

Questions & Comments from Ames Public Library Expansion Public Meetings March 17 & 18, 2009

Throughout the March 17 and 18 presentations, members of the audience were encouraged to ask questions and participate in discussion with Jeffrey Scherer, principal architect with Meyer Scherer & Rockcastle, LTD. Because the format of the meetings was conversational and some questions were asked more than once, some of the answers have been consolidated. The comments, questions, and answers are grouped below into general categories.

Existing Buildings

Question: Isn't there another possibility not mentioned in your existing capacity slide? What about tearing out the entry and creating a two-story area on east side of the new section?

Scherer: The building footings are not designed to bear the load, and it's likely that subsoil factors were involved in the decision to build that way in 1984. The building is designed to bear additional load only on the west side.

Question: Did they consider the two-story addition in 1984?

Scherer: Yes, they planned on expanding, but they only allowed for additional stories on the west side of the clerestory in the new section. The east (Douglas Avenue) side of the addition is not structured to support a second floor. A library needs to support a 150-pound live load – about three times the amount required for an office building – because of the weight of the books.

Question: Would it be practical to retrofit the 1984 area in order to add on above?

Scherer: The soil below that part of the building may not be suited for more. It would be very difficult to get the loading capacity to support three floors because there are bell-bottomed caissons that were built only to support one floor. CPMI of Des Moines estimated that it would cost \$480,000 to demolish this building. In the end, it's better to gut it and work with it. The price for Option D includes demolition, two years rent elsewhere, and the cost of moving twice.

Question: What is the viability of the 1984 building?

Scherer: The mechanical systems are worn out and need to be replaced. Power and data are inadequate. Heat gain from number of computers now in service was not calculated. Lighting was designed pre-computer and is not the same as used today in spaces used for reading and computer access. The west wall is plaster (because they assumed it would be replaced when an addition was built), but the masonry walls, footings, and slabs can remain. The 1984 section really needs to be improved.

Comment: It sounds as if it's not worn out, just not adequate.

Scherer: It's both. Also, at present you are spending \$1.48 per square foot on energy consumption. We believe that by upgrading to a LEED silver level, that cost could be brought down to \$1/sq. ft. or less. The air quality in this building is low; the air exchanges are terrible.

Question: How much was spent for the 1984 building? Some of the ideas you've presented sound good to me, but I don't think we should be wasteful.

Scherer: I'm unsure what the cost was. (Note: The 1984 addition cost \$3.9 million.) Taking down the newest section would be the least sustainable option. I would personally prefer to renovate it and install a raised floor so that systems (such as electrical, data, telecommunications, and air-handling) could be run underneath.

The 1904 and 1940 additions are the most inefficient sections, but there may be sentiment about keeping the historical parts. In order for the library to function well, an extra 4000 square feet are needed in plans that retain the older buildings. That is because there are elevator shafts, ramps, split entryways and other things to work around. And if we continue to use them, we will have significant ADA issues.

Question: When MS&R was hired to figure out what is needed in Ames, were you under any pressure to retain the original buildings? They seem to be most inefficient parts.

Scherer: There has been no pressure on us to do that; however, there are some nice areas for meeting, or the areas could be renovated for book browsing.

Question: In the 1904 and 1940 buildings, are we just looking at the classical aspects?

Scherer: Of the 1904 building, two facades still stand. The back wall was taken out and an addition built on west side. The 1907 piece has been totally replaced and the front steps of the 1904 part were removed in 1940 when they built to the west and put in the north entrance. The insides were remodeled, so they are not eligible for historic registry.

Comment: It seems like we'd have to spend a lot of money to save the older sections.

Scherer: Engineers are currently assessing what is salvable in the existing building. There is no insulation in the north part and no air handling system. People in the downstairs offices sometimes work in coats. On the steps near the garage, water runs down the floor and there is a rope people can use to make sure they don't slip. In any of the proposals that we make, our architects will recommend an amount for maintenance in the new building.

Comment: I was about to suggest that it may be time to remove the old stuff.

Comment: You've talked about the historic facades, and it seems that the idea of retaining the old building was a good selling point on the 1984 bond issue, but I think there was more emotional attachment to the 1904 façade then. I, personally, don't care for the look of the neo-classical part.

Scherer: There is the Carnegie connection to the 1904 section, but it is façade only, and there are some interior columns, but the other original parts were removed years ago.

Comment: What's so sacred about saving the old buildings? Most people who used them aren't around anymore. Or they are getting fewer and fewer.

Comment: I am in favor of historical preservation that is reasonable, but if there is no historic significance, it is only common sense to take down the old parts of the building and maximize the space.

Question: Is there any way to preserve the historical façade on the east side as a part of the interior construction?

