

BOULDER PUBLIC LIBRARY MASTER PLAN UPDATE OVERVIEW OF JULY 2007 PUBLIC INPUT PERIOD

Following the City Council Study Session in April to review the core master plan elements, Council suggestions were incorporated and the draft BPL Master Plan was presented to the public for comment during July. Outreach efforts included the BPL Web site, three open houses, publicity in all library branches and the Daily Camera, and an Update Boulder segment aired on Channel 8 during July.

Comments were received from 27 members of the public--10 individuals attended open houses and 17 community members provided comments via the Web site and written comment sheets. The comments were generally favorable toward the library and the Master Plan. The issues raised most frequently were concerns about the possibility of a further reduction in branch hours or the closing of a neighborhood branch, and the recognition that the library faces major financial challenges. Highlights of the issues raised are provided below.

Input Related to Neighborhood Branch Libraries

- A number of participants commented on the value of neighborhood branches and felt they should not be closed, even if the library's financial situation gets worse:
 - One patron felt that since a branch system is in place, the city has a responsibility to keep it in place. He preferred closing the Main Library one day per week rather than further impacting the branches should funding get worse.
 - One patron stated: "By all means do not even consider closing Meadows Branch."
 - Another patron would prefer to see further reductions in hours rather than the closing of a branch if more budget cuts are needed in the future.
 - One patron believed that it had been a very bad decision to close the Meadows and Reynolds Branches one day a week.
- One patron stated that the categorizations of library services in the library's business plan seem reasonable, although this patron would hate to lose the branch locations.
- Two patrons indicated that is reasonable to fund basic library needs (estimated to be about \$500,000 in 2007 dollars) before restoring library hours at the branches and Main.
- The statement was made by two patrons that there is a definite need for a North Boulder branch. One suggested a location near the Diagonal and Jay Road.
- Several questions were asked related to branches:
 - What happens when the Meadows Branch lease expires in 2009?
 - What are the issues or limitations of leasing a branch facility versus owning the building?
 - Has the possibility of accessing Meadows Branch through Safeway been explored?
 - If the Meadows lease is renewed, would the square footage remain the same or could another location in the shopping center be considered?
 - Is it possible to post other signs for Meadows Branch throughout the Shopping Center?
 - Is there a risk that the lease for the Meadows Branch would not be renewed?
 - What is the long-term vision for the Meadows Branch?
 - Is the location of the North Boulder Branch firm?

Input Related to Library Funding

- There was general acknowledgement that the library faces significant funding challenges.
- Several participants raised ideas related to possible library funding:
 - A “Wish List” similar to that used in public schools and some nonprofits.
 - State funding (such as that provided in Ohio and some other states).
 - A “special library tax” or bond issue.
 - The library foundation.
 - Donations to the Library.
 - A “gold” library card offered for a fee
 - Additional General Fund money.
 - The question was asked if the city resident \$1.00 fee for Books by Mail service covers the full cost of this service. (It does not; the full cost is approximately \$2.50, which is charged to out of city residents of Boulder County.)
- Given the difficult choices the library faces regarding funding, several participants provided their preferences regarding continuing as is, getting additional General Fund or other money or making service trade-offs within the BPL budget:
 - Two individuals stated the preference of obtaining additional General Fund money.
 - One community member preferred continuing as is, even if service quality deteriorates over time, or getting additional General Fund money.
- One participant stated that due to the funding constraints faced by the library, it would be a good idea to include the legal basis for library services in Boulder. (An appendix has been added to address this issue.)
- A number of questions were asked by participants in the open houses related to funding:
 - What City departments, other than BPL, are operating under a fiscally constrained budget?
 - What possibilities are there for new BPL funding?
 - Would additional sales taxes be earmarked for the library?
 - How is the Library Foundation money used?
 - Where do donations go?
 - Is the downward drift of funding and therefore library service quality universal?
 - In Ohio, where one of the community members had lived, there was significant state funding for libraries. Is that true in Colorado?

Input Related to Library Services and Collection

- A number of participants made suggestions, requests or comments related to library services:
 - Teen Space: more hours, more staff like [one of BPL teen staff], bigger space, windows.
 - Children’s Space (Main): more computers for children; more reading chairs and areas for parents to read to children; shelve books at a child’s level; provide puzzles, quiet games and toys (since there is no children’s museum in Boulder).
 - Adequate spaces for services to diverse populations, as well as teens and children.
 - Request for a deposit box for returning books in north Boulder or Gunbarrel.
 - Suggestion for a weekly or monthly poetry reading.
 - Request for emphasizing the Dewey Decimal System and keeping shelves orderly.
 - Look at portable hand-held technology for gaming, freeing up computers.

- Some participants made suggestions, requests or comments related to the library collection:
 - Request for a world class collection of information (DVDs, books, programs) to further the ecological literacy and land ethic of this community.
 - Continue to keep an updated collection on the outdoors, nature writing, and the environment.
 - Focus on books.
- A comment was made that the layout of the Children’s Area at the Main Library was a maze and too difficult to keep track of children. It felt unsafe.
- Some participants commented on things they like about BPL:
 - One patron stated: I have always been completely satisfied with the service provided and the amount of materials available for my research-based needs.
 - With the concert series, film series, Grillo, citizenship classes, etc. the library serves well as a community center, as it should.
 - The homebound book delivery program has been a godsend to many of my friends.
 - Continuing to keep the public aware of volunteer opportunities is a plus.
 - One community member was pleased to see that many of the books in the library of the Frasier Meadows Retirement Community are loaned from BPL.
- Questions asked related to library services:
 - Does the Boulder Public Library serve rural areas?
 - Has the idea of a mobile library been considered?

Input Related to Library Facilities

- Comments and suggestions were made relating to library facilities:
 - There are inadequate spaces for services to diverse populations, teens and children.
 - Improve and enlarge Teen Space.
 - Suggestion: Air conditioning throughout the Main Library building.
 - Suggestion: Use the great architecture as intended—clear the clutter and give us high quality public reading/viewing areas.
 - Improve layout of Children’s Area at Main Library.

Input Specific to Master Plan Elements:

- Funding fundamental needs (estimated to be ~\$500,000 in 2007) before restoring library hours at the branches and Main is reasonable. (2 participants)
- Categorizations of library services in the city’s business plan are reasonable. (2 participants)
- Guiding Principles in the draft plan are reasonable.
- Draft plan—nice presentation. Exploring proposed ideas is seen as positive.
- The plan is very complete and does address the needs of the community.
- Appreciation was expressed for the attention to environmental sustainability in the MP.

Input Specific to Master Plan Process

- Several emails were received from a community member expressing concern about the plan approval process, which has the Planning Board offering recommendations to City Council after the final adoption of the plan has been made by the Library Commission.