

Executive Summary

Joint Task Force Created to Gather Information + Respond to Issues Raised at June 1, 2009 Presentation to Council Regarding Library's Request to Acquire Parking Lot #10

Summer 2009

Introduction:

At the June 1st City Council meeting, the Library requested from the City the opportunity to acquire city parking lot #10 in order to build a full service, regional library for the Citizens of Wicomico County. A vigorous discussion ensued resulting in Council President Louise Smith directing Tom Hehman, Library Director, to appoint members to a Joint Task Force to consider the Library's request to acquire Lot #10, and report back to City Council no later than August.

The Charge and Task:

A memo was issued the following day, by Director Hehman, inviting City, County, and Library representatives to join the Joint Task Force for series of two meetings. As stated in the Memo:

“Charge: The Joint Task Force’s charge is to gather information and respond to the issues and questions raised by Council members at the June 1 meeting, and report back to Council at a work session no later than August in order to facilitate the Council’s decision on the Library’s request to acquire Parking Lot #10.”

Task Force Members:

Vicki Greene	WPL - Deputy Director	410-749-3612x12	vgreene@wicomico.org
Marvin Long	WPL - Board Member	410-742-1385	marvlong@comcast.net
Tom Hehman	WPL - Director	410-749-3612x13	tomh@wicomico.org
Valerie Murphy	WPL - Board Member	410-548-9417	ymmurphy@comcast.net
Leslie Russo	WPL – Board Member	410-749-3900	lh Russo@otwayrusso.com
Louise Smith	Salisbury City Council President	410-860-1717	LsmithNkey@aol.com
Terry Cohen	Salisbury City Council	410-845-0296	terry@terrycohen.com
Jack Lennox	Salisbury / Wicomico Planning	410-548-4860	jlenox@wicomico.org
Ed Heatwole	Wicomico Public Works	410-548-4810	ehatwole@wicomico.org
Brad Gillis	WPL Board – SUN	410-543-2440	bradley.gillis@sun.com
Karen Reddersen	City of Salisbury	410-548-3190	kreddereson@ci.salisbury.md.us
John Pick	City of Salisbury	410-548-3100	jpick@ci.salisbury.md.us
Melanie Hennigan	Grimm + Parker Architects (G+P)	301-523-0007	mhennigan@gparch.com

Task Force Visitors

Jason Palkewicz
Donnie Drewer
Jim Ireton

McCrone
State Highway Administration
City of Salisbury Mayor

410-548-1493
410-677-4000

jpalkewicz@mccrone-inc.com
ddrewer@sha.state.md.us

The Task

Gather Information on the following items per the request of City Council Members at the June 1st meeting as they pertain to the Library's request to acquire Parking Lot #10:

1. Parking:

- Can City retain parking rights and sell air rights for development? To be determined.
- What is the capacity of Lot #10, permits and meters? 249 total spaces; 99 metered, 150 city permits.
- Who are permit holders? City employees.
- What is the revenue to the City from Lot #10? Approximately \$30,000 per year (please confirm or revise).
- What about parking for Court? The court has parking for its employees on its site. The public uses the meters to park when visiting the court.
- What is the projected impact on the City's Parking Lot #10 revenue? Loss of \$30,000 per year
- What would be the net impact on Downtown parking? The Library would be building between 100 to 200 parking spaces on its site, depending upon the final site and building design. The Library could consider sharing some of the Library parking with the City. The Library could offer to meter some of its parking for sharing with the Court.

2. Traffic: Possible impact on Downtown traffic patterns

Mr. Drewer attended the second meeting of the Joint Task Force and reported that City traffic patterns would not be adversely affected by a new, regional library on parking lot #10. He stated that current road ways, traffic directions, and traffic signals would easily accommodate the traffic that would come to Parking Lot #10 due to the library being located there.