Scherer: Yes, that is the kind of thing we would start looking at if it becomes clear that citizens feel it is an important artifact. It could be incorporated into the design as a memory piece -- inside an atrium, for example.

Question: What option would be best for using the façade and old woodwork in the 1904 section?

Scherer: We could make that Option G2, in which the corner stays, either inside or outside, and the rest of the 1940 section goes down. Additions could then be built in the 1940 area and on the south end of the new section.

Question: Can you explain what you would do with Option F?

Scherer: Ideally, if we keep the 1984 section, we would like first floor at grade with the street. A raised floor would allow distribution of air, as well as data and electrical service, beneath it. And we could design the Strand piece and a new section on the east to be expanded vertically. In any of the options, part of the building could be open longer hours. Teens and young parents are asking for something to do on Friday nights. One idea is to have a "popular floor," where one can pick up a DVD, look at new books or browse, get something to drink. It could be an interesting adjunct to downtown, and we see this emerging in urban libraries. One family spoke about wanting to come as a family to do homework; he thought their friends would also like to come. The open space could be used for concerts, book fairs, and other gatherings.

Question: Is one option to demolish the front part of the 1984 addition and build there?

Scherer: Option B would create an entirely new section on the south end and Option F removes at least part of it. It is not very sustainable to do that. One of the problems on the south end of the lot is the footings, which are caissons. Caissons are driven into the ground like a pencil, and they are designed to stay in place with a specific amount of load. You cannot increase the load capacity of the caisson once it is in place. We'd have to put entirely new caissons in the ground in order to support two stories. The west side has bigger footings and a steel structure that will carry the load; that's why we can expand upward there.

A consideration is that some of these options require the library to temporarily relocate for two years. That means renting 45,000 sq. feet somewhere in the city, and spending about \$50,000

each way to move materials. That means that \$1.5 million included in those options really does not go toward the new library.

I should point out that Option A would allow for the addition to be built, the library could move in, then the 1984 addition could be renovated. It would be crowded during the interim period, but that works better, overall.

Question: Could we save the façade of the new section, but build a whole new building?

Scherer: I'm not sure why you would want to do that.

Comment: There's not a lot of space, but there is room to build new footings and walls around the 1984 structure.

Scherer: MS&R will look at lots of options in each scenario, but I would say that having a double row of columns in the east side is not a very good plan. I do think it would be wise to give the building more "presence." This afternoon one of the teens mentioned that nobody knows this is a library. She said we need big windows and big signs. I have to agree that the 1984 section is too introverted – enclosed and with low ceilings. It needs to be enlivened.

Question: Why don't we just demolish everything and build a new building all the way to the lot line, two stories high?

Scherer: I would not recommend that, because it would be a waste to throw away everything built in 1984. In my opinion, it would be better to renovate it and allocate it to another civic purpose.

Question: Why aren't we talking about a below-grade addition?

Scherer: Human beings need daylight and windows, and a public institution should be above ground. You could have a meeting room downstairs, but we would have to sheet pile against the property line in order to excavate below grade, and the water tables here complicate the matter. There is constant hydrostatic pressure that would be pushing the floor up – we'd have to build a bathtub and that would be very expensive.

Comment: This building is already cobbled together. There is no continuity between areas and I don't like all these pieced-together kinds of ideas. We could do an environmentally sound demolition and build the building we want with open site lines and efficient walls.

Scherer: There is a middle ground. You may not want to erase everything, but employ smart thinking to enclose and reuse what there is, rather than destroying it.

Comment: I just think we should build it properly to begin with. You can add here and there and expand in this corner or that – and we will *still* have all these different things lumped together. I think we should add Option B3: tear all this down and go for environmentally sound recycling.

Scherer: There will always be a need to consider both the logical and emotional aspects. On the one hand, you could lower utilities by about 50 percent with completely new structure; on the other, you do have a well-loved facility.

Comment: It's also a political question. There are people who will not vote for school issues today because of the way the middle school was handled years ago. The typical pattern I see is for Ames to get behind and then have to catch up. You're proposing a building with 1.5 sq. ft. per capita. That's way more than we've ever had except in 1904 and 1940, when we did the additions. Some people might consider this extravagant.

Scherer: People should realize that the difference is not only a per capita issue. What we are proposing is the area you need, with adequate aisle width and height for all users. As far as I can tell, this community is protective and supportive of the library, but we're in tough economic times now. My feeling is that you are better off to wait and do this right than to hurry up and do it wrong. It would be crazy to undermine the service level of your library.

