

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS
of Himmel & Wilson's FINAL REPORT
THOMAS MEMORIAL LIBRARY DESIGN CONCEPT
Cape Elizabeth, Maine

Background

The following document summarizes the major findings of a needs assessment and proposal for a design concept for the improvement of Thomas Memorial Library conducted in 2008 and finalized in July 2009 at the request of and under contract with the Thomas Memorial Library (TML) and the Library Study Committee and the consulting team they selected: Himmel & Wilson, Library Consultants; Casaccio Architects; and a local engineering firm.

A Cape Elizabeth Resident Survey, conducted by the research firm Critical Insights the previous November (2008), provided the opinions and observations of a representative cross-section of the town that would scaffold the needs assessment and design concepts.

The consulting team was directed to:

- Quantify TML's space and mechanical deficits;
- Determine the size and nature of a library facility that would meet the needs of Cape Elizabeth for the next 20-30 years;
- Work with the Library Study Committee, which included:
 - the Library Director
 - members of the TML BoT
 - representatives of the Town Council,
 - the TML Foundation, and
 - the Cape Elizabeth Historical Preservation Society
- Divide the project into three phases.

PHASE I – Needs Assessment

The consulting team and the engineering firm:

- Identified 102 deficiencies in the existing structure:
 - Areas housing the Library's primary collections are inefficient and marginally inaccessible;
 - The Library fails to meet several Americans with Disabilities Act guidelines:
 - Aisle widths too narrow
 - Doorways undersized
 - Stairways or use of outdated/inoperable lift system
 - HVAC are inefficient:
 - Air quality poor due to inadequate ventilation
 - Extremely difficult if not impossible to retrofit
 - Heating systems are extremely inefficient

- Ceiling heights are sub-standard in the basement, used for community meetings, young adults services, library offices, and the CE Historical Preservation Society and Maine Collections.
- Floors of both old-school-building portions of the library inadequate to support weight of fully-loaded library stacks.
- Exposed pipes and wiring unsightly and pose safety hazards.
- Electrical wiring and internal data network are at or beyond capacity.
- Under some building codes, TML would be considered uninhabitable.
- Many evidences of water damage
- Strong possibility that foundation walls may be structurally unsound and/or may contain mold.
- Existing building highly inefficient for the staff:
 - o A majority of returned materials are re-shelved by carrying books up and down stairs by hand;
 - o Lifts essentially slow and noisy even when operational.
 - o TML difficult to supervise because of the many levels and distinct areas.
 - o TML lacks a service entrance or adequate and appropriate space for accepting shipments and library loans.
 - o Circulation and front desk area is a bottleneck and cluttered.
- Meeting facilities at TML impose limits on occupancy and adequacy.
- Quiet, comfortable seating areas for reading are in short supply.
- The number of public computers are well below basic standard.

The consulting team:

- Engaged the community in a series of focus groups involving over 1,000 residents or over 10% of the town.
- Asked through interviews and surveys how the library could be improved. The findings were:
 - o TML should be environmentally safe for work and community space.
 - o TML should be fully accessible.
 - o TML should be energy efficient.
 - o TML should be centered in the community life of Cape Elizabeth, both literally (in the town's center) and figuratively (a community gathering and display space that unites the townspeople).
- Conducted a peer analysis that looked primarily to other libraries in Maine and the northeast United States for comparison.
- Revealed the following demographics:
 - The median age in Cape Elizabeth is 10 years higher than the national average.
 - Children and seniors use the library most often.
 - Demographics for library use in CE are "exceptional."
 - CE's level of educational attainment and income are very high.
 - CE's library usage is good but not as high as is expected for this community because of the inefficiencies and inadequacies of CE's current library facility, which is substandard.

- Significantly greater use of the library is predicted if facilities are enhanced.
- The population growth should remain stable near-term (within next five years).
- Made the following recommendations:
 - Replace electrical fire hazards immediately.
 - Correct foundational and mold/mildew hazards.
 - Upgrade facility to meet functional Federal ADA standards.
 - Use radio-frequency identification of materials and holdings.
 - Select mechanical systems for life-cycle costs rather than initial cost.
 - Create a “green” library in terms of energy usage.
 - Provide a larger, more functional library facility that will meet the near-term (within the next 5 years) needs immediately, and long-term library needs of Cape Elizabeth for next 20-30 years.

PHASE II - Library Improvement Program

The consultants worked with the Library Study Committee to:

- Explore alternative ways to meet the Library’s growing space needs.
- Consider improvements to the existing structure(s).
- Consider numerous additional scenarios.
- Consider construction of a new facility – either on the same site, or elsewhere in the community.

The Library Study Committee directed the consultants and architects to:

- Provide additional information, including cost estimates
- Consider three approaches to remedy the needs of TML:
 - Option 1 – Reprogram the existing space
 - Option 2 – Build an addition that reuses some of the existing structures
 - Option 3 – Build a new facility (now known as “the Clean Slate Scenario”)

The following factors severely limit TML’s ability to provide expanded and enhanced services:

- The existing space is fragmented and inefficient. Many feet devoted to corridors connecting various portions of the buildings rather than stacks or useful space.
- The demographics of the community of CE are exceptional for library use if enhanced facilities are provided.
- A portion of the existing facility is devoted to ancillary services (CE Historic Preservation Society, and gallery space used by the Art Commission.)

Space Needs

- The current TML complex provides approximately 15,000 square feet of space.
- While many examples in the peer analysis showed larger libraries in communities of similar size (less than 10,000 people), the analysis also showed smaller libraries as well.

- The consultants developed a spreadsheet detailing the space needs of CE TML near-term, and calculated TML would need 19,500 gross square feet to meet core needs for:
 - Public computer workstations
 - Increased children’s space
 - Increased teen space
 - Increased study and leisure seating for adults
 - Space dedicated to quiet, solitary study as well as tutoring or collaborative study
 - Increased size, quality, and functionality of community meeting rooms
 - Improved staff workroom, storage, and rest space
- Providing quality space for CE Historic Preservation Society and art displays would require another 3,000 gross square feet of space.

Option explorations of H&W:

- Option 1 – Not an option, given the excessive needs of the current library.
- Option 2 – Existing space is a poor option; very expensive to retrofit with little or no gain; This “Addition” option would cost between \$5 and \$7.5 million.
- Option 3 - Consultants formulated and examined in detail more than seven alternatives. In the end, the “Clean Slate” scenario, where a new library on the existing lot would be built, would cost between \$5.1 million and \$7.8 million in 2009 dollars.

Phase III - The Final Recommendation of the H &W consultants and the Library Study Committee was:

- Choose the Clean Slate approach but keep the historical and design elements of the Spurwink and Pond Cove Schools because:
 - The site allows for design creativity and flexibility to repurpose space.
 - The new building would allow larger, multi-purposed community spaces that would engender communal and collaborative environments which could be subdivided into smaller spaces as needed.
 - The new building would provide much-needed, quiet, and small-spaced tutoring and mentoring spaces for school children and adults.
 - One level eliminates stairs, elevators, and extra expense.
 - Staff and storage areas, so severely lacking in the current facility, would be provided.
 - A service area would be provided for safe delivery of materials and holdings.
 - Technological and data services would be provided for 21st century delivery.
 - A new building would allow for better site lines for supervision.
 - A new building would lower operating costs over time by being more energy-efficient, with mechanical systems, windows, and materials that would be state-of-the-art in environmental stewardship.
 - The cost of building a new building is comparable to the “Addition” approach initially but would save money over the long term.

