

# Public Comments from the Site Selection Meeting for the Newcastle Library

Tuesday, March 21, 6:30-8pm

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**Following presentations by Mayor Garber and Darby Watson, on behalf of the City, and Dri Ralph, on behalf of the King County Library System (KCLS), the following public questions and/or comments were made:**

- ◆ I want to raise concern following a red flag from yesterday's special City Council meeting when the Newcastle City Manager refused to define an upper limit dollar amount for the Civic Center project. It is important to get a handle on these costs, so it doesn't simply become irrelevant and justified after the fact. Other financial risks the City may be exposed, that the City may or may not be able to accept, needs to be nailed down now.
- ◆ It seems to me that the site KCLS has seems to work the best. The main reason for me, is that the City (bless them for trying to do something good) has thrown a curveball late in the game. I also agree with the financial comments mentioned before. I am pushing for the site near Washington Mutual.
- ◆ As someone who visits the library with my kids weekly, I'd like to think that I'm a big part of KCLS' target audience. I vote for the City's plan. As a stay at home mom, I need a central place to go. I would love to be able to take my kids to the park, to the library and to get something to eat. I currently go outside the City to do things. The only place to meet other moms is at Lake Boren Park, but it rains too much around here. I liked the renderings pictures shown of outside the library at the Civic Center.
- ◆ When I was thinking about what I wanted to say, my mom's words of wisdom came to mind: There's nothing like a crisis to promote prayer. Since the City's inception crises have been identified through Blue Ribbon committees and documentation galore. It is vital that the City promotes economic development at the core. Now, along comes the perfect alignment with the promise of funds from Sound Transit and plans for a new library in Newcastle. The first step toward answering the prayer for economic development was presented as a Civic Center today.
- ◆ I served on the Planning Commission and saw the CBC Plan come to life. I see an opportunity to start seeing that plan reach fruition and have mixed use in that will serve as a lead for future development. It would be sad to miss out on the synergies.
- ◆ I served on the Planning Commission and City Council, but declined to run for office last year. I'd like to thank the Board for this very public site selection process. I support the Donner site, because it allows a library to be built on a site KCLS controls. I believe bond money is at risk in the City's proposal. The City Manager has been working on this conceptual idea since November 2004. The proposed Civic Center has grown in size, cost and risk for City and KCLS. There are high initial costs for site acquisition, relocation of businesses and demolition of the current buildings. After well over a year, it remains a conceptual idea, with no solid numbers, which is why the City is asking for more time. The City has asked to retain the air rights and will assume the downside risks, but KCLS must consider if the City can meet their financial commitments.

- ◆ I've been a resident for eight years. If there is one thing that is apparent by the turnout it's that everyone cares about the library. It will take KCLS two to three years to build on vacant site. The argument to build on vacant site is quite strong. I see the Donner site as a pedestal awaiting a monument. Newcastle needs a library and hopefully it will happen sooner rather than later.
- ◆ I am presenting the following declaration on behalf of Mr. Jim Denton, owner of the parcels the proposed Civic Center is built upon:

*I am the co-owner of three properties in Newcastle that the Newcastle City Council and City Manager are attempting to secure for a civic development. The three major properties in question are: #28240592, #2724059070 and #2724059069. The current major full time businesses on these properties are: Newport Manufacturing, Precision Auto Craft and Acorn Custom Cabinetry. We currently have long-term leases with businesses on these properties that I am required to honor. These three properties provide the financial livelihood for over 60 families. These properties annually provide over \$30,000.00 in property tax revenues to the City of Newcastle, King County and all of its subsidiaries, including the KCLS and others. Additionally, these businesses generate tens of thousands of sales tax revenue for Newcastle and King County. My co-owners and I have our own "long range" financial plans. We are intending to address re-development plans for these properties in approximately 5 years. The possible future plans may include but not limited to a multiple story; office retail, residential and other civic facilities. At this time, I and my co-owners have expressed no "voluntary" interest in selling these properties to the City of Newcastle or any "consortium" of buyers involving the City of Newcastle. Absent the act of public condemnation by the City of Newcastle, I and my partners are not a "willing sellers."*

- ◆ I've been a resident since 1970 and appreciate having a library in near proximity on Newport Way, but I'm looking forward to having one closer. I do take exception to the comparative analysis and am concerned about safety of access to the vacant site. I feel the Board has failed to cooperate in the past, and only recently has taken into consideration Newcastle's long-range plans. The loss in that is the Civic Center is going to be dynamic with varied uses and users that will be highly likely to use a library. The synergy at the Civic Center site will potentially be lost if library proceeds to locate on the vacant lot. Several areas of the site selection analysis are erroneous. Visibility and capacity are essentially equal on both sites; the City site should be rated higher and the vacant site lower in terms of access and safety considerations; the vacant lot is more remote from the City center, so its centrality should be downgraded; based on uncertainties related to infrastructure, it is unfair to rate one site above another. If the City is willing to make long-term lease to library the sites should rank equally. With those changes the sum turns to 23 for the vacant site and 26 for the City site.
- ◆ I've been involved in planning events for the Parks Commission events and know the enthusiasm this community has about getting together. I am very excited to know the library is coming and am excited to see growth in the community. I would tend to agree with what has been said about the comparative analysis. I think people have looked at it in their quarters without giving it full consideration. I'm feeling an overwhelming weight in the direction other than my preference. I like the Civic Center concept and believe in our City's vision. The availability of property presents a quick easy fix that is something different than I had hoped. I feel somewhat on the losing side, but in the sense of negotiation, will there be consideration for mixed use (i.e. City Hall) on the Donner property? It is wonderful to know what the property owner really feels and I was excited

to hear that they have plans for development in the future. I won't lose hope that the City will have something happen on that site.