A library is one of the things that attracts people to a community. High literacy is one of the things people look for. This library needs to transform. It should have the ability to set up the teen area for different use in an hour. It should become a different place in different seasons. Right now this facility cannot respond to citizens. In Hennepin County, for example, there is no hardwiring. We put in quick disconnects under the floor so that everything can be moved and rearranged without an electrician. Kids can gang together five tables to do a big project or take them apart to work in pods.

Expanding to the East / Encroaching into Douglas Avenue

Comment: I'm surprised and disappointed that you haven't come up with a plan for crossing the street to the east (Douglas) and including the Elks and white house next door. It seems that it's a disservice to the citizens if we only think about city-owned property.

Scherer: As a professional, I would say that is the wrong thing to do from both a functional point of view and a use point of view. We understand that there are some willing sellers, but feel it would be like a family building another house across the street for a third child. Having a separate section would require extra staff and it would be hard to adjust programming.

Question: Couldn't that section be used for offices or areas not used by public?

Scherer: There are some uses that could be accommodated there. But librarians work sometimes on a desk helping customers and sometimes in an office, and staff could not simply leave the children's space, for example, to go to a separate building to get something.

Weeks: It would definitely create a staff problem. We can have a group in this meeting room (the auditorium) without requiring staff supervision (because they are right outside the door). If people were inside a building across the street, someone would have to be dedicated to that area to observe them.

Comment: Families also need to be under one roof and that would be another whole building to heat.

Comment: Maybe we could use the Elk's Club area for parking.

Scherer: It may be that collecting other properties within the area would help solve the parking problem.

Question: Is the Elks building historic?

Weeks: We're not sure. (A member of the audience stated that it was built in 1956.)

Question: Have the Elks agreed to sell their building?

Scherer: We have not had any discussions with them; Option F was just proposed yesterday. The owners of the white house attended a meeting last night, though, and they are willing to sell.

Question: How much space could you get if used the white house as an annex-type building?

Scherer: Someone suggested that last night, with skyway connection. Out of that option came the idea of closing Douglas. That proposal would allow children's wing over there, for example. But the cost of a skyway, plus the inconvenience of going from one building to another, led group to decide that street closure and contiguous expansion was preferable.

Scherer: Consider that we're talking about spending \$30 million to build. But we estimate the operational cost of the library over a period of 20 years is probably \$90 million – that includes staff, operation, energy, materials, etc. One of the goals is to make the building as efficient and ergonomic as possible because if we are five percent off on the operational side, it translates into a huge expenditure down the line. Staff costs over 20 years are enormous. In an efficient library, the staff could be out on the floor using wireless headsets – more like customer-service retail operation – instead of standing in the back lifting and moving materials. Library planners are encouraged not to require extra manual labor.

In this library, take your head of reference services, for example. Her division is in the lobby area, but her desk is in the far northeast section of the second floor of the old building. Ideally, she would have an office behind a glass wall next to the Information Desk, so if she sees that her staff needs help, she can get up and come out. The way it is now, either she can't see that they need her and customers end up waiting, or they have to call her and she takes a five-minute walk to come down to help out. We need to consider staffing.

Question: Could you build some way that would keep Douglas open underneath the new part (if it were built where the white house is)?

Scherer: We would prefer not to do that. Meeting rooms and administrative offices could be there, but the goal is to give the library the flexibility to adapt as needs and the demands for materials change over time. It is hard today to determine the size a specific area will need to be

in 15 years. A good functioning library is more like a department store, where you see into other areas. Children often need to use multiple collections, and separating sections would be a big compromise.

Question: Two of the options proposed last night include closing Douglas. Do you have any sense of the practical impact on downtown?

Scherer: No traffic studies have been done, but it is true that Douglas does not go through south of Main. People in the audience last night did not seem to feel closing it would be a problem.

Comment: I'm in favor of using the present site, but not in favor of closing Douglas. I am glad the options look forward to allowing expansion in the future. I also like the options that don't mess with the Elks Lodge, and I'm sensitive to the desires of the church.

Comment: I don't think should close Douglas; there are already a lot of dead ends in downtown.

Expanding to the North

Question: On Options E1 and E2, do the buildings extend into 6th Street?

Scherer: No, it's just the perspective of the graphic, the way we tried to show the below-grade parking ramp.

Comment: If the library goes into the lot across 6th Street and no parking were added, it would really cause a problem.

Scherer: Yes, Option D takes away existing parking and would force construction of an expensive structure to replace it.

Comment: The benefit to Option D is that there is no need to cross the street.

Question: You were talking about parking on the north side of 6th Street. Wouldn't we have to talk to that church?

Scherer: Yes, but we believe the church would be in favor of having more parking spots available.

Weeks: I have already talked to both churches (First United Methodist and United Church of Christ, Congregational). My understanding is that while there is some concern about us building on the west half of this lot, both churches are in favor of having multi-level parking ramps in the neighborhood.

