



# Friends of the Regina Public Library

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May 16, 2023

Marj Gavigan  
Chair, Regina Public Library Board  
Regina Public Library  
2311 12th Avenue  
Regina SK S4P 0N3

Dear Ms. Gavigan:

Friends of the Regina Public Library (FRPL) would like to submit the following for the consideration of the Regina Public Library (RPL) Board at their May 23, 2023 meeting, to make a presentation, and to have this letter and its Appendices included in the official public record.

## **Catalyst Committee**

In the Fall of 2022, the City of Regina established a Catalyst Committee to review options for projects intended to invigorate Regina's city centre. FRPL participated in the public presentation opportunities, at the Catalyst Committee events and at City Council, and encouraged the public to participate in surveys that were conducted, to have their opinions, from whatever angle, be included in decision-making.

In its review, the Catalyst Committee accepted plans from organizations such as the RPL as submitted, but did not have time for an independent third review of these plans – perhaps this is needed for the RPL Board's proposal regarding Central Library.

The "Modernization" of Central Library was rated as a number 2 priority in the Catalyst Committee public survey, but the term modernization is vague and potentially misleading. Does this mean that the public agreed for some improvements or upgrading to the building, or with demolishing the building and rebuilding? Many would agree with the former, and not the latter.

On March 23, 2023 City Council passed a motion to approve the Catalyst Committee recommendation concerning Central Library: "A new Central Library within the downtown core with preference given to the existing location." More specific wording was: "Recommendation 12 – The third priority Catalyst Project should be the development of a new Central Library branch within the downtown core of the City of Regina. The primary site should be the existing location, but other locations should be explored." In discussions at City Council there was some indication of the library co-locating with other projects in the downtown, such as a Multi-Purpose Event Centre. These options need to be more fully questioned in the public domain.

### **A Nationally Recognized Modernist Building**

Central Library's location is both beautiful and practical, acting as Regina's downtown cultural hub.

Central Library is nationally recognized as an iconic example of a modernist building, well-built on a strong foundation, part of the exciting and innovative modernist movement, a material statement of our mid-century optimism.

It is historical in that it reflects the changes in thinking starting in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to break free from the constricting ideas of the previous centuries. Modernism arose as a cultural movement in art, politics and science, reflecting the experience and values of modern industrial life and modern society. New images, materials and techniques were used. The old social constrictions and styles were left behind. Thus, modernist architecture is a social and political commentary for democratic accessibility; its simple and clear lines are a statement for a bright inclusive future.

Modernism occurred throughout literature, fine arts and architecture, most evident in buildings designed from the 1930s to the 1960s (and beyond), expressed in the phrase "form follows function" and of minimalism. Modernism stressed the use of materials such as natural stone and wood, reinforced concrete, steel frames, curtain walls and ribbon windows; and in having these materials honestly viewed, rather than covered up by plaster or wallpaper or ornamentation. Designers preferred open-plan interiors, filled with light and having a sense of spaciousness. Some international examples of modernist architecture include: Le Corbusier's 1927 Villa Savoye; Shreve, Lamb and Marmon's 1931 Empire State Building; Niemeyer's 1960 Palácio do Planalto in Brasilia; Gropius and Mayer's 1911-13 Fagus Factory in Germany; Frank Lloyd Wright's 1935 Fallingwater in Pennsylvania; and, Utson's 1973 Opera House in Sydney Australia.

Some Saskatchewan examples of modernist architecture are: the original Mendel Art Gallery and the Faculty of Law at the University of Saskatchewan, both in Saskatoon; the Saskatchewan Power Corporation Headquarters, Regina Court of Queen's Bench building and the Central Library building in Regina; and the Chapel at Silton.

As we know, one important cultural discipline doesn't negate another: just as literature, in all of its forms creates a culture, so do heritage structures give cultural meaning, creating a context for the lives of citizens, as is shown in all world cultures.

The value of Central Library was confirmed nationally at "The Ordinary Amazing Symposium: The Cultural Value of Modernist Architecture" held in Regina in May 2007, with a declaration signed by national architects and Regina citizens. The participants urged maintaining the Building with an enhancement.

