



## Historic Site Preservation Board Staff Report

Date: October 12, 2010

Case No: 5.1032 – HSPB # 3 – Welwood Murray Memorial Library

Application Type: Certificate of Approval

Location: 100 South Palm Canyon Drive

Applicant: City of Palm Springs

Zone: CBD (Central Business District)

General Plan: CBD (Central Business District)

APN: 513-144-006

From: Craig A. Ewing, AICP, Director of Planning Services

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### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The certificate of approval request is for the renovation of the existing 4,030 square foot library facility; new construction equaling 1,589 square feet in the rear courtyard area, demolition of a non-original addition, and building re-paint. The renovation and new construction will include sustainable energy systems enhancing natural light, and provide for new technology upgrades. The interior will be remodeled to provide updated library services. The Welwood Murray Memorial Library is a Class 1 Historic Site.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Historic Site Preservation Board approves the certificate of approval request for the renovation, expansion and related interior and landscape improvements to the existing library, subject to conditions of approval.

### **PRIOR ACTIONS TAKEN ON THE PROJECT**

On October 3, 1984, the City Council voted to designating the property at 100 South Palm Canyon Drive, the Welwood Murray Memorial Library as a Class 7 historic site.

(Subsequent amendments to the Historic Preservation ordinance converted the Class 7 historic designation to Class 1.)

On May 11, 2010, the Historic Site Preservation Board approved a Certificate of Approval for a remodel and expansion of the library.

On July 13, 2010, the HSPB continued a request to amend the 5/11/10 approval, regarding the design and height of the proposed new roof.

On August 4, 2010, the applicant decided to resubmit the entire project for consideration and approval by the Board.

## **BACKGROUND AND SETTING**

### **Welwood Murray Memorial Library**

Shortly after the City's incorporation in 1938, a group of citizens arranged for the donation of land and construction funds to build a permanent public library in the downtown area. George Welwood Murray and Corneilia White gift-deeded an 80' by 100' corner lot, while local residents contributed \$26,500 to erect a 4,500 square foot library. The Murray parcel was accepted by the City after a special election was held in November 1938 which approved the conditions of the gift. The library was designed by John Porter Clark and constructed by Charles Chamberlin.

The new building was completed in 1940 and served as the City's main library until October 1975 when the new library was built at Sunrise Park. For the next ten years the Welwood served as a branch to the main library and was staffed with one paid employee and a pool of volunteers.

Since 1975 there have been a number of attempts to use the library site for non-library purposes. These have included a tourist information center, a restaurant, and commercial development. The property's gift-deed restrictions, its popular history as a library and litigation have precluded any of these proposed uses from occurring.

In September 1984, the Library Board approved the modification to the rear patio so as to be compatible with the new Wessman development named Plaza de Las Flores.

In March of 1987, the City Council requested the Library Board to prepare a recommendation as to whether the library branch should continue to operate as a public library or, instead, be closed and incorporated into the Wessman project. After lengthy deliberations the Library Board strongly encouraged the City Council to develop the Wessman Project around the Library patio area. In October 1987, the City Council acted to close the library.

Citizens groups initiated a lawsuit to prevent the sale of the property, and an injunction was issued which precluded the library closing. The court ultimately ruled that the City

must continue to operate the facility as a public library and the non-library use of the property would not be permitted.

Finally, construction of Plaza Las Flores located adjacent to the Library site included a Redevelopment Participation Agreement dated November 22, 1988 that affects how the library site may be developed. This document, as amended, defines 10-foot wide easement which restricts the building of any structures and allows public access.

## **DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS**

The Welwood Murray Memorial Library was closed in 2009 in anticipation of a complete interior renovation project. In establishing the new program for the renovation, the City determined that as a branch library, the Welwood Murray Memorial Library should no longer be simply book collections, but should evolve into a destination that simultaneously provides a portal to other places, a space for civic engagement and a locus of urban vitality. Consequently, the existing configuration of tall dark book stacks, ordered seating and a large central reference desk would no longer serves the needs of library patrons.

Looking forward, the applicant proposes the availability of modern connectivity through computers and Internet access, as well as comfortable seating that encourages connections between people and information as well as people with each other. This adaptive reuse of the interior preserves the main building, while offering various book and media options, flexible space and self-service capabilities. In addition, a small dedicated community room is proposed at the west end of the building.

The proposal is to construct a 1,589 square foot addition to the rear of the building in the existing courtyard. The existing library building includes a structure commonly named the Billie Lu Floan Room which will be demolished to make room for the addition. The portion proposed to be demolished was added sometime in the 1950's; a building permit cannot be located.

