

(NOTE: This letter was written last week, before the release of the study reports on Friday afternoon (Sept. 16). I am currently studying this material, but so far have not found reasons to change any of the thoughts expressed in the letter.)

I am writing to express my concerns over the Board's proposal to demolish the current bldg. and build a new one on site. I think the current building has very significant heritage value; it has been written about by Bernard Flaman in his book *the Architecture of Saskatchewan* (2013) and commented on favourably by many other authors . The main design elements of aluminum louvres, granite cladding, terrazzo flooring and grand entrance make it an outstanding example of mid-20th C. design; its lightness and airiness hold up well with images of the most contemporary libraries. The lead architect, Kioshi Izumi was one Saskatchewan's leading architects of the 1950s, '60s and '70s. He was educated at MIT and Harvard and he is currently still very frequently cited for his pioneering work on psychiatric hospital design with the psychiatrist Humphry Osmond, an important and exciting aspect of Sask. history. To destroy his work seems somehow disrespectful, especially in light of the treatment of Japanese-Canadians during WW II. If we don't keep the best of the past why should we expect anyone to preserve what we do now?

Also the building already has heritage designations ; as a Municipal Heritage Property (1984) and as part of the Victoria Park Conservation District (1996) .Do we just rip those up when it is convenient, and if so what does that mean for our history? Being already designated, it would be eligible for grants from Sask Heritage, Canadian Heritage and other organizations. The Board's proposal speaks of a "beautifully designed" new building but, that is something only the future will decide - why gamble on giving up something of already proven architectural value ? I think it would be better to renovate the old building and expand it with a new addition on the empty portion of the lot to the west. In a city such as Tokyo that plot would be considered a gold mine - that city is full of innovative buildings on small lots. One example is the acclaimed Watari Museum of Art, built on a 600 square meter site (about the same size as the west lot) with 6 floors giving 3600 sq. meters of space. (grandtourofswitzerland.jp "Watari Museum of Contemporary Art)



Another possibility would be to build up on the west lot and partially over the current building. The addition by architect Will Alsop to the Ontario College of Art is a striking example of what could be done. Described as a “flying box-on-legs” it definitely has a “buzzy vibe” (link to site - Will Alsop on 10 Years of OCAD U's Sharp Centre for Design)



Doing a cost comparison of the renovation/expansion vs new build is very complex as I am sure you appreciate. Throwing around numbers can be a sort of “shell game”. I remember when the old fine Arts building was being evaluated in the 1990s - it was said that renovation would cost more than a new build. So a new building was made on the new campus. Then it was decided that the old building could be renovated after all and added onto for the sound studio. This was done and now sits largely empty after the government cancelled the tax incentives for the film industry.

The \$50M figure that is being used as the cost of renovation is, I guess, a liberally inflation-adjusted amount based on the 2015 report (Group2 Central Library Bldg. Assessment Report) figure of \$28M. It should be pointed out that this is the figure for a long term (15 - 20 yr) extension - in that time a new build might already be 1/3 - 1/2 through its life cycle and would likely be developing problems of its own. The main liability of the current building seems to be energy efficiency. The 2015 report estimates the cost for long term renewal of the building envelope as \$6M, the electrical upgrade as \$1.36M, and heating replacement as \$1.8M. The issue of asbestos materials seems minor according to most reports cited in the 2015 evaluation. The ARC Environmental says “no remedial action required”, and the latest (2014) report from Bersch & Assoc. recommends monitoring “to keep overall risk low”. This can be compared to unknowns of new building materials, which might have their own liabilities in the future.

What is most striking to me in this report is that there are no basic structural issues that need to be addressed, even in the long term scenario (15-20 yrs)

When it comes to costing environmental impact and sustainability, things are even more complex. The amount of greenhouse gases released in the production of pristine materials usually exceeds the amount of “embodied carbon” in an already existing structure . In a nutshell, “the greenest building is the one that is already built”.

Another factor to consider is the loss-of-use that would occur in the situation of demolition and new build. Of course basic operations could be continued from branches and a temporary location, but citizens would likely be deprived of a full-service, central location for 2-3 yrs. A renovation/expansion situation could be phased so that there would be far less interruption.

Winnipeg did a renovation/ expansion of its central library for \$21M, Edmonton “revamped” its library for \$69M. The new build in Saskatoon is estimated at \$80 -120M, very likely to be at the high end of that range. If we took a similar figure for a new build in Regina, and add it to the other projects being considered by the Catalyst Committee: the \$173M aquatic centre; \$165 Brandt Centre project; \$23M baseball stadium, we are approaching half a billion dollars.

In light of all the above mentioned factors, I believe the most prudent course of action would be a hybrid approach - keep the best of the past, the current building, and add an exciting new addition on the west plot.

Lorne Beug, Sept. 16, 2022