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1. LIBRARY DESIGN QUESTIONS

- What kind of design style will the library be?

No architectural design or style decisions for the library have been made. Wherever the new library is located, it is the expressed desire of the ALBSC that the new facility enhances and respects the context of its surroundings. The community will be invited to participate in the design decision when we proceed to that phase of the project.

- How many stories will the library have?

The decision of how many stories the library will have has not been made. Once the site is selected and work begins in the next phase of the project, including confirming with the community what types of spaces are important and working with San Mateo County Library to confirm the space can enable an efficient service delivery model and support sustainable staffing levels, a decision can be made about number of levels for the library.

2. NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- How did you arrive at the conclusions in the needs assessment?

In the general development of a needs assessment, there are critical parts and they all sit in analysis together. Benchmarking, existing facilities, user models, anticipated growth, and user needs are all critical parts.

The Atherton Library Needs Assessment had two main objectives, and those were to answer the following two questions.

- **How does the current facility meet the needs as set out by the JPA?**
- **What is the minimum space requirement for the needs of Atherton?**

The Needs Assessment is not based on the survey, it is based on

- Anticipated Growth
- SMCL Service Model Principles
- User Needs
- Benchmarking
- Existing Facilities (review from a service delivery perspective)

Benchmarking

The Assessment involved a great deal of benchmarking. The benchmarking established criteria and looked at libraries that had recently been completed. Various libraries were selected along the following criteria: based on a specific service population range, ranges of service, that were recently redone, and communities that were to some degree demographically similar. The criteria included: 10,000-20,000 in service population size, the library building would be no more than 15,000 sq ft, and the library building was built in the last 5 years.

Arriving at the 11,000 square foot Recommendation for Atherton Library

The information used to develop this figure included actual circulation of Atherton Library materials, actual number of computer seats. First is a set of assumptions—ABA worked with population growth (just above 0 projected over 20 years, which is rare), worked with the service pop of 16,436, worked with the existing collection size, and worked with targets (seating and tech growth). ABA then went through a series of efforts per collections, a series of factors, calculating percentage growth factors (based on trends and community desires, incorporating information they heard and what the community is currently using), incorporating staff and community input (collection by collection, balancing the future collection). They arrived at a new subtotal of items needed. They looked at the percent of items on shelf and percent checked out, and estimated by collection how many items would be on the shelf at any given time to arrive at a projected shelf space. They looked at shelving (from spine out shelving to space out shelving, expanding the number of linear feet, especially in children's collection and popular collection).

The information is a planning tool in the context of a needs assessment and it yields a net area. In addition ABA looked at seating and computers and did the same analysis. Ultimately, they came up with three net areas, but those net areas do not equal a building. Space for walls and staff areas need to be incorporated. They then assessed, what, in a broad way does it take to make those three major areas into a building. 10,984 is what the calculations came down to, without a teen room. ABA then rounded, added a percentage, and arrived at 11,100. ABA looked at all the information gathered and made a recommendation--they were doing minimums.

- Is there more information about the Needs Assessment?

ABA, the consultants who conducted the Needs Assessment, had completed a million square feet of library programming at the time of the Atherton assessment and now has completed even more programming. They have a background in library planning and seeing library projects through architectural completion. The work ABA has done within the county system includes Foster City, Pacifica, San Carlos, Atherton, and East Palo Alto. They did the library program for the King Library joint use facility for San Jose State and the City of San Jose, staying on that project from the beginning to the end. They have done libraries in Virginia, and worked on small library projects and large library projects.

The California State Library association did training on needs assessment that one of the ABA partners participated in. In general, for modern library space needs, 0.6 square feet per capita is on the low edge and 1.3 to 1.4 square feet per capita is on the high edge. The results of the Needs Assessment identified the Atherton minimum needs as falling on that low edge. Any recently constructed building in California will generally fall right within that range. As much as folks want there to be a number driver or a statistical driver, there isn't one.