The new addition includes a curvilinear glass wall facing the interior plaza, while the new roof will join the main structure just below edge of the existing roof, above the existing transom windows. The addition will extend twenty-five (25) feet out into the courtyard area, but does not encroach into the Redevelopment Participation Agreement ten (10) foot access easement.

The new structure will be constructed of galvanized metal, clear tempered and green floating glass. The roof will be made of fibertite roofing and cream-colored ridged foam insulation. This portion of the building will open directly to the new landscaped courtyard allowing for an indoor / outdoor experience. Existing mechanical equipment located in the courtyard will be consolidated into a new electric room.

New exterior walls sections are also proposed as part of the rear expansion, and these walls are to be board-formed concrete to match the existing structure. Exterior colors

are white to match existing; mint green will be used as an accent color to frame the side windows and entries facing Tahquitz Canyon Way and Palm Canyon Drive.

The interior will be remodeled by the removal of all interior partition walls, shelving, cabinetry, and plumbing. The revised interior will include handicap bathrooms at the very south end of the building, a small dedicated community room at the east end, and modular furnishings (shelving, desks, tables, chairs and sofas, book kiosks and service areas) throughout the remainder of the building. Final interior finishes as well as final landscape materials have not been selected.

## REQUIRED FINDINGS

### Definition of an Historic Site.

Section 8.05.020 of the Municipal Code provides the definition of an historic site, as follows:

*(a) Historic Site.*

*An historic site is any real property such as: a building; a structure, including but not limited to archways, tiled areas and similar architectural elements; an archaeological excavation or object that is unique or significant because of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship or aesthetic effect and:*

*That is associated with events that have made a meaningful contribution to the nation, state or community; or*

- 1. That is associated with lives of persons who made meaningful contribution to national, state or local history; or*
- 2. That reflects or exemplifies a particular period of the national, state or local history; or*
- 3. That embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction; or*
- 4. That presents the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect whose individual genius influenced his age; or that possesses high artistic value; or*
- 5. That represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or*
- 6. That has yielded or may be likely to yield information important to national, state or local history or prehistory.*

Staff has evaluated this application for the proposed addition of 1,589 square feet to the rear of the Library building, a re-paint, and the demolition of a rear courtyard portion of the building located at 100 S. Palm Canyon Drive and finds that the project will modify certain elements of the historic nature of the building, especially the building interior.

The site plan as presented will not be in conflict with the Redevelopment Participation Agreement easement requirements by providing a ten (10) foot wide non-construction area for building openings and Staff finds the plan to be in conformance.

The distinctive architectural elements of the building will not be compromised because the new 1,589 square foot courtyard addition is at the rear of the building; the demolition of a small portion of the building is a non-original element; and a repaint to original colors will not be a detriment to the overall aesthetic look of the property. Those elements of the building facing the street which date to 1940 will not be altered, and the rear addition will be complementary to, but not a mimic the look of the original building.

The historic character of the interior will be replaced with a contemporary library layout. The applicant has determined that the existing configuration no longer serves the needs of library patrons today. Instead, the applicant proposes that the interior should support the new ways that people use libraries including a more informal, self-directed approach to seeking and exploring library resources and the availability of both traditional and non-traditional library media, such as internet access.

This adaptive reuse of the interior preserves the main building, but eliminates the stacks of books, ordered seating and central reference desk. In their place, the proposal offers various media options, flexible space and self-service capabilities. In addition, a dedicated community room is proposed at the east end of the building.

The fixtures, colors and materials for the interior have not been selected, nor have final landscape plantings have been chosen. The applicant proposes to return to the Board for final approval of interior finishes and landscaping.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

This project is categorically exempt from environmental review per Section 15301(L), (1) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines.

## **CONCLUSION**

The distinctive architectural elements of the building will not be compromised by the proposal. The new construction in the rear courtyard area (including a demolition of a non-original addition) and building re-paint will renovate the structure to a more useable space, preserve its original street-front exterior and support its continued use as a library. The interior will be adapted to the new role libraries play in society, and will result in removal of many existing elements, including shelving and furnishings. Staff recommends that the HSPB issue a certificate of approval for the project, subject to final approval of the interior finishes and landscape plantings. The Board may wish to offer recommendations on the interior finishes and landscape plantings as part of its conditions of approval.

## **NOTIFICATION**

There are no public notification requirements for this application.