- ◆ The site selection analysis seems subjective and not a fair assessment based on unknowns admitted by staff. I question the actual number of parking stalls available at the Civic Center site and would argue that the transit oriented design of the Civic Center site should increase its accessibility rating. My other comment is that, under site infrastructure, KCLS has conducted a phase one EIS study. Without conducting the same survey on the Denton property, how can you rate them? I know KCLS feels they are respecting the vision of the community by using the vacant site, but in fact, the site proposed does not respect that vision. My background is public health and I tend to take a holistic look at the impact of development on public health. The civic complex has the potential for making a more livable community. Possible benefits for current and future residents include positive impacts on physical activity, by making destinations walkable. It can also impact air quality, by making the bus a more viable alternative for users. Civic complexes are trip generators, are good for mental health and social capital, and increase safety for pedestrians. Research also indicates that mixed use development ensures people are in the spaces all the time, which helps to reduce crime and increase feelings of safety. This decision represents an opportunity for KCLS that's happened in other communities. Maybe it's late in game to make it happen, but it's not too late.
- ◆ I've lived in community for 13 years and came to every meeting when the City was being formed. I certainly appreciate economic development, but the key word is livability. Coal Creek Parkway is the biggest impediment to livability in the City. I'm opposed to any library closer to Coal Creek than it has to be. If you can't tell, I'm going for the Donner property. Are there any single dwelling houses near the City's proposed site? No. The Donner property is more remote, which means it's more serene. I'm not concerned about mixed use, but am concerned about public funds being invested in a property with a private investment. Public monies are not supposed to be used in a manner that allows accrual to a private entity.
- ◆ I've been a resident of Newcastle for four years and resident of KCLS for 35 years. I'm Chair of the Planning Commission. My concern is that we're at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour of a process that has had very little public input. We had an opportunity a week ago and heard many questions answered and many other raised. KCLS must make a decision on March 28. I'm asking that the decision be postponed another 90 days, so the City can develop the plan with more detailed information. I've been involved in an awful lot of real estate and in regards to public/private partnerships, they are often necessary to get anything done. Newcastle is constrained by land inventory. To take a pristine, vacant open site and plunk down a single use site is a mistake. Whatever happens, each of these sites must be developed to mixed use at the highest density possible.
- ◆ I would like o touch on stewardship, responsible planning and financial responsibility. Stewardship deals with the legacy I'm going to leave my children. We have an opportunity to be responsible stewards to this community. I heard in great numbers when campaigning for City Council this fall that ours is a community focused on the future. We need to be responsible, not just to maintain our quaint woodsy neighborhood, but to consider the legacy we're leaving our children. We're at a turning point to do that. The vision the City is stepping forward with helps accomplish it. In terms of responsible planning, this is where a disparity between the two sites comes in. With the limited amount of space in Newcastle, it would be unfortunate to see another single story, single use building brought in; despite the fact it will be a fantastic amenity to be used in a manner that is great. Wouldn't the City be better served by a library and

some other job-creating entity on the Donner property? The City has conducted a public input process for years regarding the Comprehensive Plan. That input was that the community wants higher density mixed use development in downtown because that's what the future needs to hold to create a community our children can live in well. Regarding financial responsibility, it's important to consider that the cost to the City is an investment. Certainly there are limits, but we need to be responsible in how we're spending. If KCLS takes the Donner property, that land will be removed from the City's tax roll, will remove the possibility of adding jobs to economy and will impact the functionality of the City. I know you're thinking short-term thoughts, but this is about doing the right thing for community today and for the future of downtown.

- ◆ I'm not used to public speaking and strongly wish you would consider the Donner property. The traffic at the intersection and coming up towards golf course is horrendous. KCLS has a serene piece of property and isn't a library more than income. It's also an investment in education and should be a place where children feel calm and comfortable.
- ◆ I'm a resident, but feel torn because KCLS and the City are clients of mine. I really appreciate the fact KCLS picked Newcastle. Newcastle is a unique community with a mixture of really nice residences and very nice homes. Building an urban village is a diversion from previous molds of suburbia. I like the City's idea and hope it happens so I can take the bus to the library. I appreciate KCLS' position; they've been waiting for a year and want to make it happen. I hope the decision can be held off.
- ◆ I live on 129<sup>th</sup> and have been envisioning a lovely library, but I also appreciated the comments about mixed use. I hope to hear more about how the Donner property can be developed as a library with mixed use.
- ◆ I've lived here for 30 years. I'm strongly in favor of the Donner lot because I'm a big advocate of biking or walking where we go. The vacant lot is more accessible to more neighborhoods than the City's site. A study may need to be done to look at the demographics, but based on where residents live, it seems the vacant site is better. I don't think you should have to bring your kids to the library; I'd hope that you could just let them go.
- ◆ I live on SE 88<sup>th</sup> and attended the Planning Commission meeting last week. My wife and I have a letter in today's edition of the King County Journal. As residents since the City incorporated, we support whatever gets the library up and running as fast as possible. Despite the invention of the Internet, I'm finding that my daughters need the library. I'm still faulting the City's plan because their partner, Sound Transit, is not contributing enough information (i.e. where will buses, pedestrian shelters, etc. be put). I would have appreciated having someone from Sound Transit here tonight.
- ◆ I am a 15 year resident and have loved every minute of it. I spent 12 years on the City Council, the past four of which I served a Mayor. I must say this has been one of the best public meetings I've been to. I'm not sure whether it was the library mailer or what, but more people came this evening than any of Newcastle's visioning meetings. The best part of the problem is that the City will get a library. I am excited that safety improvements from Coal Creek Parkway are being funded after lobbying congressmen and getting federal funding. I believe the Coal Creek Parkway projects should be the City's primary focus. I was one of the dissenting votes at last night's special City Council meeting. I am concerned about the City proposal because there are too many unanswered questions. I don't want to take away from the merits of a potential civic

