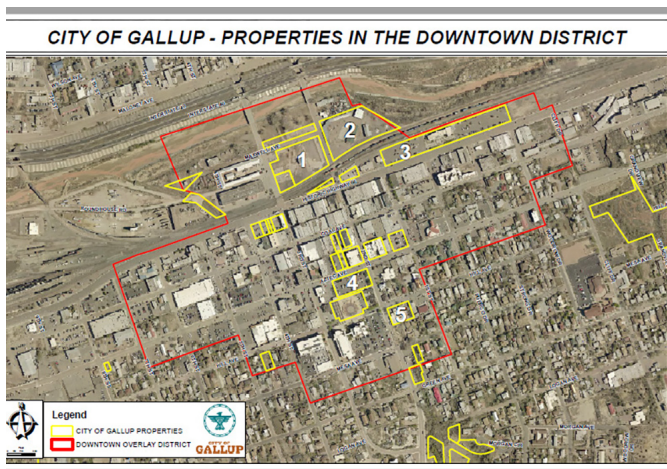


Gallup tries again to build a new library

Written by By Beth Blakeman Managing Editor
Friday, 12 March 2021 03:08



An undeveloped lot owned by the City of Gallup, south of Maxwell Street between Second and Third Streets, could become the new location for the Octavia Fellin Public Library.

The library is considered one of the city's most significant cultural institutions and a crucial element of developing a vibrant arts and cultural district. Out of 27 redevelopment projects in a collaborative vision of the City of Gallup, members of the community, Gallup Main Street, and the Gallup Business Improvement District voted it as the most important project.

The Gallup City Council addressed the subject of a new library at its Feb. 9 meeting and considered several of the issues that have kept it in the planning stages for the past 15 years.

In her presentation, Tammi Moe, director of the library, said the current library needs space,

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more meeting rooms, expanded services for youth, conference and group study rooms, more staff, and parking.

District 3 Councilor Yogash Kumar expressed concerns that the city-owned location at Maxwell Street might fail to draw many people, and that the people who visited would be the same people time and again.

He said he had envisioned seeing the city use that property for another purpose, a conference or a convention center.

District 4 Councilor Fran Palochak was reluctant to spend taxpayer money for a second conceptual design at a cost of \$32,840, when the first design in 2013 had a price tag of \$45,000.

Moe said the cost of the programming and concept design is listed in the library's capital outlay request for the 2021-22 fiscal year budget.

Some discussion at the council meeting centered around making the library a regional facility designed to meet the needs of the county, as well as the city.

"There's not a library within about 150 miles every way," Palochak said. "There's no place for them [users] to go, but here."

The council and the mayor approved the site selection pending a conceptual plan.

Moe said the vote gave her the go-ahead to pursue funding for the new library outside the city for what she called "one of the busiest libraries I've ever been in."

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She has since formed a new Friends of the Library group to fundraise, and announced that she will fill at least three seats with members from McKinley County.

In addition to her plans to approach philanthropic donors, Moe said she will seek funding for historic preservation, specifically for the Gallup Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial Collection.

At the Library Advisory Board meeting Feb. 18, Moe suggested consideration be given to a multi-use building that could encompass a performing arts center, exhibition space, a railroad history room with an observation deck, and outdoor spaces for programming.

PAST EFFORTS

In 2013, 21 potential sites were evaluated for a new library, but only three of them were considered viable by consultants. None were inside the city's central business district and capital costs to acquire the property and build went above \$20.47 million at the time of the study.

The concept design study performed by Huitt-Zollars, determined that the site at Second Street and Aztec Avenue, would have to be built vertically as a three-story building with a basement, in order to remain downtown while matching the space requirements. The study found that the current 26,665 square feet met less than three-quarters of the need for library space and that the need would grow to 47,960 square feet in 12 years.

That study determined that it would take 4.4 acres for an adequate footprint and code-mandated parking.

Programming and concept development created for the previously approved site at Second and Aztec required modifications which would increase the price of building, maintaining, and staffing the structure.

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The price tag on the 2013 design came to more than \$18 million.

Moe said the cost to taxpayers for the newly-proposed site is not yet known. She also told the *Sun* that the company slated to create the design concept has not yet been named.

“The first step was the approval of the site by the city council and mayor,” she said in an email. “The next step is seeking the approval of funding to pursue the design concept.

“This will be decided during the city’s strategic planning and budget hearings taking place in March and April.”

Molly Adamson contributed to this report.

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