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Hi Lynn,

One of the Board of Finance has written to me to correct a slight error in my timeline – that pre-dates my arrival at the library and which the notes I'd inherited were slightly inaccurate.

I've made the changes relating to the date in question (that the de cew parking lot was built a few years after the purchase of the land was made) and another small typo.

I'm attaching it here and wonder if you could substitute this corrected version on the town website?

Many thanks,

Lisa

*Lisa A. Oldham  
Executive Director  
New Canaan Library*

Learn more about the New New Canaan Library – [www.newcanaannewlibrary.org](http://www.newcanaannewlibrary.org)

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# New Canaan Library

A history of the New Canaan Library new facility planning process including critical decision points and rationales, regarding design scheme and theme, and decisions not to include original Library building in the design or the new facility.

## 1979

- Construction of the Lapham Wing doubling the size of the library.

## 2005-2007

- The Library Board Trustees engaged Architect Elisabeth Martin of MDA Group of New York to conduct a Facility Evaluation and Space Utilization Study.
  - Recommendation: Undertake a complete rebuild.

## 2008

- The Library acquired 64 Maple Street.

## 2008-2010

- The New Canaan Long Range Planning Committee is formed and First Selectman, Jeb Walker, commissions a [Master Plan](#) that explores options and makes recommendations for the New Canaan downtown. Multiple options for a new Library were considered in various locations which included: Center School Lot, in Town Hall, in a new Civic Center behind the current Town Hall (on Park Street) and at Morse Court.
- As part of this municipal planning process, the Library Board, using private donations, hires Robert A.M. Stern (Architect) for a pre-architectural study to assess each of the potential building scenarios contemplated in this Master Planning exercise.
- Stern studies the identified potential Library sites including the Park Street, Center School, Morse Court, and the existing Library sites. Stern's report was shared with the over 100 town residents led by the New Canaan Long Range Planning Committee. This group recommends that the Library move to the Center School Lot or stay in its current location.
- The Library Board of Trustees, having evaluated the two recommended options, decides to pursue a project on its existing site and to acquire adjacent properties to enable a new and expanded facility.

## 2012

- The Library added 24 additional parking spaces at 64 Maple street.
- The Library Board convened a working group of Library members, staff, and outside Library specialists to develop a functional requirement for a new Library. This study group studied successful libraries regionally and nationally.
- Library Board of Trustees after a rigorous process looking at several firms, uses private donations to engage Centerbrook Architects.
- Centerbrook lead a series of workshops with a 40-member community committee representing a cross section of diverse town demographics in an in-depth, iterative process that evaluated several renovation options.
- In four Saturday workshops the study group explored and evaluated a wide variety of factors to meet New Canaan's Library needs.
- The study group initially favored maintaining the original (1913) Library wing, if it could fit in with the new structure. The study group at the time designated a \$1 Million premium for its preservation.
- The study group reviewed existing conditions, future functional requirements, outdoor spaces, phasing requirements, image, scale, connection to the community and the zoning regulations.
- Renovation options for the existing facility were ultimately rejected due to the significant compromise they caused to the program. Renovation also drove up costs due to the phasing it would require, the need to move offsite and the significant structural challenges of the existing building.
- A consensus formed quickly that a new building was the best course of action.
- As to design, the consensus was to pursue a "forward thinking, modern appearance" facility, and that the building should be: "exciting, with a lot of 'openness and glass' and that finishes should be 'warm' with wood and stone."
- The Library commissioned a facilities assessment report from Kohler Ronan (MEP) to assess existing mechanical systems. This study concluded that the systems are at the end of their life, that the insulation and windows do not meet the energy code, and the structures would require additional bracing to be meet current codes.

## 2012/2013 Community Study Group: Initial Design Iterations

- In all, eleven (11) iterative designs for the new structure were reviewed by the study group. Each of these concept designs required the purchase of two more adjacent properties.
- The estimated cost of the final design iteration for a ~60,000 square foot building was estimated at more than \$40 million for construction alone at the time (2012).
- Centerbrook engaged independent cost estimators Faithful & Gould and later Dharam Consulting to assure we had accurate cost information for making realistic decisions.
- The study group decided that building new, with no phasing, was the least expensive and least disruptive option and would include the following benefits:
  - Deliver both the functional requirements of a future-focused Library and flexibility for the future.

- Include meeting rooms, performance spaces, quiet study space, community gathering space, business center, children's room and teen center designed for current and future use.
- Provide various types of outdoor event spaces in response to comments made at the workshops - for both smaller gatherings and larger town wide events.
- Allow the Library to remain open and, not disrupt services to the public during construction, and avoid expensive relocation and business disruption costs.
- Provide integrity of design and open green spaces.
- Allows for sustainable design and effective use of space, and efficient use of staff.
- Provide for completion in a shorter time frame resulting in lower construction costs and least disruption.