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Craig A. Ewing, AICP  
Director of Planning Services, AICP

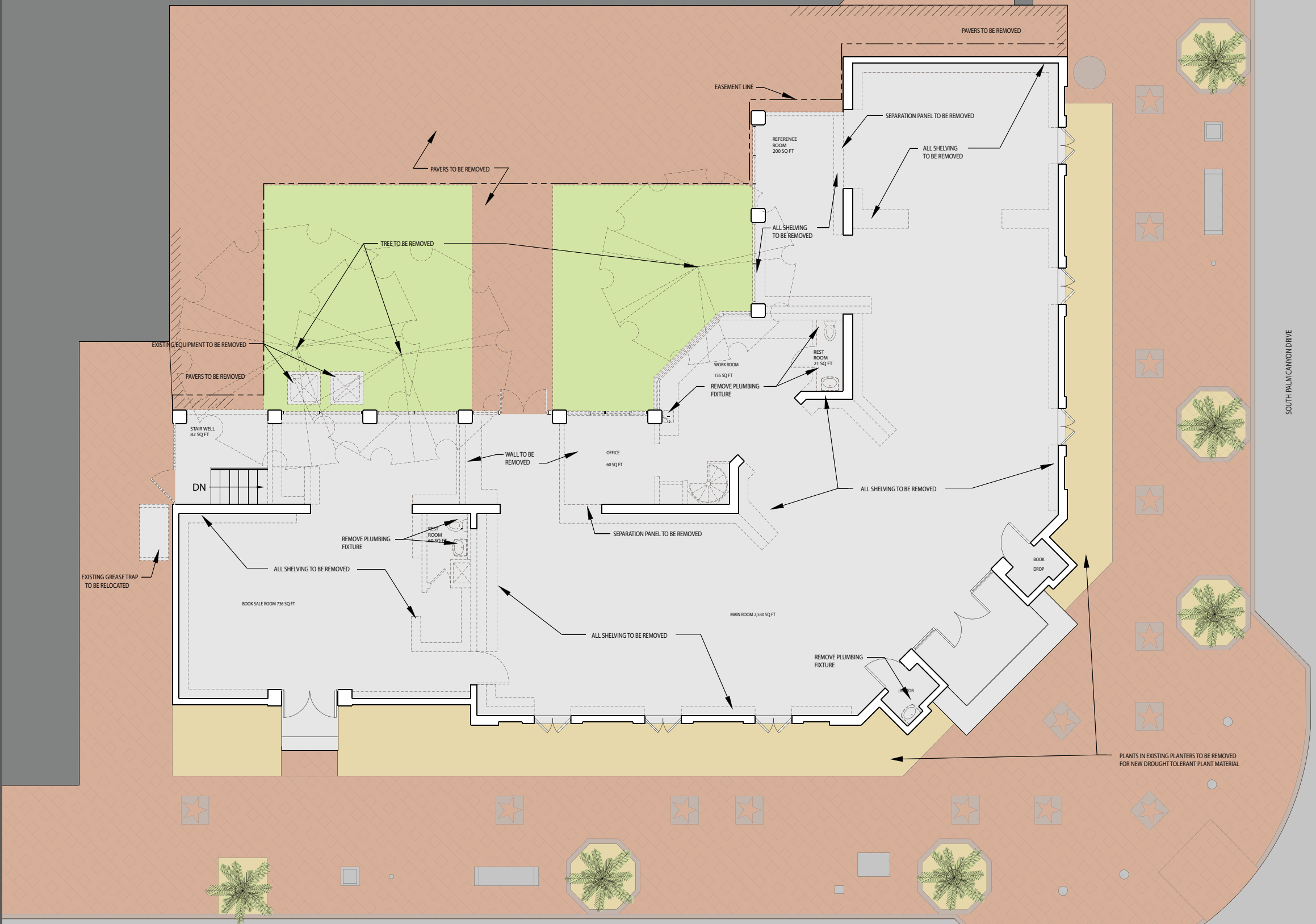
#### ATTACHMENTS

1. Exterior Perspective
2. Demolition Plan
3. Site Plan / Floor Plan / Landscape Plan
4. Basement Floor Plan
5. Roof Plan
6. Exterior Elevations
7. Detail Wall Section (New Roof to Existing Wall)
8. Letters from Palm Springs Preservation Foundation w/ attachments



