

MEMO TO: Howard Armstrong

RE: Building The Case For Relocation and Enhancement of The Depot Public Library as a component of the Lyon Economic Development Program

DATE: 10/06/08

FROM: John Burke

CC: Read Spear

A Fine Library Is Just Good Business!

Relocation and Enhancement of the Depot Public Library As a component of the Lyons Economic Development Program

Within a commercial district a busy public library serves the same function as an anchor store by attracting a steady flow of traffic to the area's businesses. - ¹

Over half of the people using a library combine the visit with shopping in local stores. - ²

One study of economic activity noted: "the library is complementary to other businesses in the (shopping) complex, and the use of all businesses is very likely to increase because of the presence of the library." - ³

Economic research verifies that the economic vitality and value of a community is enhanced by a library's "capacity to draw businesses, home buyers, tourists, and others to the zone." - ⁴

Like good schools, good libraries also enhance property values and are a factor in attracting and retaining residents. Some standard ratings such as *Best Places to Live*, *Best Places to Raise Your Children*, and *Best Places to Retire*, for example, regard "books per capita" as an essential measurement in a community's profile. - ⁵

A good library is considered an attractive economic asset to those evaluating a community as a possible site for a business or a commercial investment. Small companies, in particular, are most likely to receive benefit from a good local library. - ⁶

To many communities the library is an essential service. Consider usage statistics from 2007. - ⁷

- 68% of Americans had a library card (vs. 63% in 2006)
- 76% visited their local library (vs. 66% in 2006)
- 41% visited their local library website (vs. 24% in 2006)
- 73% of women and 62% of men used their local library

Surveys show the primary purpose of visits to the library fall into these categories: - ⁸

¹ LaRue, Jamie, "Libraries make contributions to economic development," *CML Newsletter*, November, 2003, p.7

² Warner, Jody. "Dividends: The value of public libraries in Canada." *The Library Action Committee of the Book and Periodical Council*, 1997 <<http://www.nald.ca/fulltext/dividend/cover.htm>>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ McClure, Charles R., Robbins, Jane B. and Fraser, Bruce T. *Economic Benefits and Impacts from Public Libraries in the State of Florida*. Tallahassee, FL. : Information Institute, 2000

<http://dlis.dos.state.fl.us/bld/finalreport/FL.Exec.Summary.Jan18.2001.pdf>>

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Anas, Brittany, "More Check Out the Library", *Boulder Camera*, Sunday September 28, 2008, p. 1

⁸ ibid

- 39% to borrow books
- 12% to borrow CDs, videos & DVDs or software
- 10% to browse available holdings and services
- 9% to use reference materials
- 8% to use the internet

To the entire community, across the age and economic spectrum, the library has become a multimedia center which is now driven by the digital revolution. In fact, 88 percent of all libraries - and 98 percent of urban libraries - offer their patrons access to databases in virtually every subject. These include academic topics such as history, literature and science and interest/hobby topics such as sports, genealogy, auto repair and environmental issues. - ⁹

In 83 percent of rural communities the local library is the only source of free public access to computers and to the Internet available to the local population. That fact helps explain why 74% of libraries report their staff helps patrons understand and use online government services, including enrolling in Medicare and applying for unemployment insurance. - ¹⁰

The computer has become so important to library patrons of all ages that library staff nationwide reported that, on average, they spend 50 percent or more of their time managing technology and helping patrons learn how to use it effectively. - ¹¹

Colorado has 186 movie theaters and 248 public libraries. Librarians in those facilities assisted patrons with finding the answers to 5.3 million questions. - ¹²

Public events held at those 248 public libraries in 2007 attracted a total audience of 1.6 million – equal to selling out Invesco Field at Mile High over 21 times. - ¹³

A fine library draws traffic to area businesses. It enhances commercial and residential property values. It assures potential residents, investors and businesses that a community is vibrant and enriching. A library is an essential tool to people of all ages and all economic circumstance. It serves as a quality of life cornerstone in a neighborhood or town.

