

Library: Options discussed have more realistic cost estimates

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Councilors Cindy Price and Zetty Nemlowill told city staff they needed more information on financing.

"The main thing for me is the cost to taxpayers," Price said. "The enduring cost to taxpayers that might have to come through a bond."

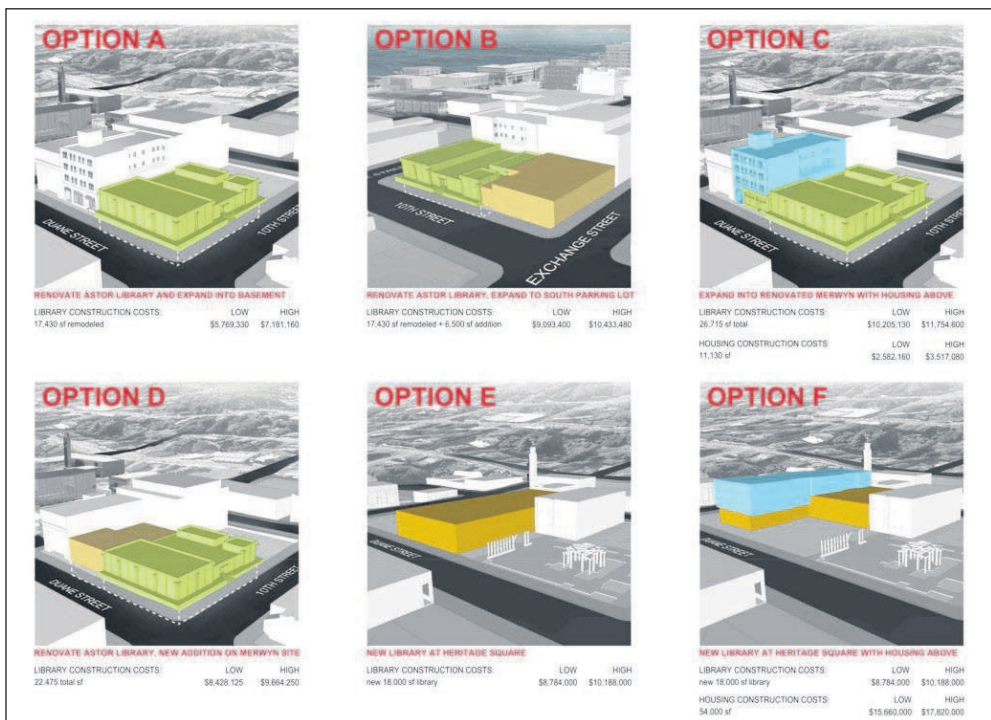
City Councilor Drew Herzog, however, warned of the cost of taking no action and leaving the community with a substandard library.

Precise figures difficult

Precise figures are difficult to calculate until the City Council chooses an option, and, even then, the cost could depend on several variables.

The easiest calculation would be to presume the city would have to pay for a new or expanded library, likely by asking taxpayers to support a bond. The cost could be shared by a private developer if the project includes housing.

Private fundraising and grants could help offset the cost. Depending on the final selection, the city could also market the existing library and the privately owned Waldorf Hotel in a redevelopment



Submitted Graphic

City consultants presented six options Wednesday for a new or renovated public library.

package to investors.

Options detailed

The six options discussed on Wednesday have more realistic cost estimates than previous outlines, but city staff cautioned that the figures and designs are still preliminary.

- Option A/10th Street

library expands into the basement. The construction cost would range from \$5.7 million to \$7.1 million. The option is the least expensive and disruptive, but the drawbacks include the need for additional staff to operate the library on two floors.

- Option B/10th Street

parking lot. The cost would run from \$9 million to \$10.4 million. The benefit would be that all public spaces would be kept on one floor, but parking would be lost.

- Option C/10th Street

\$10.2 million and \$11.7 million, while the estimate for the housing feature is \$2.5 million to \$3.5 million. The option would achieve the goal of an expanded library and could bring new life to a hotel — also known as the Merwyn — that many consider a historic treasure. The housing could be workforce micro-housing units. But operating the library may be functionally difficult and would likely require two floors.

- Option D/10th Street

library expands into the Waldorf. The cost is projected between \$8.4 million and \$9.6 million, significantly higher than the \$4.6 million estimate when the City Council approved a version of the idea in 2014. The option would require additional staff to cover two floors. The Waldorf would be demolished.

- Option F/New library

with housing at Heritage Square. The cost of the library would be between \$8.7 million and \$10.1 million, while the housing component would run from \$15.6 million to \$17.8 million. The housing could be market-rate units. The project could help revitalize Heritage Square, but the city would have to find uses for the existing library and the Waldorf.

Kevin Cronin, the city's community development director, said the two Heritage Square options were the most popular among the people who attended an open house at the library Wednesday. The city will continue to accept public comment over the next month.

The Library Board, which has watched as the City Council wavered, is preparing to make a recommendation. The aging library, designed in 1965, does not meet reader demand and has physical shortcomings such as a lack of access for the disabled.

"We're ready," Kate Summers, the chairwoman of the Library Board, told councilors. "We want to make a decision with you. We want to give you information you need."

Squabble: There's no timeline on the court deciding what to do

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That review could involve oral arguments, which both sides have requested in their motions for summary judgment, or a review of filings by the judge. There is no timeline on the court deciding what to do.

Arguments

The citizens group alleges the Corps improperly permitted Wal-Mart to fill the wetlands for the new store without adequately assessing environmental impacts and available alternatives. Anuta seeks judicial review of the Corps' wetland fill permit at the retail center under

the federal Clean Water Act and National Environmental Policy Act, along with review of the Corps' environmental impact analysis and finding of no significant impact in September 2014 that underpinned the approval of the fill permit.

As for alternatives, Anuta claims the Corps arbitrarily

rejected a parcel owned by Warrenton Fiber Co. and the Nygaard family behind the Les Schwab Tire Center, where the agency had approved filling in wetlands in 2009 for the retailer to be able to build.

The Corps argues the wetland fill at the retail center will have a minimal impact in a des-

igned nonsignificant wetlands, while providing a significant benefit for an economically depressed region.

In a filing in support of the Corps' motion for summary judgment, Martin claims the Corps looked at the Nygaard property but determined it was not a practical alternative

because of costs for development and logistical concerns.

"Neither plaintiffs' philosophical opposition to Wal-Mart, nor their permitting disagreements and regulatory methodology preferences, render the Corps' permit decision arbitrary and capricious," Martin wrote.

New Today

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