Expanding to the West / Alley Encroachment

Question: Do Options A and C both close the alley?

Scherer: Yes. One thing we have not discussed is that there is a bookmobile in use here. I recommend that you visit the back of the library and the garage when tours are offered in April. Maneuvering the bookmobile into that garage is very difficult.

Carey: When we purchased the bookmobile, it was delivered by a professional driver – a person who does that task everyday for a living. And when she arrived here, she could not get the vehicle into the garage.

Comment: The Methodist Church is an historic spot, too.

Scherer: We were not proposing to encroach onto their land. Before this week, we were not fully aware of their expansion plan, and the church did not assume there would be any building on the southwest corner of the block. The library has talked to the pastor and the building committee chair in the last two days.

Weeks: I have also talked to the pastor and the lay leader of the United Church of Christ.

Scherer: We do know that the churches are in favor of having additional parking on Sundays.

Proposed Building Size, Height, and Layout

Comment: I wonder if library use will increase as much as you think it will. People want to get in and out because they are busy, and they also use the Internet at home.

Scherer: Based on the trends and on the extremely high use by Ames residents, we feel you really need to build about 110,000 square feet, but we dropped it down after hearing the feedback.

Question: Is 94,000 square feet the summation of what staff wants, or is it a generalized target?

Scherer: MS&R carefully analyzed this. The Library Space Needs Assessment suggested that 118,000 sq. ft. is the amount needed, but we went back to staff to trim down needs to the minimum. Things could be eliminated to go below 94,000 square feet, but if you take the materials that Ames circulates today, you should be at 68,000 square feet now. Could you live with 74,000 sq. ft.? Of course, but the library would be out of space the day it opened and it would only compound the problem. People will not want to have another bond issue within 20 years.

We will always want to look at how the library functions. We don't want to put 60,000 square feet on one level – it gets too spread out to manage efficiently. But we might consider a smaller third floor, possibly set back so that the cornice doesn't impose. Maybe there could be an elevator going to a new meeting space on the third floor. You could have a green roof, a patio, a place to have readings. We will come up with several ideas for each concept. What we are looking for tonight is some direction about your preferences so that we can come up with ideas.

Question: Why did your slide show Ames' population constant from 2020 to 2030?

Scherer: For conservative reasons, we assumed it would flatten out. The important thing about population numbers is that in 1985 there was a standard method of planning a library's size based on population. But since the 80's there has been such a change in the way libraries are being used that square footage per capita is now only one aspect. The nature of the way the building is used is also taken into account.

The national norm for circulation of library materials is seven items per capita. If Ames were at that level, it would be a lot less work to manage the through-put. Your usage is at 30 items per capita, so high that it compounds the traditional measures.

Question: Could three stories be built on the vacant lot the library already owns (also referred to as the Strand Paint site)?

Scherer: A new structure could be designed for three stories, but you would end up with a library on six different levels, which would compound the difficulty in accommodating things in the library and adjusting collections to fit into spaces. You could probably have 83,000 square feet of space, but it would be in the wrong configuration.

Comment: They built a three-floor library in Eugene, Oregon, and one of the problems from the beginning was that the system of returning books on the third floor did not work.

Scherer: That is an important technical consideration, but we know it can be done. I will call them to find out what system they chose.

Question: Why would you just put a small third floor on Option B2?

Scherer: It would probably be used to house mechanical systems and an elevator. It is a better option than going below ground because Ames has a very high water table and there is a lot of hydrostatic pressure.

Question: How does a three-story option compare with other buildings around here?

Scherer: The Octagon has three stories and I'm sure there are other comparisons. I will get some diagrams next time.

Question: With a three-story building, how tall are you talking?

Scherer: A brand new building with three levels would be about 54 feet high. In order to have ambient lighting, we need a minimum ceiling height of 12.5 feet. We attain the most energy efficiency by harvesting daylight and using automatic dimming lights. Your energy cost was \$1.48 per square foot in 2008; we would like to bring that down to as close to \$1 as possible.

Comment: As a member of the Historic Preservation Commission, I'm concerned about the height of some of these options. We need to be conscious of compatibility and scale that is appropriate, especially when we get into that transitional zone between the downtown and a single-family neighborhood.

Scherer: One way to deal with that might be by stepping the top floor back – perhaps including a reading terrace – so that the cornice is not so high.

Question: In the more vertical plans, such as B, D, and E, would the books be on the main level with offices above?

Scherer: It is popular to have new books, a computer lab, teen space, magazines, DVDs, and a café on the first floor; children's and fiction areas on second; non-fiction and reference on third. Ideally, each floor should not be much larger than an acre. In addition, a new library never has less than 18 feet between floors. That allows for ambient lighting. But these are topics we'll take up in the next rounds of discussion.