A fine library is just good business.

NOTE: This opportunity was identified by John Burke and first shared with Howard Armstrong, Town Administrator and Read Spear, Chair of the Marketing and Downtown Development Subcommittee of the Town of Lyons Economic Development Committee (TOLEDC). Both favored further development of the idea by the subcommittee and inclusion in the TOLEDC Interim Report to the Board Of Trustees. This summary has been researched and written by Burke. As will be discussed later, if the concept gains traction Burke may have to remove himself from further participation in its development.

⁹ The Information Use Management and Policy Institute (Florida State University) “Libraries Connect Communities: Public Library Funding & Technology Access Study 2007-2008.” September, 2008

¹⁰ ibid

¹¹ ibid

¹² Library Research Service, Colorado State University and Colorado Department Of Education: Quotable Facts About Colorado Libraries, 2008

¹³ ibid

Economic Development and Community Enhancement

As the Town Of Lyons begins to embrace an Economic Development Program, this is the perfect time to recognize that a fine library is just Good Business. This analysis will attempt to build the case for enhancement and relocation of the Depot Library so it can play a much larger role in the community.

This is not a matter of costly luxury for a town facing budget pressure. It is an opportunity for responsible investment with guaranteed return. ***And through establishment of a Library District that investment becomes well within our means!***

THE OPPORTUNITY

The Lyons Depot Library is lovingly staffed by committed employees and unpaid volunteers. Nevertheless, restricted by size, budget and location - it is unequipped to meet the needs of the community or to fulfill its potential as an economic development magnet.

Lyons could establish a modern multi-media community library in the downtown commercial district to serve as a centrally located non-seasonal traffic generator. There are several possible sites. Some require significant remodeling. Some require building an addition. Some require a new building. As far as I know, only one is currently for sale:

1. the historic building at 349 Main Street now owned by Valley Bank;
2. the lower floor of the Lyons Museum, now owned by the school district and leased to the town, might be better used as a library;
3. the site of the Odd Fellows Hall;
4. Rogers Hall, perhaps with a new addition;
5. the vacant land behind Solman Realty, the Pharmacy and the Gateway Café owned by Sandy Williams and Matt DiProfi.
6. Perhaps there are centrally located sites other than the ones I noted.

Benefits: Following are five direct benefits to an upgraded, centrally located library. There may be more.

ANCHOR: as Trustee Baumgartner has pointed out to members of TOLEDC, the High Street commercial block needs an anchor at the east end. He suggested that the museum could fill that role. By placing the library on the museum's lower floor his idea becomes even more persuasive. Besides, the museum location has an advantage over the other options – it is already off the property tax rolls.

MAGNET: as with an anchor to High Street, the entire Downtown Commercial District will benefit from a library located in any one of the possible sites. The library itself would be a strong traffic magnet in the commercial district – a benefit that can be broadened by including meeting rooms and even a performance space in the facility.

ACCESS: there are many children in town who would directly benefit from a library upgrade because today they must rely on school computers which are unavailable on weekends, during vacations and by mid afternoon during the school year.

PARKING: in some sites it is possible to build the library on pilings above grade or to build it over a ramped underground parking shell to accommodate onsite library parking and more.

TOWN HALL: if this concept is implemented the empty Lyons Depot building could be put to different use. One possibility would be to shift some of the functions currently housed in Town Hall into the vacated historic depot building, thereby creating much-needed space and flexibility within Town Hall itself.

By attracting area residents to the commercial center of town this concept accords with the broader principles of the town's Economic Development Initiative and the town's Master Plan. Moreover, enhancing the quality of life for area residents plays a significant and interrelated role in economic development – a role that is underestimated by many who think the problem and the solution are merely financial.

