, with one lane of traffic and one of parallel parking.

Summary slide of what is/is not achieved in each of the options.

Summary slide of preliminary square footage comparisons (includes unusable space)

Breakout Room Sessions (15 minutes in smaller groups)

(Sessions were not recorded on Zoom. Zoom functionality, not our choice)

Breakout Room Session Summaries

Room 1 – Talked about square footage, impacts on community needs, outdoor space and how the current space isn't as well used as might be. Also talked about the benefit of right support spaces for staff and day-to-day functions of the library. Began a discussion of changes to Common Road.

Room 2 – Appeal of reopening historic areas, potential addition parking at the fire station allowing easier use of historic entrance. Need for teen reading and improved children's area. The historic nature of the building and how the 'mid-town' campus drives the feel of the center of Stow. Benefits of a more efficient building from operational standpoint. Lots of excitement about reopening the historical entrance.

Room 3 – Echoed many things similar to group 2. More light into the building, the improved accessibility makes the space feel more useable. Efficient use of space. Lower shelves make space seem more social and open. Question about the security of having two entrances. Very excited to improve the building for the site. Would there be parking that would make the historic entrance the first stop?

Preliminary Cost Estimate (Ben)

Introduction (with a graphic illustration): Base Costs are identified first. Items that must be addressed regardless of design option and addresses all the issues identified at the beginning of the meeting. From there, costs are grouped into three areas: site preparation (including landscape and any civil work), architectural improvements and building systems. On top of that we have soft costs, the biggest of which is estimating the escalation of costs to the time of construction. The library collection will have to be moved and stored and a possible smaller pop-up library established for patrons to continue to use the services, all interior finishes that a library needs but aren't part of construction, hiring a project manager who oversees the Town's interests, the design team and consulting staff, etc.

Cost estimates shown side by side, comparing program goals accomplished by each option.
The Base Costs regardless of design option are estimated to be around a \$4 million investment to fix all the issues and challenges mentioned.

Option A (these are a 2023 projection of costs) will be a \$5.8 – 6.8 million project
Option B will be in \$7.7 – \$8.9 million range to achieve all outlined
Option C is very close to Option B, is a \$7.8- \$8.8 investment

This is a major capital investment for the Town, but will serve the town well for many generations. B and C are higher to allow for achievement of program goals.

Recap of planning timeline – take recommendation to Town Administrator in December, bring to Town Meeting for a vote in the spring, if passes, move into final design and construction planning with the potential for beginning construction in spring of 2023.

Tina

Thank you to the design team, the Town Administrator, and the Building Committee for all the work and guidance that have brought us to point in project development, and will continue to work on the project. We're happy to announce that the Randall Library Trustees have already pledged \$500,000 as a great start to the project.

Feedback can be sent to Tina at tmcandrew@minlib.net

Meeting adjourned at 8:30pm