center, but the library is ahead of us. There is nothing wrong with the vacant parcel. I may be biased because I have a spouse reading two books a day and children who love to visit the library. I want the new library before my kids graduate from high school. My unofficial opinion is that the library site doesn't put cold water on the City's proposal. Not having the library is not a death nail to the civic center. The civic center just needs more homework. I'm encouraging KCLS to build at the Donner site.

- ◆ I've been a councilmember since the City's incorporation and served as mayor. I strongly favor the request by the City Council that KCLS give us 90 days to answer the questions that have been asked. We in Newcastle have been very supportive of this library. Many of us went and rang doorbells in 2004 to make sure residents voted. I'm pleased to report that the 65% "yes" vote in Newcastle was the highest approval rating in KCLS' service area. I'm asking the Board for 90 days to ask the question: Can it be done? Newcastle is a "can do" city and can do it in a way that makes it right for everyone. The library will site where it is in their best interest. The YWCA is located on the east side of Coal Creek Parkway. We will do our part to make sure people can walk or bike throughout Newcastle.
- ◆ I've heard a lot about the CBC plan being a great work by many people. My husband and I worked hard to get the bond measure passed. We put signs out because we wanted the new library and we want it to happen within our lifetime. Newcastle officials are saying they've been supportive, but at the meetings they haven't been communicative. The City has had enough time. KCLS has a good site and ought to use it now. I've heard concerns expressed about people using public transportation. There is a bus stop near the Donner station right now. For those who want to walk to library, the Donner site has the tightest connection with the Newcastle trail system. You're not going to get to the City site on Newcastle trails. The main thing that speaks in favor of the Donner site is that the Library will own it. KCLS has its own mission and users know what they want the library to do. It also works as a civic center if the City chooses to co-locate. I want a library and I want it soon.
- ◆ I'm here to speak to the opportunity a library brings to the civic center. As Deputy Mayor during adoption of the City's planning documents, I would be shocked if any councilmember would want to take property out of our tax rolls. I also believe Mr. Dulcich should disclose that he is the developer of property near the Donner lot, so he is very biased. Development of a civic center is a higher risk situation, but we need to be willing to take some risk. None of the features of the newly opened Sound Transit Center in Sammamish occurred without risk. Do not be afraid of urban living. I encourage you to have an open mind and encourage KCLS to give the City another 90 days. Such extensions happen in other projects where necessary and valuable dialogue is needed.
- ◆ I've lived here for 34 years and have concerns. First, why does the City need 90 more days? They've been planning for how long and still don't have answers to our questions. I don't think you should have 90 more days. You should have already had the answers. KCLS shouldn't have to wait. Why are they trying to build on the Denton property, when they turned down an offer to build City Hall on the four-acre lot where the YWCA is building their facility? I also want to know, since I'm a close personal friend of the Denton family, who doesn't want to sell and have been verbally threatened, why the City stood up and lied about a letter of intent.
- ◆ I am a member of the City Council and was a dissident to the resolution at last night's special meeting. I am a former Planning Commission Chair with a background as an attorney and a businessman. The Denton site is not ready for primetime, period. No

feasibility studies have been conducted, so it is uncertain if the sites are appropriate for development. The cost of the site is also unknown. If the City moves forward with condemnation proceedings, they'll likely encounter legal difficulties. I've experienced a number of situations where major developments didn't pan out. You're never sure what you'll find out or how long it'll take. The project needs to be carefully vetted. The Donner property is excellent, vacant and easy to develop. The KCLS Board should explore co-development on that site. The City wants a 10,000-square-foot City Hall with capacity for a 5,000-square-foot expansion, as does the library. The Denton property is not suitable. There is a dispute about the owners' desires. What about the status of the transit center? The Renton Transit Center is a major crime site right now; so much so, that they're piping classical music as a deterrent. Behind the City's site is an industrial zone with Mayflower trucks zooming by. Is the KCLS Board willing to accept the risks, delays of a year or more and forfeiture of option payments? I'd like to remind you that the residents of Newcastle never voted for urban village or a civic plaza, but a year and half ago residents voted for a library and deserve to have it.