FINANCING – FIRST OBSERVATION

Consideration of a new library forces the Town to evaluate three kinds of cost: acquisition, construction and ongoing operations. At first blush assumption of these expenses will seem daunting. That view may be shortsighted. Having raised a couple hundred million philanthropic and federal dollars during an earlier professional career, one member of the subcommittee gives assurance that the money is available *providing* the right project is undertaken by competent people who can deliver on their commitment to provide public service.

It does not matter whether Mrs. Jones is asked for a \$10 contribution or the El Pomar Foundation is solicited for a \$75,000 capital grant or DOLA is invited to donate consulting support or the town's leaders are framing a construction bond for \$500,000 – this principle will apply: *the project must be based on a solid platform that will assure prospective funding source(s) that the services needed by a significant population will be delivered to that population by the device they are being asked to help support financially.*

A properly defined Library District is the foundation for financing. With that in place it becomes reasonable to seek support from philanthropic and public funding sources.

THE SERVICE AREA

From an economic development standpoint the concept of an enhanced and centrally-located library works only if financing does not add an excessive burden to the town's budget. Every municipality faces the same issue. Consequently, a tax-generating library district is the most common library financing mechanism in Colorado.

To evaluate the potential service area of a Lyons District Library it is wise to consider two overlapping populations.

- One group lives in the town of Lyons or lives relatively close to the town in Apple Valley and on the hills surrounding the town.
- The second population lives up to the midpoint of the North and South Saint Vrain Canyons.

In the terms library professionals use, these are “underserved populations”. To reach the services of a comprehensive library these people – those in the canyons and hills and those who live in town – must travel to Estes Park, to Longmont or to Boulder.

That means Lyons, situated midway between those three cities, has an opportunity to become a service center for a group much larger than the town's population. - ¹⁴

Lyons is the convergence point in a daily east/west migration of area residents. Nearly every day thousands of Boulder County and Lyons residents drive through town to employment, to shopping and to services that are not available in the canyons or in Lyons itself. Responsible citizens, especially Boulder County residents, are becoming focused on energy conservation, sustainability and related economic and lifestyle choices. That means an enhanced, centrally-located library becomes a more persuasive option for them than it might have been in an era of more profligate energy use. Heading either east or west, they will drive within a block or two of a library located in the central downtown district. ***If that library offers adequate holdings and services, we can expect that they will use it rather than make additional trips - or add additional mileage- to visit the libraries in Longmont, Boulder and Estes Park.***

Lyons Library District: Colorado Library Law offers different forms of the basic Library District, including one called the Regional Library Authority.

There are 114 public libraries in the state. 12 of them are operated by county governments. (All but one of the county libraries are rural.) 7 are based in school districts. 44 are operated by municipalities. The Lyons Depot Library is in this group. Functioning as one of many departments engaged in providing an array of services – many of which deal with more important health and safety matters – municipal libraries are at a serious management and financial disadvantage.

The other 51 public libraries in Colorado are managed, financed and governed by Library Districts. Those districts are designed specifically to provide that focused management, financing and governance.

To illustrate the general concept of a Library District we present some features of one format - the Regional Library Authority. There are other varieties, but this version may be a good fit for Lyons because it is designed to meet the needs of underserved areas through “.....acquisition, construction, financing, operation or maintenance of publicly-supported library services on a regional basis.....”

Here is a summary from the Colorado Department Of Education:

Regional Library Authority: CRS 24-90-110.7 (Part 1, Section 11)

Any combination of two or more governmental units (cities, counties, library districts) can establish a separate governmental entity known as a Regional Library Authority..

Requirements to form a Regional Library Authority: (not limited to the following)

- Public hearing by each governmental unit
- Resolution/ordinance by each governmental unit
- Contract between the units
- Electors must approve any tax before it can be levied

General Powers: (not limited to the following)

- Acquire, construct, finance, operate, or maintain public library services located in the boundaries of the authority.

