

Tyson Land Use Task Force: Fairfax County Public Library Response

1/31/08

The Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan first volume section on Public Facilities sets forth guidelines that quantify the need for libraries based on population, proximity of existing libraries and square footage of available county library space per resident. The Library determines the range of services offered at a new facility based on the demographic characteristics of the community and experience drawn from other libraries that operate in similar communities. After operating a new facility for a year or so, collections and services may be adjusted to reflect actual use patterns.

According to the Comprehensive Plan, regional libraries serve a minimum residential population of 100,000 and community libraries serve a minimum residential population of 50,000. The service area for a regional library should extend up to six miles and community libraries should have a three to four mile service area. The existing Tysons-Pimmit Regional Library, located at 7584 Leesburg Pike, is .5 miles from McGarrity Road, the eastern edge of the Tysons districts and about two miles from the centrally placed Tysons 123 Metro station.

Distance from an existing library does not support the building of a new regional library as part of the Tysons development. However, the nature of the proposed residential and business mix, the emphasis on public transportation and pedestrian movement within the area, and the anticipated growth in residential and employment population do require that the Library recommend adding a new facility within the development area.

The chart below summarizes the potential number of employees and residents that would result from the two Tysons development options before the Tysons Task Force.

	Employees	Dwelling Units	Residents
Existing Development	106,871	8,056	16,112
Base Case	161,545	16,259	32,517
Advanced Prototype A	158,973	36,250	72,500
Advanced Prototype B	202,816	49,956	99,912

The Library's recommendation for a facility responds to both Prototype development options. The Library would seek to provide a community-type library that would offer Tysons' residents and area workers with a full range of library services to include a circulating popular book and media collection for all ages, a small reference collection, wireless Internet access, public PCs, limited study/research space and programs for children and adults. A meeting room would be included in the building design for programs and to provide free meeting space for local community organizations. A 17,000 sq ft building or space located in a mixed use high density area would be most desirable. Some access to parking would be required, although public transportation and pedestrian access would suggest that the code-required 7 spaces per 1000 sq ft of library space might be adjusted. The library could be located within a retail area or co-located

with office space. A location within the Tysons Central 123 or Tysons Central 7 districts would place the library within very dense areas of residential and workday populations.

Conservation Measures, New Technologies and Urban Standards:

Libraries like all new county buildings are designed and constructed according to the Fairfax County Green Building policy. The county's Department of Public Works and Environmental Services has adopted sustainable building practices that meet the rating criteria of the Leadership Energy and Environment Design (LEED) program, sponsored by the U.S. Green Building Council. The LEED program is a rating system that includes a checklist for building design that covers: site management; building materials; water efficiency; energy use and the indoor environment. A facility in the Tysons development area would be planned to take advantage of design features that support a sustainable building program.

Fairfax County Public Library has used a variety of locations over the years. A number of branches have been placed in shopping centers among retail outlets; at one time, free-standing kiosks housed three mini-libraries in shopping centers. Older buildings have been renovated to update and expand the libraries for their communities. And several community and regional libraries have been built with ample parking lots in keeping with their suburban locations. In every case, the location, the site, and the needs of the community have dictated the style of the library. A facility within the Tysons development would be an urban library, perhaps a stand-alone building, more likely part of a retail block or office high-rise. Parking requirements are a challenge for suburban libraries. Locating a library within an urban environment will change the need for parking. Although access to some parking will be necessary, most customers will use public transportation, walk to the library, or visit the library on their way to the Metro. The "transit circulator" in Prototype B will contribute greatly to efficient movement of population within the development area and facilitate residential access to a library near a Metro station.

Through technology, the Library offers free remote access to many services. Customers can use home and work computers to manage their library accounts, place reserves, renew borrowed items, download audio books, conduct research using electronic databases, work with an online tutor and ask reference questions online. Although the number of customer visits to FCPL branches and the number of items borrowed continues to increase every year, technology has enabled public libraries to change and remain relevant for today's customers. Public computers, audio books and databases are as popular as books.

Costs and Financing:

Generally, FCPL libraries are built with bond funding authorized by public bond referenda. Funds from the county General Fund are used to buy equipment and acquire collections for new libraries and to support ongoing operating costs. The cost of building and equipping a new library is summarized below. The estimate is provided in 2008 dollars and does not include land or space rental costs.

Costs for a 17,000 sq ft library:

Design, construction and fixed equipment	\$7,600,000
Initial furniture and equipment	\$700,000
Opening collection and subscriptions	\$3,500,000
Annual staff and annual operating	\$1,300,000

The Library has acquired building sites by purchasing land, through developer proffers and negotiated leases with developers. The Library would be open to negotiation with a Tyson's developer for space to co-locate a library within a commercial project.

Base Case: Current Comprehensive Plan:

Given the level and kind of projected development, the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2007 Edition does not endorse an additional full-service library in the Tysons Corner Urban Center. The Plan states:

Library coverage is provided by the Dolley Madison and Patrick Henry Community Libraries and the Tysons-Pimmit Regional Library. These libraries meet the County's library locational standards and no additional facility requirements are anticipated. However, the provision of a mini-library or a specialized library (i.e. business and/or technology) may be desirable for inclusion in a new development or one of the shopping malls.

The Library does not have an existing model for the kind of facility referred to in the current Plan. The mini or specialized library is envisioned as a facility with minimal print collections and extensive online access to electronic databases. Professional staff would be available to assist customers with their research. A popular browsing collection for all ages including a variety of newspapers and periodicals would be available for recreational reading. Downloadable audio books and books on CD would be included for commuter borrowing. A small amount of comfortable seating would be included in the design. Youth services would be limited to a small collection of children's materials that were rotated to the library from a full service branch. Such a mini or specialized library might be 4,000 to 5,000 square feet located in a retail area or within an office space.

In 2008 dollars and excluding costs for land or space rental:

Estimated costs for a 5,000 sq ft mini-library

Design, construction and fixed equipment	\$2,250,000
Initial furniture and equipment	\$205,000
Opening collection and subscriptions	\$1,000,000
Annual staff and annual operating	\$380,000

The Library provides services that match the needs of individual communities and strives to build facilities that are flexible and capable of adjusting to changing customer demands. A Library presence, whether a stand-alone building or space in a shared facility, is a vital component of a successful mixed-use urban development. Whatever the recommendation that comes forth from the Tysons Land Use Task Force, the Fairfax County Public Library is prepared to work with the opportunities that are presented to maintain convenient high-quality library service for all county residents.