WELWOOD MURRAY MEMORIAL LIBRARY REHABILITATION  
EXTERIOR PERSPECTIVE

LEGEND	
-----	TO BE REMOVED
- - - - -	EASEMENT LINE
—————	TO REMAIN



TAHQUITZ CANYON WAY

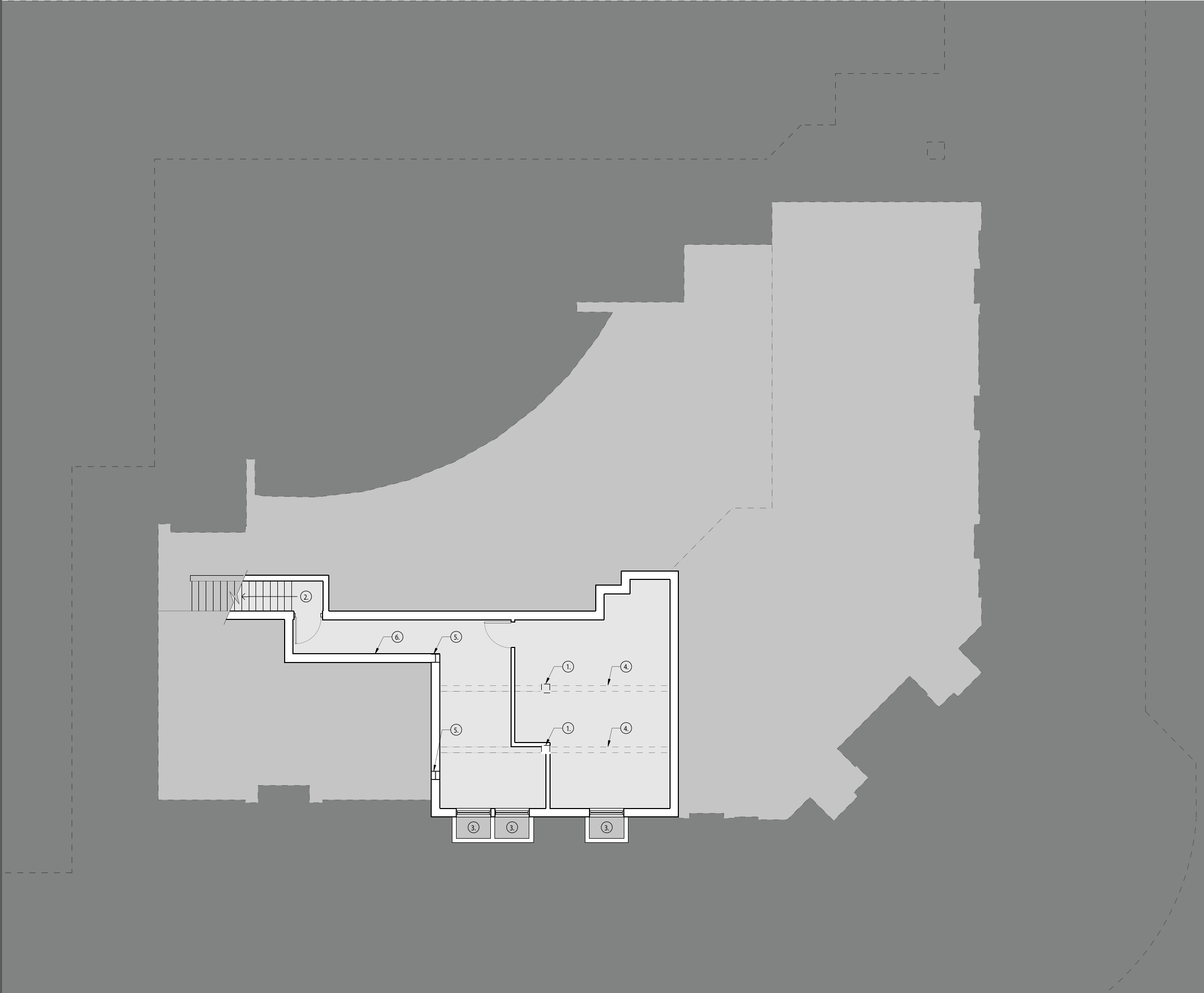
# WELWOOD MURRAY MEMORIAL LIBRARY REHABILITATION

