



True Myths - Dirty Realities

*The REAL dirt behind the proposed move of
the Cross County Library.*

Prepare to be shocked!



East Central Arkansas
Regional Library

True Myths – Dirty Realities:

The Real Dirt Behind the Proposed Move of the Cross County Library

April 2016

Myth	The Dirty Truth
<i>The proposed site is in the 100 year floodplain, and has flooded before</i>	<p>The feasibility study proved that the flooding can be alleviated with the addition of two larger drains from the box culvert underneath the intersection of Commercial Avenue and Front Street and creation of two retention ponds on Union Pacific property. This will alleviate not only the flood danger, but alleviate Union Pacific’s flooding problems as well, insuring that it will remain viable for them to keep its facilities, and their jobs, in Wynne.</p> <p>A major storm water management project along Merriman Avenue is also in the works.</p> <p>There are grant monies available from the EPA and other sources to help with this effort. If downtown Wynne is to remain, the drainage issue MUST be addressed, whether the library moves or not. The library will not move to this location without assurances that the problem will be mitigated.</p>
<i>How can the County afford a new library?</i>	<p>The Cross County Government nor the Library Board cannot afford a “new” library for less than \$3 million, and that is building it cheaply. The Front Street alternative affords the best possible solution while keeping the Library in Downtown Wynne at a fraction of the cost of a “new” library.</p>
<i>There is too much crime in that area and it’s unsafe.</i>	<p>According to the crime map published by the Cross County Sheriff’s Department (http://crosscountysheriff.org/crime_map.php), there have been no crimes reported within 3 blocks of this location in the past three years. Expanding a little farther from this location, there have been crimes/arrests, but none of these were for violent crimes. All of these occurred roughly the same distance from the existing library as they were from the proposed location. The addition of public space and people to this area, and relocating the police station closer to the area will likely deter crimes in the future.</p>
<i>People won’t go that far to the library.</i>	<p>Studies show that people will go to the library at any location as long as it’s accessible and somewhat visible. This location will actually improve visibility of the library.</p>
<i>What is wrong with the existing building?</i>	<p>The current building began as a house constructed about 1924. Later, it served as the telephone exchange for the city. In 1961, the library was moved to this old house. That old house has been added on to three times to accommodate library growth, the last time in 1999. That’s roughly once every 15 years, so</p>

	<p>time has come again to accommodate growth.</p> <p>Another addition to the “old house” will create additional walls and further security (visibility) issues within the current building. There are security (visibility) issues within the existing building as it is.</p> <p>A study conducted based on the Wisconsin Library Building Standards (considered the national library building standard by many) in 2013 showed that, with no changes in population, the Wynne Library needs an additional 3,000 to 4,000 of library space, particularly for technology and programs.</p> <p>The State of Arkansas does not have library building space standards. Instead, it still recommends those of the American Library Association. Last completed in 1968, their standards dictate roughly 1 square foot per resident. If we followed that standard, we would need a much larger (and much more costly) facility.</p> <p>The existing “old house” and most of its additions were not designed for the modern technology and educational program needs of today’s libraries. The current building does not have enough space for computers, and not enough space for library programs and exhibitions which improve the quality of life, help with educational attainment, and spur economic growth for the entire county.</p>
<p><i>But the Front Street property will need an elevator.</i></p>	<p>This has been taken into consideration in the feasibility study. Considering that it would be built outside the existing footprint of the building and attached to it, the cost has been estimated, by the architect, to only be \$80,000.</p>
<p><i>But that area is so run down.</i></p>	<p>As is much of the area around both the proposed site and around the existing library. If the library must move, why not move it to an area where it will truly benefit the community?</p> <p>Many public libraries have been moved to locations for economic and community development purposes. The move of Little Rock’s Main Library in the 1980s led to the major revitalization that is now known as the River Market District, an economic powerhouse for the entire Central Arkansas region.</p>
<p><i>Why is the City of Wynne forcing the Library out?</i></p>	<p>They are not! Library Staff came up with the idea to relocate the library after the space study was completed in 2013. They looked at several sites. After it came out in the Wynne Progress in late 2014 that the City wanted to relocate City Hall to the area of the current Library, staff looked into the issue and approached the Library Board. With Board permission, they approached Mayor Stacy. With his interest, they informed the County Judge they were looking into it.</p>

	<p>The City of Wynne realized that this project would spur downtown development, provide the ideal partner agency for the new Wynne Square, and would meet their needs as well.</p> <p>Later, the Wynne Economic Development Corporation commissioned a study to determine if it was economically feasible to relocate these public facilities. The study has determined that it is the most cost effective option available at this time.</p>
<i>Why wasn't the Quorum Court notified?</i>	<p>By Arkansas Law, the Library Board administers the Library on behalf of the Quorum Court. The Library Board members (called Trustees) report to the County Judge. By Arkansas state law, the County Judge is the county's chief executive and runs the county government based on policies set by the Quorum Court.</p> <p>The County Judge was notified that the Library Board was studying this possibility. It was determined it was not prudent to bring the matter before the Quorum Court until the Board had a viable, feasible idea to bring to them.</p>
<i>There's not enough parking down there.</i>	<p>Actually, there is double the amount of parking at the proposed location than at the existing library, and the city's plan to use the property just to the northeast of the site for both parking and flood mitigation will provide even more parking.</p>
<i>But the Library has always been there!</i>	<p>No, it has not. It has existed at many places around town, including in the old Courthouse, the old Courthouse Annex (now the Veterans Museum Building), and other locations.</p>
<i>What would "Miss Lolly" say?</i>	<p>According to children she babysat, and many who knew her, Mrs. Lolly Shaver was always for progress, and for insuring that the citizens of Cross County had access to the best library facilities and space possible. We believe, that if she were alive today and still the Regional Librarian, Miss Lolly would be looking for more space.</p>
<i>The cost of landscaping is too much.</i>	<p>The proposal involves no outdoor landscaping, except for an outdoor reading patio with potted plants. The proposal actually does away with the landscaping responsibilities of the library, which currently cost over \$5000 per year.</p>
<i>The county doesn't own these buildings.</i>	<p>No, but the owner of the largest one is more than willing to sell the property or trade it for a better location. The Wynne Downtown Revitalization Committee bought another one of the properties, insuring its support of this project, and the Wynne Economic Development Corporation has put an option on the third building in support of this project.</p>
<i>But the county owns the existing library property.</i>	<p>Yes. Two tracts make up the current library property. The first is the "old house" property, which was purchased jointly by the First National Bank, Cross County Bank, the Wynne Rotary Club,</p>