3. Subsequent Development: What follows post-Library construction development?

This item was discussed in the two Joint Task Force Meetings and Library Consultant Melanie Hennigan reported numerous findings from other Cities she had worked with (including: Hopewell, Rockville, Frostburg, and Prince Frederick) as well as other examples across the country that the general finding is that Libraries serve as anchor stores and that they draw numerous repeat visitors, many of whom will go on to visit surrounding environs, and some of whom will not. Because Libraries draw repeat visitors (not one- time-only visitors such as museums and courthouses), they are better neighbors for surrounding retail. It has also been reported that Libraries spur surrounding economic development by acting as a catalyst for future development. Public investment instills economic confidence and thus creates more possibilities that private developers will invest in nearby areas also. The general answer is that the Library will sponsor surrounding development in a positive way – whether located on Parking Lot 1 or Parking Lot 10.

Questions arose as to whether the Library would detract from future Downtown development by being located on Parking Lot #10 and drawing people away from Downtown. If one applies the analogy of a mall with anchor stores at the ends, then the library would serve as an anchor store that actually draws visitors to the edge of Downtown and many people who make it to the Library will then also make their way into the heart of Downtown. It is fair to say that not everyone who visits the library will visit Downtown. Currently, the library is Downtown and not everyone who visits it goes over to Main Street.

There was also concern that if the library were developed on Parking Lot 10, then the City would “lose out” on future commercial development opportunities on that site. This concern is valid, but another way to look at Lot 10 is to ask what building would the City rather have announcing the presence of Salisbury at the corner of this prominent intersection than a friendly and inviting public library? What retail establishment would create a better gateway to downtown? Are there developers ready to take action as soon as possible to develop Lot 10? The Library is ready to move and move quickly as it knows that time is of the essence and that there is no better time than the present to get their new project going.

The Library does not believe that it is hindering the City’s goal of reinvigorating Historic Downtown nor is it preventing an imminent commercial venture from being developed on Parking Lot 10. Right now, commercial real estate activity has slowed dramatically due to an economic downturn. Right now, a new Library is needed more than ever. Right now, public entities are bidding new projects and getting the greatest value for the public dollars invested.

One way of looking at Lot #10 is to acknowledge that it is truly a prominent Gateway to Downtown. Right now, visitors in the region do not know have a Beacon building drawing them into the core of Historic Downtown. Main Street is only two blocks away from parking Lot #10. By building a new library on this site, the City will be creating a Gateway to the Historic Downtown that greets and welcomes travelers as they move north and south, and east and west in the region. The number of vehicles passing Parking Lot 10 on Rte. 13 on a daily basis is 34,179 vehicles. The number of vehicles passing by Parking Lot 1 on a daily basis is only 3,412 vehicles.

4. Usage patterns

Usage patterns of a public library depend primarily on accessibility and visibility within the community. What would be impact on anyone who currently walks to the Library from SU, PRMC and Camden Ave., as well as Newtown and Church Street? While walkability is highly desirable and definitely a point of consideration, the majority of users coming to the library come via automobile and public transportation. Most urban areas recognize a 5 minute walk rule. There is very little housing within a 5 minute walking radius of the existing library. More residential areas will be within a 5 minute walking radius of the Parking Lot 10 site than of either the Parking Lot 1 site or the current library site. A 10 minute walk radius drawn from either Lot 1 or Lot 10 appears to capture almost equal amounts of residential area. Most of the PRMC campus is more than a 5 minute walk to the library. The number of visitors coming to the library from PRMC is small compared to other visitors coming by car, bus, or on foot from Downtown.

Parking Lot 1: Accessibility: Regional Access is POOR due to isolated location and lack of visibility from major arterial roadways. Local Access is VERY GOOD - walking - 1 block from Historic Main Street and from Historic Downtown. The site is accessible by car, bus and bicycle. The site is not on highly visible or highly traveled route. Only 3,412 vehicles drive by this site per day on average. **Visibility:** This site is visible only from local, lightly traveled road. Site is not visible from a major arterial roadway.