## DEMOLITION PLAN



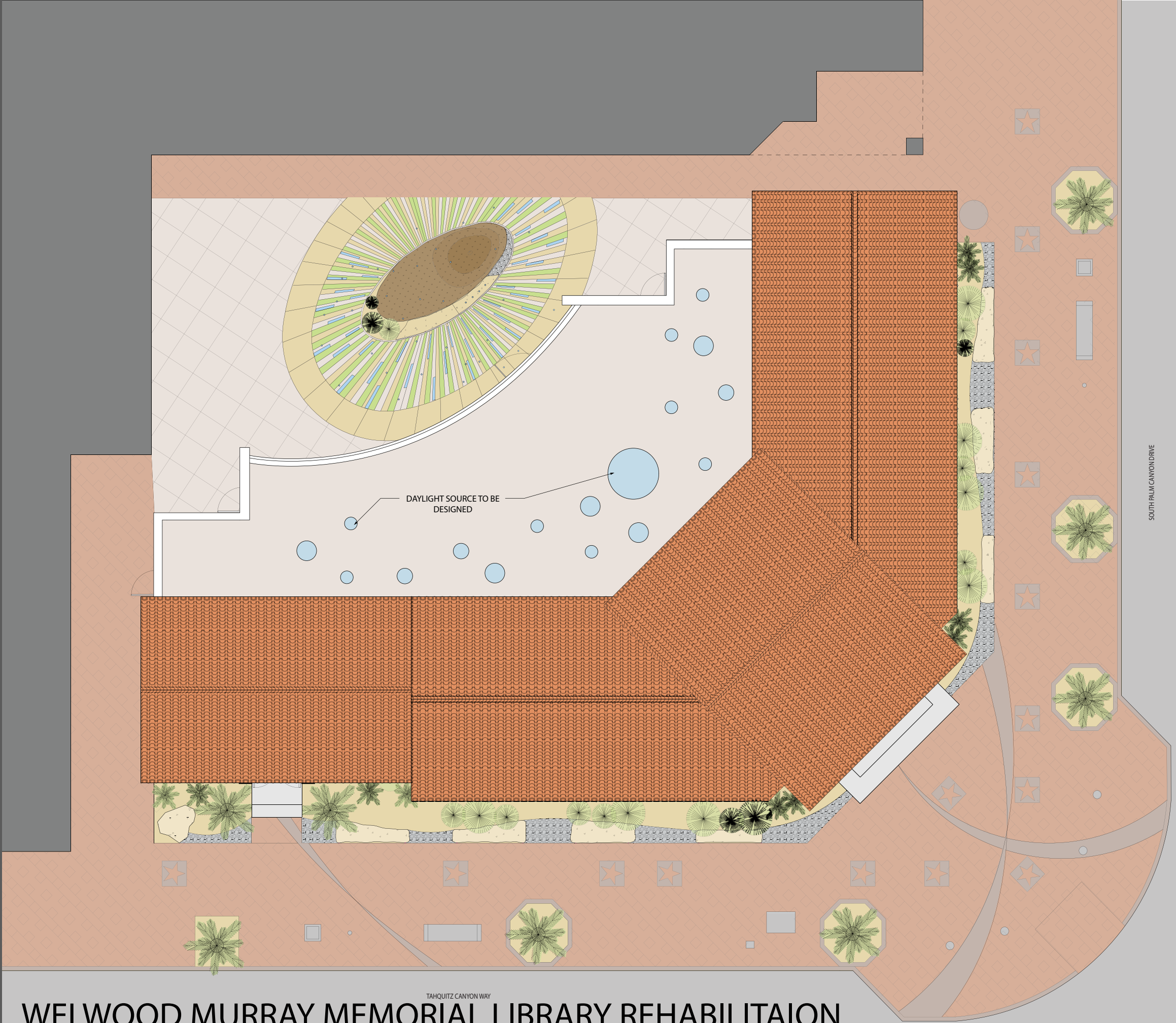


- 1. EXISTING CONCRETE COLUMN
- 2. STAIRS UP
- 3. EXISTING AREA WELL
- 4. EXISTING CONCRETE BEAM ABOVE
- 5. NEW STEEL BRACEFRAME
- 6. EXISTING CAST IN PLACE CONCRETE WALLS