- ◆ I am really looking forward to having a library. I've lived here for two years. I moved here from Seattle and am knowledgeable about local governments' ability to drag on projects. Here we have an agency ready and able to move forward, so let them. I loved living in a high density area in Seattle, but left there to come here. I'm not looking for it again. I like the concept of two stories being built on the Donner property. I think we've missed the boat about creating a civic center around the YMCA; or will we go in at the last hour to partner with them? You may also be familiar with the recent Supreme Court decision related to condemnation. If such action is taken, the City could face lawsuits that would drag this project on even longer.
- ◆ I was hired as a consultant by the City of Newcastle and have no interest in what site is selected as my firm will not ultimately be selected to build the complex. With that said, when trying to create urban development, what you need is scale. The Denton property offers a chance of scale. You need enough uses to create synergies. If you add a library, a city hall, a transit center, housing and retail, the synergy begins to work. What mixed-uses can do is create a seed for an urban center, but it's up to you to decide. If you say, "Maybe we can do urban development on the Donner property," your chances are less likely for retail, etc. on a larger scale. From a feasibility standpoint, this is hard. No developments are easy, and all happen at glacial pace. You need patience. This project as a civic center may not work, but it may. Will the City's site be redeveloped during the next five or 10 years without the library? Maybe. If Denton's think they can develop the parcels by themselves, it takes a big economic development swing, which is difficult for a private developer.
- ◆ As a consultant in economic development policy, which is about building a city, we don't see a civic center type of development happening on the Donner site. The library is an integral part of creating the vision and scale of development. Most cities are in a position where they're asking, "Where did things go wrong?" Newcastle, however, is in a unique position to establish the City the way they want to make it, by allowing properties to develop in the size and scale you want. These properties will develop one way or another. Actively participating gives you a chance of having development work the way you want.

**The following comments were made via the Comment Card form following the meeting:**

- ◆ The vacant site is wonderful! Close to shopping, eating and Lake Boren! It will foster community every bit as much as the City's proposed site. Don't let the City intimidate you! The City's proposed site has too many unknowns. Likely more expensive, could come upon so many problems and obstacles. I don't like that the owners of the property are reluctant. That is not good community behavior.
- ◆ The vacant site is the preferred site. Consider mixed use (i.e. library/city hall). I live on this street.
- ◆ I prefer the vacant site – a great use for this property. There are too many variables and unknowns on the City's proposed site.
- ◆ Please don't hold up the library. Build it on the vacant site. More people have walking/biking access here than the other site. I want my kids to be able to use it before they grow up. The City doesn't own their proposed site.
- ◆ Go with the vacant site now. An outdoor setting for reading and talking would be great.
- ◆ I think the vacant site is the better choice.
- ◆ The vacant site is the only viable site. I want the Library Board to conserve the money they would lose by giving the City any extension of time. The civic center is a nice long-range idea, not dependent on the library. Mixing library and transit is not a good mixed-use for children.
- ◆ I am strongly in favor of the vacant site. It is more accessible to more neighborhoods. Parents will allow their kids to walk and bike to this site and won't feel compelled to drive them. In addition, I believe we'll have a library a lot sooner with this site. I'm very concerned about the complex acquisition process for the City's proposed site. I also believe that is a more congested area. I would strongly oppose any condemnation efforts.
- ◆ I vote for the vacant site. KCLS has all their ducks in a row whereas there are too many questions unanswered by the City. If you take away all the "stuff" and look at what is most important, getting a library in Newcastle, then the vacant site is the choice location. As for waiting 90 days, would that be fiscally responsible?
- ◆ I, for one, believe that a library should be a quiet, peaceful place where people can relax and possibly do their work without the tension and "excitement" of a busy city center where the noise may distract the people, especially the ones reading a good, at least 15-chapter-book. The vacant site is very good, matching this description of a perfect library. I do not think the City's proposed site is a wise choice.
- ◆ I prefer the vacant site because a library is supposed to be a quiet area, not among a beehive of activities. There is too much risk with the City's proposed site to stomach.
- ◆ The vacant site is excellent. Good visibility from Coal Creek, good access, buildable immediately. If the library is here and a Civic Center is on the City-favored site, there is still excellent pedestrian access between the two sites. You can see one from the other too. There is too much uncertainty about project cost and timeframe on the City-

proposed site. I am reluctant to see public and private money mixed in the project. The Civic Center is a good goal and can still happen in the future without the library. I don't think the City should be granted a 90 day extension to continue planning on this site. Select the vacant site now and build our library now!

- ◆ I disapprove of the City-proposed site. It rates lower on KCLS' site evaluation and traffic impacts caused by proposed Sound Transit facility and condos have not been provided. Testimony the other night by resident citing conflicts with Golf Course traffic are very valid. Too long of delays while the City acquires property, demolishes and such. I approve strongly the vacant site. Let's start to build and open library ASAP. Best access for many Newcastle using pedestrian or bicycle means. Convenient to McDonalds, Safeway shopping complex and Lake Boren Park. Existing streets will handle library traffic much better than east side of Coal Creek.

# E-Mail Comments

## regarding site selection for the Newcastle Library

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### March 19, 2006

- ◆ I am a resident of Newcastle concerned about the development of the downtown area. I am thrilled that the King County Library System has agreed to supply us with a library branch! I would like to voice my support for the Newcastle City Council's request that the library be built as part of a multi-use complex. Currently, there is very little character to "Downtown Newcastle" and I would relish a lovely plaza for the library, Sound Transit, City Hall, retail space and public areas. You and your fellow trustees are in the privileged position of offering a wonderful public service while beautifying a relatively unattractive, non-pedestrian-friendly intersection. There is not a lot of open land for building in downtown Newcastle. A multi-use building is the best use of our city's land, as we need to maximize what is available in planning for future growth. Please work with our City Council and Sound Transit to make the Newcastle Branch of the King County Library System something really special!

