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**Christina Volek, City Administrator**  
**City of Billings**  
**210 North 27<sup>th</sup> Street**  
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I am writing, Tina, as an explanation of our design direction for the Parmly Billings Library, specifically the integration of the Bookmobile and Home Bound Book Truck Garage into the design of the building and the site. From our preliminary programming, planning, and design conversations with the Library, it was clear *how important* these outreach services are to the Library and its mission.

The Library is designed to reflect its position as an important civic institution at the northern edge of the Central Business District on Sixth Avenue between 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> Streets. Building to the property lines at these street edges is not only good urban design practices, it is especially important here—as a catalyst for future development in this eroded urban context. We hope, as I am sure you do, that the Library spawns good urban development at the CBD's northern edge.

Building in an urban context and developing the character and role of the facades, one has to carefully consider the hierarchy of streets relative to the needs for public presence (image), public entry, and service entry. Sixth Avenue and 28<sup>th</sup> Street are clearly the more prominent and important streets surrounding the site, and even within Billings as a whole. Equally important is the south side of the Library, as this is the pedestrian approach to the entry from the parking garden. These factors shaped the design of the building and the site, and clearly directed the service side of the Library to 29<sup>th</sup> Street, away from the building's public functions.

The planning of the garage in the building and site were shaped by other important considerations and functions. In our many public meetings we heard how important public parking is, especially with no branch libraries and most patrons driving from the West End and the Heights. A drive-through book drop was also one of the most requested functions.

With the garage at the southwest corner of the Library, facing and serviced directly from 29<sup>th</sup> Street, our design team was able to not only to optimize the site plan (public and service faces, maximize parking, convenient drive-through book drop), we were able to optimize interior planning, flow, and functions as well.

The Bookmobile and Home Bound Book Truck are loaded and unloaded from the rear, that is, backed into the garage. Once per day, they leave for their outbound destinations in the morning and return in the afternoon. With the garage's immediate adjacency to Access Services (which is always staffed), the drivers will always be assisted by a spotter when both leaving and entering the garage. This public safety measure is easily and naturally accommodated.

Changing the design of the Library to accommodate not backing the vehicles into garage would impact and compromise many of its important functions, attributes, and aspects. Rotating the garage 90 degrees to be entered from the south side parking would—

1. eliminate the drive-through book drop, or at the very least, move it to a location that would eliminate another important function and amenity, the meeting garden. If the book drop were to move east, it would also compromise the safety of pedestrians entering the Library.
2. Another solution for the book drop would be to move it away from the building. This would force staff out into the weather to service it (one of the major complaints of the current Library). Moving the book drop away from the building would also necessarily eliminate parking spaces.
3. force the staff entry north into the current Children's Library. Within the tight site conditions, this would either force the Children's Library to shrink, or force other important public first level functions elsewhere.
4. require re-planning the service and exit stair and the second level administration and staff areas. The flow and function of these areas are currently very efficient and a rework would certainly compromise functionality.
5. force the mechanical court to move to a more public position, most likely near the Meeting Garden, where the noise of the chiller would have a grave impact on the space.

Another potential solution would be to eliminate the garage entirely by moving the storage of the vehicles off site. This would require loading and unloading the vehicles in 29<sup>th</sup> street, greatly impacting traffic, staff safety, and public safety.

I hope this helps to clarify the design of the Library with respect to the garage and its impact on the overall building and site. Please let me know if I can offer further clarification to the matter.

Sincerely,

**Richard Jensen**, AIA LEED  
*vice president*