#### **2013**

- The Library using funds from a bequest, acquired the parcel at 56 South Avenue with philanthropic funds and later created "Christine's Garden" to serve as an interim public green space amenity while awaiting a final building plan.
- Centerbrook issued a detailed report on its work including the 11 iterations.
- New Executive Director recruited

#### **2014**

- Library board using donor funds commissions a feasibility study on fundraising by CCS consultants of New York, NY.

#### **2015**

- Capital Campaign formed by Library Board.

#### **2017**

- January - 48 South Avenue purchased with a 1/3 contribution from Town as per a Memorandum of Understanding to ensure Town vision of a new, fit-for-purpose facility on the existing and expanded site without parking along South Avenue.
- February - Library Board re-engages Centerbrook Architects with guidelines to design a new future focused facility using the following parameters:
  - their previous work in 2012 with community representatives
  - newly expanded real property footprint
  - budget based fundraising assessment by CCS.
- April - Centerbrook Architects presents a new concept. The new Library is proposed on the southwest corner of the Library site at Maple Street and South Avenue and extends eastward toward Main Street that:
  - Meets the Library's functional needs within the budget provided.
  - Applies community input from 2012 study group.
  - Applies fundraising feasibility study projections by CCS.
  - Realizes the planning goal for a sustainable building and associated operations.
  - Avoids displacement of the Library during construction.

- Proposes an integrated Library Green to provide community event space and provides green space in the downtown area.
  - Provides a gateway for visitors entering town.
  - Provides underground parking.
- This design, making use of the newly secured, completed land assembly, is the 12th iteration proposed and the first that does not integrate the original (1913) building façade into the design.
  - The Library Board considers the options for retention of the original (1913) building on site as a free-standing structure.
  - Utility factors assessed include the functional space, building program, level of rehabilitation/remediation required, opportunity costs, and economic sustainability of future operating costs.
  - The Library Board decides to pursue the new design plan without the original structure based on the following considerations:
    - The original (1913) building is in and of itself very small. What remains is the original front wall and two rooms situated behind that.
    - The original west wall of the original building was replaced entirely in the 1950s renovation.
    - The original south wall remains only extending approximately 20 feet from the front southeast corner. The remainder was removed during the 1970s expansion.
    - To retain the original façade and end wall as an independent structure would require significant work and expense to preserve/restore.
    - The roof of the 1913 Building is made of a synthetic roofing material of uncertain age but reasonable quality.
    - The northern half of the 1913 original library is built on slab.
    - The southern half has incomplete stone foundations, some reinforced by more recent concrete block.
      - It is not clear whether the foundation behind the block has structural integrity or not.
    - There are no mechanical systems at all in the 1913 building.
    - Rebuilding on site around the 1913 Building requires the construction of new foundations, two new external walls, installation of new HVAC, plumbing and electrical systems as well as fire safety and ADA compliant access and bathrooms.
    - Hazardous materials have been discovered throughout the 1913 Building including asbestos throughout the floor of the original building, in the flashing on the roof as well as in the basement. Lead paint was found in the front room.
    - Independent cost estimators carefully evaluated construction, engineering, and contingency costs to restore the original building.
    - These estimates have been reviewed by both the general contractor and project manager and are ~\$3MM or more. (Diversion of funds to restore/preserve the 1913 Building would necessarily reduce the overall building program and future function of the New Library building significantly)

- In addition to the presence of hazardous materials inside the 1913 Building, the cost to bring the original structure up to current building code standards- would require completely gutting the interior and restoring the windows along the front and the north end.
- A restored, freestanding (1913) building has no Library function, and would need to be heated, lit, cooled, and importantly, staffed. All of this would require more capital funds and create an ongoing cost to operate.
  - These costs would necessarily be taken from the Library's operational costs.
- In addition to the opportunity cost of preserving the 1913 building – the reduction in the scope and increasing the construction and operating costs of the new Library, there would also be the loss of the Library Green.
- Through the 'market testing' of the Library's capital campaign/fundraising effort with over 1000 New Canaan residents, it became clear that the Library Green is an important and highly desired element of the project.
- The Library Green will be an integral, thoughtfully programmed, and intentionally conceived outdoor space that is as important to the overall new library as the building itself. The Library envisions:
  - Adult and children's learning and cultural programming on the terrace and lawn,
  - Collaborations with our community non-profit partners
  - Space for families and individuals to enjoy the in-town green space.
  - Space for students to work together on the lawn.

