

Archives
Rio Grande Options

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**A Report to the Executive Appropriations Committee
Of the Utah State Legislature**

**Prepared by
The Office of the Legislative Fiscal Analyst**

Kevin Walthers, Fiscal Analyst

Introduction

Recent attention on a proposal to move the Archives into the Rio Grande Depot generated significant concern with the equity of not renewing the lease of a long time state tenant. This is the latest chapter in a multi-year effort to relocate Archives Administration from its current Capitol Hill location.

The Archives building on Capitol Hill is an aging and inefficient building that the Building Board slated for replacement as early as 1998. Replacement was seen as the best option because the building's asbestos made it impossible to consider any type of remodeling or upgrade. A lack of consensus on where to place the new facility continues to create confusion and delay, impeding progress toward a solution. However, with the Capitol Hill expansion project under way, time is growing short to find an alternative location for the Archives.

The Utah Division of Facilities Construction and Management (DFCM) is currently evaluating options for a new location that can be brought before the Building Board in June or July. In anticipation of DFCM's proposal, this report will provide the Legislature with information in three specific areas:

1. History of Archives Planning
2. Options associated with the project
3. Evaluation of parameters set by the new planning working group.

History of Archives Planning

As part of its 1998 priority list¹ (for the Legislative General Session) the Building Board requested \$40,000 for programming to find a solution to the Archives problem. DFCM cited substantial public use, inadequate space, distance from the storage center and structural issues as the justification for planning a new facility. As part of the plan, DFCM intended to address storage issues within space currently leased by the Archives. The project was listed as Priority 8 by the Building Board but was not funded by the Legislature in 1998. In 1999 the same proposal dropped to 21st on the Building Board list² and was not approved by the Legislature.

For the 2000 Legislative Session, the Building Board did not prioritize any “programming” issues, opting instead to request funds for four “business plans” that would “evaluate the project’s economic viability.”³ The justification for the Archives “business plan” was the same as the justification presented in 1998 and 1999. Funding constraints in the 2000 General Session prevented the Archives project from receiving any funding.

2001 Request Addressed “Utah Cultural Center”

The Department of Administrative Services, in cooperation with State History and State Arts, took a different approach to the programming question for the 2001 General Session. Rather than seek an Archives specific solution, the agencies joined together to propose a joint facility. The Building Board again separated programming requests from mainline building projects and requested \$290,000 for planning of a new *Archives, Arts, and Historical Society Facility*.⁴ The facility concept was to complement a proposed “cultural center” to be located downtown and funded through a public-private partnership. With the pressing need to make way for the Capitol Remodel and a feeling that it was time to move the Archives off of Capitol Hill, the Legislature provided \$40,000 to fund a program for the Archives only – the notion of a joint facility was not approved.

Delay in reviewing program document created confusion

The 2002 General Session opened without a finished document regarding the Archives project. As a result, there was no Building Board recommendation for the new building. By the time the program document was complete (January 31), there was not enough time to thoroughly evaluate it before the close of the Legislative Session. Adding to the confusion was the fact that cost estimates continued to change from one meeting to the next – estimates ranged from \$10.3 million⁵ to \$13.3 million.⁶ With no clear plan from Archives or DFCM, the Legislature chose to wait until the 2003 General Session to ensure that the best option was chosen for the project.

¹ Utah State Building Board (January 1998). *Five Year Building Program*, p. B-9.

² Utah State Building Board (January 1999). *Five Year Building Program*, p. B-22

³ Utah State Building Board (January 2000). *Five Year Building Program*, p. B-1

⁴ Utah State Building Board (January 2001). *Five Year Building Program*, p. B-23

⁵ Prescott Muir Architects (January 31, 2002). *Utah State Archives Architectural Program*, p. 4 or Executive Summary.

⁶ Evans, Max (January 30, 2002). *Proposals for Relocating the State Archives*. Letter to the Capital Facilities and Administrative Services Appropriation Subcommittee.

Options Associated with the Project

There are several options available to the State to provide new space for the Archives.

Co-location with other agencies on North Temple was considered during the 2002 General Session. For example, the State Library (exclusive of the area reserved for Services for the Blind) totals 90,000 square feet. Much of that space is dedicated to library stacks that seem to be underutilized. It might be possible to combine administrative functions of both agencies in that space and add on cheaper warehouse storage for books and temporary records.

Co-Location with USDB

One additional option that may provide savings to the state would be to co-locate the Archives with a new facility for the Schools for the Deaf and Blind (USDB). The USDB leases a facility on Conner Street that does not meet their needs. It might make sense to move the facility out to the North Temple location where the state already houses state services for the blind. It's possible that the State Library could share space with state Archives and that the USDB facility could be located under the same roof as services for the blind.

