

COMMUNITY



Photo by Sean Poston

The scenery could change for Eugene Public Library employee Mary Kontny. The city council may ask voters next spring to fund a new library site in the old Sears building.

Council mulls over new library

By Brian Bloch
Emerald Reporter

A proposal asking Eugene area voters to help fund the creation of a new library in the old Sears building is likely to be on the spring ballot.

The Eugene City Council will decide late this month whether to develop a funding proposal for the renovation after evaluating public support for the project.

If the council decides enough public support exists to warrant the project, a bond measure will most likely appear before voters in the spring.

Architects' drawings and models of the proposed Sears building library are at the Eugene Public library at 10th Avenue and Charnelton Street. City councillors and library staff held public forums about the proposed move throughout late September and early this month.

Models of two proposed de-

signs for the Sears site depict buildings more than twice the size of the current facility.

Designed by Eugene architects Robertson/Sherwood, who will oversee the project, the two plans differ only in that one would provide underground parking and a three-level addition to the Sears building.

The other design has no provisions for underground parking and only a two-story addition to the current structure.

"These (models) are what the library could be," said architect Jim Robertson, who also stressed the need to cater to public input on the design.

The first design, incorporating about 90 underground parking spaces, would be more costly but provide room for future expansion of the library, Robertson said.

Martha Rice, library board chairwoman, said the existing library "doesn't have the space to provide ample service to Eu-

gene."

Space problems with the 31-year-old building have forced the library to store thousands of books in the basement, reduce seating and utilize other facilities for public service programs, Rice said.

Given ample public support and funding, the new library would span more than 100,000 square feet and offer room for the 250,000 books, 700 magazine and newspaper subscriptions, recordings, video cassettes, art and public service facilities currently offered.

At an estimated cost of less than \$15 million, the proposed renovation of the Sears building is less expensive than the estimated \$15.4 million of updating the current facility, or about \$22 million at the proposed Broadway and Charnelton Street site.

Options to build a branch of the main library would not solve "space problems for the central collection," Rice said.

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