Have towns built libraries to the minimum? It ranges—San Jose has built below the range. For libraries that are interspersed without a lot of immediately adjacent facilities, they would tend to be larger. However, libraries don't tend to hover in a particular place in the range. Redwood Shores came in on the higher edge. Foster City sits at 0.823 square feet per capita.

There is a wide variety of statistical measures.

In the process that was done, ABA heard that the library should be quaint and doesn't need to be all things to all people. This reinforced the other data, leading their recommendation toward the lower edge.

Service Population Level

The base information is that library users make up the service population. The needs assessment looked at the unincorporated and Atherton populations together. Both the unincorporated and Atherton communities are highly educated, relatively affluent, and strikingly demographically

similar. The number 16,436 was used for the total population and to calculate the per capita figure.

How Does Atherton Library Fit In with the Benchmarks?

You can see how low the Atherton Library really is in relationship to other libraries. San Mateo County Library (SMCL) set a target for all the branches within their system. For example, they have a system wide target of providing one computer for every 1,000 people. They would like to provide at least 8 seats for study at every location. In other libraries they have done a trimmed mean; it would yield something similar. These benchmarks address the quantitative aspect of the Assessment, but they do not address the qualitative aspects of the Assessment. The question is not whether or not people own computers. It is do they want to bring them to the library? Is the library committed to the idea of democracy and equal access? Libraries use computers to teach information literacy and technology skills. People may enjoy the wireless services the library offers. The Needs Assessment recommended 17 computers.

Percentage of Respondents and What that Means

The survey was publicized—a notice was put into the newspaper. The entire community did have the opportunity to participate. Almost a percent of the service population responded. To compare, in Rockland, that process engaged Friends to begin a campaign to get people to participate in the Needs Assessment. The result: 2.34% of the population was a wildly successful response rate there. While 1% is a low response rate, the purpose of this survey was not to be statistically significant, it was to provide narrative input. To repeat, the purpose of the survey was never to be statistically significant.

ABA laid out information based on an expectation of library quality. Could the Needs Assessment have included forums, additional surveys, more participation? Maybe, but that was not the scope. ABA did look for a variety of users and nonusers, the participation was broad based. While the participation piece was a relatively limited process, there was alignment from the input received from the different participation sources. If there had been distinctly different input that would have been a signal to conduct additional work.

The current work with Group 4 would suggest that the additional focus groups held further confirmed the Needs Assessment.

The Needs Assessment is not based on the survey, it is based on

- Anticipated Growth
- SMCL Service Model Principles
- User Needs
- Benchmarking

- Existing Facilities (review from a service delivery perspective)

The Atherton Library Needs Assessment included a relatively low level of interaction: ABA held one focus group, conducted three key informant interviews, and conducted one survey. In other communities, they have done deeper levels of work. More interaction would not necessarily have given a different outcome. The Atherton Library Needs Assessment is good work. It looked at comparisons—when examining SMCL JPA, state, and country library levels, the existing Atherton service levels are very low.

Even if the library was the right size, it isn't accessible and it isn't acoustically separate. The qualitative aspects are just as key as the quantitative aspects. The questions that can be posed for the community to answer include:

Does the community support children's programs?

Do you want training programs on the computers?

Do you believe in the democratic ideal of the library and that it is a grand equalizer?

Does the community understand the value of the programs?

Sometimes when communities give primary weight to the numbers, focus is lost. What are you paying for with the existing facility? If you look at what the building deprives you from receiving, you are losing value?

ABA heard people want the library to be a community place and to feel like a community there; they heard that people want this to be a place people can gather in.

Needs Assessment Context

The Atherton Library Needs Assessment was presented and reviewed and agreed upon as the base document by the Council.

After doing library work for 28 years, ABA understands the importance of respecting and learning from differences and the importance of building in processes to answer questions. ABA had a certain amount of time to conduct the Assessment and they stand by their work. It is statistically accurate. The context for the Needs Assessment was the County Library wanted answers to two questions. Is the town getting value for their services and was the building limiting services? What are the minimum space needs for the present through 20 years from now? That was the context, the beginning of a conversation. SMCL was simply asking the question, how does the building support our service model? The context was not that we are building a new library. SMCL spent the appropriate levels of funds for that context. ABA described the minimum need in the service model you have.