Question: Do all the plans have a drive-through, drop-off area?

Scherer: Money for automated materials handling is in the budget, and pick-up could either be inside or from a window, and that does take pressure off of the parking problem.

Question: With most of these options, is there a section of the library that would have longer hours?

Scherer: There could be. Some libraries have a café, browsing space, and public rooms where they have talks or book club meetings that are open longer.

Question: Is having a café common?

Scherer: I should be careful using that word. People might pick up on the idea that we're "building a café" and be opposed to using public money for it. The area I'm referring to could be café with an outside vendor, it could just be a space where there are vending machines, or it could be a place where the Friends of the Library make money for support of library programs. I'm really just referring to having some place where library users can stop and have some refreshment. In Phoenix there is a "café" and they sometimes turn it into an area for teen dances.

Building in a New Location

Question: Why are all the options listed in the downtown area?

Scherer: That seemed to be the commitment of the Library Board.

Question: Were others asked?

Scherer: You're welcome to propose another option.

Comment: An advantage to Option E is that it puts the library on all the bus routes. I also like the idea of building the new building and then having the library move. One building also gets away from having to cobble things together. It's good to have the library convenient to other downtown services, but I do not like the idea of destroying the 1984 building.

Question: Why would you even consider resurrecting the tunnel (as proposed in Options E1 and E2)? It was always wet.

Scherer: It was an idea we came up with before we even realized a tunnel already existed. We could rebuild it.

Branch Libraries or Divisions

Question: What about opening a branch?

Weeks: Branches would force us to take on the costs of adding staff, replicating services and the core collection of books, and pay to operate another facility. Ames does not fit the profile that calls for a branch. It's only 22 square miles in area and traffic congestion is not a major problem. Finally, the library draws 475,000 visitors a year downtown from all four corners of the city. If we were to put up branches, we would diminish the vitality of downtown. Before we hired the architects, we brought together a citizen focus group to determine "sacred cows." The desire to stay downtown was clear.

Question: What about a division – maybe a separate children's library?

Scherer: I do not advise breaking up the family. The 10- to 14-year-olds, for example, might use the adult collection or the reference section. From a learning point of view, it would be a mistake to migrate them away. Sometimes parents might want to browse in new materials and let their kids browse in their own area.

Comment: I would not allow any of the children who've lived with me to browse on their own. You just do what you have to do as a parent to get appropriate reading material, so if it would be less expensive....

Scherer: It would not. Staff is used throughout the building and you'd have to replicate them in a separate facility. The same issue applies to circulation. Materials returned to the wrong area would have to be returned back to main collection. I would say it's better to simply have a delivery/pick-up branch than to take a piece of programming out of the building.

Costs

Question: What are the costs of Options F and G?

Scherer: These options were just proposed by citizens last night, so I am not sure, but neither of them would exceed \$38 million. The public process of consensus we're following allows a lot of ideas to emerge, but more work is required to answer some of the detailed questions.

Question: What is the library's current budget as compared to the proposals?

Scherer: There is not a one-for-one ratio of full time employees (FTEs). The only extra staff needed will be shelvers, and they are at the bottom of the pay scale. What really costs Ames now is the labyrinth of nooks and crannies. And the more unsupervised areas you have, the more

trouble. If we can open up lines of sight and automate the processing, we can keep staff numbers down. I'd guess it would cost maybe \$22,000 to \$25,000 more per year to have 94,000 sq ft in a LEED silver building.

The operational expenses today can be greatly improved upon. Today's method of air handling, for example, has air distributed through a plenum. We know that cool air stratifies at 60 degrees; warm air rises and takes pollutants upward. So we can filter it through a HEPA filter, send it down to the lower level, and have it come back up from below.

Today's materials handling is even more smart. Books dropped off would go to a sorter that checks them in, categorizes them, and places them on the book truck in order, ready to be shelved. In Hennepin County, Minnesota, a person only has to get the truck and take it out to the stacks. Books in Ames are handled 5 million times – each one is handled a minimum of three times by a staff person before it's ready to be checked out again. Your library is among the top ten in the county in the amount of circulation per capita, and it takes a lot of logistics to get 1.5 million items in and out of the library.

Question: Since we are in tight economic times, has anyone come up with a list of what needs to be fixed here, even without expanding?

Scherer: The MS&R architects are doing a report on what would have to be done if nothing were added.

Weeks: We have an on-going capital improvement program. We spent \$58,000 for tuck pointing last year and, if we don't move forward with an expansion project, we have \$48,000 in the budget next year to replace skylights.

Comment: Maybe we need to focus on fixing what we have and then consider expanding as Stage Two.

