

CITIZENS LEAGUE REPORT

No. 49

**Supplemental Report on
Minneapolis Library Site**

October 1955

CITIZENS LEAGUE OF MINNEAPOLIS AND HENNEPIN COUNTY

SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT ON

LIBRARY SITE CONSIDERATIONS AND RELATED MATTERS

October 1955

In the spring of 1955 the Citizens League's Library Committee issued a report strongly recommending the construction of a new main library building in the Minneapolis loop. This report presented certain criteria which library experts and the committee believe should be followed in selecting a site. These criteria are set forth in Appendix A, to this supplemental report. On the basis of these criteria, the committee found that the proposed site for the new library at 4th and Nicollet was the best site which had been proposed for the library up to that time and is a substantially better site than the main library's present location at 10th and Hennepin.

But because the library, more than any other public building, is the key cultural influence in the city, and it, more than any other public building, depends on volunteer use, the League's committee concluded that the selection of a main library in a large and growing metropolitan area is one of the most important site decisions which any public body makes. For these reasons the committee proposed that information be gathered from other cities to see

1. Where their main libraries are located
2. What their librarians think of their locations
3. What criteria are considered most important

Questionnaires * were sent to 35 cities and librarians from 31 cities replied. The replies are quite detailed and varied so that summarization is difficult but certain helpful facts stand out which we believe shed light on this important decision.

The librarians rate service to transit riders, office workers and downtown shoppers as most important. This jibes with the criteria which the League's Library Com-

* A copy of the questionnaire and accompanying letter are attached.

mittee used. Service to downtown residents and the need for parking facilities were also stressed but not as much as the transit riders, office workers and downtown shoppers.

Of the 26 librarians who rated the location of their own library, only 15 rated the location of their site as good or very good. Several indicated plans to get new buildings closer to transit, office and retail centers because of the adverse effect of present locations on library use.

Based on maps supplied with the replies some estimate of the relative closeness of the 4th and Nicollet site to office and retail centers as compared to other cities can be made. The League's committee concluded in its earlier report that the proposed site is three blocks from the retail center (7th & Nicollet) and three blocks from the office center (6th and Marquette). This location is closer to the office center than the present libraries of 16 out of 23 cities and closer to the retail center than the present main libraries of 19 out of 23 cities and the same distance as three.

Considering the average of the two figures the proposed site is as good as or better than the sites of the present libraries in 20 out of the 23 cities reporting.

While these figures do not indicate that the proposed site is the best possible site, they do indicate that it is an excellent one in terms of the most important criteria. It appears to be superior to any other site which has been publicly proposed or which, based on assessed values, might be acquired for the money which the Library Board has indicated a willingness to spend.

The principle objection to the 4th and Nicollet site is its proximity to the Washington Avenue area with its run-down buildings, honky tonk businesses and varied residents and occupants. Plans for the redevelopment of this area are progressing, but they are still quite nebulous and at this point they do not assure the development of compatible and favorable uses of the areas adjacent to the 4th and Nicollet site. On the other hand, the construction of a beautiful new library between 3rd and 4th and Hennepin and Nicollet, construction of a federal courts building between 3rd and

4th on Marquette and the broader redevelopment powers given to the Minneapolis Housing and Redevelopment Authority by Act of Congress in 1954 should give plans for the redevelopment of the city's gateway the kind of a fillip they have needed for many years.

As members of the League's Library Committee who have studied the question of site carefully and thoroughly and with the question of what is best for the library and library user first in our mind at all times, we agree with the action of the Library Board, City Council and many other groups in locating the new library between 3rd and 4th Street and Nicollet and Hennepin Avenues.

Steps leading to the acquisition of this property have already been taken. In this connection we urge the Library Board and City Council to direct their appraisers and negotiators to be most prudent since other recent acquisitions of property for public buildings have resulted in the public agency paying 2.37 times assessed values while a tabulation of major downtown real estate sales over the past three or four years indicates a ratio of aggregate sale price to assessed value of 1.75. This includes many properties which had been substantially improved prior to sale while most of the properties being acquired for public buildings have had no significant improvements made on them for years.

We further urge the prompt development of plans for parking and traffice and transit interchange in the gateway area by the City Engineer, Minneapolis Housing and Redevelopment Authority, City Planning Commission and State Highway Department and various bus lines so that the plans for the new library may be reviewed to assure, among other things, their harmony with transit, traffic and parking patterns proposed for the area.

We further urge the early employment by the Library Board and the Librarian of an assistant who can assist the Librarian in supervising the many important acquisition of property, the details involved in the/erection of a new library building and moving into it.

We further urge the Library Board to proceed with a proposed study of ways and means to shift to a county or metropolitan basis of operation, whereby uniform standard:

of library service would be maintained and paid for on a fair and uniform basis throughout the metropolitan area.

We further urge the Minneapolis Housing and Redevelopment Authority to proceed as expeditiously as possible with the survey and planning work necessary to qualifying the gateway area as an urban redevelopment project, including particularly plans for the relocation of small businesses and legitimate residents of the area.

In the furtherance of the foregoing we offer to do what we can, through the Citizens League, to help.

Approved October 20, 1955 by the Library Section

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Harper Glezen
Jule Hannaford III
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E. SITE STUDY

The Section concerned itself with the question of the desirability of the present main library site as compared to possible sites which might be used for a new library.

After considerable discussion and a review of much of the written material on library location, including a study of proposed library locations prepared by the Minneapolis Planning Commission in 1949, the Section adopted the following criteria as guides in judging sites for a main library:

The users of the main library are believed to be principally made up of the following:

A. "Voluntary"

1. Loop area workers who visit the library during their lunch hour or on their way to or from work.
2. Shoppers who visit the library on the way to or from their shopping destinations.
3. Professional persons and employees of business houses who use the library during working hours for business purposes.
4. Persons making a special trip to the library by bus, automobile or by walking.
5. Persons living nearby who use the main library as their branch.
6. Persons coming to the loop for purposes of other entertainment.

B. "Compulsory"

1. Library employees
2. Branch and school libraries
3. Deliverymen
4. Bookmobiles
5. Servicemen

To best meet the needs of the "voluntary" users, the main library building should be located as follows:

- A. On the main street (s) of the business area.
- B. As close as possible to the center of the office and business area.
- C. As close as possible to the center of the shopping area.
- D. As close as possible to the center of public transit service.
- E. In a neighborhood where users will not feel insecure as they come and go.

- F. As close as possible to convenient street traffic routes and parking facilities.
- G. Convenient to loop area residents.
- H. As close as possible to the center of the theater trade.

To best meet the needs of the "compulsory" users, the main library building should be located as follows:

- A. Close to public transit service and parking facilities.
- B. Centrally in relation to the branch and school libraries to be served.
- C. Where trucks, Bookmobiles, etc., can have adequate room for loading and unloading.
- D. Where trucks, Bookmobiles, etc., can have easy ingress and egress to main street traffic routes.
- E. In a neighborhood where employees will not feel insecure as they come and go.

(NOTE: These criteria are taken in part from p. 5 of "Survey and Report on the Location of a New Main Library for the City of Minneapolis", prepared by the City Planning Commission and dated September 1, 1949.)