3. COMMUNITY GROUP INCLUSION

- Will there be studios and storage for the art committee?

It is possible, but this final determination will be made in the next phase based on the community input and cost. Space for the art committee is a desire we have heard from the community. As long as the needed space for identified library operations, services, and programs is approved, additional shared space can be added to support broader community functions.

- Are there going to be dedicated classroom spaces for art classes?

The Arts Committee's needs will be included in the space planning assessment and could be accommodated in shared space. The library space planning will be refined and determined in the next phase, and community input and cost considerations will factor into the final determination. No specific decisions have been made on types of art spaces at this stage in the project. Classroom space is a possibility, especially if flexibly designed, and would be a shared library space.

- Will there be dedicated heritage space?

Preserving the Atherton heritage archives and making them available to the community in the library is important. Along with meeting the space needs of the Atherton Library (in a narrow sense) in the new facility, the space needs of the Atherton Heritage collection will also need to be included. The Heritage Association Collection needs will be included in the space planning assessment and could be accommodated in shared space. The essential function of the Heritage Association is archival which is consistent with library archival functions. However, this determination will be made in the next phase of work based on community input and cost.

4. LIBRARY USE AND ROLE

- When I go to the library no one is there?

The Atherton Library experiences a range of usage, from a number of people attending a program or story time at once to occasions when there might only be a single person in the building at a time. While the library experienced robust use with 81,241 visits in the last fiscal year 2009-2010, the limitations of the current facility do not support or encourage people to linger. The combination of uncomfortable and very limited seating and lack of acoustical separation encourages library users to quickly select or pick up their materials, then leave.

- Does anyone use the library?

Over the last four years, we have seen a 3.55% average increase in people visiting the Atherton Library. The total number of visits for 2009-2010 was 81,241 or nearly 5 annual visits per service population capita. This corresponds with national trends and data indicating public libraries are increasing in usage and importance to their communities.

- Why are you building a community center and calling it a library?

The modern public library has evolved with time and to support the needs and interests of the communities it serves. The mission of the San Mateo County Library is to provide innovative, dynamic services that connect our diverse community with opportunities for individual growth and enrichment.

People who haven't visited a library recently may be surprised to know that we offer many appreciated services besides the opportunity to check out collections of materials, including numerous programs, classes, clubs, and events.

As one of the remaining free and politically neutral gathering spaces for the public, the library serves the community and helps further develop the sense of community, connection, and shared experience so valuable for health and fulfillment.

Classes on downloading eBooks to your device, book discussion clubs, baby sign language classes, yoga story time, art lectures, crafts, and more, all take place, however awkwardly, in the current facility.

The spaces we are looking at in the new facility *do not* represent a shift or change in the mission or objectives of the library; they represent planning to meet real existing needs, needs that were not addressed when the current facility was converted from a private residence to a library.

- Why can't we just use the Menlo Park Library?

You may use the Menlo Park Library. A transfer fee will go to them. Our library money will still accumulate to be used for library services in Atherton.

- Why do we need a library?

Communities typically enjoy having a library

1. to preserve and support the tenets of intellectual freedom,
 2. to explore and share resources with each other,
 3. to carry on the great American tradition of free access for all,
 4. to continue lifelong learning,
 5. to benefit from a collection carefully selected for its demographic from the enormous quantity of materials published each year,
 6. to experience programs and community enriching events,
 7. to volunteer in and convey the pleasures and joys of reading and giving back,
 8. to have a convenient location in your own neighborhood,
 9. to ensure future generations will be able to explore the world of ideas,
 10. to benefit from staff's deep knowledge of information literacy,
 11. to develop new interests and reinforce long standing interests,
 12. to expose children to literature and early childhood development/reading best practices,
 13. and to form friendships and connections.
- Do we need such a large library?

At this stage, no specific size for the library has been finalized or decided. The Atherton Needs Assessment recommended that 11,100 would be the minimum appropriate size for the service population given the types of services and uses the library would need to include. Most libraries recently constructed fall within a range of 0.6 and 1.4 square feet per capita, with very recent construction trending to the higher end of the scale. The 11,100 figure is at the low end of that range and represents a minimum recommendation.