¹⁴ A basic principle of management is to first deal with the variables you **can** control. An Economic Development corollary to that principle might be: 1) first meet the needs of three or four thousand neighbors and near-neighbors who frequently drive in and through Lyons and give them reason to stop and participate in the local economy; 2) and second, after those needs have been met, face the more difficult task of meeting the wide variety of very different needs of the hundreds of thousands of vacationing strangers travelling through town and likely to stop in Lyons only if they have an empty stomach or a full bladder or are offered a unique attraction that nobody, despite years of trying, has yet identified.

- Make and enter into contracts
- Employ agents and employees
- Acquire, hold, lease, sell, or dispose of real or personal property, commodity, or service.
- Adopt, by resolution, rules respecting the exercise of its powers and the carrying out of its purposes.

Taxation powers:

- Sales or use tax, or both
- Ad valorem tax

You can review the enabling statute under this citation: CRS – 24-90-110.7 But remember, there are other relevant forms of organization provided by different statutes – the Regional Library Authority is only one of the Library District Options that could be used as part of the town’s economic development plan.

END GAME

This approach means creation of a new government entity followed by transfer of the library assets currently held by the town to that entity. The results could include some or all of the following characteristics.

Result: the Lyons BOT would no longer operate the current library. Nor would it be responsible for managing or financing the new Library District.

Result: since the people of Lyons would take the leadership role in shaping the geographic boundaries and the governance structure of this Library District, the town could remain influential through exercise of prerogatives such as selecting some of the District Trustees.

Result: the plan for a Regional Library Authority could provide for facility construction or facility conversion of a true community resource with a modern, comprehensive multi-media library.

Result: the facility plan could expand the concept of creating a centrally located magnet. It may be possible to include community meeting rooms or even a small community theater/lecture hall in the facility.

Result: there might even be room in the building for some street-level retail shops which would generate rental income to help displace operating expense.

Result: the building could be owned by the town and leased in whole or in part to the Library District....or it could be owned by the District itself. Either form of ownership will support economic development by adding the same amount of pedestrian activity to the commercial district.

An important consideration: this endeavor does not require Lyons’ leaders to reinvent the wheel. Over the years leaders of many small Colorado towns, theoretically no more astute than our own leaders, have figured out and implemented Regional Library Districts. Not only is the process well documented, the Colorado Library Association and freelance consultants can provide guidance, just as they did to other participants in Library District IGAs.

IGA OPTIONS

As mentioned earlier, consideration of this concept includes facing land acquisition costs, construction costs and ongoing operating costs. The Regional Library Authority provides several types of tax support to help address those fundamental expenses.

To launch a Regional Library District two governments must join together in an Inter-Government Agreement (IGA), so I looked at the logical players and concluded the following:

Boulder/Longmont City: The city of Boulder and the city of Longmont both own and operate a public library as a municipal department – just as Lyons does.

Leaders of either city may have an interest in establishing a greater presence in the Lyons area. Nevertheless, I suspect an IGA establishing a Regional Library Authority with either Boulder City or Longmont is politically unlikely. Their governments are focused on more important municipal issues. They might consider the IGA initiative a distraction, especially since their libraries have underserved populations within the cities themselves – and those populations have first claim.

NOTE: there is a small opportunity within the negative conclusion above. Boulder Public Library's Master Plan calls for establishment of a branch in North Boulder near where 28th Street and Broadway intersect. It is perhaps possible that the city might want to extend its hegemony through that intersection all the way out to Lyons by establishing a Regional Library District with our town. In addition to Lyons and its environs, that district would include areas like Lake Of The Pines, Crestview, Caribou Ranch Estates and others totaling several hundred households likely to be supportive.

Boulder County: The County of Boulder operates no libraries. But it does have vast and sparsely settled areas of underserved population. It seems to me that Commissioners and staff should regard a Regional Library Authority centered in Lyons as an important enhancement to their turf, providing it effectively delivers services to the population beyond the town's borders. In fact, one could argue that establishing a district centered in Lyons and extending from the northern border of the city of Boulder all the way up the South Saint Vrain to include Allenspark.....and up the North to Pinewood Springs.....would be an attractive proposition to a county government facing pushback from mountain communities and residents of unincorporated Boulder County.