*RPL's Central Library is a building of national, historical, cultural and architectural merit and urges City Council and the Library Board to find a way to keep and maintain and enhance the heritage values of this fine building consistent with the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada; as well as explore creative possibilities for a building enlargement that would complement the 1962 building, so it can continue to serve the changing needs of Regina's people, and enhance its key public spaces.*

As noted by Heritage Architect, Bernard Flaman (see Appendix), Central Library's flat roof, simple cubic composition and large areas of glass, are hallmarks of the modernist style. The durable split squares and polished slabs of granite cladding and aluminum modernist sunshades add texture to the exterior.

Yet as we discuss the merits and economy of Central Library that have made this building a national treasure, it is personal experience that has brought this library alive and a feature of our downtown. The entrance foyer, facing the greenery of Victoria Park, filled with light and leads to the magic of a Children's Library; an Outreach Unit, assisting people with visual challenges, seniors and those not easily able to leave home [now changed to the Community Commons meeting room]; a Literacy Department and its volunteers, the Dunlop Art Gallery, the RPL Film Theatre, the Prairie History Room and more, all adding to the vibrancy of downtown Regina. The tall windows fill the Reading Room with natural light.

## **Heritage Designation**

Central Library, at 2311 - 12th Avenue, faces Frederick Todd's Victoria Park, replacing the earlier Carnegie Library (1912). The current Central Library building was opened in 1962. Central Library, the SaskPower Building (1963), and the Bank of Canada Building (1964) are quality mid-century buildings, all designed to sensitively integrate with earlier Victorian Revivalist buildings, including the 1926 Masonic Temple.

Furthermore, the value of this building to Regina's history is solidified by the fact that it was designed by a Regina engineering and architectural firm. Izumi, Arnott and Sugiyama. Izumi, who was raised in Regina and matriculated from Regina College in 1944, returned to Regina in 1954 after extensive architectural studies and experience.

The current Central Library building is legally designated in the Victoria Park Heritage Conservation District, Bylaw #9656 passed May 27<sup>th</sup>, 1996 under the provisions of the provincial Heritage Property Act.

There is a heritage permitting process and a regulatory process based on conservation standards.

What would elimination of the current building mean for the Victoria Park Heritage Conservation District? If the RPL Board wants to unwisely demolish the current building, there are two steps to the removal of the heritage designation. The first step is a vote at Regina City Council, overruling the City bylaw. If the building is rehabilitated, no such votes are needed.

The second step is at the Saskatchewan provincial heritage Review Board, to remove the designation of the existing building according to the process outlined in the Saskatchewan Heritage Property Act.

These approvals will not necessarily be obtained.

Options to retain and expand Central Library building must be explored further. What are the terms of reference for future designs?

## **Revitalization and Addition**

"Thinking ahead," the 1962 Central Library Opening Day program noted directions for future expansion: "...if more space were needed, a tower could be built on the lot west of the building." Regina might look to how the Winnipeg Public Library's Patkau addition and redesign created a useful

social space, as an excellent elegant and economic way to 'rethink' Central Library.

With renovations and/or expansion to the current property as originally conceived, FRPL believes the current building can continue to fulfill the intended mandate of being a community hub and FRPL firmly supports the preservation of our Heritage Modernist Central Library.

FRPL continues to put forward the concept that a revival of Central Library could include bringing its essential operations up to current standards and creating an addition on the current site, which would preserve the heritage aspects of the building, be more environmentally sound, and provide extra space for library programming.

With regard to the Central Library building being old, some improvements are needed. But we do not tear down our houses because the furnace or roof shingles need replacing or the electrical system needs upgrading. In other countries, buildings have continued to exist and be useful after hundreds of years.

### **Protect the Environment**

Green architectural building principles recognize that it is less expensive and more environmentally responsible to use a building that already exists, than to tear it down, take the remains to the landfill and rebuild. Recent engineering reports have stated that Central Library is a structurally-sound quality building. Engineering reports also have stated that it is possible to build up to two additional storeys on the current building.

There is embedded energy in this building that will be lost if the building is demolished. Rehabilitating the building, with attention to current environmental building standards, would contribute positively to Regina's goal of being a sustainable city.

Cost estimates of the resources lost if the building is torn down do not seem to be in the RPL reports. This kind of analysis is needed.

Rehabilitating the building would provide better insulation and operating systems that would reduce the environmental impact of the building. And an addition would be built to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards.

The carbon footprint for any changes should be made available to the public, with the goal of a net-zero carbon footprint.

