
Library Site Selection

Potential Sites Summary Report

Planning & Zoning Department
October 2010

LIBRARY SITE SELECTION

SITE RANKING RESULTS

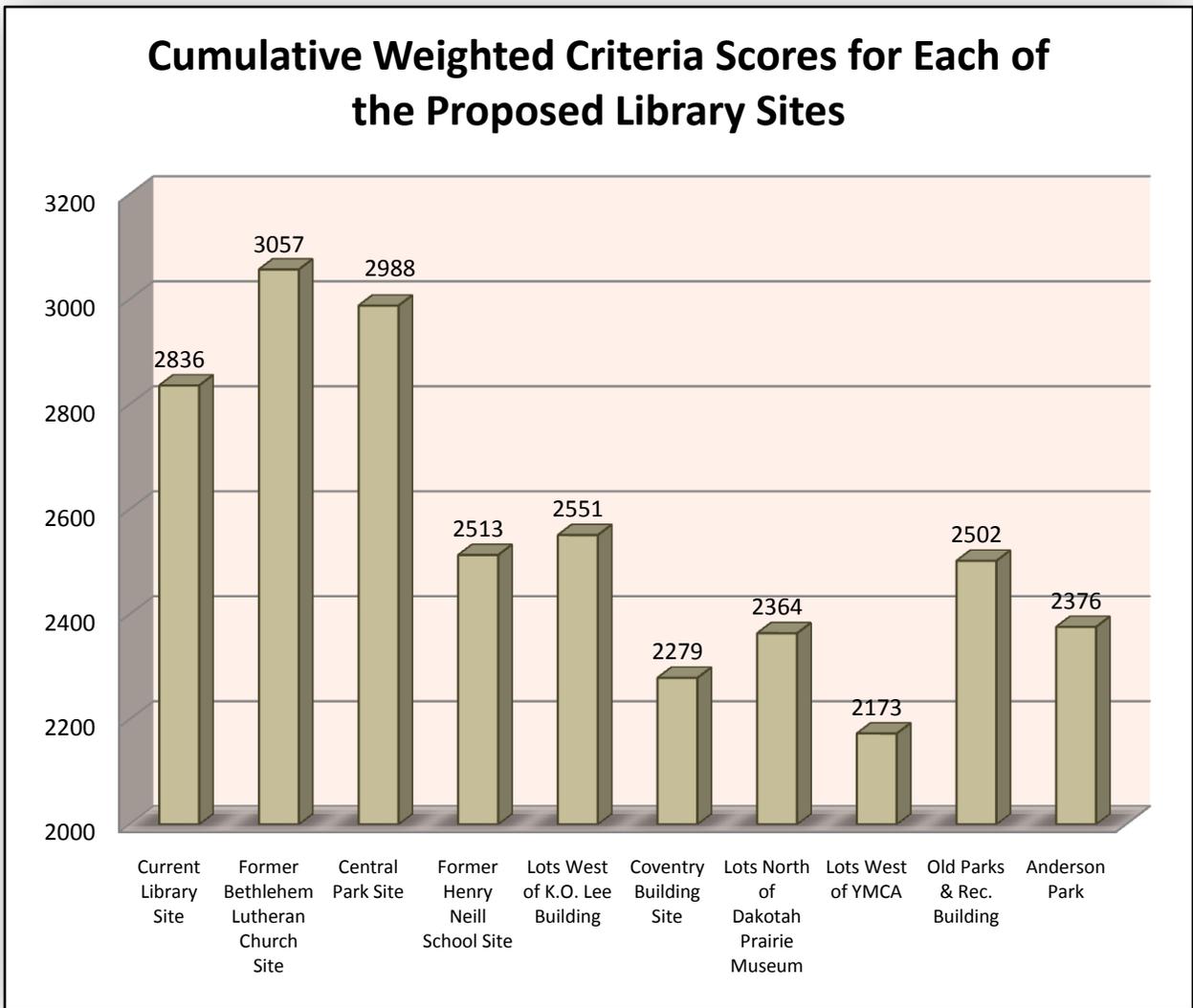
The following report contains the results of a nine member committee's study on the proposed location of a new Aberdeen public library. The Library Site Selection Committee ("the committee") was made up of members from the Alexander Mitchell Library Task Force and representatives of Aberdeen's city government. The study ranked ten proposed sites (selected from previous studies) across a number of criteria that measured each site from both a long-term, community planning perspective and a library's business needs for success.