	<p>Wynne Savings Bank, and other donors for use as a library, and it was given to the county. The other tract was purchased by the Friends of the Cross County Library and given to the county. The Library Board and the Friends of the Library raised all of the funds necessary for the renovation of these buildings and construction of the additions. No county monies were spent.</p> <p>The county would lose no money, and would, in the end, gain more valuable property in the deal...property that would increase in value as the library is more heavily used in its larger quarters and the Wynne Square brings more people to the area.</p> <p>Downtown activity will also increase the property values of other downtown properties, increasing property tax revenues, and increased downtown economic activity will mean more sales tax revenues. This will bring more money to county coffers</p>
<p><i>But there is asbestos in the building.</i></p>	<p>The engineers found no significant evidence of asbestos in the facilities. A subsequent environmental study has confirmed that, and remediation costs are less than \$5000.</p>
<p><i>But the "Little Village" property burned. .</i></p>	<p>Both the fire inspectors and the engineers involved in the feasibility study found that while smoke-damaged, the property was intact and structurally sound.</p>
<p><i>But there is a "beer joint" in the block there.</i></p>	<p>Yes, the Little Village, which has been closed over a year, and which would be included in this property, preventing its future use as a nightclub.</p>
<p><i>But there is a "beer joint" down the street.</i></p>	<p>Based on current zoning and alcohol use laws, a nightclub could be placed almost anywhere in the downtown sector of Wynne, even in vacant properties across Jessie Wynne Park from the current location. There are laws on the books giving cities the ability to deal with nuisance businesses, which would provide protection should the existing club become a "nuisance" or criminal problem.</p>
<p><i>How did the Library come up with so much money that it can afford to move?</i></p>	<p>The Library hasn't come up with "so much money." Its property tax millage money can only be only be used for operating the library. According to the Arkansas Association of Counties, it is among the lowest in the state. The Library keeps modest amounts in reserves as required by law and by prudent business practices, and endowments set aside by donors for the library which cannot be touched.</p> <p>The study has shown that, provided the Quorum Court allow the sale or transfer of the current library property, the renovations of the property <u>should not cost more than \$750,000 at the very most, and these are under worst case scenario assumptions.</u></p>

	<p>The Library Board and the Friends of the Library can raise funds, as they raised \$250,000 almost 20 years ago to pay for the last addition to the existing library.</p>
<p><i>But our population is declining.</i></p>	<p>Yes, and the space study was completed based the current population, factoring in no growth. The most recent studies were based on a population of 16,000. Most of the additional space is necessary for technology, educational programming, and the support activities behind those library functions. These library functions will only grow with time, and with the changing demographics and economics of the Cross County community.</p>
<p><i>Why not just add on to the building?</i></p>	<p>Again, adding on to the existing location would create security issues, and would not rectify the limitations of the “old house” wing of the facility.</p> <p>Using the existing building would also require bringing existing infrastructure up to modern codes. For example, while our public restrooms (and we only have 1 space/seat per gender in the building) are ADA compliant, based on the codes in place when the facility was last altered. However, if we were to add on, we would have to bring them up to current codes, which would require additional space, additional seats and more money. Bringing the existing HVAC, electrical, plumbing and fire safety infrastructure would also cost money. If we must expend money to bring these systems into compliance, why not do it in a facility which would meet our needs? Professionals believe it is no longer prudent to continue to sink money into this facility.</p>
<p><i>I want the library to stay where it is.</i></p>	<p>We would like that too, but doing so will continue to impede progress and prevent the library from meeting the informational and educational needs of the modern Cross County community.</p> <p>Since adding on is not a viable option, another one would be to go into our rear parking area and build the building we need, then demolish the existing building for parking. We still would not have enough parking, and the cost would be more than \$3 million. <u>This is actually the preferred option.</u></p>
<p><i>They only want to move it to make the Square “work”.</i></p>	<p>Regardless of whether or not the Library moves, Mayor Stacy and the City Council have said that the Square will be built. The monies are in place. Construction will begin in 2016.</p> <p>The square and the adjacent, existing Jessie Wallin Park will provide space for additional library programming opportunities, including concerts, cooking and healthy eating demonstrations, outdoor movies, Summer Reading Program activities, and other events. No outdoor space conducive to this effort exists at the current library.</p>

<i>The site is too close to the railroad tracks.</i>	The current library is 214 feet from the railroad tracks. The proposed site is 214 from the railroad tracks. If you look at the portion of the site which would actually be used for library purposes, it is 263 feet from the railroad tracks. The noise will be no worse than it is now.
<i>The city will be taking away library money by this move.</i>	The City of Wynne provides no direct or indirect funding to the Library at all.
<i>There are insiders making a killing if the library moves.</i>	Please tell us who. We would like to know.

Got more myths that need breaking? Learn the truth for yourself!

Contact John Paul Myrick, Regional Librarian at 870-587-0587

or via e-mail at jpaul@crosscountylibrary.org.