### March 20, 2006

- ◆ I strongly favor the west site for the new library - the Donner property west of the WaMu bank. Judging by KCLS' comparison matrix, the west site wins on nearly every point. I'd like to add three more:
  - DELAY: Like most folks in Newcastle, I'm eager for the new library. I want it constructed ASAP. Choosing the Civic Center alternative opens the door to endless delays. I share the concerns voiced by some citizens (and Planning Commission and Council members) at last Wednesday's PC meeting that: the proposed Civic Center may not pencil out financially; may not get public support; may lack (or preclude) the people-friendly spaces of Newcastle's existing CBD plan. Lots of hurdles and possible delays.
  - LIBRARY DESIGN: On its own site, the library can be designed with library uses in mind. The design can be shaped to suit KCLS, library staff, and (hopefully) the public. The alternative must accommodate more constraints: it must satisfy Council and staff (some with strong egos and opinions), consultants, a developer, Transit Center needs, and so on. Amenities (skylights, a sloped roof/ceiling, etc.) may be impossible. Too many cooks spoil the broth.
  - PEDESTRIAN ACCESS: The west site is closest to the most densely populated neighborhoods (Hazelwood, Olympus Newport Hills) and these are linked to the site by easy trails and sidewalks. There's a sidewalk connection from the old and new Hazelwood Schools along Newcastle Way. And the heavily-used Waterline Trail runs south from Newport Hills past Hazelwood to Lake Boren Park and Olympus, just west of the Donner site. There's a planned condo development a short distance south. When complete, it will offer short trails to Lake Boren and the 10-acre School Woods - a chance for library patrons to stretch their legs and enjoy a bit of nature.Although I'm a long-time member of various civic organizations, the opinions expressed above are entirely my own; I'm not speaking for anyone else.

### March 21, 2006

- ◆ Away from the tumult in the ballroom I would simply state that we, the residents of Newcastle and immediate area, want the library to be constructed as quickly as possible on any site to which the Library System has free title. I am very familiar with both the suggested locations. The City of Newcastle's choice is nice, a fairly decent location, but is and no doubt will be embroiled for months if not years in supposition and potential litigation. It is obvious that the City wants the Library System dollars as well as those of King County Transit in order to realize a dream which is fairly new and poorly planned. When KCLS appeared in the picture the City rushed forward with an idea that would take months if not years to develop. The City plan is short sighted, there is, first of all, insufficient parking. Then talking about green areas, outdoor tables and chairs, even water fountains and kids rushing around unattended, all this midst the diesel fumes of King County Transit busses, arriving departing and turning 'round. Tonight, the open meeting was almost a farce. The proponents of the City plan were either City employees, shills for the City, Consultants, Architects and other beneficiaries of the City plan, even a mother with noisy children who mouthed what amounted to almost a plea to adopt the City plan and who later turned out to be the wife of a Newcastle Council member who was a loud proponent of the City plan. Yet you also heard the taxpayers. Those who opted for the Donner site. The same people who will shoulder the taxes for the Bond moneys you will be using. And the taxpayers will own the Donner site, profit from its development and the increases in value. Please don't waste the deposit money; please don't waste the extra time and dollars to allow the City of Newcastle to get on with what it should have had completed years ago. Please use this taxpayer money wisely, develop the Donner site and give us our Library.

## **March 22, 2006**

- ◆ Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the site selection for the new library at Newcastle. The size and quality of KCLS has been the biggest single factor in our choice to live in King County rather than elsewhere in Western Washington. We are heavy users of the Newport Way library, volunteering there for over seven years and working hard on the last bond campaign. As 25-year residents of the Newcastle area, we are very excited about having a library so near our home. We hope you will decide to build on the vacant site at 129th Avenue SE rather than at the proposed site on 132nd Place SE. Your analysis of the two locations correctly gives preference to the Donner parcel in terms of visibility, capacity, availability, and construction costs. It is also more attractive in terms of access because of its proximity to the Waterline Trail, a pedestrian artery that links to the extensive trail systems of both Newcastle and Bellevue. More critically, the west site gives the library control of its destiny through ownership of its location. The City of Newcastle presents a charming vision of a civic center on the alternate site, but it has made no concrete progress toward realizing the dream. Months before the public approved money for construction of the library, the City was promising to find a suitable site, but even now they have no firm commitment to purchase land. With building costs rising every year, the City's foot-dragging could soon price the library project out of the KCLS budget. The exigencies of the City's ongoing project to widen Coal Creek Parkway will continue to dominate its thinking and budget for the next several years. Beyond that there are other major infrastructure issues which could overshadow the needs of the library far into the future. Being yoked in co-tenancy to the City of Newcastle presents more problems than benefits for KCLS. Far from destroying the City's hopes for a civic center, going forward with library construction on the Donner site will force the City to reconsider its current concept and find a less problematic location - one more suited to a 4.5 square mile town. It has been obvious at the two recent public meetings that, if you shut the city council in a closet, the general public in

this area strongly favors the location west of Coal Creek Parkway. Please heed to voices of your real constituents, the people of Newcastle, by choosing to build on the vacant site at 129th Avenue SE.