## **Financing**

The Catalyst Committee report noted that “The Central Library project also has a reserve commitment of up to \$20 million that will be dedicated to the proposed project.” Total project cost was estimated at \$125 million. Cost estimates were under the heading “Cultural Centre: Central Library and Art Gallery”. Funding sources were hoped to be 10% federal, 10% provincial, 60% municipal (City of Regina) and 20% private funding. It is not clear if the latter is to be from fund-raising, or is there a potential for public-private ownership? This troublesome model was seen as a possibility when the former Board chair was asked about it by City Council in the Fall of 2022.

The addition of the \$125 Million for the proposed new library to the city’s debt, would essentially double the City’s current debt to \$296 Million, adding an approximate \$9.9 Million in servicing charges (assuming previous borrowing rates) making it \$23.5 Million annually for the coming 30 years. If hoped-for funding from the federal and provincial levels of government can be achieved, this would reduce the long-term debt paid by the citizens of Regina somewhat, but still be a large expense.

### **\$50 Million Figure**

FRPL has always questioned the \$50 million estimate the RPL has given since the Summer of 2022 for maintaining the current building. To date, while some verbal generalities have been stated by the RPL in media interviews and at City Council, no detailed lists or tables have been provided about what specifics add up to that cost.

In reviewing the cost figures from the Group 2 “Building Assessment Report” of February 2015 and the KPMG “Central Library Needs Assessment and Project Plan” report of 2020, it seems there have been some errors in double counting in the RPL statement of the \$50 million cost.

On page 139 of Group 2’s report in 2015, short term remediation strategies were identified as 0 to 4 years, medium term as 5 to 15 years, and long-term as 15 to 20 years or more. On page 137 it is explicitly stated that “It should be noted that each remediation strategy (i.e., Short, Medium and Long Term) has been priced as mutually exclusive and does not build on each other.” But the \$50 million guesstimate put forward by the RPL Board seems to have been obtained simply by adding the columns across horizontally.

Some items, such as windows and curtain walls, outlined on pages 146–147, were described as: replacing failing window units in the short term, or

replacing all windows in the medium term, or replacing the entire curtain wall including all windows in the long term.

Also, the figures already had an escalation factor of about 4 % per year to account for inflation in each column, with great amounts of escalation as time went on. So RPL statements about adding amounts for inflation need to be clarified.

### **Costs for Revitalization vs Rebuild**

Renovation, or as it is called in heritage conservation, "rehabilitation", of Central Library and building an addition would create jobs, just as a new build would do. "Rehabilitation" would involve bringing the building up to all current codes (accessibility, ventilation, energy use, and so forth).

Deloitte's "Central Library Business Case – Phase 1" Report of May 2017 considered the costs of rehabilitating the current library and constructing an addition, versus demolishing the current library and constructing a completely new building. Table 19 on page 26 shows that when Deloitte included demolition, construction, operating and other expenses, the cost of rehabilitating the current building and constructing an addition was actually less than a new build. The Deloitte report of 2017, Central Library Business Case – Phase 1, estimated costs, including an option for an addition of storeys onto the current building. On page 21 Deloitte provided the following capital construction costs: Renovate \$26,603,000; Renovate with Additions \$26,603,000 + \$35,026,000 = \$61,629,000; New Library \$68,738,000. Total costs, provided on page 26, looking at capital, lifecycle, operational, and project risks: Renovate \$110,473,970; Renovate with Additions \$195,036,540 and New Library \$195,737,090. Thus, retaining the current building with additions was less costly than building a new building.

Although the cost figures are older, the same principle was found in the 2012 RPL Building Assessment report, by P3Architecture that estimated \$71,929,000 for renovations and an addition, either vertically or horizontally. A new build was estimated at \$79,674,250.

As with the \$50 million estimate for "keeping the building open" the options of building up and over and of building an addition to the west should be laid out in detail in a publicly available written report, not simply verbal comments, concerning practicalities and cost.

It is unfortunate that the RPL, as stated at the Sept. 7th Executive Committee meeting, has done only immediately needed repairs. The RPL has chosen not to invest funds in needed upgrades that were outlined in the

2015 Central Library Building Assessment Report, by Group2 Architecture and Design. RPL stated that they thought it wasn't worthwhile to invest money in these repairs, in case they decided to tear down the building. Is this another example of "demolition by neglect" so common in the City of Regina?

Funds are being spent to revitalize the Globe Theatre, and their building is way older than the central Library. Over the last 10 years, at least some of the renovations and repairs needed by Central Library could have been done, so why weren't they? How much of the \$3.2 million spent on Central Library over the last 10 years addressed the most outstanding issues, and what were they? And are there still the same issues?