For the purpose of brevity, and not to duplicate nor omit previous work, this Summary Report should be considered Part III of the Library Site Selection documents *Ranking Criteria & Weighting Factors* (June 2010) and *Additional Proposed Site Maps & Scoring Matrices* (Aug. 2010). Those documents (also prepared by the Planning & Zoning Department), define each of the measures used by the committee to arrive at the results given in this report.

It is important to note that the committee considered a weighting factor modification to a value originally assigned in the first two Site Selection documents. The discussion was on whether to weigh the site capacity (the land area) of the site at 25 versus 15 points. (The new maximum would be 100 points on this criterion versus the previous 60). All other criteria weightings being unchanged, the resulting impact would be to weigh the site capacity at approximately 23% of the total site score versus 15%, respectively.

Examining the total site scores under either scenario did not change which three sites received top ranking, nor did it change the order that those three sites ranked (in first, second, or third place).

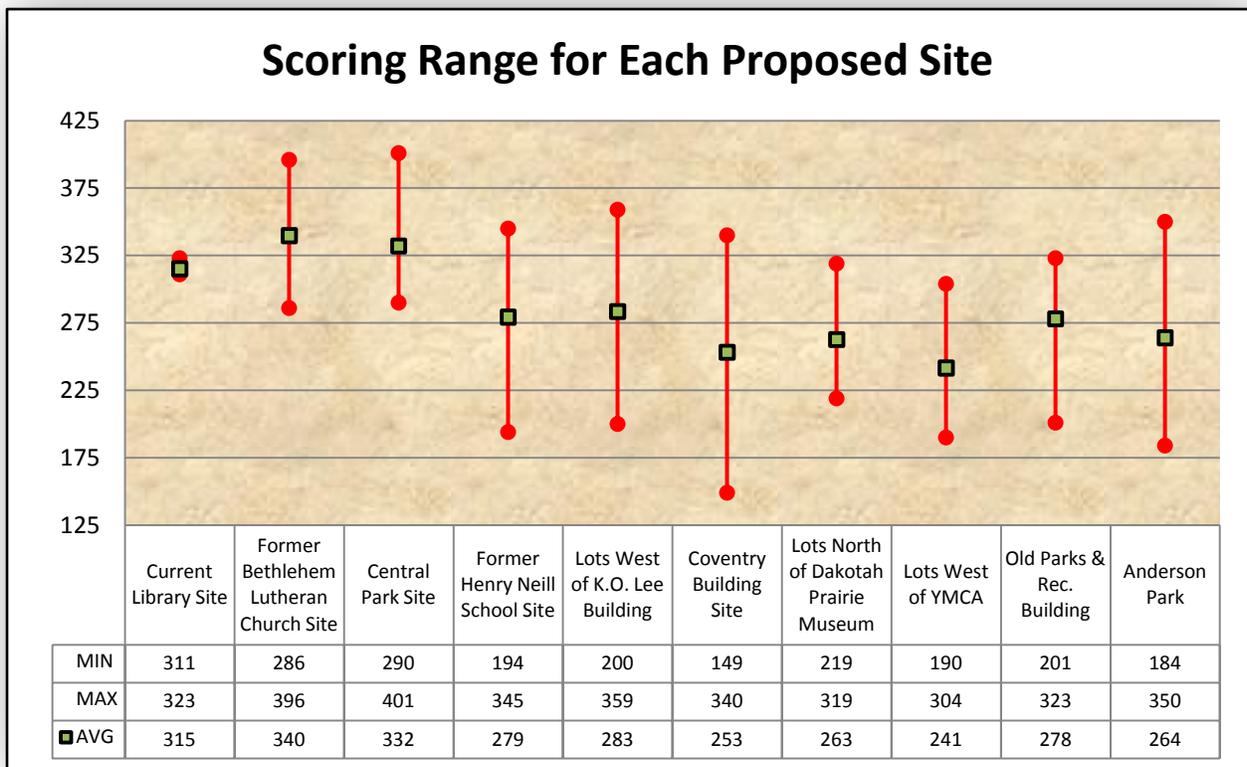
The graph on the following page shows the cumulative scores received by each potential site from all committee members.



Graph 1: This is a total of the Library Site Selection Committee’s cumulative, weighted score, by all nine members for each of the sites.