- ◆ I attended the meeting at the golf course last night and wish to make a couple of comments. When I also attended the planning commission meeting last week I was leaning toward the City's proposed site. However, after reflecting on the two properties it seems that the correct decision is to build the best looking/functioning building possible (given the budget) on the vacant property next to the Washington Mutual bank lot. That lot would allow you to build an inspiring design that becomes the design center point of Newcastle. The building would need to make an individual statement much like the Bellevue, Issaquah or the new downtown library buildings. This site requires great care and sensitivity to position the building to give it character, elegance, inspiration, and uniqueness. If on the other hand you are going to build a squat little square building (like the Newport library) which can later have another story plopped on top (such as city hall) then you might as well build over on the city's site. I think most of us would be terribly disappointed to see just another "economical" box with two floors, one for the library and one for the city. The building needs vaulted ceilings with lots of windows letting in light and views of the outdoors. Its architectural elements should be both modern and historical to NW roots of wood and stone. The problem with the city's site is that it is back off the main road and in an industrial location that is not interesting. I live on the east side of Coal Creek and drive by that location twice a day. It just does not have any possibilities like the other site does. If they plop 24 condo units on top of the library then that design would have to be just another vertical box building with the library on the bottom floor which means it would not have its own design identity; the library would be lost in the conglomeration. We want a beautiful, distinctive library building that is not compromised by other economic agendas of co-location. The library building must stand alone (or maybe in front of) from city hall. I support the city's effort to develop its plan, even to the point of condemning the private property in the area. This redevelopment will happen sooner or later as the value of the land increases over the years, but these other goals should not compromise the design integrity of the library building.
- ◆ I attended the Public Meeting at Newcastle Golf Club for the selection of a site for our Newcastle library. I was impressed by your staff's presentation and the numbers of citizens in attendance, but I also was disappointed by the extraordinary number of Newcastle city officials there. It appeared that their proposal was in trouble and full of uncertainties, therefore they would sway the decision by sheer numbers. I voted and lobbied for votes to get a library for our "Jr. City" and now that we succeeded, let's go with the plan and build at your chosen location: **Vacant Site 129th Ave SE**. The 11<sup>th</sup> hour counter proposal submitted by the city appears to be full of pitfalls and uncertainties, to jeopardize what appears like a slam dunk location, would be very unfair to the citizens that voted for it. As a resident of Newcastle area for almost 35 years, I saw many changes to our community, many not so good, but having the Library in our neighborhood would atone for many misdeeds. I can assure you that many of my neighbors feel the same way, but were unable to attend last night. My best regards to you and keep up the great work.
- ◆ Last evening my husband and I attended a Newcastle community meeting at Newcastle Golf Course. The agenda for the evening was the site for the new Newcastle Library. I was one of the many community residents who overwhelmingly voted to have our own library. So, I wondered, what's the fuss? I strongly support and recommend the vacant site on 129<sup>th</sup> Avenue S.E. You have done your homework which was evident to myself

and the many citizens present. As an educator, avid reader and member of a book club, I realize only too well the important role libraries play in all of our lives. Recently, on one of my many trips to your Newport Way Library, it was so crowded that I had to double park until a parking space was available. Too as you know, that library has extended their hours to try and meet the demand for its services. Again I hereby give my vote for you to begin construction on the Newcastle King County Library on the vacant site at 129th Avenue SE.

- ◆ Although I didn't speak at last night's meeting, I'd like to add my voice in support of the western site (the Donner property) for Newcastle's library. I strongly oppose any delay in the site selection process. And I'm against co-locating the library and city hall, given the inevitable delays and compromises. This is Newcastle's chance for an architectural gem, in harmony with the building's function and site. Great new libraries have been springing up all over the County; why not in Newcastle? I've lived here since 1980: a Newcastle founder; chair of our first Parks Committee; president of Newcastle Trails, vice president of the Hazelwood Community Association, a member of the Parks Commission. The opinions expressed here are purely my own, but they're based on a long involvement in civic affairs. I support the vision of a compact downtown with multiple-use buildings. But the plan put forth by city officials is premature, financially risky, and deeply flawed. It does NOT realize the vision of the CBC plan; it repudiates it. The vision is an attractive people-centered core; a focal point; a gathering place. Other towns have village greens, with grass and trees, or urban plazas with fountains; Newcastle's CBC plan calls for a central spine. An attractive spine that invites a tree-shaded stroll north towards Coal Creek Park. Strollers shielded from traffic noise. Benches, a sidewalk cafe, sculptures, and maybe a child-friendly fountain. The plan as proposed replaces the strollable spine with a large building and a parking lot. The "public space" is reduced to a strip mall on the south and a short pass through between buildings, with vistas of parked cars. Traffic noise from the Parkway will be reflected along the strip mall and funneled into the library. The heart of the vision - the people-friendly outdoor gathering place - is lost, and this impairs the commercial viability of the rest. Newcastle has a poor track record with visionary projects. Public inputs are solicited and endorsed - and ignored. For example, the Lake Boren Esplanade was envisioned as a tree-shaded promenade along the eastern shore, buffered from the Parkway by berms and plantings. The Esplanade was used to justify the city's decision to become lead agency for the Parkway. But what we got was a noisy and expensive sidewalk. When we used it for a Volksmarch, walkers complained; now we've changed the route to avoid it. I doubt that Newcastle has at present the staff, financial strength, and public support needed to build a city hall, let alone a civic center. Our tax base is limited. Per capita spending on essential services is low; when I last compared us with Bellevue, we were at 50% on fire and police, and 10% on parks and trails. We have a deficit in neighborhood parks, and none of the trails identified in our Comprehensive Plan is complete (fully city-controlled, adequately signed, and maintained). While our staff keeps busy with the Parkway, smaller projects funded for completion in past years (Hazelwood Trail, Terrace Trail...) remain undone. As do the basics: the Council voted for a long-overdue park sign standard a year ago, but we still have no specifications and no signs. Financially, Newcastle has taken responsibility for cost overruns on the Parkway; we anticipate a non-motorized transportation plan (sidewalks and bike trails) and a major sports facility. Yet Newcastle's ability to maintain existing park and trail facilities has been questioned. Before launching big new projects, the city needs to cost them out, identify the risks (sky-high taxes, service cuts, bankruptcy?), and ask the citizens what they want - and are willing to pay. There are strong arguments for a stand-alone library on the Donner site:

