



# City of Oregon City

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## Staff Report

File Number: 13-390

**Agenda Date:** 6/12/2013

**Status:** Agenda Ready

**To:** Library Board

**Agenda #:** 4a.

**From:** Library Director Maureen Cole

**File Type:** Report

### **SUBJECT:**

Staff Recommendation for Site Designation

### **RECOMMENDED ACTION (Motion):**

Staff recommends that the Library Board advance the Carnegie Library and Carnegie Park to the City Commission as the preferred site for the new OCPL and request the Library Director to take formal steps to validate current assumptions.

### **BACKGROUND:**

#### **Background**

The Oregon City Public Library (OCPL or the Library) has been a function of the City since 1909. The Carnegie Building officially opened for business on June 21, 1913, and is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. OCPL lived happily in the Carnegie for several years, but at as early as the late 1940s Librarian Gertrude Brumbaugh began reporting a lack of space to the Library Board. Finally, in 1995 OCPL moved to leased space in Danielson's Hilltop Mall, where it was located for 15 years. At this site, OCPL had 13,000 square feet, over twice what the Carnegie Building offered. However, it was poorly lighted, had poor acoustics, and had only one window in the entire building. As funding dried up, the collection slowly deteriorated and at one point, the Library was open only 23 hours a week.

Then, in 2008, a county service district (District) was created and approved by voters; this provided an ongoing means of supporting all of the libraries in Clackamas County. In this same formation, Clackamas County agreed to fund each city \$1M for library capital improvements. The District formation enabled the City of Oregon City to fill the Library Director position for the first time in several years, and the Library once again became its own City department. With the District funds, which can be used for any library purpose, and the \$1M promised by the County, Oregon City was in a position to improve services and consider expansion for the first time in many years. Maureen Cole was hired with those tasks in mind. Shortly after that hire, OCPL lost its lease on the hilltop and was forced to consider an interim location until such time as it could build or remodel a larger building. In 2010, OCPL moved back into the Carnegie Building, where it has been operating with reduced space and reduced collections, but is open 56 hours a week and offers many services and events.

In 2010, the City Commission tasked the Library Board to deliver a recommendation for a new site. The team began a systematic search for either bare land or an existing building that could be adapted to library use. The guiding principles that framed the search criteria were:

- Site zoning must allow a library as an outright use
- Must be within city limits
- Must have proximity to public transportation

- Land area no less than 1.5 acres /building area no less than 20,000sf
- Preference that the site not have a negative impact on the tax roll

The team, through a commercial real estate and project advisor, issued a public request for information with the site criteria, reviewed available properties on multiple listing services and followed leads generated from the public. This resulted in the review of approximately 32 sites, 5 of those made it to the stage of conceptual site plans and/or capital budget estimates, and 1 progressed to a draft letter of intent before negotiations ceased. During this time the City also attempted to purchase property from Clackamas County; the City was informed that the County was not interested in selling.

During the site search and review process, the team also investigated the feasibility of expanding the footprint of the Carnegie Building to accommodate the same programmatic requirements. Preliminary findings support the conclusion that the Carnegie site meets all base requirements and is within the cost constraints identified by the City's Finance Department. The Carnegie Building and Park are owned City assets, ideally located to serve the population base and in proximity to other City services and public transportation. The resulting library would include renovations of approximately 7,000sf of existing space plus an addition of approximately 13,000sf for a total area of 20,000 square feet.

### **Recommendation**

Staff recommends that the Library Board advance the Carnegie Library and Carnegie Park to the City Commission as the preferred site for the new OCPL and request the Library Director to take formal steps to validate current assumptions.

Staff recommends the Carnegie site for the following reasons:

- it is already owned by the City and therefore a purchase is not necessary
- since the site is already tax exempt, there is no negative impact on the tax roll
- it was built as a library and its optimal use remains as a library as evidenced by the continued and growing usage by citizens
- the site is large enough to accommodate an addition, which was how it was originally designed
- it has good proximity to public transportation
- library use is allowed on the site
- the library has been in this location for 100 years and has been a good neighbor to the surrounding businesses and residences
- it is a solution which is historically and functionally sustainable

Next steps will include more detailed site and massing studies, planning and parking studies, public participation of design concepts, space programming, retaining of project management and architecture consultants, finalizing the funding strategy and refinement of capital projections.