As the graph indicates, the top three sites, in order, are the Former Bethlehem Lutheran Church Site, the Central Park Site, and the Current Library Site, in the previous site selection reports these were referred to as Site 1, Site 2, and Site 0, respectively.

In Graph 2, we take a closer look at the details that produced the total scores. This depicts the variability among voting committee members regarding the specific sites.



Graph 2: This depicts the range of votes that each potential site location received by the committee members.

As expected, there is variability in the votes cast by the committee members. This is not surprising as the criteria examined in this study contained not only quantitative data, such as site capacity (which is easily measured), but also contained criteria such as community effect which seeks to measure, qualitatively, the future benefit based upon the existing neighborhood context.

On the surface, looking at the Scoring Range Graph appears to be simply more information about how the committee members voted. However, the data presented in this format allows for some measure of risk. The greater the range of variability in votes, the less there was a consensus about the “fit” for a particular site.

This disparity between votes can be the result of many factors including, but not limited to, lack of complete information (i.e. unknown legalities in securing a piece of land), strong opinions one way or another (will the library succeed in one place and not another), and differing perspectives on the value of available information (i.e. to what degree does the surrounding population data impact the library), etc. These are not flaws to this study, but are expected deviations around the average score for any particular site.

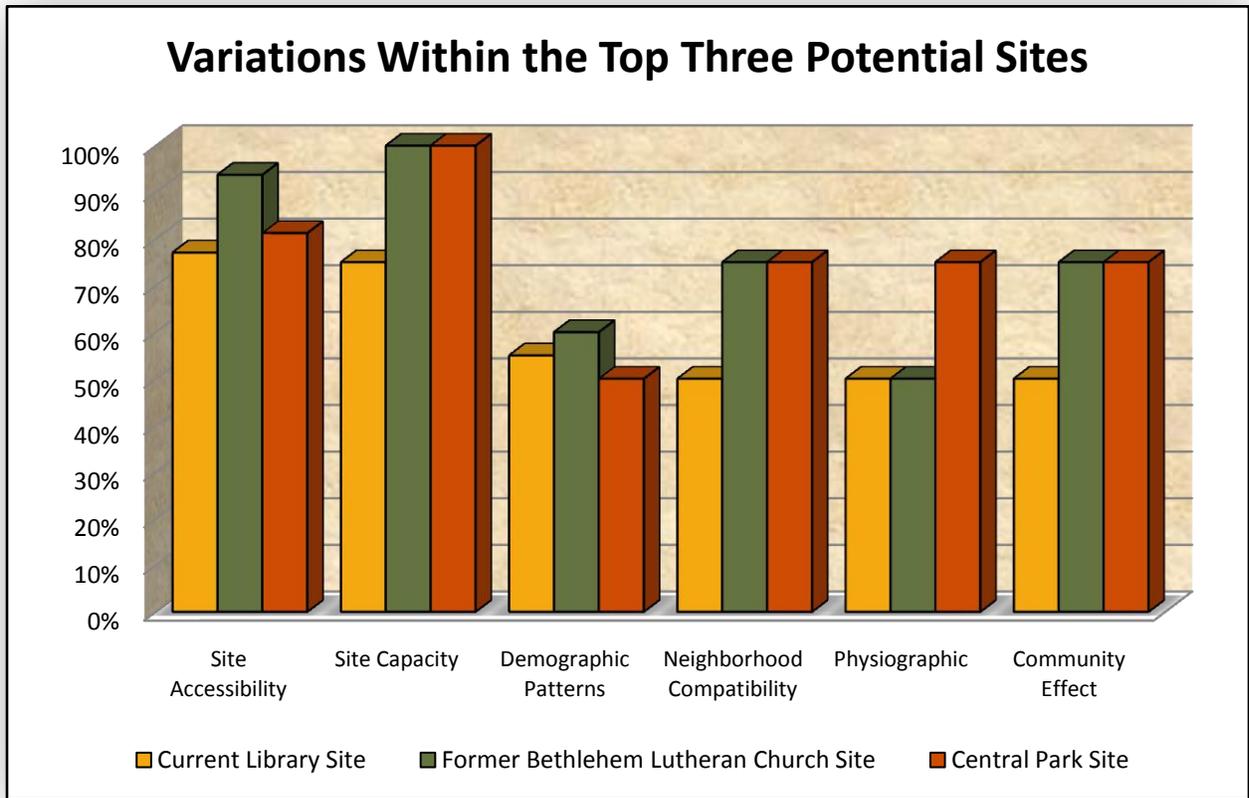
The measure of risk in this context highlights some of the unknowns. Graph 2 captures this risk very well and makes it visible, as seen in the very narrow range of scores at the current library site. There is really

nothing unknown about this particular site. As both the current site and a potential site, everyone is aware of how well a library does and would fit into the community at this location. The fact that there is not a large range of scores to this site speaks to the agreement of the committee in weighing known criteria. The variability in scores at the current library site is minor because there is little unknown about this site as a library location. There is very little risk.