We really care about the excellent staff who dedicate their time and energies to the public library, and want them to work in good conditions. We understand the need to do some renovations in the Central Library building, but think that rehabilitating the building and constructing an addition will better preserve heritage and the inherent resources in the building materials, rather than a teardown and rebuild.

### **Functional Program**

The library will need to have a "functional plan" of what it intends to provide, for the public to review and determine if that is what is wanted and what people are willing to pay for.

### **Public Engagement**

It is good that, as FRPL suggested, the RPL has provided print copies of reports on Central Library in the Reference section at Central Library.

What is the timeline for public engagement going forward?

How will the public be involved in the setting of the terms of reference for the Request for Proposals for architectural design?

How will the public be involved in determining the transition plan for Central Library which will be needed while any major upgrades are taking place?

Surveys have asked what people want in a library, but as pointed out by a citizen's letter to Executive Committee and verified by the RPL Board representatives, the RPL surveys have never directly asked "Are you in favour of demolishing the current Central Library building in order to provide additional services."



Public opinion greatly favours expanding and renovating rather than demolishing Central Library.

### **Urban Planning**

The City of Regina wants to have more people living downtown. Has there been direct consultation with the seniors and others living downtown about what should be happening with Central Library? Some residents, and indeed, library patrons, are still unaware of decisions being made that will affect their immediate surroundings.

In terms of City-wide planning and use of City resources, the RPL is focusing on a large Central Library building, rather than taking an overall view of library services in the city and putting resources into local branches in our many neighbourhoods. The RPL has stated that it is going to review the functions of the local branches AFTER it deals with Central Library. Isn't this going about the situation a bit back to front?

Perhaps some of the needs or desires of librarians can be met through satellite locations in downtown Regina, either newly constructed on vacant parking lot space or in existing downtown buildings, assisting in the revitalization of Regina's downtown? Could our model of library services be decentralized and democratic, emphasizing the value of neighbourhoods and walkable branches throughout the City, with funds spent on additional resources throughout the City?

The library is a very important part of downtown. But should it be the only free public indoor space in downtown Regina? Should it be the only place where people facing life challenges get support?

There is a need for public spaces downtown, places that support learning, creativity and training. While the RPL is open to everyone and is a community hub, the City of Regina should be considering other additional venues that can provide public meeting spaces and opportunities for people. Should some of the needs and aspirations of people in the downtown area be met by other organizations in other locations in the downtown? Is this not something that the City of Regina and downtown organizations and businesses should be considering together with the citizens of the city?

Where is money best spent to make Regina a livable community - on housing for the homeless, services (in collaboration with other levels of government), free public spaces for people, libraries, or, other facilities? This

is an important question to be examined by the citizens of Regina and Regina's City Council.

## **Conclusion**

Libraries are about preserving and sharing knowledge. This knowledge is contained in books, in digital formats, in art, in music and in buildings and landscapes. Thus, preserving the public heritage embodied in the Central Library building is part of the Regina Public Library's role.

Not every library building will necessarily have significant historical and cultural value, but the Central Library building does.

Let's continue the public dialog on the options available.

Sincerely,

Joanne Havelock  
Chair, Friends of the Regina Public Library

## APPENDIX – CENTRAL LIBRARY



### **Regina's Central Library and Victoria Park**

*By Bernard Flaman, Heritage Architect*

When the original Carnegie Library was demolished in 1960, at the young age of 48, it was a brave new world: the ascendance of International Style Modernism, the predominant architectural style in Canada, saw many revival style buildings from the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century replaced with minimalist, modern structures.

The current Central Library, completed in 1962, was designed by the Regina architecture and engineering firm Izumi, Arnott and Sugiyama. Along with its neighbours around Victoria Park; the Bank of Canada building (1962) by Durnford, Bolton, Chadwick and Elwood of Montreal, and the Saskatchewan Power Corporation headquarters, an extraordinary interpretation of Brazilian Modernism designed by Regina architect Joseph Pettick (1963), the Library reflected the arrival of modernism as a mainstream architectural style in Regina.

