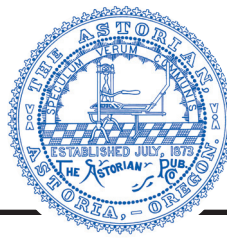


OPINION



the Astorian

editor@dailyastorian.com

Founded in 1873

KARI BORGEN
Publisher

DERRICK DePLEDGE
Editor

JEREMY FELDMAN
Circulation Manager

JOHN D. BRUIJN
Production Manager

CARL EARL
Systems Manager

OUR VIEW

Astoria Library project needs a spark

Astoria deserves a better public library.

The boxy, concrete bunker off 10th Street, designed by prominent architects Ernest and Ebba Wicks Brown, was considered a stylish example of Brutalist architecture when it opened in 1967.

But the building seemed too dark and dreary, too cramped, even before age eventually took its toll. The infrastructure — as Ruth Metz Associates concluded in a 2013 study — has reached the end of its useful life.

Unfortunately, the library's \$6.6 million renovation is off track.

The nonprofit foundation raising money for the project conceded in October that more public investment is needed. Volunteers raised \$83,500 to pair with \$1.6 million the city pooled from carbon sequestration credits and a memorial fund, far short of the \$5 million goal.

We fear voters will not support a bond for the renovation. We also wonder if there is political will on the City Council to pursue other public financing tools.

Part of the problem is the renovation is a compromise of a compromise.

With the election of Arline LaMear, a former librarian, as mayor in 2014, the library was a priority at City Hall. There was momentum to either expand into the old Waldorf Hotel next door or build a new library as part of a mixed-use development with housing at Heritage Square.

Instead, the City Council spent three years talking itself out of both options before settling on the renovation.

Preservationists pressured the city to spare the Waldorf, and the cost of relocating to Heritage Square was expensive, but the renovation always felt like a halfhearted third choice.

The renovation is sensible enough — large windows for more natural light, removing the mezzanine, opening up the basement, improved reading rooms and more inviting meeting spaces — yet it lacks the kind of spark neces-



Colin Murphey/The Astorian

The Astoria Library is often used as a gathering place.

sary to attract significant private investment.

Last year, the City Council agreed to extend the timeline for groundbreaking — and expand the price tag from \$5 million to \$6.6 million — to make public use of the basement. The timeline was contingent on the library foundation raising \$5 million instead of the original \$3.5 million.

LaMear, who left office in 2018 and is the president of the library foundation, is gamely defending the project.

But it might be time to start over.

One of Astoria's best traits is that it is a small town that does ambitious things. The Column. The Riverwalk. The Riverfront Trolley. The Mill Pond neighborhood. Liberty Theatre. The Garden of Surging Waves. CMH Field.

Imagination and leadership were as important as money in these accomplishments. Former Mayor Willis Van Dusen and Paul Benoit — as city manager and community

*PRESERVATIONISTS
PRESSURED THE
CITY TO SPARE THE
WALDORF, AND THE
COST OF RELOCATING
TO HERITAGE SQUARE
WAS EXPENSIVE,
BUT THE RENOVATION
ALWAYS FELT LIKE A
HALFHEARTED
THIRD CHOICE.*

development director — showed how to channel entrepreneurial spirit into action.

A contemporary library promotes literacy and equality, providing access to knowledge and information. More than just books or an internet connection, a library can serve as a gathering place that improves civic engagement and the quality of life. It can be a beacon that reflects a city's history and cul-

ture while shining a light toward the future.

City leaders, at least publicly, have shrugged off the two-year search for a new community development director with increasingly implausible explanations about the difficulty in hiring.

We like to think a creative community development director — or city manager, or mayor, or city councilor — would see the potential of a new library as the catalyst for redevelopment. Heritage Square is an obvious location, but there are several other forlorn properties downtown that could be repurposed for a library with housing, retail, office or open space components like a plaza or park.

Such a project would take several years and require considerably more public and private financing than the renovation. We believe voters would be more inclined to support a bond and private donors would be more interested in investing in something transformational.

GUEST COLUMN

Grounded in truth

With looming questions about our environment, economy and basic survival in a war-torn world, I am of the opinion that the most important thing we can teach our young people is what is truth and how to discern truth from fiction and where should they search to find answers that will affect our global society for decades and years to come.

We look to our learning institutions, teachers and books to identify and locate the truth, but these sources may be incomplete. I suggest that we not put our money in the snazziest book bags or newest apparel, but in equipping our children with the right questions to ascertain what is truth and the best research skills they can develop.

With each headline and news blast we hear statements that challenge the truth of many circumstances. To be perfectly clear, we, the generation of the 21st century, will be turning over a world of warring tribes, climate change, economic challenges and the search for justice to a civilization of people who aren't sure or can't explain the chaos.

Our education on every level, in schools and in our homes and communities, must put more of an emphasis on both hearing and expounding what is true and accurate.

We understand that the goal of education is to foster intelligence, plus charac-

ter, which are both needed to make solid decisions about what to do, how to act and where in the future we should be going.

Do our schools teach moral attributes? Do parents teach this to their children? Today, most schools and teachers shy away from the teaching of morals in adherence to keeping church and school separate. I suggest that to discover the truth requires that we look through our moral lenses.

Several years ago, I read a book by M. Scott Peck titled "People of the Lie" written in 1983. I can't paraphrase everything in the book, but others have reviewed it over the years and I came across a reviewer by the name of Dr. Lepora Flournoy. She listed the attributes of these people of the lie, that align closely to what I remember in the book:

- They urge to seek control over others
- They have a lack of empathy
- They exhibit a permeating problem toward negative behavior
- They strategically plan and calculate toward the wrongdoing to others
- They tend to be atypical
- They tend to not show remorse
- They tend to not be corrected by punishment.

Our judicial system is also where our young citizens will need their ability to discern the truth, for if they can't do it in the courts, where they must at some time fulfill their civic duty, then we are really in trouble and our future is in jeopardy.

Witnesses in a court of law recite the following: "I swear to tell the truth, the



Jeff Chiu/AP Photo

A man works at his desk in the war room where Facebook monitored election-related content on the platform in 2018.

whole truth and nothing but the truth."

If we state something that is not a fact, this is considered a lie of commission, which is telling someone something that is simply not true, twisting the truth to create a version of something that happened.

"The whole truth" is where you leave out an important part of information. Are many of our textbooks guilty of this? These lies of omission may have been corrected now, but in the past, history books didn't contain all of the facts about native peoples, slavery in America and the Holocaust. If information is left out then the reader doesn't know the whole truth.

"And nothing but the truth" is called a character lie or lie of influence, since you

are told something completely unrelated to the truth to cover up a lie.

If our learning institutions teach young people about how to recognize lies, then hopefully students will not only be able to recognize the truth, but will become a more truthful member of our society and will be more apt to tell the truth themselves.

In all aspects of our world, it is imperative that we begin to recognize and embrace the truth about ourselves and our world. As a familiar Bible quote goes, "You will know the truth and the truth will make you free." Free to survive in a truthful manner in a less chaotic world.

Denise Reed is the conductor of the North Coast Chorale.



DENISE REED