

Annual Report on the Duvall Library - September 25, 2008

There is a common thread that weaves my day together. The question "When are we getting a new library?" The question takes on an increased urgency as citizens driving along the 203 corridor watch the Carnation branch materialize on Main Street. I speak for the entire Board when I say that we are eager to respond with the definitive answer patrons await. As the Council is well aware, the project is very large and timing and coordination are complicated.

For this very reason, I feel it is important to take a step back and remind ourselves of why libraries are such a critical resource. Why are libraries so important? Probably the best known champion of the library system was Mr. Andrew Carnegie. We've probably all heard of Carnegie Libraries -- To Carnegie the library "symbolized the unity and summit of all knowledge, the bones, the binding sinews, the flesh and heart of any society that could call itself strong. No city could sustain progress without a great public library — and not just as a font of knowledge for scholars, but as a creation for and of the people, free and accessible to all. To him it was no exaggeration to say that the public library "outranks any other one thing that a community can do to help its people."

We often focus on the coming facility and I want to remind everyone in this room that the current library – while undersized for our growing community's needs, is thriving! Duvall Circulation last month was 11,362 up 8% over August of 2007. The year through August was 93,678 up 12% over the same period in 2007. Duvall Library responded to requests from Duvall Civic Club/Friends of the Library and added three additional open hours on Wednesday mornings starting this past May (while the Carnation Library is in temporary quarters). The additional open hours and increased traffic from Carnation has contributed to the circulation increase this year. The "Catch the Reading Bug" summer reading program was a huge success in the Duvall area this summer. There were approximately 450 children who formally registered locally and 30,000 system wide thus far. To say the library is thriving is if anything, an understatement.

This year our Cty Board has accomplished several internal goals. We have been committed to staying educated and informed - meeting monthly with the exception of December, keeping in close contact with Duvall library management and staff, participating in activities with FOL , attending KCLS Board of Trustee meetings as appropriate and interfacing with local and senior KCLS staff as well as the Duvall planning dept on a regular basis. Additionally, we have championed the building of the new Duvall library by being a sounding board for patrons, a "squeaky wheel" with developers/ KCLS and the City. We revised and updated Mission principles and goals in late May and you have that document before you –

Our goals are:

- Strive for a new 8,000 square foot library with a substantial increase in the current space for books and reference materials to meet the needs of the community's growing population.
- Ensure community input and involvement in the design of the new library.
- Advocate for sufficient parking; safe, convenient pedestrian, vehicular and transit access to the library.
- Strive for standardized hours of operation.
- Encourage the user-friendly and intimate atmosphere of the current library in the new library.
- Endorse sufficient areas for research, study, children's programs and other community activities and further ensure that these areas are designed to minimize noise and interruptions.
- Promote celebration of the cultural and historical heritage of Duvall in the new library.

The library is alive and well in Duvall and your advisory board is engaged and informed. Now that we are all reminded of the strong foundation of library patronage and support in our community. Let's go ahead and address the elephant in the room – The new facility. Here is the most current news as I know it:

Following the August South Duvall Design Workshop, participants identified five near-term objectives that had to be met to get the project underway by next spring:

1. KCLS, CamWest, and Washington Holdings have to develop a design for the "Village Center.
2. The City of Duvall and Washington Holdings must coordinate to ensure that mixed use requirements will be met.
3. The City of Duvall and Washington Holdings must move on a development agreement that will expedite the application and permitting process.
4. Street alignments must be addressed to ensure smooth traffic flow, pedestrian access, transition to walking/biking paths, etc.
5. The City of Duvall and the developers must meet to ensure that the storm water requirements are met and to address the various environmental impacts of runoff as a result of the development.

None of these items had been cleared as of Monday night's Board Meeting though many are being worked on. In 2007, when KCLS initially sought co-development it was for the express purpose of mitigating infrastructure cost. It is highly unlikely construction work on the new Library will start until the necessary infrastructure (i.e. roads and utilities) is completed pushing the timeline out to 2010.

Economic realities have hit Duvall and the Board appreciates the tough calls the Mayor and Council have had to make due to revenue shortfalls. However, the Board would be remiss to not point out that layoffs will have a direct effect on the project timeline: how could they not? The odd juxtaposition we find ourselves in is that instead of an economic downturn translating into less work in the pipeline for less people to manage, we actually have more work for less people to do. We have heard conflicting answers regarding the ability to contract planning work out. We respectfully request that the Board continue to be kept in the loop as this workload is distributed so that we can respond to KCLS concerns about timeline management.

A year ago, when KCLS decided that co development was the preferred option to pursue in Duvall due to spiraling construction costs, it was known that the construction equation variables would increase exponentially but the hope was that the gains in economies of scale would offset them. As the WH project has morphed into the WH/Camwest South Duvall project, the library has become one of multiple voices at the table. Too many cooks in the kitchen? Perhaps. But wait. Consider the possibility that more voices at the table can often reveal a better, more accurate analysis of reality than a single expert entity ever could. Libraries intrinsically provide quality control. Only information that is carefully vetted is allowed in. Looking at the bigger picture –the equation of a City committed to providing the library citizenry demands + a well regarded developer + a strong experienced financial backer + the 2nd largest library system in the country do equal a sum larger than its parts. Consequently, frustrating as it is at this point in the process, the Board remains confident that collaborative planning can result in realization of our mutual goal: the best possible library for Duvall patrons.

Respectfully submitted by Paige Denison, Chair - Duvall Library Board