One must assume that nearly every Boulder County household west of Lyons has one or more residents who drive through Lyons frequently. Those living between Boulder City and Lyons might prefer to avoid Boulder city traffic by an equal or shorter distance to Lyons. Thus, what we regard as an economic development strategy for Lyons might be regarded by county government as an attractive expansion of public service to an underserved population within its realm.

I have been told by informed people that it is unwise to predict the attitude of Boulder County Government on any issue of common interest. Whatever the basis of this warning may be, this concept should be compelling enough to earn it a full review by County decision-makers. Even if it is eventually rejected by staff or Commissioners, the process of evaluation might help improve the working relationship between Lyons and the County.

Estes Park: Unlike the towns of Lyons and Boulder, the library in Estes Park is operated by a Library District similar to the one I think could bring benefits to our community. I learned this fact when I was about two thirds through my research. It gave a boost to my thinking on the subject.

It appears that the eastern and southern boundaries of the Estes Valley Library District are within Larimer County. That means an IGA with Boulder County could stake out a District boundary a bit east of Pinewood Springs on Highway 36. On Highway 7 in the North St. Vrain Canyon the boundary could extend beyond Allenspark. Then there would be two

adjacent Library Districts that could jointly and collaboratively serve a large, disbursed mountain population whose residents could travel to either town to use either library. - ¹⁵

The leadership of the Estes Valley Library District has experience in establishing and operating a Library District. It has put in place systems, staff, management, multi-media library holdings and more. The community leaders built two library support groups – Friends Of The Library, similar to Lyons’ group of library supporters, and the Library Foundation. These volunteers operate two successful fundraising programs. Their commitment provides a great deal of financial support annually while building an endowment reserve that broke the \$1 million barrier after about 15 years of effort. About 60 volunteers annually donate 4,000 hours of service within the library itself.

Instead of finding an IGA partner, figuring out how to establish a library district and then creating one from scratch, with Estes Park it might be possible to take a leveraged approach. Estes Park could provide guidance in the beginning, collaborate to jointly serve a shared population thereafter and possibly outsource services to the new district as well.

The result of that collaboration could be a large service area served by adjacent districts and anchored at each end by libraries in Estes and Lyons, towns connected by the only two highways available to east/west traffic.

Financing – Second Observation

Two points about financing have been made so far.

First, establishing of a Library District provides tax support upon a vote of District residents.

Second, establishing a District also provides the credibility platform that is essential to earning favorable review leading to financial support from public and private entities so the library can be properly designed, built, staffed, equipped and operated.

When a district is established several financing avenues become more accessible. The following comments assume that the traditional path has been followed: a serious and committed group of talented people have formed an organization dedicated to bringing forth a new Library District. They put in many hours of hard work assisted by outside consultants to establish the District. They then mount a capital campaign in pursuit of philanthropic and public financing to create the library. When the library is constructed and operational these people would form a separate library support organization to continue, at a slower pace, the work of obtaining additional funding for ongoing operations in a library supported primarily by District taxes.

Initial CAPITAL CAMPAIGN: in an alliance with the new Lyons Community Foundation or through simultaneous establishment of the Lyons District Library Foundation, this method should be able to generate \$250,000 to \$500,000 from residents of the Library District – depending on the established boundaries of that District. This campaign would take place

¹⁵ - It is interesting – but probably fruitless – to anticipate geographic usage patterns. On one hand it could be argued that the Estes Valley has a population about five times the population of Lyons and environs. On the other hand, it could be argued that migration trumps location. Many residents of the Estes Valley - and most people who live between the two towns – regularly drive through Lyons enroute to employment, services and shopping opportunities.

over 9 to 18 months and solicit funds for construction/remodeling of a facility and purchase of books, equipment and other assets. If done right a board of people with serious talent and commitment would be created and, before soliciting others, each individual on that board would contribute his or her own leadership gifts. They would use techniques ranging from the basic solicitation letter designed to invite a \$25 contribution..... to well-researched personal proposals to name a couple community meeting room for the District's most illustrious families for a \$50,000 donation.

