

Executive Summary



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Kansas City, Kansas Public Library – Main Library Feasibility Study

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INTRODUCTION

In November, 2019, Garcia Architecture engaged in a feasibility study for the Kansas City, Kansas Public Library system and over the next nine months our team evaluated the existing facility, determine needs, define a program, and study potential concept approaches to achieve the mission of the System Administration and the Main Branch operations. The tasks engaged in as part of this study included:

- Physical Assessment of Facility
- Functional Assessment (Meeting Library Needs)
- Library Visioning Sessions
- Establish the Main Branch Sizing Criteria (Peer Facility Comparisons)
- Program Future Main Branch and Administration Spatial Needs
- Development of Concept Responses and Probable Costs
- Conclusions and Recommendations

PHYSICAL ASSESSMENT OF FACILITY

Our team toured the facility with the Director of Libraries and the Facilities Manager for the Main Branch / Administration building. In addition to gathering anecdotal information from staff and performing our own field survey of condition our team included engineering expertise to evaluate the condition, age, and usefulness of the building systems.

Our analysis identified the following critical shortcomings with the facility.

- The patron experience accessing the building is underwhelming, either from the parking area or from street frontage on Minnesota Avenue
- The Loading dock is undersized and cannot meet the modern needs of the library operations
- The building envelope underperforms in comparison to current energy efficiency standards and more importantly the glazing system on the upper floors is beyond reasonable repair.
- Building Systems (MEP, IT, Security, ...) are either at their end of life and it is time to consider replacement. Several systems have been added onto often to meet short term needs.
- The vertical circulation (stairs/elevators) of the space is seriously outdated and cannot meet either the code or expectations of a modern facility.
- The restrooms are outdated and while attempts have been made to meet modern code and accessibility requirements these facilities do not meet modern needs.

FUNCTIONAL ASSESSMENT (MEETING LIBRARY NEEDS)

Our team also evaluated this facility for its ability to provide a basic level of serviceability in support of the Main Branch operations and that of the System Administration. Our findings are as follows.

- Existing collections are physical constrained without the possibility of expansion. Furthermore, the collections are spread across two floor creating staffing inefficiencies.
- Staff Areas are poorly located, often split between floors, and circulation between critical work areas is complicated by overlapping with public areas and numerous secure points / locked doors.
- Building Layout create supervision concerns (sightlines)
- Wayfinding in the building is not intuitive for patrons and access to the upper floors is not secured. In addition, there is little separation of public access from dedicated staff areas.

LIBRARY VISIONING SESSIONS

Our team engaged in two distinct sets of listening sessions to allow staff and local stake holders to voice their concerns or joys with the current facility and share visions of how they felt the library might be better. How it might broaden its mission and offerings through new spaces and technologies. How it might be an anchor to the downtown community. Several common themes surfaced between these two groups.

- Improve functional adjacencies, locate collections on a single floor
- Provide for growth and flexibility
- Improve patron experience and wayfinding
- Provide ample flexible event and meeting spaces, including outdoor event space to be shared with community
- Provide social welfare resources to help deal with the reality of the downtown demographics

PEER LIBRARY COMPARISONS

Once the analytical and technical data was gathered on the existing building and operations, GA engaged in researching new library facilities in cities (and counties) of equal size to Kansas City, Kansas (and Wyandotte County), and those built within the greater Kansas City area. This information was used to establish guidelines for the new proposed Main library facility - including the building size, collection size, the amount of patron seating, meeting spaces, and other amenities.

The amount of anticipated growth over the next 20 years was also estimated, based on current trends. It was assumed a new Main Library facility would be built with expansion capability to accommodate most of this projected future growth within Wyandotte County, eliminating the need for significant renovations to the smaller branches during the growth period studied.

BUILDING SIZE PROGRAM

The building program developed in this report outlines the proposed building size. This program is primarily composed of two numbers. The first is the quantity of each type of room needed. The second is a square foot factor typical for that library function - including computer stations, meeting rooms, collection racks, etc. Since the square footage factor is a 'fixed' number, the proposed building size can best be increased or decreased, if needed, by modifying the quantity of the spaces listed.

DEVELOPMENT OF CONCEPT RESPONSES

Concept 1 – Renovation

The objective of the first concept was to study the extent to which the program as defined through the preceding analysis, could be placed within the shell of the existing building. From the outset the GA team realized that working to modify the existing vertical circulation further complicated any plan layouts, so the decision was made to create small additions to create modern, code compliant, stairs and elevators.

The Results:

The Administration offices would need to be provided separately, likely in a nearby downtown tenant space that the Library would be required to lease or purchase. Additionally, while all the Main Branch functions were included, a number were undersized and worse still had not capacity for future growth. Worse still, there is no way to achieve a major need, which is to include all collections on a single floor with a single circulation desk

Concept 2 – Addition

The objective of the second concept was to create a building addition that would provide ample space to eliminate the shortcomings of concept 1. We examined the site and determined it was reasonable to add 25' of width to each side of the building and 50' to the north (Minnesota) side and south (Park) side. With this additional envelope area this concept successfully incorporated the entire program and allows for future growth of the library.

The Results:

This concept does address several goals for the library staff. 1) It changes the pedestrian engagement with the building along Minnesota by bringing the façade out closer to the sidewalk and eliminating the underutilized public lawn; 2) It provides a modern building envelope that is both energy efficient and more transparent allowing for a better human connection from inside and outside the building; and 3) it can provide purposeful housing for the mobile library busses so they can be 'plugged into the building' rather than simply parked on the lot.