Parking Lot 10: Accessibility: Regional Access is EXCELLENT due to location at prime north/south arterial roadway and prime east/west arterial roadway. Local Access is GOOD - walking - 2 blocks from Historic Main Street and from Historic Downtown. This site provides excellent access from surrounding region and brings users to the edge of historic downtown. This site is highly accessible by cars and buses, located at the intersection of two major arterial roads - Route 13 north/south and Route 50 east/west. More than 34,179 vehicles pass by this site per day on average along Route 13, the major north/south arterial roadway. Another 20,000 vehicles pass by this site per day along Rte. 50. **Visibility:** This site is highly visible site from major arterial roads - Rte. 13 running north/south and Rte.50 running east/west.

5. Economic impact

What would be the impact of a library relocation on current businesses such as Parker Place and other businesses in the Historic Downtown? While the library is very sympathetic and empathetic to surrounding businesses, and while the library believes that it is one of the very best possible neighbors that surrounding retail may have (due to the fact that the library attracts repeat customers to it), the library must consider the impact its location has on its own customers and clients first and foremost. The economic impact of building a multi-million dollar library project in an area that will be under utilized and not visited as frequently as it could be, would be a devastating waste of public tax dollars. The library located anywhere in the Downtown will bring economic benefit to its neighbors, as has been proven in numerous communities around the country. The closer the library is to the business, the greater the positive impact.

6. Urban Salisbury

Would Urban Salisbury endorse this library relocation in light of their Downtown streetscape plans? Urban Salisbury considered Lot 1 and Lot 10 as possible library locations and they voted in favor of Parking Lot 1 due to its close proximity to Historic Main Street and the Plaza. They did not evaluate the location based upon the American Library Association recommended standard of care which addresses accessibility and visibility for a new library location. They made their selection based upon their desire to save Historic Downtown and have close proximity between the Library and the Plaza.

7. Property Appraisals

What is the fair market value of Lot #10? Parking Lot 10 has been appraised by the City's appraiser at \$1,325,000. Parking Lot #1 has been appraised at \$1,550,000.

Can the present Library and site be traded to the City for use as a City Hall? The current Library cannot be renovated and meet current codes for a library use group due to structural code differences between library floor loads and office floor loads. However, the building could be repurposed as an office building or city hall as the floors are structurally designed to support those types of uses.

John Pick said the Library should have the Library site appraised and the City should have Parking Lot #10 appraised. Differences of opinion can be discussed.

8. Alternate sites:

What other five sites are or were being considered? During the two Task Force meetings, the Library Board and their library consultant and architect reported on the original ten sites that were considered for the site feasibility study. The 10 sites were:

:

1. Parking Lot #1 East
2. Parking Lot #1 West
3. Parking Lot #11 (Parking Lot West of Existing Library)
4. Parking Lot #10 at Route 13
5. Beaglin Park Drive + Glen Avenue
6. Feldman's Site
7. Daily Times Site
8. Beaglin Park Crossing (lots 5, 6, 7 + 8)
9. Beaglin Park Crossing (lots 1, 2, 3 +4)
10. Existing Library (Plus Extra Area?)

9. Process:

The Task Force met on July 1st and again on July 21st. Representatives of the Library, the City, and the County converged to gather information in order to report back to the City Council as requested by City Council President Louise Smith.

This Executive Summary is supported by the following documents that were developed during the summer of 2009 with input from the Task Force, from Grimm + Parker Architects, and from the Library Board of Trustees:

- Appendix A: Charge of Task Force City Council Work Session June 1, 2009
- Appendix B: WPL Site Task Force Meeting #1 Minutes – July 1, 2009
- Appendix C: Power Point Presentation to the WPL Site Task Force July 21, 2009 by G+P
- Appendix D: WPL Site Task Force Meeting #2 Minutes – July 21, 2009
- Appendix E: Traffic Count Analysis by Traffic Concepts July 2009
- Appendix F: 2005 + 2008 State Highway Traffic Count Map Wicomico County
- Appendix G: Appraisal Lot 10
- Appendix H: Appraisal Lot 1
- Appendix J: Top Three Sites: Pros and Cons