# WELWOOD MURRAY MEMORIAL LIBRARY REHABILITATION

## BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN



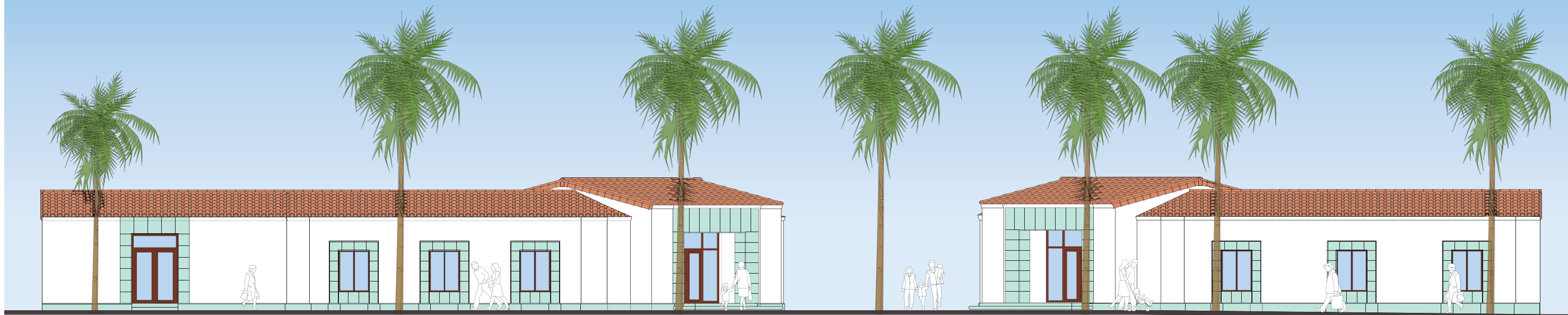
DAYLIGHT SOURCE TO BE DESIGNED

SOUTH PALM CANYON DRIVE

TAHQUITZ CANYON WAY

# WELWOOD MURRAY MEMORIAL LIBRARY REHABILITATION

## ROOF PLAN



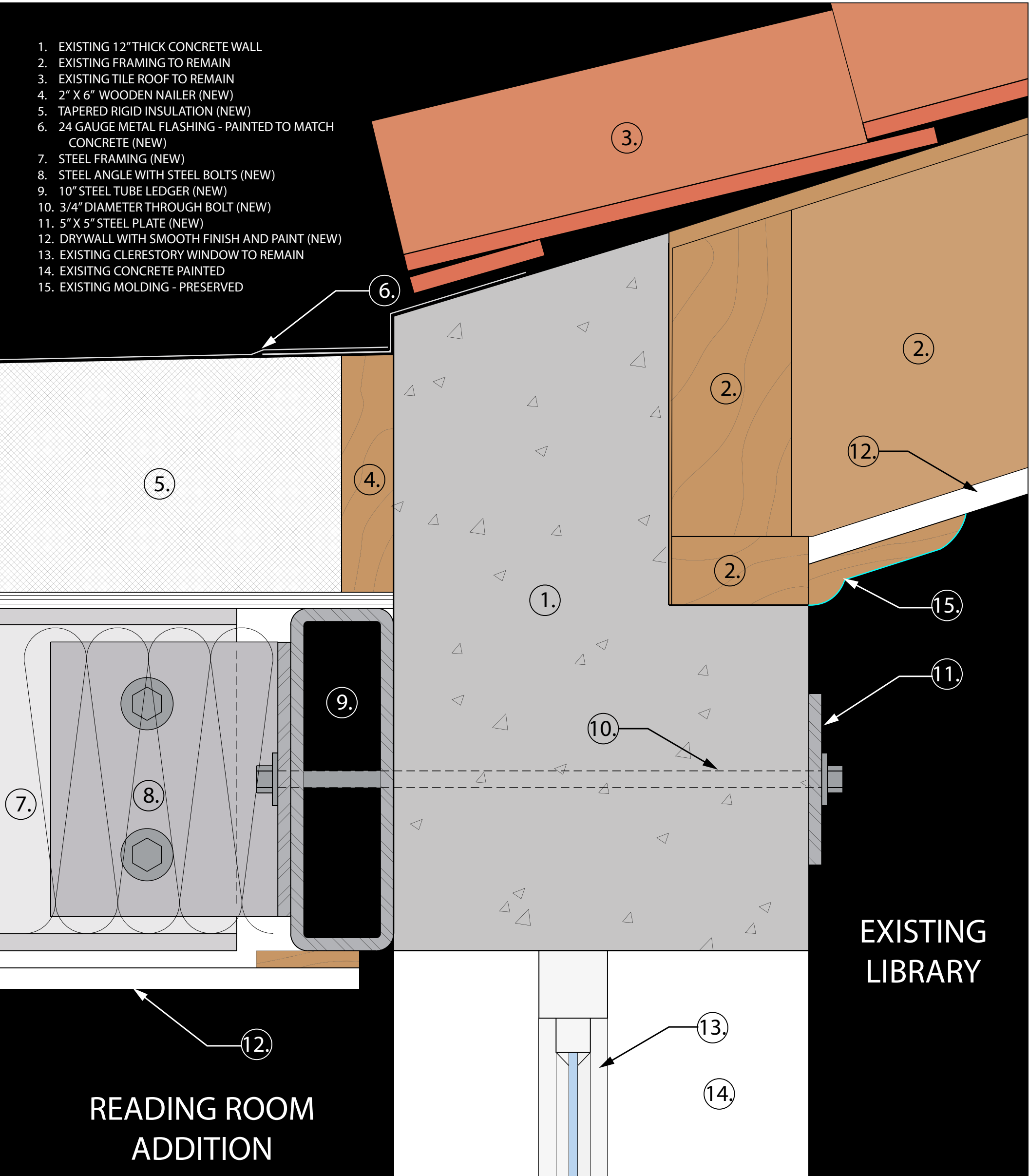
TAHQUITZ CANYON WAY (NORTH) ELEVATION

SOUTH PALM CANYON DRIVE (WEST) ELEVATION

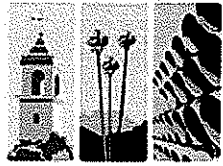
COURTYARD VIEW (SOUTH) ELEVATION

COURTYARD VIEW (EAST) ELEVATION

1. EXISTING 12" THICK CONCRETE WALL
2. EXISTING FRAMING TO REMAIN
3. EXISTING TILE ROOF TO REMAIN
4. 2" X 6" WOODEN NAILER (NEW)
5. TAPERED RIGID INSULATION (NEW)
6. 24 GAUGE METAL FLASHING - PAINTED TO MATCH CONCRETE (NEW)
7. STEEL FRAMING (NEW)
8. STEEL ANGLE WITH STEEL BOLTS (NEW)
9. 10" STEEL TUBE LEDGER (NEW)
10. 3/4" DIAMETER THROUGH BOLT (NEW)
11. 5" X 5" STEEL PLATE (NEW)
12. DRYWALL WITH SMOOTH FINISH AND PAINT (NEW)
13. EXISTING CLERESTORY WINDOW TO REMAIN
14. EXISTING CONCRETE PAINTED
15. EXISTING MOLDING - PRESERVED



WELWOOD MURRAY MEMORIAL LIBRARY REHABILITATION  
 DETAIL WALL SECTION



# PALM SPRINGS PRESERVATION FOUNDATION

August 30, 2010

Chair, Architectural Advisory Committee  
City of Palm Springs (Planning Services)  
3200 East Tahquitz Canyon Way  
Palm Springs, CA 92262

Re: Welwood Murray Memorial Library (WMML) Project

Dear Chair Ortega,

Attachments (1) through (3) are forwarded for your information and to assist you during your deliberations regarding the proposed Welwood Murray Memorial Library project.

PSPF has also established an advocacy page concerning the library project at [http://www.pspreservationfoundation.org/welwood\\_murray.html](http://www.pspreservationfoundation.org/welwood_murray.html).

If you have any questions please feel free to contact the foundation at (760) 837-7117.

Sincerely,

Ron Marshall  
President

Attachments:

- (1) Palm Springs Preservation Foundation letter of August 9, 2010
- (2) Mr. Phillips Welwood Murray letter of August 12, 2010
- (3) Ms. Sara S. J. James letter of August 16, 2010

RECEIVED

AUG 31 2010

PLANNING SERVICES  
DEPARTMENT



August 9, 2010

The Honorable Steven Pougnet  