However, one major shortfall of even this concept is that the collections areas and supporting elements are still spread across two separate floors which means the inefficiencies of staffing the Main Branch will continue. A secondary concern is that this concept is still limited by the physical constraints of the existing structure which include short-span structural bays and a tight floor to floor height which limits the ability to gain volume within the spaces. Finally, we still do not have outdoor event spaces controlled by the Library.

Concept 3 – New Construction

The third concept is a true what-if scenario. In this concept we were free to achieve the goals of the program. We started by analyzing the total buildable area of the library property which established a maximum floorplate area. From there we were able to arrange the departments and department functions in a meaningful way.

The Results:

The greatest success of this approach is that the large single floor plate finally allowed for the entire collections and supporting functions to be collocated on a single floor for maximum staff efficiency and better still a premier patron experience. Other important needs that are achieved with this concept include: 1) a wealth of multi-functional and purpose designed event spaces for use by the Library and downtown

community alike; 2) a cohesive patron arrival experience whether parking on site or arriving from Minnesota Avenue; 3) flexibility with space arrangement due to removal of previous structural limitations; 4) intuitive wayfinding and separation of circulation for staff and patrons; and 5) opportunity to address new best design practices in a world that has faced the greatest pandemic in over 100 years. The future of design will change to make public interaction safer and less compact for humans and building systems will change to introduce new requirements for clean air and ventilation.

PROBABLE COSTS

APPROACH: The development of probable project costs at this early stage of project development is a back and forth coordination between the programming statement, the concept development, and the cost estimating. Through this process, the team arrived at a reasonable range of costs for each concept.

CONTINGENCY AND ESCALATION: Feasibilities studies are often years ahead of actual construction cost and at the same time lack the design elements and construction details required for a true picture of final costs. Therefore, the construction estimating team utilize markups to cover economic escalation and unknown design/construction realities. The costs presented in this document include the following markup percentages.

- Escalation to mid-2022 7%
- Design and Construction Contingency 20%

SOFT COSTS: These costs represent the fees, expenses, testing, permits, moving, furnishings, and other costs required to complete the project, but not part of the actual construction work. At this early stage of project development *Soft Costs* are estimated as a percentage of the construction cost (which is often referred to as “Hard Costs”). For this exercise, *Soft Costs* are projected as a range from 20% to 25%* since at this early stage there are still many unknowns.

**Note: There are some costs that simply cannot be anticipated at this time and therefore are not included in the range of Soft Costs. Such costs would include, property acquisition, relocation, temporary facilities, and other costs beyond the scope of this feasibility study.*

Concept 1 (Renovation)	LOW	HIGH
Hard Cost	\$17,000,000	\$19,000,000
Soft Cost	\$3,400,000	\$4,750,000
Total Project Cost	\$20,400,000	\$23,750,000

Concept 2 (Addition and Renovation)		
Hard Cost	\$34,500,000	\$37,000,000
Soft Cost	\$6,900,000	\$9,250,000
Total Project Cost	\$41,400,000	\$46,250,000

Concept 3 (New Construction)		
Hard Cost	\$42,500,000	\$52,500,000
Soft Cost	\$8,500,000	\$13,125,000
Total Project Cost	\$51,000,000	\$65,625,000

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After these past several months of analysis, research, and study, we believe there are several key takeaways for the Library and the Kansas City, Kansas downtown community that benefits most for the presence of this Main Branch library and Administrative office.

RELEVANCE: The Main Branch Library in Downtown Kansas City, Kansas will continue to be a valuable asset to community demographics projected for the foreseeable future

AGE: The existing 50-year-old facility has numerous systems at the end of their useful life or very near the end of useful life

COVID-19: Our world today is very different from our world just six months ago, new trends in social distancing, on-line teaching, and ventilating buildings

LIMITATIONS: The first two concept rely heavily on the framework of the existing building and therefore are also constrained by the physical limitations of this building

FULFILLMENT OF MISSION: The need for more flexible programmable event space was made clear through our analysis, programming, and concept study tasks

DISRUPTION: All the concept scenarios studied and presented would significantly disrupt Branch and Administration services as temporary relocation would incur significant costs above and beyond the cost of construction.

Recommendations

Of the three concept approaches presented, only the new construction approach will create a library for the present that meets the critical objective of providing the Main Branch operations on a single floor and also fulfill the growth needs into the future. However, even this approach when executed within the limitations of the existing downtown property will necessitate additional cost and disruption to temporarily relocate services and staff during construction. In addition, the new build option on the existing site does not provide space for outdoor events.

THEREFORE

It is our recommendation that the Library pursue construction of a new downtown facility and give consideration to a fourth option, which is to acquire adjacent land to the east of the current Library and pursue the new build concept on that site. This approach will allow the Main Branch and Administration to remain operational without disruption through construction. Once the Library moves into new quarters the original site will be available to fulfill the programmed objective of creating a variety of outdoor event spaces supporting the Library and downtown community including an expanded rose garden.

The cost of new construction on an adjacent site would be comparable to that of Option 3 and the cost of land, while unknown, is partially or fully offset by eliminating the need for temporary space for the Main Branch and Administration and the cost of relocating operations twice.