## 2018-2019

- The Library continues its ongoing dialogue with Town officials and shares the Centerbrook plan.
- Town officials direct the Library to demonstrate fundraising capability and community support before approaching the Town bodies for a financial capital contribution.
- Library outreach shares the plan with **1000+** residents and most Town officials view the plans.
- November 2018 – Library Building Committee is formed
- The capital campaign raises \$16.5 million for this plan from more than **243** New Canaan donors over 16 months. Strong support for the Library Green is a critical component of this fundraising success.
- December 2019 – Library conducts a rigorous search and engages an owner's representative/project manager from Karp Associates.
- With funding from a donor, the Library commissions a study from the Connecticut Economic Research Council (CERC) on the local economic impact of the New Library and Library Green

## 2020

- January/February
  - CERC issues its projecting up to \$6.6MM in additional revenue to downtown New Canaan in first 6 years after new Library and Green are built.
  - Library presents the project, including fundraising milestones, to the Board of Finance and Town Council at public meetings.
- Fundraising efforts slow due to COVID.
- March
  - Town Council considers the preservation of the original building issue and votes 10-2 against making preservation of the 1913 building a condition of a Town grant to the Library project.
  - Governor's Executive order closes Library due to Covid
- April
  - Board of Finance and Town Council advise the Library that they look forward to receiving more information as the project is further developed and has P&Z approvals.
  - Library retains Robinson & Cole for legal support for the planning process.
- June
  - Relying on Town Council vote in March that concurred with the Library's decision not to preserve the 1913 Building, the Library signs a \$4Million contract with Centerbrook Architects to design the project from their concept drawings through schematic and design development plans, and construction documents.
  - Library commissions a parking and traffic study which reveals that underground parking solution creates untenable traffic conflicts on state roads and local streets proximate to the Library.
  - Town, through the First Selectman, presents to the Library for discussion, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to serve as a governing document for the Town grant toward the project.
- Summer
  - Schematic design developed by architects.
  - Alternate underground parking solutions on site are explored by design team and examined by traffic engineers. Proximity to two state highway traffic lights at downtown intersections precludes egress on Cherry, Main or South Avenue.
  - Library shares information about parking challenges with Town
- August
  - Following a rigorous interview process, Library hires Turner Construction for pre-construction support.
  - Schematic (SD) design presented.
    - Estimates created by both Turner Construction and independent cost estimator – Dharam Consulting.
- September

- Rigorous Value Engineering looks at over 100 changes to project to reduce 'hard costs' by \$6.5 MM including a reduction in building footprint.
- Two Board of Finance representatives join the building committee as agreed in draft MOU for Town grant
- Autumn
  - Due to proposed revised Library footprint, only 60 parking spaces fit under the new building.
  - Library engineers more fully develop 9 possible parking solutions to share with Town, including the possibility of using Center School Lot for Library visitors
  - Traffic engineers for both Library and Town review the parking solutions and both agree to exclude all that have egress onto South, Cherry or Main leaving only an underground parking garage solution requiring a complex ramp or tunnel exiting toward Maple creating extremely high (greater than \$100,000) per space cost.
- December
  - Design Development (DD) plans delivered.
  - 2 estimates done and reconciled – construction costs remain near \$30MM.
  - Further parking demand study underway

**2021**

- January
  - Two Town Council representatives named to the Building Committee as agreed with the Town.
  - Design team starts on Construction Documents (CDs)
  - Legal, design and engineering teams working on preparing necessary Planning and Zoning applications
  - Library and Town discuss a solution for Library parking at the Center School Lot
- February
  - Library requests permission from Town to allow Library patrons and visitors to park at the Center School Lot temporarily, during the project's construction phase, and once the new library facility is completed.
  - The Parking Commission approves this request.
  - The Board of Selectmen approves this request.
  - Library submits its Applications for Site Plan, Special Permit, Zone Change, and Regulation Amendments for project to Planning and Zoning Commission

**Conclusion:**

Over the past 16 years, the successive Library Boards of Trustees, hundreds of community volunteers, and a wide range of expert advisors have thoughtfully and carefully worked to create a plan for a New Library that will serve the needs of the community for the future. This enormous long-term effort has been supported by considerable philanthropically funded resources.

Along the way there have been many inflection points when the Library Board made difficult decisions based on the many and competing needs and desires for this important and essential



community asset. Balancing these many factors at every point, to ensure the most highly functioning building at a cost that the community can support has been challenging and was undertaken with all due care. The Library is proud of the building and site plan it has presented and believes that it is the soundest option which will enable the Library to deliver an exceptional level of service to the New Canaan Community for the next 100 years.

March 8, 2021