Scherer: The press has pointed out that we are talking about doubling in size. The last building program was written in 1984. If same measures were applied today and if it were used in exactly the same way, the library would need to contain 68,000 square feet. Right now, Ames needs to play catch-up.

Comment: I think it's ridiculous that we can't have buildings last 100 years the way they do in Europe.

Scherer: I worked in Europe for seven years and renovated a lot of buildings that look old but have been completely redone. It costs two to three times what people are willing to pay in the U.S. People here are not willing to make the investment necessary to make things last that long. Generally, things are built to code, but to the minimum standard, in this county. Another true point is that we have learned a lot in the last twenty years, too. There are a lot of building techniques and innovations that were just not around in 1984.

Energy Efficiency

Question: Is there a difference between a brand new building and changing the existing one from an energy standpoint?

Scherer: Our cost estimates assume that when this building is renovated it will be brought up to the same standard, such as the LEED silver level, as we'd build a new one. Lots of things are very poor in this building. There is only two-inch insulation in some walls, and there is no insulation in technical services -- and they have no HVAC zoning controls. The HVAC was not sized properly for the use the building is receiving now, either. The per-person heating load and computer heating load is much greater today. Also, the 1984 air handling code was different. That was in the day they made buildings air-tight and lowered the level of air change. You're spending \$1.48 per square foot now for energy in this building; we expect it can be brought down to \$1. There will be some compromises in remodeling -- you can't destroy everything -- but we'll do the best we can.

Question: How much cost in energy inefficiency is there to keep the 1904 building?

Scherer: It's only about 3600 square feet so, in the scheme of things, it would not be a huge drag.

Question: Would Option E1 or E2 be more efficient?

Scherer: I would say they are equivalent. A two-level building may be more customer-friendly. You might want to have sections of the ground floor open for longer hours or designate one floor as a quiet area.

Question: How could we reduce the cost of utilities even further?

Scherer: You could do a net zero building. Going to the LEED Platinum level would bring down energy costs and add about 7% to the construction cost because you'd have a different kind of wall.

Parking and Transportation

Question: Is there any reason not to put a parking ramp near the railroad tracks? Putting it north of the library doesn't seem good for that neighborhood.

Scherer: I agree that unless you are willing to invest in the aesthetics of above-grade parking, it is not a very good option. Light spillage is just one problem residents would have to deal with.

Question: If there is a parking ramp, will we be expected to pay to use it?

Scherer: That will depend on what the City decides. At some libraries you get two free hours on your parking ticket if you check something out. That can be abused, and you don't want people ducking in to check something out just to get free parking. My preference would be to look at the downtown as a zone. It is not the same as a suburban area. To get a sense of scale, you should realize that the Borders parking lot is about two and a half city blocks. The Wal-Mart parking lot is about the size of four downtown blocks. Perception is different when you can see the front door. People will drive to the front door of a store, then drive a block or so away to park and

walk back in. In the downtown, I think we need to think about the quality of the sidewalks and walking experience.

Parking ramps are not very sustainable. Not only do they take a lot of concrete, when built below grade, they have to have carbon monoxide monitors and they have to be lit.

Comment: I am likely to support any library expansion we do, as long as it's downtown. But with respect to parking, it seems like we are working on a package deal. Personally, I would like an ideal library with less than perfect parking far more than the reverse.

Question: How much does a parking lot cost?

Scherer: It would cost about \$2800 per parking spot at ground level, perhaps more or less, depending on landscaping. In general, we estimate a total of \$28,000 per stall above ground in a ramp, \$38,000 per car below ground – in 2012 dollars. All the numbers we are discussing have been escalated out for bidding in 2012.

Question: Under Option A, could all of the first level be for parking with two or three levels of library space above?

Scherer: A library needs to be overbuilt to support all the books, and then you'd need insulation below the floor of the building, but you could do it.

Question: Aside from the convenience of parking, is there a city ordinance mandating parking stalls?

Scherer: The city code calls for one parking space per 200 square feet of building area. We would probably ask for a variance to reduce that to three or four parking spaces per 1000 sq. ft. We know that 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. is the busiest time at the library because people are in a hurry. We want to include a drive-up pick-up and drive-up drop off area so that people would not have to park just to pick up materials on hold. That would help mitigate the demand on parking.

Comment: With people driving up or coming on busses there is congestion out front. I would like to see that problem resolved.

Scherer: We could close Douglas and create a cul-de-sac. That would provide access for busses and a place for drop-off and handicap parking, but make the entryway more like a plaza.

Question: Is the parking ramp (shown in some options) under the building included in the costs?