3200 East Tahquitz Canyon Way  
Palm Springs, CA 92262

Dear Mayor Pougnet,

Re: Welwood Murray Memorial Library (Class 1 Historic Site)

On August 4, 2010 Palm Springs Preservation Foundation board members Ron Marshall and Gary Johns met with members of the Palm Springs city senior staff (i.e., the city manager, assistant city manager, city attorney and director of planning services) to discuss the foundation's concerns regarding the Welwood Murray Memorial Library project. Also present were the chair of the historic site preservation board and the city representative overseeing the project. The meeting was cordial and there was a frank and wide-ranging exchange of views regarding the project. Among the issues raised were:

- failure of the city's "ad hoc" subcommittee charged with the project to include a knowledgeable preservation expert,
- characterization of the project as a minor architectural approval (MAA) rather than a major architectural approval (MAJ) (thereby side-stepping planning commission review),
- minimal solicitation of public comment on the project design,
- failure of the project to meet any of the U.S. Secretary of Interior's standards for the rehabilitation of historic buildings,
- uneven city staff support to the city boards charged with reviewing the project (i.e., the Architectural Advisory Committee and the Historic Site Preservation Board),
- a sense that the project is being "hurried" through the city bureaucracy, and
- PSPF's opinion that because the project constitutes a "significant adverse change" to this historic resource an Environmental Impact Review (EIR) is required under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

On a positive note, we emphasized our view that there is a unique opportunity for the city to do a first-rate and sensitive restoration of the library. This opportunity is available because:

- as a Class 1 site there is no debate about the historic or architectural importance of the building,
- there is no developer pressuring the city to "tear the building down,"
- as a civic building the city has control over both the building's interior and exterior, and
- the library is still remarkably intact.

