

**REPORT OF THE
LIBRARY SITE PLANNING COMMITTEE**

SEPTEMBER 13, 2004

Members:

Paul Bell
Richard Cheek
Vera Dreyer*
Jennifer Mugar Flaherty
Mike Flamang
Martha Gallagher
Marcie Schorr Hirsch
Mary Ann Johnson
Mike Speidel*

WW design team:

Sarah Whiting
Ron Witte

Our process:

- Investigate and hone library siting alternatives
- Identify important requirements and tradeoffs; create draft plan
- Solicit informal feedback from key constituents
- Finalize and propose plan to Board of Selectmen

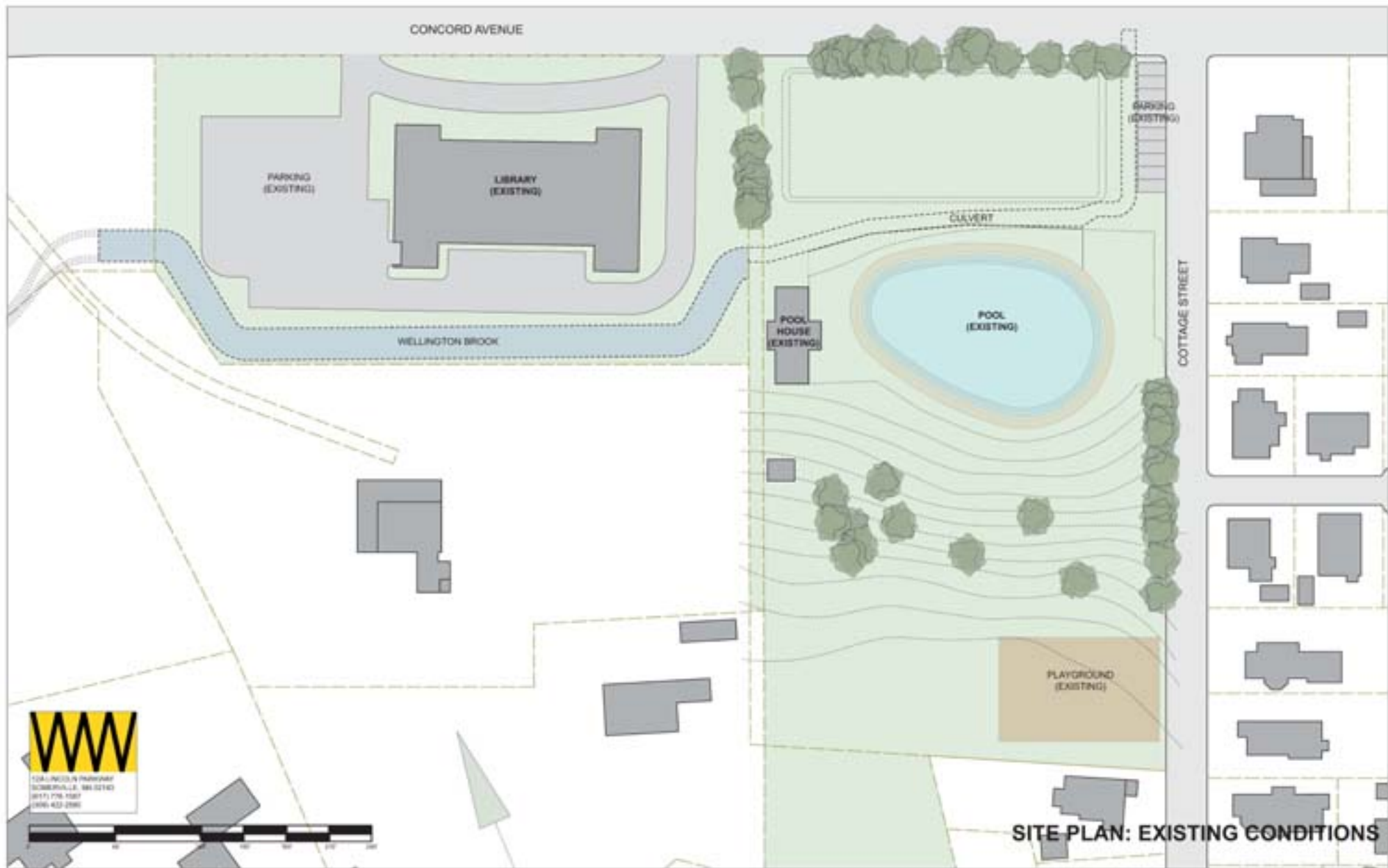
* Co-chairs

Library's design parameters:

- Existing library: 28,000 square feet on 2 ½ stories with 45 parking spaces (+10 Cottage Street)
- New or expanded library:
 - ⇒ 50,000 square feet on two stories
 - ⇒ 100+ parking spaces
 - ⇒ Walking distance to Belmont High School and Chenery Middle School

Potential sites reviewed:

- Acquire Concord Avenue two-family; switch library and JV soccer field
- Switch library and Hittinger Field
- Electric Light Department site
- Our Lady of Mercy site
- Pleasant Street
- Existing library parcel
 - ⇒ Self-contained; or
 - ⇒ Parking to east on “golden bowl”; and/or
 - ⇒ Parking to west on unutilized Armenian Church land
 - ⇒ Difficulty in matching existing floor heights if expansion
 - ⇒ Relocation and book storage costs during construction
- Entire L-shaped town-owned Underwood property including existing library, pool, playground and golden bowl