Some of the factors involved in the increased size include creating spaces that are more conducive to browsing, creating seating spaces for reflection or connection, creating an acoustically separate space in the facility for library programs, classes, discussions, and services, and otherwise supporting the role of the library as the heart of the community.

Further work to confirm the community's wishes and needs for the new facility is planned after the site has been selected. Gathering additional information about community priorities for the new facility will help refine the size of the new space. The architectural style and site will also refine the size of the new space.

It is common for communities to decide to increase or decrease the square footage of libraries, based on such factors as funding, environment, site, and community interests.

The decision on the final size of the library will be informed by community input and is premature until the site has been selected.

5. LIBRARY IN THE PARK

- Will the library take over the park?

No. The library has no desire to take over the park, just to be part of a variety of park activities. The library would replace an existing building and decrease the burden on the town to obtain funding to maintain the Main House. The library could further enable enjoyment of the park through outdoor reading rooms, literacy gardens for children and all ages, spacious windows to frame the park's beauty and allow for contemplation, and through environmental best practices.

- Will the library interfere with the community and sporting activities already in the park?

No. The library will be complementary to other park activities. It is anticipated the library could enhance community and sporting events, for example by providing a space for younger siblings to attend story time while older siblings play in sports, by providing a quick spot to do research after curiosity is piqued by a discovery in the park, by providing a source for audio books for listening to while walking, running, or jogging, by providing a place to grab an honor book to peruse in the shade. The library supports and encouraged community interests and priorities, it does not compete with them.

- What is the safety of the play school children?

A library in the park will not impact the safety of the children attending the play school. The configuration of the library would encourage usage of the large parking area that is farthest from the day school and therefore would not contribute to cars in the play school area. In addition, the library would participate in a traffic flow and traffic calming study as part of the next phase of work. The results of the study and the siting of the library in the park could lead to increased safety via improved traffic flow adjustments.

- If the park closes at sundown and the library is open after that, is there a conflict?

The park currently accommodates a number of regularly occurring events and classes that continue after the park closes at sundown. These include: dance classes, community and group meetings, and cooking classes to name a few. A library in the park, open after sundown would not conflict with the current policy of allowing use of the park after sundown.

- What is going to happen to the weddings?

The policy regarding weddings and other large private events in the park is currently under review. The town is looking at the financial ramifications. Renting the facilities at the park does not benefit the town financially. Staff, maintenance and policing costs exceed the revenues. While the town is undergoing a transition towards contracting town staff positions, it still appears that the financial benefits to renting facilities in the park are nominal at best. Secondly, renting the park for large private events that do not benefit the community is an important policy issue. Renting facilities for large events conflicts with the community's ability to enjoy the park, particularly on weekends and during the warm nice weather months. Parking conflicts and noise issues arise from the private events.

6. FUNDING

- Can't this money be used for something else?

No. According to law, this money is collected as a portion of our San Mateo County property taxes to be used for library services in Atherton only.

The underlying legislation supporting County Free Public Libraries explicitly provides for participation in the levy of a tax specifically dedicated and restricted for library purposes. The San Mateo County Library is classified as a dependent district. The property taxes collected within the district are allocated directly to the entity (SMCL) to provide library services within an established geographic area (the library district). The geographic area of the district is approximately 351 square miles. There are about 93,000 parcels within the district which are taxed (per County Library Law) and these taxes are collected to support the services provided by the San Mateo County Library for the entire district.

- Can't this money be used to save the Atherton town employees?

No. This money is collected for San Mateo County Library to be used for library services in Atherton only. Atherton Library is operated by San Mateo County Library and the town of Atherton cannot utilize dedicated County Library funds to finance Town operations.

- Can we give the money to the schools instead?

No, the money cannot be directly given to any schools. The money is for library services in the town of Atherton; pre-school, school age, families and seniors. Library services are for everyone regardless of age. The Atherton does and will continue to coordinate and support literacy and other programs with our surrounding schools.