Focus is now on Rio Grande Depot

DFCM is currently looking at two options for building a new facility next to the Rio Grande Depot. The first option would place the facility on the north end of the Depot and would close down the café for a year. If this option is chosen, the owners of the café would be compensated in some manner, most likely through construction upgrades on their current space.⁷ The second option would place the facility on the south end of the Depot and would not impact the café's operation.

The Analyst believes that DFCM should engage in a process that specifically rejects alternatives on their merits. There are many options available to the state and a continued downtown focus may result in the perception that other, more cost-effective, solutions were not considered.

⁷ This notion was discussed in informal settings with DFCM, no agreement has been reached with the café owners.

**Working Group
Parameters**

To bring about a final recommendation, DFCM put together a planning group for the Utah Cultural Center. The goal of the group is to “develop a proposal for an alternative site located at or near the Denver Rio Grand Depot for the planned Archives building.”⁸ According to the group, ten things must be considered in developing a recommendation:

- 1) costs can not exceed the original budget,
- 2) the proposal must enhance all three agencies (Art, History, Archives),
- 3) the proposal can not include any elements that would hurt any of the three agencies,
- 4) ensure adequate parking needs are met,
- 5) The Rio Grande Café must be addressed,
- 6) DFCM must support the proposal,
- 7) building should meet the Secretary of Interior Standards for Rehabilitation,
- 8) determine how the shared facility spaces can be programmatically compatible for use by all three agencies,
- 9) address the Depot’s basement collection area problems and the stacks in the library office rooms,
- 10) consider Art’s [sic] Council’s need to consolidate functions.⁹

*Some issues should
be precisely defined*

This is a good starting point – one that probably should have been initiated two or three years ago. However, the Analyst believes careful attention should be paid to items 1 and 5. Item 1 says that the new proposal “can not exceed the original budget” but does not clearly define what this means. The budget as presented by Prescott Muir in the program document totals \$10.3 million and includes enough warehouse space to house the permanent and temporary collections managed by Archives. There is not enough room on the Rio Grande site to move the temporary records, so the state would need to continue to lease space for day to day documents needed by agencies. Current lease costs are \$186,000, but would be less if the permanent collection is removed.

⁸ Utah Cultural Center (April 17, 2002). *Design Charette Minutes*.

⁹Ibid.

Item 5 says that the “Café must be addressed.” In April, the Analyst agreed with DAS that the state should take a serious look at locating the Archives in that space. Given that the Café lease was about to expire and that it might save the state \$10 million in capital costs, the Analyst reported to the co-chairs of the Capital Facilities and Administrative Services Appropriation Subcommittee that “DAS would be negligent if they did not consider using space already owned by the state.”¹⁰ The discussion as understood by the Analyst was that there was adequate space within the facility – no mention was made of additional construction costs. The current proposal to add a facility to the Depot poses a different question and should lend greater weight to the good will established by the Café management for nearly 20 years as one of the few businesses willing to operate in the area.¹¹

Most Archives patrons are genealogists

Archives serves approximately 4,000¹² people per year – and fewer than 800 patrons actually request records in person.¹³ Around the country, much of the research done in state archives facilities is related to genealogy. In Salt Lake City, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints operates a research center that serves more than 600,000 visitors a year.¹⁴ It may not be prudent for taxpayers to duplicate efforts that are provided for free by a private entity.

Conclusion

The Analyst does not have enough information to recommend a new location for the Archives. However, the policy decision should take a look at long term goals, options for co-location and potential benefit to state agencies. Clearly there is a synergy between State Arts, State History and the Archives. However, a downtown location for Archives is not essential for the State of Utah. Since the planning process is not yet completed, the Analyst recommends that the Executive Appropriation Committee provide guidance to DFCM in the May meeting to facilitate final discussions during the 2003 General Session.

¹⁰ Walthers, Kevin (April 16, 2002). Memo to Senator Beverly Evans and Representative Gerry Adair RE: *April Interim Report*.

¹¹ In addition to “goodwill” by the tenant, it should be noted that DFCM offered a five year lease extension to the café owners on February 5, 2002.

¹² Utah State Building Board (January 1999). *Five Year Building Program*, p. B-22.

¹³ Office of the Legislative Fiscal Analyst (January, 2002). *FY 2003 Budget Recommendations: Division of Archives*, p. 6.

¹⁴ Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (2002). *Fact Sheet: Family History Library*.