Finally, we asked that an "original design" or "minimum impact design" be offered to the city leadership in tandem with the current over-designed proposal.

Re: Welwood Murray Memorial Library (Class 1 Historic Site)

We thank the city for allowing us the opportunity to express our concerns. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact the foundation at (760) 837-7117.

Sincerely,



Ron Marshall  
President

Copy to:

City Council members (Ginny Foat, Lee Weigel, Chris Mills and Rick Hutcheson)  
City Manager (David Ready)  
City Attorney (Doug Holland)  
Historic Site Preservation Board  
Palm Springs Historical Society  
Palm Springs Modern Committee  
Desert Sun (Mariecar Mendoza)



**PHILLIPS WELWOOD MURRAY**

41261 Woodhaven West Drive  
Palm Desert, CA 92211

August 12, 2010

The Honorable Steve Pougnet  
Mayor of Palm Springs  
3200 East Tahquitz Canyon Way  
Palm Springs, CA 92262

Subj: Welwood Murray Memorial Library

Dear Mayor Pougnet,

As a descendent of Palm Springs pioneer Dr. Welwood Murray, I have followed recent events regarding the Welwood Murray Memorial Library project with great interest.

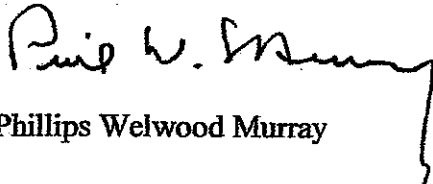
I have been troubled that the proposed project is not a renovation, but rather an unsympathetic (and unnecessary) remodeling which tears off the rear of the building. To add further insult, the project proposes to append an unseemly roof structure that sports a swiss-cheese hole design! Frankly, this proposal is an affront to this historic, and architecturally important, building.

I have been in contact with other relatives of mine and we would be thrilled if the library could be used to house rare and local history books and possibly even include rotating exhibits celebrating the history of Palm Springs and the Coachella Valley. This would attract tourists to the downtown and be a resource to the local community. Finally, not only is a sensitive restoration the smart thing to do, financially it seems far less costly than the plan before you.

I have also been in contact with the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation and applaud their efforts to convince the city to pursue a sensitive renovation of the library.

Please don't hesitate to contact me at (760) 360-4963. I would also be happy to meet with you in person.

Respectfully,



Phillips Welwood Murray

Copy to: Palm Springs City Council members (Foat, Weigel, Mills and Hutchenson), City Manager, Palm Springs Historic Site Preservation Board, Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, Desert Sun newspaper (Attn: Ms. Mendoza)

Sara S. J. James  
4509 Clark Road  
Crozet, Virginia 22932

August 16, 2010

The Honorable Steven Pougnet  
Mayor of Palm Springs  
3200 E. Tahquitz Canyon Way  
Palm Springs, CA 92262

Re: Welwood Murray Memorial Library

Dear Mayor Pougnet,

It has recently come to the attention of the members of my family that some significant changes are being considered that would affect the appearance and use of the Welwood Murray Memorial Library. As direct descendents of Dr. Welwood Murray (Palm Springs co-founder Welwood Murray was our great-great grandfather), we have a special interest in the future of the Welwood Murray Memorial Library.

We are concerned and alarmed that the city's proposed design for the library's "remodeling" erects new walls, demolishes existing walls and attaches a foreign roof structure to this historically important building. All of these changes would fundamentally and negatively impact the architecture of the building, and do a disservice to architect John Porter Clark's original vision. The Palm Springs Preservation Foundation's ongoing efforts to achieve a sensitive restoration of the original library structure are closely aligned with our hopes to maintain the historical integrity of the Library, and we would ask you to support the Foundation in their efforts.

We would also suggest that the best use of the downtown library would be as a research library resource for the Coachella Valley, housing relevant materials from the main library and the historical society. This would be a use consistent with the restrictions stated in the deed, and fitting for a building with such history.

If you have any questions, I would be glad to speak with you. You can contact me at (434) 960-2286.

On behalf of the descendents of Welwood Murray, sincerely,

Sara S. J. James

Copy to:

City Council members (G. Foat, L. Weigel, C. Mills and R. Hutchenson)  
City Manager (D. Ready)  
City of Palm Springs Historic Site Preservation Board  
Palm Springs Preservation Foundation

Attachment (3)