Existing characteristics of L-shaped site:

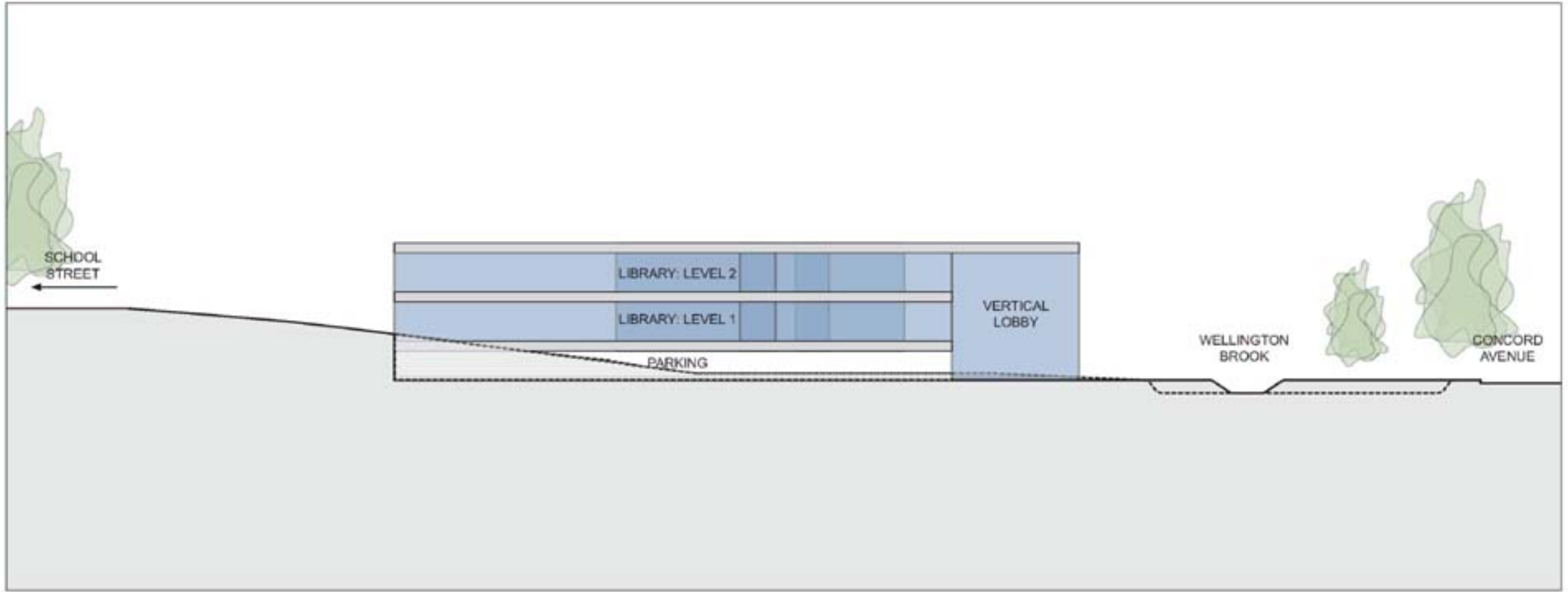
- Centrality and proximity to other important municipal uses
- Historical significance associated with Underwood estate and gift
- Relatively new and well-sited playground – but...
- Undersized library
 - ⇒ Space-constrained
 - ⇒ Internal flow and control only fair
 - ⇒ Inadequate parking
- Outmoded pool
 - ⇒ Continual need to resurface
 - ⇒ Small effective size of deep end due to floor curvature
 - ⇒ Bathhouse undersized and does not meet current code
 - ⇒ Inadequate parking
 - ⇒ Periodic stormwater runoff from hill into pool
 - ⇒ Ongoing Board of Health concerns
- Low-quality open space
 - ⇒ Disjointed
 - ⇒ Not user-friendly
- Flood control constriction point in existing box culvert
- Proximity to residential abutters
- Disconnected from “swing” parking available at Wellington School

But from planning standpoint, presents wonderful opportunity to problem-solve and thus improve existing characteristics...

“Synergistic” planning objectives:

- Site new library and pool facility
 - ⇒ Meet library design parameters
 - ⇒ Avoid library relocation and storage costs
 - ⇒ Achieve programmatic requirements for pool and bathhouse
 - ⇒ Improve parking capacity for both uses
- Respect historical context
- Knit together site components and circulation – library, pool, playground, open space – in coherent park-like setting
 - ⇒ Plus swing parking at pending Wellington School project
- Utilize rather than fight site topography – hill, brook
- Improve environmental aspects of site, including flood storage capacity
- Minimize visual and traffic impacts on residential abutters
- Improve views to and from historic Underwood house
- Provide potential for future library expansion
- If possible, replicate prospect of additional recreation use, including outdoor skating





SITE SECTION: PROPOSAL A & B



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Perspectives of particular constituents:

Conservation: Mike Flamang

Historic: Paul Bell

Library: Hal Shubin

Recreation: Mary Ann Johnson

Conclusions:

- Our recommendation
 - ⇒ achieves the program requirements,
 - ⇒ enhances significantly the existing site in many important respects, and
 - ⇒ honors our historic heritage
- Is suitable for State library grant application
- Presents a special opportunity to improve the quality of life for Belmont community