Atherton Library - Partnerships and Services to Schools

Supporting a child's educational success is a crucial role for the Library. For this reason, the San Mateo County Library collaborates extensively with schools in our service areas in a number of ways. For example:

Class visits – Librarians go to schools to demonstrate online library resources and databases, teach research skills, register students for library cards and read and promote books at schools. Atherton Library staff serves Selby Lane, because its students come from Atherton and Redwood City, they often coordinate programs with the Redwood City Library. Visiting schools at least twice a year at the beginning and end of the school year is one of our standards.

Programming – Library staff often take special programs directly out to schools. Last year and author visited Selby Lane as part of the library's author festival. The Atherton Library specifically targets all the 1st grades and 6th grades, at Selby Lane and other local schools we serve, with a library card campaign.

Libraries also offer summer and school year reading games. Librarians from both Atherton and Redwood City visited Selby Lane this year to promote the current Summer Reading Program.

Programs for parents and teachers and "Teacher Cards" - Librarians attend back to school nights and Parent-Teacher Organization meetings to demonstrate library resources, teach homework help skills, and provide literacy promoting tips. Libraries also offer library orientation programs specifically to teachers. The library offers a special library card for teachers that eliminates fines and hold fees on San Mateo County Library materials and offers longer loans on material used in the classroom.

Assignment Help and On-site material check-out - When teachers notify staff of particular assignments, librarians will request materials from other libraries, display specific assignment materials, and place topic materials aside for pick-up. Some libraries have taken books to class rooms for check out on-site and often the bookmobile will visit schools.

These are just a few of the ways we partner with our local schools. Teachers and children also benefit from the many traditional library services offered including access to collections (books, periodicals, movies and music), computers and the Internet, online databases, and educational information and research. The eBranch provides access to a wealth of information and is accessible in each branch library or from a patron's personal computer at home, work or school.

Recent Atherton Library School Activity Highlights

Preschools/Daycare

- *Playschool (Holbrook Palmer Park Preschool)*

Visited all classes for Read for the Record, October 2010. The playschool's young 5's class comes to the library for story times throughout the school-year each year.

- *Our Place Daycare*

We provide annual story times in October.

- *Robert's Preschool*

We provide story times annually.

- *Redwood City Headstart*

We provided story times during the school-year, 2010-2011

Elementary Schools

- *Selby Lane School*

First grade library card visits to promote the importance of every child having a library card every September and October. We visited Selby Lane for four lunch periods for International Literacy Day in September 2010 and collected postcards from hundreds of kids as part of the program. In May we brought Jennifer Holm for the Author Festival to the fourth grades and encouraged them to participate in the Summer Reading Club.

We have brought other authors/illustrators to Selby Lane in previous years.

- *Laurel Elementary*

Visited first grade classes: Fall 2009, 2010 for library card campaign; visited all 21 classes for summer reading program publicity: May 2009, 2010. Read to class for Day of the Reader at the school, April 2009.

- *Encinal Elementary*

Visited the first grade classes in Fall 2010 for library card campaign; visited classes for summer reading program, May 2010.

- *St. Joseph's Elementary School (Sacred Heart)*

Arranged Ying Chang Compestine author event for the 8th graders as part on One Book One Community.

The classes had all read *A Revolution is not a Dinner Party* as an assigned book in advance; the visit was a huge success and enriched class assignments.

High Schools

- *Menlo School*

We work with students of Kumiko Sakamoto's Japanese class to teach children origami at Atherton Library throughout the year, usually in October, December, February, and May.

- *Menlo-Atherton High School*

We provide library incentives to 9th graders each Fall. We provided opportunities for students to engage in

community service by assisting with story times in Fall 2009, and acting as summer reading assistants in May 2011.

- *Sacred Heart School*

We hosted faculty and campus chickens as part of our "Chicken Education Day" in winter 2011. We partner

with the school art department to feature and show student art work in the library to stimulate broader community discussions.

- *Sequoia High School*

We collaborated with and brought in the robotics team to provide library programming for National Robotics Week.

