

## **Appleton Public Library: Program Design Study – Executive Summary**

The document you hold in your hands represents a major milestone in a process begun some years ago by the administration and staff of the Appleton Public Library in cooperation with the City of Appleton. That process is the logical outgrowth of the desire by the City, APL administration and staff, and the citizens of Appleton, to build on a rich history of high quality library service and innovations in the delivery of that service.

Just over a year ago, the project began with a study by Durrant and Himmel Wilson that looked at the community perception of their library – the materials, programs, staff and facility, and the way in which these could be best delivered to the public. Options including branch library construction and alternate service delivery were also reviewed, and the study concluded that the preference of the public remained with a central library facility, albeit one improved to meet the demands of current and future use, changes in service delivery and technology, and the shifting roles that public libraries find themselves in in growing, dynamic cities such as Appleton.

Following that process, Engberg Anderson and George Lawson were retained earlier this year by the City and Library to undertake the process of writing a detailed program for a library that would meet the well-defined goals of the public study, and to test the results of that programming process by producing conceptual designs for both new facilities and expansions of the existing library facility. These designs were objectively evaluated on a list of functional and measurable criteria, and clear design directions were developed for each option. After further refinement of these options, cost models were developed by construction cost consultant CRM, which, along with a second round of objective scoring, went into the development of a final recommendation for action. The specific steps in this process included the following:

### **Programming the building:**

- Project kickoff with central team representing both the Library and City
- A detailed worksheet process to gather data for each space, service and program in the library
- Structured meetings and review of the above to look at both quantity and quality of space

- Development of a draft building program for review by APL staff and City
- Comparison of the program findings with State of Wisconsin and other library standards
- Review meetings, going over all individual departments and spaces, designed to refine details
- Issuance of a final Library Building Program for a 140,000 square foot (+/-) building

**Evaluating the existing building and contents:**

- Site visits by Engberg Anderson and their engineering consultants
- Field observation and documentation of visible building and site conditions
- Field review of existing building furnishings and equipment
- Production of improved drawings representing existing building and contents
- Production of a Building Assessment Report summarizing structural and building systems

**Testing the program:**

- Design of at least 3 options/approaches to expansion of the existing facility
- Design of at least 3 options/approaches to design of a new facility (on the existing site)
- Study of parking options and public outdoor space opportunities related to each approach
- Objective evaluation of options within above categories
- Development of a fourth "hybrid" option in each category and review of same against previous
- Further development of preferred options, including test fit of public furnishings
- Development of a cost model for each preferred option
- Review options for LEED silver certification of each option, and incorporate into the cost model
- Development of exterior "character" renderings and elevations of each preferred option
- Objective evaluation of preferred options against each other (new vs. expansion)
- Analysis of objective scoring and cost models to produce value indexing
- Creation of "interior imagery" intended to evoke the potential character of a new facility
- Presentation with recommendations to the Library Board and Common Council

It is important to point out that this process, although it has produced detailed plans, elevations and renderings, is not the beginning of the schematic design process for the library. The amount of detail included was provided so that a full and thorough vetting of the program could be completed, and so that effective comparisons could be made. It was important that each option be developed to the same level and with equal care. That being said, it would be tempting to look upon the designs as complete,

but to do so would be to short circuit a process well planned and considered by the Library and City. It would also miss opportunities for input by City officials and others that will rightly come as part of the next steps in this process. And finally, it assumes decisions about building siting and other aspects of city planning (including actual site selection in the case of a new structure) which have not yet been made. This process in fact intentionally avoided selection of any city parcel for a test site, and instead used the existing site for a new building, since it represented a typical city block fairly well. Assuming a new building option is finally pursued by the City and Library, selection of a site as part of the formal design process will be the next logical step.

**Final Recommendations:**

That brings us to our conclusions based on the results of this study. First, the City and APL staff should be applauded for the care and attention to detail with which they have maintained the existing building. In addition, the library has continued to deliver exceptional service to a growing population of users in spite of the limitations of the existing facility in terms of space, technology, infrastructure and environmental quality, and this should be acknowledged as well. That being said, it is clear to us that the option of expanding the existing building places far too many of those limitations on the delivery of 21<sup>st</sup> century library service. While there is sufficient site area to expand the building, the resulting facility would force compromises in terms of public service, and could not provide the quality of environment that the public has asked for throughout this process.

In contrast, a new facility would permit Appleton Public Library to fulfill the aspirations of a community that clearly appreciates and makes full use of their library. The staff would be able to facilitate community education and public gatherings, expand public access to collections and current technology, and build their commitment to being a gateway to learning for young and old alike, and they would be able to do so with maximum efficiency, reducing operational costs. In short, they would not need to “fight the building” but could focus on the work they do best. Finally, a new public will become the important civic building and anchor for downtown growth that it has the potential to be. The public library is truly the most important of civic buildings – and the people of Appleton seem to understand and embrace that. The City of Appleton has an opportunity at this time to build a building that lives up to that ambition.