Ongoing FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN: an annual event that begins after the capital campaign has reached its goal, this campaign would focus on raising money for ongoing operations including a contingency fund and acquisition/replacement of books and materials.

Target - PRIVATE FOUNDATIONS: there are 1700 private philanthropic foundations JUST in Colorado. Some, like El Pomar, Boetcher, Daniels and Gates give away many millions a year. But even the small ones can be generous if presented with the right project.

Perhaps 200 of Colorado's private foundations have defined at least one area of interest that will include aspects of the Lyons District Library. So the venture must be divided into interest-parcels such as books, computers and pint-sized furniture for the children's reading room, staff support and materials for the golden age book club or the weekly foreign film festival, development of the local history collection or a collection on energy conservation, acquisition of furnishings and shelving, installation of computers, licensing use of various library databases, funding of the Lyons Lecture Series and dozens of other needs.

Then the leaders of the potential District must join the Foundation Center for something like \$25/month and research online the Colorado foundations to see which ones welcome grant applications for which parcel of activity.

Many national foundations also have defined their focus to accommodate one or more of the needs the District will have. They can be researched remotely through the Foundation Center also.

The library founders must use the Common Grant Form wherever possible, adapted by the addition of a personalized cover note. This will allow them to reach more funding sources.

Target - CORPORATIONS: The same approach works with corporations – and successful solicitation begins with knowledge of the corporation's policies. However, a corporation may make grants from a public relations account in its operating budget. That can make it difficult to obtain much information about the company's philanthropic values and practices. Other companies have a corporate foundation. Information about their preferences is accessible from the Foundation Center and will be welcomed by a solicitation team trying to fund the Library District.

In addition to large corporations, every local business should be solicited – and some can be expected to make five figure gifts.

Target - GOVERNMENT: Two years ago my wife, Janice Gavan, and I sat in an economic development conference in Steamboat Springs. We noted that during the day-long presentation there were 23 federal programs offered by the US Department Of Agriculture that could be used by Lyons. They focused on matters like flood abatement and drainage control, streetscaping, community development and others that would never have occurred to us.

That's just from Agriculture! Consider what might be available from federal departments and agencies whose core mission more nearly approximates areas like humanities, education, literacy, underserved populations (aged, handicapped, economically disadvantaged) community development, economic development, etc. Within the morass of government agencies one can be pretty sure to find several programs that meet the needs of a new Library District, but I suspect it will take assistance from an experienced consultant or library consortium to figure out that terrain. Fortunately, both consultants and consortia are readily available.

In addition to the Federal Government, Colorado State Government has programs which might provide funding if properly researched and approached. Information about state programs which might fit the needs of a new Library District can be obtained from the Colorado State Library, a division of the Colorado Department Of Education.

Target – PEOPLE: I intentionally placed this target last. Our community is just beginning to explore the power of philanthropy due to the good work of the Lyons Community Foundation. Nevertheless, I fear many will blanch at even the modest goal I used in an earlier paragraph to illustrate the capital campaign. Within the boundaries I expect would be drawn to establish a Library District lives one family that has made multiple philanthropic grants in the seven-figure range – plus many families with the capacity to make three and five year pledges in the mid-five figure range.