- LIBRARY DESIGN: A stand-alone library can be shaped by KCLS for library uses, with inputs from the public (I trust KCLS' public process), but WITHOUT constraints from public officials, their consultants, developers, and others. The architect will be free to add skylights, a sloped roof/ceiling, green-building facilities and/or other amenities.
  - PEDESTRIAN ACCESS: The Donner site is closest to the most densely populated neighborhoods (Hazelwood, Olympus, Newport Hills); and these are linked to the site by easy trails and sidewalks. There's a sidewalk connection from the old and new Hazelwood Schools along Newcastle Way. And the heavily-used Waterline Trail runs south from Newport Hills past Hazelwood to Lake Boren Park and Olympus, just west of the Donner site. A short distance south, a planned condo development will offer short trails to Lake Boren and the 10-acre School Woods just west of 129th. Library users will be able to stretch their legs and enjoy a bit of close-by nature.
  - TRANSIT: In speaking with planner Darby Watson today, I learned that the transit center will be much smaller than I'd thought - little more than a drive-in bus stop and it'll be slow in coming. There's already a bus stop on the Donner site.
  - CENTRALITY: A shopping arcade anchored by Safeway is right across the street (plus Starbucks, Subway, Yea's restaurant, Blockbuster, etc.). The existing/proposed city hall is a short block-and-half away. And the library will have easy access to whatever mixed-use development arises on the northern lake shore.
- I look forward to a splendid new library. The sooner, the better.

### **March 22, 2006**

- ◆ I attended the meeting at the Newcastle Golf Club on March 21. After listening to both sides, I would like to vote for the Donner site. I'd like to see the library get started as soon as possible. I see no reason why this lot couldn't be used as a multi-use site. After listening to the several moms who spoke, I'd like to propose that the library team up with a cafe to offer a family friendly place to eat lunch or dinner. Something other than fast food would be nice.

### **March 23, 2006**

- ◆ I attended the town meeting on Tuesday night and enjoyed the discussion. Thank you for holding the meeting. I favor the vacant site on 129<sup>th</sup> Avenue. I don't see much difference between the two sites with regard to user convenience, but I think this site has much less construction risk. I fear that the unknowns with the City-proposed site cause too much risk and potential delay. However, doing some type of joint project with the City on the 129<sup>th</sup> site sounds appealing. Perhaps a joint library/city hall building. I do not think you should delay the decision for another 90 days as the City has requested. Thank you. I look forward eagerly to using the new library.
- ◆ Thank you for the public presentation on the proposed library sites for the Newcastle library on Monday at the Newcastle Golf Club. It was, to say the least, an interesting meeting with, as you undoubtedly know, many people with strong feelings favoring each of the two sites. I did not speak at the meeting, but I did want to take this opportunity to urge the Board to continue with the acquisition of the site you have an option on and speedily complete the new branch as a separate building. While I do not object to joint projects and think they can work nicely, I do not believe that the City of Newcastle is truly ready for such an undertaking. When you consider the shaky funding, the apparent lack of firm commitment from the transit authorities, the opposition of the property owners, the extensive delays for demolition, and possible requirement to mitigate contamination, it all means that going with the city proposal will delay the opening of

the new Newcastle branch library well into the next decade. As a dedicated library user (in the past six months I have used eight different KCLS branches), I am eager for the new Newcastle branch. It will become my home branch. Please do not delay construction of the vital new county library resource.

### **March 24, 2006**

- ◆ We are 10 year residents of Newcastle who attended your meeting on March 21. We are grateful that KCLS has chosen Newcastle to have a new library, regardless of which site is selected. It will be a wonderful addition to our community! It appeared that there was an element of change versus status quo and long term versus short term visioning running through the various speakers' comments. We had to leave around 8:30pm, but based on the information that we heard, we would like to reiterate a recommendation to allow the City to have a 90-day extension before you make your site selection. It appeared that some of the points on the site selection criteria that were given for the City were because of lack of information/analysis. One of the observations that we did not hear regarding safety was that if you choose the vacant site on 129<sup>th</sup> Avenue S.E., wouldn't it be located on the gas pipeline running through that area, or very close to it? It would be helpful if the City could provide more information as to cost/timeline for the Urban Village/Library designs. We were interested in the information the pro-City speakers presented regarding the economic development possibilities for Newcastle for the Urban Village concept, which would also allow more economic development possibilities for the 129<sup>th</sup> Avenue S.E. Site (and perhaps in the long run help with keeping property taxes lower). Thank you for allowing us to comment.

