

Site Evaluation Criteria

February 26, 2014

Introduction

Libraries epitomize public spaces and as such should be accessible, attractive and promote public interaction. In addition, there are distinct requirements of the building to accommodate public access, materials flow and support functions. Site evaluation and selection is a complicated process and often requires more extensive study. This study intends to provide an initial evaluation of possibilities. This site evaluation process has a multiphase approach. First, to identify the sites that potentially satisfy the criteria and to evaluate the sites using a quantitative method based on the criteria. Those that score the highest will receive a more detailed evaluation. When considering the potential sites there are a few basic criteria that should be met. Two primary categories should be considered: the site itself and any existing building that is being considered in whole or in part for the finished building.

Criteria Weight: As each individual site is scored in each category listed below, the weight of that category is multiplied by the score to come up with an overall value. These overall values total to the final score seen in the blue/green highlight on the left-hand side.

Size Initial: Site size accounts for Right of Way and other easements. The smallest sites that scored poorly on site size were eliminated from full scoring due to being too small to house a library building. They appear on the list as the grey options without scores.

Visibility: Libraries should be visible to the community not only to ease way-finding concerns but also to advertise services and improve safety.

Image: Library sites should be attractive and desirable. If there is a “white elephant site” that no one else in town seems to want, there is probably a reason for that. Beware!

Control: The site size and or location should allow the library adequate control over its immediate and near environment. Changes in land-use on adjacent parcels can greatly alter the overall quality of a potential site. Beware that undeveloped parcels are more prone to change than those in established, built areas. Additionally, zoning constraints should be identified.

Access Average: The access score is derived from averaging three types of access: car, transit and walking or biking. Libraries should be conveniently located with respect to the planned center of the service population. Easy vehicular, pedestrian, mass transit and bicycle traffic patterns should be considered. Locations of targeted user groups, especially those with mobility or access issues, should be considered. Location of the facility may influence the extent to which certain elements of the population, such as the elderly and young children, use the facility.

Synergy Cultural: Relationship with other civic buildings is desirable. Care must be taken to consider the nature of the other activities. Fire, police and court facilities often come with a different set of clientele, access and acoustic issues than a library. The Post Office is typically considered a more suitable neighbor. Being part of a recreation or park setting is often desired.

Synergy Business: Libraries can be thought of as higher end retail establishments and thus located with commercial activities. There is often benefit to the retail enterprises arising from the library's steady volume of use. In many ways, the library can be an anchor tenant in the retail model. A counterbalance to this is an assessment of whether the library constitutes the best use of high-value retail property. The development of particular retail sites may actually decrease a municipality's ability to attract a desired business because the library has occupied the prime site.

Synergy Residents: Many consider schools, in particular middle or high schools, as inappropriate neighbors within residential areas while others see them as ideal partners. Long established pattern can be a useful barometer – if the library has always been in a residential area, continuation of the pattern, albeit at a larger scale is less of an intrusion than inserting a significant facility in an area that has no experience with a public entity as a neighbor.

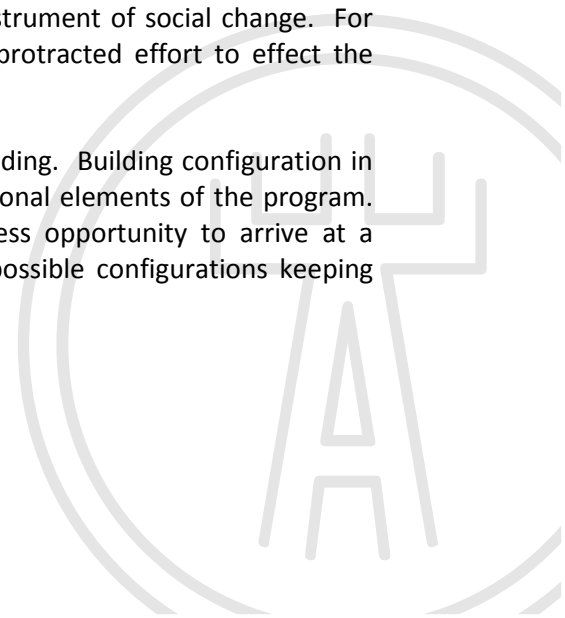
Adjacent Uses: This score looks at the surrounding blocks of a site and what is currently on them. Higher scores are given to sites that have supportive adjacent properties. Lower scores would reflect more industrial neighbors. In urban library settings, one looks at what is trying to be done in the downtown as well.

Potential Development: Libraries can spur further development in a region, being used as a catalyst for an underdeveloped area or as a draw for increased retail in a downtown. At the same time, libraries should be wary of being used to create social change.

Amenities: Sites with attractive amenities are desirable. Adjacent parks, nature, rivers and other amenities are seen as positive attributes of any site.

Perception of Safety: Libraries should not be constructed in high-crime areas. High scores in the category reflect the safest areas. Be careful of using a library as an instrument of social change. For such change to occur, the library must be part of a larger, broader, protracted effort to effect the desired change.

Site Geometry: Site configuration can dictate the configuration of a building. Building configuration in turn will strongly influence the options available to configure the functional elements of the program. Oddly shaped or proportioned sites will limit the options and offer less opportunity to arrive at a preferred configuration. Consider the geometry of the site and the possible configurations keeping



optimum building configurations and relationships in mind. Consider how adaptable and efficient the resultant configurations might be.

Building Operational Efficiency: The library should take into account how the new or remodeled facility will impact the number of staff required to safely and successfully operate the library. Additional floors directly increase the number of points requiring staffing and therefore the overall number of staff needed.

Ease of Construction: Library sites should be well drained and free of standing water. Sites that are in flood plains are rarely good choices and will not qualify for most grants. Sites should have suitable bearing capacity. Poor soils are expensive to overcome and will divert project funds away from the service-supporting elements of the building.

Perception: When all is said and done, how will the community react to or feel about the project? Is it a worthwhile investment of resources, a source of pride? A job well done? Did the library do the right thing? This is the ultimate measure of value.