As a former major-gift fundraiser, I insist that it is shortsighted to doubt the capacity or the intent of the Greater Lyons Community. The trick is to assemble a geographically dispersed group of visible and committed leaders, support them with an experienced paid consultant, obtain leadership gifts from them and then have them solicit carefully researched members of the community. When the major gifts are gathered the total is announced and the visible, public campaign begins with all the drama and kinetics possible. And no matter what generosity might be expected from foundations and government agencies, the Library District will be launched and sustained through the generosity of its residents.

Financing – Final Observation

Foundations, corporations, federal and state agencies and both property tax and sales tax can all play an essential role in launching the District and sustaining it afterwards. However, it is also worth considering whether the building itself may be partially self-financing. As mentioned earlier, it might be possible to design or renovate a facility so that part of the building is occupied by street level offices and stores who pay rent and may generate sales tax. Another possibility is to arrange the facility so that the top floor contains space which can be rented as commercial and professional offices or titled as commercial condominiums and sold.

Wheels – Final Observation

This was said earlier. It deserves emphasis through repetition. ***There are no wheels to invent here.***

Everything proposed or contemplated by this memo has been done many times by other Colorado communities. They have already figured it out. One of the most productive tasks imposed on those who attempt to provide leadership to this project is to first learn from those who have already succeeded. A good source of information and inspiration is the Estes Valley Library District. As will be explained shortly, that operation might be an ideal template for the Lyons District Library. Another neighboring community which has much to teach us is Nederland, which formed a Library District, secured land with the help of town government and has just launched a capital campaign with a goal of \$1.5 million. We can do the same.

First Steps

Howard, I think you should share the concept with your library leadership before it becomes widely available to the public. This group **IS** the library in Lyons and deserves the chance to react to this concept early. Then form a group of community stakeholders and also have those people review and react. Other tasks include careful examination of the various kinds of districts; review of population densities and possible District boundaries those densities suggest; analysis of the process by which a Library District is established; consultation with state library officials who can assist the process. I am out of my element in these matters and just touched the surface of them in this memo.

Standards

Space and equipment standards for modern multi-media libraries are carefully articulated by professionals. I think there will be a natural tendency to approach these standards in quest of acceptable minimums. Some people claim that's what happened in the library portion of the voter-rejected Town Center proposal.

Instead of yielding to that tendency, I urge you to think in terms of population growth over the next decade, plan to accommodate that population with the best library possible..... and then include in the facility a capacity for future physical plant growth so the building can meet the District needs that occur beyond the 10-year window.

I advocate this approach for two reasons. First, it may be politically easier for the voters to accept a District that supports a really good library than it will be for them to endorse a new District with a no-frills economy library. Second, as you will see explained in the next section, it is possible for a library to evolve into much more. In the right town it can become the center of community vitality.

The Target

The following is a set of quick observations about the Estes Valley Library District. When we learned that it is a Library District we began to see it as something of a prototype. Unless we all decide that the people who live up the hill are somewhat smarter than us, or are otherwise favored, Estes Park is demonstrating what Lyons could have. Building on the staff, volunteers and service attitude our little Depot Library has already acquired, I think we can approach this target knowing that some elements are already in place and ready to be nourished.

Janice and I visited on a Saturday in August. At 10:00 on a Saturday morning the library was crowded with about 50 people. Three moms were engrossed with their kids in the children's reading room. In the wireless room (real name!) there were six people working on five notebook computers. Three people were sitting around the fireplace, two conversing and one reading a newspaper. In the computer room I think there are 25 computers. All but three of these computers were in use. A group of six people was gathered in a meeting room named after a library benefactor. Other residents of the Estes Valley Library District were browsing, reading, chatting with librarians and with each other. In the vestibule two people were selecting tourist information from the rack of pamphlets. Of the 50 or more patrons in the building, I bet a fifteen or twenty were under age eighteen.

Remember, this was at 10:00 on a Saturday morning!

Some weeks after the August visit mentioned above we attended the Library Foundation's Annual Dinner. At our table was the former chair of the Library Foundation board of directors (an old friend) and the mayor of Estes Park (a new friend).