- Will there be an on-going source of money with property values going down?

While a few properties have been reassessed for less than peak price, property values in aggregate have not gone down, they continue to rise and there is still a lot of construction in progress adding to the tax rolls.

7. PARKING

- Are you going to have underground parking?

Based on the initial environmental study conducted, additional parking in the park is not required. However, there has been no determination as to whether the new library will include underground parking. This determination will be made in the next phase and will be based on cost, building configuration, and community input.

- Is there enough parking to accommodate the library?

Yes there is sufficient parking to accommodate the library. In studying all the activities occurring at HPP today, we can conclude that the numerous DAILY groups utilizing the park for tennis, yoga, lacrosse, soccer and Little League do not lead to any parking usage issues even when several of the large groups are present at the same time. On the other hand, the SPECIAL EVENTS groups utilizing the park can often lead to severe constraints on parking that can necessitate utilizing non-paved areas for parking, which is detrimental to the beauty of the precious green spaces in the park. On weeknights, the highest parking usage of 52% of spaces is at 7pm, a time when both Little League and MA Lacrosse activities are ending. On weekends, the highest parking usage is 61% of spaces at 10am when both Little League and MA Lacrosse games are held. This last percent is actually higher than normal due to a meeting of 40 people held in the Carriage House on the Saturday of the parking count.

SUMMARY:

There is NO parking problem for any of the daily use groups. At the busiest time, only 61% of the spaces in the two main lots are utilized.

PARKING SPACES:

Paved Spaces – 2 main lots		124
Entrance Road	15	
Exit Road		30
Loop By Main House		20
Road by Water Tower	20	
By Carriage House, Corporation Yard	10	
		219
North Meadow (stacked parking)	60-80	
		279-299

PARKING USAGE:

Daily Groups	
Exercise Classes (mornings in Carriage House)	10 cars

Tennis (mornings mostly)	5-8 cars
Team Sheeper (various)	12-20 cars
Lacrosse Camp (June, August, 9am-12pm, WD)	Drop Off/Pick Up*
AYSO Soccer (Sept-mid Nov, 4:30-6:30pm WD)	Drop Off/Pick Up*
MA Lacrosse (Feb-June, 3:45-6:30pm WD, 10am-3pm WE)	Drop Off/Pick Up*
Little League (mid March – early June, 4-7pm WD, 8am-4pm WE)	Drop Off/Pick Up*
Pre-School (8:30am & 1pm Drop Offs, 11:45am & 3:45pm Pick Ups)	

8. TRAFFIC

- If the library is located in the park, won't that increase traffic?
The LSA Traffic Analysis in 2011 studied possible impacts on intersection of Watkins and Middlefield caused by the library being located in HPP: The findings were that there would be no significant impact.(an increase of 0.3 seconds at peak hour).

9. OTHER

- What's going to happen to the existing library?

Town Council will determine what is going to happen to the existing library. The decision will consider the structural condition, historic value and the functional needs of the town. The town could consider renovating the existing library for needed office space for the planning and building departments and/or public works or administrative offices. Records storage is another potential re-use. The town will evaluate the potential re-uses for the existing library and council will make the determination.

- How will the new library in the park be able to respect Atherton's history?
Atherton has a proud tradition of having library service since the early 30s. Holbrook Palmer Park has been a wonderful community feature since the early 60s. Both reflect important features in the civic life of Atherton and the task of architects as the project proceeds will be to more fully realize the promise of both a park and a library, while reflecting the values of the users and proponents of both.
- Why isn't the library being considered as part of the Town Center project?
Library function is not compatible with town functional operations - such as the police, planning and building, public works and administration departments. The experience for the library user would not be enhanced by including the library within the same facility or close proximity to town operating functions. Therefore, the ALBSC focused on the existing site which is within the town center district and a potential location in Holbrook-Palmer Park.

Council accepted the Task Force recommendation to build a new library and established the ALBSC to evaluate and make a recommendation to council for a site - either the existing or park (refer to minutes from June 2010 council meeting). In addition, the timing of the Town Center/ new town operating buildings is unknown.