Scherer: No, no parking costs are included in any of the options. We thought the right way to approach this was to have two separate discussions – building and parking. In my opinion, the parking issue needs to become part of a broader discussion. If you were building a free-standing library at the edge of town, you might need 350 spaces. But here, the number of cars that can be accommodated downtown on adjacent streets needs to be considered, so it's a bigger issue that needs to take downtown businesses into consideration.

Comment: I really appreciate that we are starting with the idea of keeping library downtown because of the availability of bus transportation.

Question: If the existing parking lot was used for a new library, would this lot (515 Douglas) be available for parking?

Scherer: I'm not sure it would be reasonable to tear this building down to create a parking lot.

Question: Have you considered that there are people who walk to the library?

Scherer: I really don't think parking is the driving force on this project. It is important, but the question of having all the spaces contiguous with the library may not be essential.

Question: How can we realistically divorce parking from these options?

Scherer: It's hard to do it, but at this point in the process, we want to look at the library from a strategic square footage basis so we can have an apples-to-apples discussion about the options. When get down to three options, the parking issue will be integrated.

Question: What about putting the library below and the parking above?

Scherer: In my opinion, people need daylight, so any economic savings of building below ground would be eaten up by the loss of spirit. Also, lighting accounts for about 60% of energy costs, so my preference is to model space so you don't have to turn the lights on.

Question: With Options E would parking have to be built below?

Scherer: Parking needs to be provided one way or another in any successful downtown. But since below-grade parking is so expensive, we might want to look at adding parking space about the lot on the west side of City Hall.

Question: Is parking included?

Scherer: None of these plans include parking. It is an issue that should be thought of as a city need, not something for individual buildings. For the library, about 150 spaces need to be close to the front door, but when there is a big meeting, people should be able to walk a couple blocks. One approach would be to build surface parking on a lot to serve the library, leave open the option to build more, and then when see what the future of the car is in our society.

Question: How often is there no place to park?

Scherer: No traffic studies have been done.

Comment: We need bike spaces at the library.

Scherer: We do need a better understanding of how people get here. A survey has been commissioned with some graduate students at the university to help find out what the travel patterns are.

Question: A few years ago when the Main Street businesses were talking about making some changes, the owner of the EOB Building on the southwest corner of 5th and Kellogg said he was not opposed to turning that property into a parking ramp.

Scherer: That is the kind of thing I was referring to when I said we need to look at the parking situation in a bigger context. In an urban setting, people don't see distance the same way. That building is probably no farther from the front door of the library than the farthest parking spots at Borders or Wal-Mart. But it is perceived differently.

Opinions of Library Staff and Architect

Question: What option do you think is ideal?

Scherer: I couldn't really say. From an urban design point of view, I wish we could have the front door facing in the direction of Main Street. But we work with what we have. I do feel the entryway needs improvement. It is very unusual to go down in order to enter a civic building. That is what you have because in 1984, they chose to put the new floor at the same elevation as the lower floor of the 1904 structure. So in renovating, I would definitely raise the level of floor in the new section and take advantage of the opportunity to use that space for new wiring and air handling.

Children and families have to be taken into consideration whenever we look at options. We are working on libraries in Norman and Fargo; the citizens there wanted pedestrian-friendly streets in front. In your case, it would be ideal to close a street – that would be hard to do on 6th, but perhaps we could put all the handicap and short-term parking across Douglas, and then close Douglas, but leave it available for busses or handicap vans.

Question: Will you talk to the library staff?

Scherer: I have spent time with staff to discuss their ideal operational set-up. We will take options that are selected this week to see how they can be combined. There are lots of hybrids with any of the proposed scenarios. One definite problem is the bookmobile, but by closing the alley we could include a means for driving the bookmobile into a place where it can be loaded on the passenger side, with everything on the same level and driven on through. Right now, library workers climb stairs into the garage, go back down to the garage floor, then back up into the bus. We are also looking at how packets can be delivered quickly to outreach volunteers so they can be taken for home delivery. About 20 minutes per packet is wasted now by storing and retrieving materials from awkward places and having to make multiple trips.

Question: From an operational point of view, does staff have any preferences?

Scherer: The same question was posed last night. Each department head has stated, in the abstract, what he/she feels the ideal situation would be. Once the Library Board of Trustees

decides which three options should be considered further, MS&R will explore how close the options can fit in with the staff's perception of function –which departments are adjacent to others, what the work flow would be like, how the building would work for customers. The ideal for the bookmobile, for example, would be to drive in, unload and load materials on the passenger side, process materials at the dock, and drive on through. The idea is to leverage staff time and make the overall operation more economical.

The library's annual budget is about \$3 million, a large portion of which is for staff, heating and cooling. If you figure on a four percent increase per year over the life of the bond, the community will spend about \$90 million on operations. But if we can save 5% in efficiency when we operate in a new building, you end up saving \$5 million.