From the podium a speaker stated that the library is the center of community activity in Estes park. A bit dubious, after the proceedings we asked the mayor and the former foundation chair about this extravagant claim. They each quickly affirmed the assertion, assuring us that in Estes Park the library IS the center of community activity. They also noted that without that library the community's quality of life would be diminished immeasurably. Part of the reason for this, apart from books and magazines and DVDs and internet access and all the rest of the products and services we associate with a library is the fact that community organizations and the library itself sponsor a rich agenda of activities at the library.

There is no center of community activity in Lyons. We deserve one. We need one. We can build one.

This memo shows it can be done.

And why!

.....

Personal Note and My Potential Recusal From Further Participation:

This concept grew from simple roots and changed direction as it evolved. I feel the need to put in this memo, and on the record, the background of my interest in this project and my sensitivity to the appearance of conflict of interest.

- My wife, Janice Gavan, our partner David Figuli and I will soon commit our financial resources and effort to develop property with frontage on Main Street and High Street in the 400 block . In the process we will assume great financial risk. We recognize that our project is in no way enhanced by the unattended portable metal building next door. The condition and infrequent use of the Odd Fellows property weighs on my mind. Recognizing that simultaneous development would provide economies to both parties, in 2005 I asked the contact for the Odd Fellows organization to discuss collaboration with us.
- Howard, as I explained to you a couple weeks ago, the invitation was rejected. I had been thinking of collaboration between two private parties (our PUD and the Odd Fellows) to build a more fitting auditorium for the town. You suggested an alternate approach, raising the possibility of working with the Town on appropriate public/private development for that corner.
- We discussed that opportunity in your office, focused on the library as the best use for that property, and I set out to learn a bit about library law and management to flesh out the concept.
- However, in the process I began to realize the enormous impact on economic development that can come from this concept. I also realized that the library need not be located on the Odd Fellows property to succeed. The same economic development benefits can be realized from a library located on any of several properties.

I believe establishing a multi-media library with meeting rooms in the center of the commercial district will contribute enormously to revitalizing the town and restoring its financial stability. Therefore, it will become a cornerstone achievement in the town's economic development strategy.

However, it turns out that I am related to someone whose organization could become involved in this project. My daughter-in-law, Claudine Perrault, is Director of the library in Estes park. I learned

last week that her library is not a department of town government but is an independent Library District. (I never had reason to ask about this before.)

Here is my two-fold quandary. Claudine and her colleagues can become enormously important to the Lyons' effort. However, that involvement might risk the appearance of my having given some advantage to her or to her organization. Further, even though there are several sites available for a Lyons Library properly located in the downtown commercial district, because it is adjacent to my property it can be assumed that I would benefit if the town chose to upgrade the property on which the Odd Fellows Hall is located.

For seven years I was secretary to the board of a university that operated under Colorado's sunshine law and conflict of interest statutes. So I am acutely aware of how necessary it is to remove oneself from even the appearance of transgression. That is particularly true in this town where the public dialogue frequently features a handful of people gleefully attacking the reputations and motives of others.

As a consequence of these factors, after completing this memo I will stand mute during any discussions within TOLEDC or DEPICT! that focus on 1) possible location of a Lyons District Library and 2) possible formal relationship with the Estes Valley Library District. Further, I will resign from either or both committees if I sense that my continued involvement is putting the project at risk.

So, if the concept gains traction I will restrict my participation in those two committees. In this manner I intend to avoid even the appearance, much less the actual basis, of undue personal influence or conflict of interest. *However, if this concept gains momentum, in every forum other than those two committees I will strongly support it.*

So now Howard, this memo turns the concept over to you, fleshed out and changed quite a bit from when we first discussed it. You may share it or bury it as you feel appropriate. I expect Read Spear, who is receiving a copy, will post it on the TOLEDC website for discussion and improvement.

NOTE: I have acquired a number of useful documents which I will make available to those seeking further information.