### **Cost Impacts**

The next recommended steps are expected to cost less than \$100,000 and will be funded from Library reserves as well as operating funds set aside for this purpose.

The total project expenditure will be funded using Library operating fund reserves, a capital contribution provided by Clackamas County, and bonds. Debt service for the bonds will be paid using operating funds already flowing to the library. The bonds will require a public vote for approval of the expenditure but is important to note that there will be no increase to the tax rate/base.

**Current forecasting outlines the following:**

Design/Construction/Fit-up: \$9.8m  
Starting Capital: (\$3.8m)  
Loan: (\$6m)

The annual debt service and operating costs based on a \$6m loan is approximately \$559,000 annually.

Debt Service: \$439,000  
Operating Expense: \$120,000

### **Timing**

The next steps outlined in the "recommendation" section will take place over the next 6 months and a new library could be operational as early as the end of calendar year 2015.

### **Things to consider during next steps**

#### **Square Footage and OLA guidelines**

According to the District IGA, all Clackamas County Libraries are to strive to meet the Public Library Standards are provided by the state professional organization, the Oregon Library Association. Due to changes in technology, much about the library world is in a state of flux. In response to that, the Standards are currently being revised. Library Director Cole is on that committee and leading the revisions for the Standard on Facilities. The current Standard provides a formula to figure out how many square feet of library space should be provided by using the Library service area; there is no documentation for what the formula is based on. The service population assigned to the OCPL, which is all of Oregon City plus a portion of the unincorporated area of Clackamas County, is 54,000. According to the formula currently provided in the Standard we should have a total of square footage of 41,190, which could be in multiple buildings.

However, this is changing.

Although the new standards are still in draft form and have not been approved by the members of the Public Library Division of OLA, a provision has been added which allows space in other buildings that is available for use by the library to be counted in its total square footage. This reflects a desire to use public buildings for multiple purposes.

There is a desire by librarians to have a formula comparing their library's square footage to best practices. Current conventional wisdom holds that space containing print collections should not go away as print collections dwindle but be converted into space for 'people' activities, such as seating for wifi, events, etc. With this in mind, the Standards Committee is considering recommending the current per capita square foot average of all libraries in Oregon, which is .61, be used as the recommended goal. Using this figure, the OCPL service area pf population 54,583 should have 33,460 square feet in all buildings available to it for services. Including the square footage of the Pioneer Center and City Hall with the square footage of the Library would be allowed if these Standards are approved.

#### **Parking**

A parking study will be conducted but at first glance it is believed that spaces can be added by changing to diagonal parking on some of the streets abutting the Park.

#### **Location in Service Area**

Much of the Library's Service Area is east of the site of the Carnegie Building, which is why the search included sites on the hilltop and beyond. With the selection of the Carnegie, it will be important to make efforts to extend services further east. This can be as simple as adding drop boxes. With the advent of library software through

mobile devices, coming this fall, other models of service will be available and will be investigated.

**Historic impact**

Because the Carnegie Building is an important and historic Oregon City building, extensive work will be done to ensure that all historic aspects are considered. Of note:

- The City of Oregon City is moving forward with National Register listing for the Carnegie Building;
- The Carnegie Building already has a local historic designation;
- The Carnegie Building is in the McLoughlin Conservation District;
- Any additions to the Carnegie will be reviewed by Historic Review Board;
- It will meet Chapter 17.40 historic overlay district and design guidelines
- The requirement to meet ORS 358 is understood
- The Library will work with Christina Robertson-Gardiner and State Historic Preservation Office to ensure that any addition is compatible and does not adversely affect historical significance
- THA , the architectural firm which did the rendering, has experience with historic libraries and other buildings. This was taken into consideration when they were selected for their work with the Library.
- The architectural firm selected for the design of the addition must have experience with historic buildings.

**BUDGET IMPACT:**

Amount: \$100,000 or less

FY(s): 2013-14

Funding Source: Library Operating Funds, Library Reserve Funds