The case is just the reverse for those potential sites exhibiting a wide range in their scoring. These sites have a greater number of unknowns and therefore represent a greater amount of risk. This does not mean that a location change is necessarily bad, only that it presents more risk (more unknowns and less group consensus) than the status quo of the current location.

Bringing together the two previous graphs, the final graph depicts the three, top-ranked sites, and examines the criteria that resulted in differences in the scores they received.

Surprisingly, the top three sites received equal score averages on five of the eleven criteria measured (the twelfth criteria, Cost, was not needed to serve as a tie-breaker). Graph 3 shows how these three sites measure up on the criteria in which their average scores varied from one another.



Graph 3: This graph shows how the three, top-ranked sites, differed across six criteria (based on committee average scores) in their ability to meet the site selection criteria.

This last graph shows what criteria constitute the difference in the final determination of one site over another in the three, top-ranked, sites. This graph “boils down” how the proposed sites really differ in the analysis by the committee. The degree to which the three sites were able to meet these six criteria was substantially different in some of the scoring. These differences covered critical items that are both internally important to the library itself and what is perceived to be important to the surrounding community of a proposed site.

SUMMARY

The library site selection study sought to measure the degree to which several potential library sites fit an established set of criteria. Those criteria sought to maximize both library opportunities for success and contextual community fit in a variety of site locations. This summary report also identified some of the potential sources of error, based among others, upon interpretation or lack of complete information. These unknowns can appear as variations over a large range of site-specific score results, and can be considered a measure of risk.

The results of the committee’s thorough analysis ranked the potential new library sites as the following:

First – The Former Bethlehem Lutheran Church Site

Second – The Central Park Site

Third – The Current Library Site

What the site selection study did not do in its analysis is examine the total cost of a new library building. In fact, cost was only to be considered a tie-breaking factor in the selection among alternative sites. Additionally, that cost was only to differentiate cost of land procurement and/or extraordinary costs in land development that may rule in favor or against one site over another.

Beyond construction costs, this study has suggested that there is a community cost in terms of limited funds in selecting one public project over another. From a fiscally prudent perspective, this site selection study should not be assumed to override, nor be secondary to, any other use of public funds allocated to enhance or maintain our community.

According to the previous studies undertaken by the Library Task Force, there does appear to be a functional need for change in the current library situation and this report does not suggest discounting the needs of the library and its patrons. However, successful community planning requires weighing priorities across the entire community. The investment in any one sector of the city (parks, infrastructure, buildings, equipment, etc.) ought to seek to support the whole of a community’s functions. Reality seldom works this way, but it is a worthy goal that can be more closely attained by prioritizing community-wide needs, weighing their importance based upon varying criteria, and honestly examining the potential for errors in any analysis made with unknown variables.

In closing, the committee utilized the specific following site selection factors listed below to determine an effective site for the library.

- a. Site Accessibility

- b. Site Capacity
- c. Demographic Patterns
- d. Site Visibility
- e. Site Image
- f. Compatibility
- g. Physiography
- h. Legal Matters
- i. Infrastructure

All these factors are, without doubt, significant criteria items in creating success for a library operation. The library site selection committee understands the controversial aspects in building a library. The committee believes this study provides fact-based criteria which can assist in final and future site selection.

THE COMMITTEE

The Library Site Selection Committee Members included the following:

Rob Ronayne – Library Board of Trustees, Library Foundation Board

Linda “Cec” Peters – Library Board of Trustees

Troy McQuillen – Library Foundation Board

LaVonne Miller – Library Foundation Board

Clint Rux – City Council Member, Library Board of Trustees City Council Liaison

Jennifer Slight Hansen – City Council Member

Lynn Lander – City Manager

Shirley Arment – Library Director

Brett Bill – Planning and Zoning Director/Building Official