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## Library Design Reflects 'Architecture of Agriculture'

*By Julie Fernandez*

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*Tulare* - When Councilman David Macedo took a look at the design for the new \$14.3 million Tulare Public Library, he thought someone had made a mistake. “It looks more like a barn than a library,” said Macedo, a cattle auctioneer who knows a barn when he sees one.

The councilman's comment pleased Architect Paul Halajian of Taylor-Teter Partnership, Fresno.

“The whole point is to make it look like something from this area,” Halajian explained.

The library design has changed considerably since 2003 and 2004 when the city made unsuccessful bids to secure state money for the project. The new design is bolder and now includes a formal 110-seat City Council Chamber and a conference room for closed sessions.

“We've had time to really think about the architectural character of the building,” Halajian said. “We keep hearing this part of Tulare is ripe for redevelopment and this particular building could be a catalyst for that development.”

A design cannot be just what the architect likes, he said. “It really has to come from the environment. Tulare is really about agriculture, it's about growing things, producing things — crops.”



The entry to the new Tulare Public Library, which will face the downtown area, will feature a silo that reflects the community's agricultural heritage. The building will feature a second silo over the children's area. The building is provided by Taylor-Teter Partnership.

So the design now reflects what Halajian calls “the architecture of agriculture,” which explains the low-sloping roofs, metal and other building materials.

The agricultural theme also is dramatically reflected in the building. One is at the entrance to the library and the other — 113 feet in diameter — comes through the roof into the children's section of the library.

The second silo will have a skylight at the point where it meets the top of the long dramatic cylinder will continue downward into the building to stop about seven feet above the floor.

“The kids would gather into the silo for story time,” Halajian said. Many libraries have children's areas that are “too juvenile,” Librarian Michael Stowell said. “They have the Beatrix Potter thing going on, but it's fine for 4 or 5 years old but won't inspire nine and 10 year olds.”

Adding to the agricultural theme are columns that run along the outside of the building from the Tulare Santa Fe Trail to the entrance, which Stowell says is symbolic of the rows of crops in this area.

“There's symmetry to that,” he said. “It's something I find that's common to all cultures, there's something about those rows of cotton. They're important.” While the original design called for a predominantly stucco exterior, the current plan calls for concrete block.

“We don't want to lose the economy of stucco, but we wanted to use something that's more durable,” Halajian said. “It's affordable, it's durable and it fits the project budget.”

The use of concrete block will also help the city meet the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEEDS) Gold standard for green buildings, he said.

“It's produced in Selma, so it's a local product,” he said. “It's very heavy and has mass and will absorb heat and radiate it into the building during the day and, in the summer, it has a cooling effect. It has very good thermal mass to it.”

The windows are placed for the best energy efficiency and also to provide a dramatic statement, Halajian said.

“I think libraries are civic buildings and I think it's important that the outside see civic buildings used by the community. ... It shows a vital, thriving place to be.”

The roof over the Council Chambers is what Halajian describes as a “bold gesture,” designed to let the community know its government is working. The roof sits on top of a circular bank of windows and peels off the top into the air in a dramatic fashion.

“Seeing this thing glowing at night says government is working,” Halajian said.

said.

The addition of a formal Council Chamber gives the building more presence, Stowell said, adding the design conveys the message that important stuff going on there.”

### Conservation Efforts

Besides the concrete block construction, the new library will incorporate energy efficient and environmentally healthy practices.

Permeable concrete, for example, will be used for the parking lot, which Halajian said means water will not stand on the flat surface but will go to the soil beneath the concrete.

“The water goes directly down into the earth, so there's no need for a storm drainage system,” he said.

The percolation process will not result in flooded lots, he said. “I tested it with a fire hose and it was just gushing water, which immediately disappeared.”

Other conservation measures the project will incorporate include:

- Installation of landscaping and an irrigation system that will reduce water consumption about 50 percent from what is typical of such a project.
- A “very efficient” air conditioning system that is not commonly used. “It costs more upfront, but over time it's going to pay for itself and the savings because of your reduced energy consumption,” Halajian said.
- Diversion of construction waste from the landfill.
- Selection of low-emitting paint, carpeting and other materials. “They don't release toxins into the indoor air ... that over time can have a negative impact on inhabitants,” Halajian said.

Once the project is completed, the library will feature a display explaining many of the sustainable, green building practices that went into the building, Halajian said.

“This whole approach to building is here to stay,” he said. “The more we know about it, the more design people get involved, the better building it becomes over time.”

The project is currently in the design development phase, a 10-week period that will be followed by a 16-week period in which construction documents are prepared for the contractor.

City officials have said they want the project under way by October. “It's been a fun project to work on,” Halajian said.

Because the city has hired a construction management company—

Construction out of Fresno—to work on the project, the design is being done now to prevent the project from going over budget, Stowell said. Once the construction drawings are complete, Zumwalt will prepare bid packages covering the various aspects of construction, he said.

Stowell is also working with Bev Moris of San Francisco on the interior finishing and furniture for the library. She recently finished the new Mateo library, which is outstanding, he said.

“I want the building to be something that everyone in Tulare is proud of and finds inspiring,” Stowell said. “I don't want just another office building sort of design.”

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