The Library's flat roof, simple cubic composition and large areas of glass, are hallmarks of the modernist style. Preliminary sketches indicated a much more ambitious project, with the Library and the Dunlop Art Gallery designed as two buildings separated by a plaza. The final design exhibits traces of the original idea, with the art gallery articulated as a separate object; a box that slides into the side of the library structure, like a giant drawer. The massing and architectural composition of the building reflect its functional components. While the exterior of the building may be austere, the cladding material comprised of various types of granite, the most durable stone for buildings, lends a rich and luxurious appearance. The aluminum sunshades add texture to the exterior and allow a generous amount of natural light into the interior without the problem of glare.

Izumi and Arnott were the architects in the firm and Sugiyama, the structural engineer. Known as "Joe" to his friends and colleagues, Kiyoshi Izumi had completed extensive architectural studies before returning to Regina to engage in practice.

Victoria Park appeared as the central square on the very first survey for Regina, the Canadian Pacific Railway plan of 1882. In 1907, while he was in Regina working on a design for Wascana Park, Frederick Todd of Montreal, Canada's first resident landscape architect, created a design for Victoria Park. Shortly after, institutional buildings, such as the Court House and the Carnegie library, began to replace the residential houses around the park. By the early 1960s, the International Style had arrived in Saskatchewan, reflected in three new buildings: the Regina Public Library, the Saskatchewan Power Corporation Headquarters, and the Bank of Canada Building, all completed between 1962 and 1963, adding an important layer to the buildings surrounding the park. It marks a moment when prosperity coincided with a significant period in architectural design.

The library addresses the park with a prominent double-height glass entry at the north-east corner. Here, the corner opens up to reveal the columned structure of the building and a sunken garden that provides a visual connection to the lower level. The entrance forms an inviting, generous and public gesture on the corner of Victoria Park, and shines like a beacon on even a cold, snowy winter evening. The ramps that cross over the courtyard are also modernist in nature and were often employed by the modernist master, le Corbusier, as part of an idea of "architectural promenade," where the act of entering allows the visitor to explore and experience important elements of the building. At the entrance to the library, token decorative stone elements from the original Carnegie Library of 1912 were salvaged in an early attempt at heritage commemoration, if not conservation. The limestone columns from the 1912 building are arranged in the courtyard,

and the original lintel stone, bearing the words, *Regina Public Library* is incorporated into the vestibule.

The interior of the building is characterized by a series of three major spaces: the entrance vestibule, the Dunlop Art Gallery, and the main reading room. All were conceived as tall spaces, however, a mezzanine was constructed in the reading room shortly after the library opened, to address a shortage of space. The vestibule, like the rest of the building contains expensive and durable materials, in this case, terrazzo flooring, and, in the same material, the unique boot racks. The benches with wood seating areas and heating ducts below still survive and offer comfort on a cold winter day. The vestibule features a large mural by Saskatchewan artist Douglas Morton. Inside the door, the window of the Dunlop Art Gallery is an important connection to the flow of foot traffic coming in and out of the library. It is perfectly located to attract library visitors, especially children, who may not otherwise think of visiting a gallery.



In 2012, the library celebrated its 50th birthday, and, indeed, is close to the same age as the 1912 building when it was demolished. This is at an awkward age for buildings; they often begin to suffer from the 50-year-old building syndrome. Symptoms include a run-down and shabby appearance

due to chronic lack of maintenance, because of little appreciation or recognition for their heritage value. A closer look at the Regina Public Library reveals a beautifully designed building clad in the finest materials that would likely be unaffordable today.

Victoria Park is now over 125 years old, and its buildings and architectural styles represent the achievements of one of the most interesting periods in Regina history. Having been recognized as the only municipal heritage district in Saskatchewan, it is a valuable, rare, and fragile environment. New interventions must stem from an understanding and acceptance of what is already there and always contribute to, rather than detract from, historical layers that define Regina's civic square.

*Text from Biblio Files: A History of the Regina Public Library.  
University of Regina Press. 2017. Pages 244-247.*

*"Central Library (1962) is a good example of the International Modernist style. Architect Kioyshi Izumi, of Izumi, Arnott and Sugiyama, was a Regina boy who matriculated from Regina College in 1944, earned an architectural degree in 1948 from the University of Manitoba, and after a Pilkington Glass traveling scholarship where he spent a year studying the economics of town planning at the London School of Economics, he received the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada Scholarship in 1950, which he used to complete a graduate degree at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in city and regional planning. He returned to Regina and teamed up with Gordon Arnott in 1954.*

*Bernard Flaman: The Sun Never Sets: Victoria Park in Context.  
Dunlop Art Gallery. 2008*