### **March 25, 2006**

- ◆ We have lived in Newcastle for 9 1/2 years and are constant users of the KCLS. Having attended the meeting last Tuesday evening at the Newcastle Golf facility we have determined a site preference for the Newcastle Library. Since the 132<sup>nd</sup> site is clearly not ready for start up for at least several years, and since the 129<sup>th</sup> Street site is available unencumbered with the meter running, it seems prudent to go with either a one-story library or a two-story building that will house both a library and city hall on the 129<sup>th</sup> Street site. Down the road, and just across the street, the City Council can pursue their CBC vision in a less rushed and adversarial posture. And, if the City wants 90 more days to examine the issues, let them pay for the option costs. We appreciate the passionate and extensive input from all the parties involved and look forward to a prompt fiscally and civically responsible resolution to this process.

### **March 25, 2006**

- ◆ I spoke at the meeting held at the Newcastle Golf course. My comments at the meeting were favoring the City of Newcastle's site position. If the decision is for the alternate site West of Coal Creek Parkway then I urge the Library System to make that a multi-use property. The City of Newcastle has such a limited amount of commercial property that it would be like a dagger to the heart of the City if there were no commercial or tax revenue generating use on that property or any commercial/mixed use property in the City. I urge you to strongly consider making your Newcastle Library a multi story - multi use facility and then I would wholeheartedly support any location.

- ◆ I attended the March 21 meeting and here are my comments on the two locations.
- ◆ The City's Proposed Site on 132nd Place SE is my first choice. Due to the shrinking amount of available land, I'm in favor of multi-use, urban village proposal. Since 1994, the City of Newcastle has had various meetings to gather input on the citizens' vision and wants for the city. Newcastle citizens have voiced that they want a central village where they can do multiple things. The city wants three more months to study and secure the site. I say give it to them. We've been talking about a city's vision for 12 years, let's work together to make it happen. Since the City of Newcastle has such a limited amount of commercial property, it would be detrimental if there were no commercial or tax revenue generating use on the 129<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE site. It seemed to me that many of the people in favor of the 129<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE location sited that it had trail access and more people could walk to it. Given that both locations aren't that far away from each other I'm not sure that matters. The 132<sup>nd</sup> Place SE location may not have trails but instead it has sidewalks! Also, there are more apartments and condos within a few blocks of the 132nd location which lead me to believe that there may be more people living closer to this location. If the 132<sup>nd</sup> site is not viable, I would strongly encourage making the Newcastle Library a multi story – multi-use facility. Given the shortage of available land and the requirements of the Growth Management Act, it would seem decadent to build a single story-single use facility. Thank you for your consideration. We eagerly await our new library.

### **March 27, 2006**

- ◆ Last week, I attended the presentation on two potential sites for the Newcastle Library. Before going to the presentation, my wife and I were leaning towards the City site east of Coal Creek Parkway. After hearing comments from concerned citizens, we have changed our opinion about the wisdom of the city sponsored site. We think the KCLS site next to Washington Mutual would be better for our community.
- ◆ I realize my comments may arrive too late as I just noticed that your meeting is today. I am a resident of the City of Newcastle and a KCLS user. I was not able to attend the open meeting that was held on March 21 to discuss the location of the Newcastle Library but I was able to read the packet that was distributed by the City of Newcastle at that meeting. I also have read some of the comments that were included as an attachment to the agenda for today's meeting. Rule number one is that one never knows the whole story--there's always something going on in the background and one is not privy to all the available information. In spite of that disclaimer, I do have a few observations and a recommendation. I am confused as to why this is much ado about nothing. We're not talking about locating the library miles away from the proposed civic center. It's practically within spitting distance. So what if it is not in the same building complex on the same block. Why not widen the focus and look at a civic center that is larger and encompasses several blocks instead of one that is smaller on just one block? Seems to me like the City of Newcastle has not done the necessary planning to build a civic center and may not be ready for years to come. The fact that they don't even own all the property for the city-proposed site. The fact that one of the owners is refusing to sell his property for the civic center site should be a BIG warning flag. RECOMMENDATION: Give the City of Newcastle a specified time period to get all their planning done, including all the purchase of all the property involved. Anywhere from 3 - 6 months (but no longer than 6 months). BUT only go along with that IF the City is willing to pay the \$12,000 per month that KCLS has to pay on the 15<sup>th</sup> of every month to maintain the purchase

option contract for the property that they are proposing for the Newcastle Library. Since this \$12,000 is not refundable and will not apply towards the purchase of the KCLS preferred property, if the City wants more time, give it to them but at a price. KCLS should not have to front the costs for the lack of planning on the part of the City. It reminds me of an old saying: "Lack of planning on your part does not constitute an emergency on my part." Questions? Please let me know. Thanks for your consideration in this matter.