

Thu, Mar 01, 2007 12:17 PM

Update for March 1, 2007

Home

- News
- Schools
- Opinion
- Op-Ed
- Features
- Sports
- Business
- Pointer Of Interest
- Births
- Obituaries
- Engagements
- Weddings
- Letters
- Pointer Of Interest
- Archives
- Police/Fire Reports

Extras

- Calendar
- Contact Us - Phone, Email, And FAX
- Your Home Newsstands
- Local History Archives

Forms

- Babies (Pdf)
- Birth Ann. Form
- Engagements(Pdf)
- Engagement
- Weddings (Pdf)
- Wedding Form
- Obituaries (Pdf)
- Obituary Form

# Grosse Pointe News online

Subscriptions | Submit Classified | Classifieds | Email Headlines

News

- ◆ Ice age
- ◆ ULS hires new head of school
- ◆ Foundation funds donated
- ◆ City hall closes after power loss
- ◆ Coyote escapes 'live' trap
- ◆ Expert to address North Korea
- ◆ Police chief trades in his uniform
- ◆ Rev. Father Demetrios Kavada dies
- ◆ 'Dr. Mom,' 'G.P. Girl' share lessons learned
- ◆ Week Ahead
- ◆ Yesterday's Headlines

FREE Headline Emails

Subscribe Today!

Print subscribers

Change of Address

Vacation Forward

News ▶

## Charrettes think outside the (Central) box

Grosse Pointe Public Library

Beth Quinn

[write the author](#)

03/01/2007 - A capacity crowd packed the large program room of the Grosse Pointe Public Library's Central branch Monday, Feb. 26, to see the Design Charrette's ideas how to save the current Central branch library.

An international Design Charrette was organized in January by the Modern Architecture Protection Agency (MAPA) to save the Marcel Breuer-designed library from demolition. MAPA asked architects to find creative ways to preserve the 53-year-old building while updating and expanding it to meet the needs the library board and staff feels are necessary to service the community.



Twenty architects participated in a Design Charrette to show how the Grosse Pointe Public Library can meet present and future needs without tampering with the Marcel Breuer-designed Central branch.

MAPA representatives Brian Buchalski and Jim Fidler's powerpoint presentation showed 14 submissions worked on by 20 architects.

"I spent about 15 hours on my own design," Buchalski said. "So if you figure that each person spent an average of 15 hours, you probably have at least 300 hours of work here."

In his introduction, Buchalski encouraged the library board and Central building committee to reconsider the notion that bigger is better.

"The current library is perfectly scaled to the neighborhood it's in," he said. "It is very elegantly done in a very modest style."

Most of the designs attempted to increase Central's square footage and meet the need for additional parking if the library is enlarged.

Participants saw the need for additional parking as the biggest problem the library board faces.

Extras

- ◆ comments to this article
- ◆ e-mail this article link to a friend
- ◆ letter to the editor about this article
- ◆ print this article

Site Search

Search for:

Search among:

- editorial
- authors
- calendar
- companies
- organizations
- directories
- classifieds

Search



Renderings courtesy of MAPA

"This problem involves architectural and political issues," Buchalski said. "It would involve zoning and property laws."

Fidler and Buchalski recommended that the library forge a partnership with the Grosse Pointe Public School System, the City of Grosse Pointe and Grosse Pointe Farms to resolve the Hill neighborhood's lack of parking.

"This would entail getting together with the right people to create a right solution," Fidler said.

Early in the presentation, the board realized charrette participants were given an outdated square foot requirement of 54,000 as opposed to the current estimate of 40,000 to 45,000 square feet to accommodate present and future needs. However, it was considered a minor mistake since most of the designs were concept drawings and not detailed in scope.

The 14 designs showed 14 ways to accommodate more space on a tight site without tearing down an already established structure.

One common idea was to attach a tower alongside the existing building. Some architects envisioned a watch tower type design while others preferred a "V" or cylinder-shaped spire.

One plan proposed enveloping the existing building with a larger building, turning the current library's exterior walls into interior walls.

Another design used the same window moldings and brick style of the current library to make a back addition look "seamless."

A few architects suggested adding a separate building on site using either a courtyard or a walkway as a connector.

There were a couple of radical proposals, such as gutting the existing building and turning it into a parking garage, which Buchalski introduced as being one of the few "out there" ideas.

Another showed the humorous side of its creator. The rendering description stated, "on the recommendation of the Swiss government, the people of Grosse Pointe decide to melt all their Swiss-made steel objects, including the Swiss army knives, and use the metal objects to build a new library addition behind the old one, designed by a Hungarian named Marcel Lajos Breuer, thus gaining an international foothold in the name of enlightenment and world peace."

During the question and answer session, problems with basic premises behind the designs quickly became topics of discussion.

Fidler and Buchalski had difficulty answering Trustee Mary Beth Smith's request to show which designs stayed within and which went beyond the library's current property line. They quickly conceded most of the architects were more concerned with generating creative suggestions to save the current library than

staying within the property's footprint. They conceded many of the designs challenged the setback on the front and side.

"This was an open call of ideas, not concrete proposals," Fidler said.

In reference to the idea of encapsulating the current building within a larger outer shell, Trustee David Bergeron asked if reconfiguring the interior would be condoned by those wanting to preserve its historical significance.

"While this is my personal opinion, reworking the interior would be allowed," said Buchalski. "I understand why the library staff is frustrated with the existing building, but I believe the exterior design, size and scale is what is important here."

While board president Laura Bartell expressed disappointment that many of the designs showed the enlarged building and parking spaces outside property lines, she was grateful that the Design Charrette opened the dialogue in the community about the current Central branch.

The Design Charrette will be on display for public viewing at the Ewald branch Thursday, March 1, and in the business reading room at Central Friday, March 2.



powered by  
Linear Publishing  
copyright 1999 - 2007