The children's staff can also work in the adult areas during the day, so it's important to make the library as efficient as possible. Right now you have a reference supervisor whose office is located in the far corner of the upper floor; she can't see what's going on with her staff and she walks half a block to work at the desk.

Question: According to the librarians, which option is most efficient?

Scherer: Any of the buildings we design will have the same quality, whether they are new or renovated and we expect to include automated conveyors to bring materials in from the book drops. A brand new, two-story building designed for the 21st Century would be the best. We do have some concern about using the old area as an entrance with the split level, and we would certainly build walls differently today than they have in the past.

The Future

Question: A decision was made to build in 1984 and now we don't think it might be so great. Your Option A does include what they planned, but now we need more (space). What's to say your plans are going to include sufficient space for expansion 20 years from now?

Scherer: No one should fault what was done in 1984. They did a terrific job with what they knew. It could be that in 20 years, you may decide branches are the right way to go.

Under Option B1, how much space would be left on 5th Street?

Scherer: In the future, another 25,000 square feet could be added. This option is least good for the bookmobile.

Question: If we look ahead to 2030, are any of these plans better for the future?

Scherer: Any new building can be designed to allow for expansion.

Library Service during Construction

Question: Would the library have to close during construction?

Scherer: Our pricing on some of the options include the cost of renting about 45,000 sq. ft. for a period of two years. On others, such as Option A, we would recommend that the new section be built first so that most services could move, then we'd gut the old sections and renovate. There would be some reduced service, but that could work.

This is a very important consideration, though. We estimate expenses at \$50,000 per move, and the estimated rental cost for temporary space could run about \$1,000,000.

Question: If the 1904 and 1940 sections were torn down, what would happen to the library during construction?

Scherer: The library would probably be relocated temporarily. Our cost estimates include the rent of 48,000 square feet for two years and the cost of moving twice. Some of the options might allow for phasing; it will depend on what design is finally chosen.

The Decision-making Process

Question: Who will make the final decision?

Weeks: Ultimately, the Library Board of Trustees will decide, but there is a citizen's advisory committee that includes 20 members who will also examine and weigh in on ideas. On our Web site, you can contribute additional ideas. Get back to us. After the citizen's advisory committee's input, the Board will make recommendation to the City Council to put a proposal to a vote of the citizens for a bond referendum. If at any time you feel the process is unfair, please let us know.

Funding

Question: Will this project be a bond?

Weeks: Yes, but the earliest we could have a referendum would be sometime in 2010. We hope to have a building plan by September, but we'll have to work on a funding plan and then find a good time to put the plans to a ballot.

Scherer: This is a good time to plan. It's better to hold the vote when the economy is swinging up. That said, most libraries have a combination of private and public funding. In a town like Ames, you should easily be able to raise \$100 per person. In Fayetteville, the students helped with fundraising, and now they've developed a film group that meets regularly at the library.

Question: Is support positive?

Weeks: We have seen a lot of public interest, but not a definite sense that people perceive the need for expansion. I think they do agree that we don't want a building that is obsolete the day we cut the ribbon and that it's important to build a building that will allow us to grow.

Scherer: It is better to slow down the process and do this right, than to rush into it and come out with something inferior. The downside, of course, is that the costs tend to increase year by year.

Miscellaneous

Comment (March 17): It looks as if the square footage figures for Options B1 and B2 are wrong on hand-out.

Scherer: You're right; I see now that they are reversed. We will correct that.

Question (during ballot collection/counting): Why are you not adding in the comments now?

Scherer: We will tabulate those at a later time and board will discuss them. But we could have 100 variations. The written comments will be reported and incorporated into final documents. At the end, a decision will be reached. Not everyone will be happy, but we hope everyone can respect the decision.

Comment: As I look around the room, it seems like parents with small children are not well-represented.

Scherer: We did have special meetings for teens and parents last month and there are more meetings later today.

Question: Is this bad timing?

Scherer: Every year of delay will likely cost another \$1 – 1.5 million, but that will be determined later.

Question: Will some of the new options be put on line?

Scherer: Yes, information about all the proceedings will be aggregated.

Question: What is the value of the current building?

Scherer: Public buildings are not assessed. Today, it would probably be worth the cost of the land. The existing structure needs serious renovation, but could be very suitable for another city department.

Question: How does Ames compare to other communities you work in?

Scherer: Ames is similar to other college towns. Some of the people went to school here and stayed, so they have emotional ties. Students, faculty, and retired faculty have a separate point of view, but there is a common thread in that everyone shows a tolerance for sitting through this process in university towns. In some places, people only care about the space; they don't care about the process