



Mr. William J. Cooper, Village Manager, and Members of the Village Council  
Village of Elk Rapids  
315 Bridge Street  
Elk Rapids, Mi 49629

Dear Mr. Cooper and Village Council Members:

Nannette Miller, Director of the Elk Rapids District Library, has asked me to write a letter to you and members of the Village Council to help clarify and explain the original role our firm, Hartzell-Mika Consulting, had in developing a strategic plan for the library. My name is Robert Raz, a public library consultant and member of the three-person team who created the "Facility and Financial Assessment and Strategic Plan" for the Elk Rapids District Library Board. The 96-page report was submitted to the Board on November 13, 2014 and is available on the Elk Rapids District Library's web site.

Our firm has done a significant number of strategic plans for public libraries in Michigan as well as in some other states. Libraries are our only business. My partners are Marianne Hartzell, and Joseph Mika, who established the firm in 1999. Marianne is the retired Executive Director of the Michigan Library Association, where she served for 18 years and has 30 years of public library experience. Joseph Mika, is a retired Professor Emeritus in the School of Library and Information Science at Wayne State University in Detroit and was director of that program for eight years.

I worked in public libraries for 38 years including at the Library of Michigan in Lansing, as Director of the Willard Public Library in Battle Creek, and my final 25 years as Director of the Grand Rapids Public Library. I have been working as a public library consultant now for the past 14 years.

Once we complete projects we like to continue to follow up and determine if our work has been a benefit to our clients. I became aware of a group in Elk Rapids called "Preserve the Island House and Property" last summer when I saw an article published in the Traverse City *Record-Eagle*. In following up with Nannette Miller, I learned that there may be some misunderstanding that this group has about the role of Hartzell-Mika Consulting with the library. Our firm was hired to do an assessment of the library facility, finances, staffing, collections and other aspects of the library's services. We were asked to compare the Elk Rapids District Library to other libraries serving similarly-sized communities in Michigan to determine how well the library is performing in relationship with its peers. We interviewed six key community leaders,

did staff and community focus groups and a survey to gather comments and observations that would help provide background for the Library Board to use in developing a new strategic plan.

Hartzell-Mika Consulting does library space planning, but we are not an architectural firm. We have experience in working with architects to develop plans for library facilities, and I have worked on several library renovation projects. Our role in Elk Rapids was to assist the Board to create a strategic plan, a roadmap to the future that established a vision and mission statement and very specific goals and strategies, all outlined in the report. As part of our work we also completed a facility assessment and compared the Elk Rapids library facility to others in its population category.

In our report to the Elk Rapids District Library Board we made a comparison of the size of the library facility in Elk Rapids with nine other public libraries in Michigan serving populations from 5,000 to 6,000 (Elk Rapids Library service population is 5,432). The Elk Rapids Library has 3,000 sq. ft. of floor space in comparison to the nine-library peer comparison average of 6,569 sq. ft. It has a facility that is 54.3% below the peer average.

Our firm gave one illustration of expanding the library by adding a 2,000 sq. ft. addition to the south that included a new basement level built under the main floor extension (4,000 sq. ft. total). This would, of course, be just one possibility and was provided to the Board as an example of what was needed to improve the amount of interior space for the library. Any future planning would require the services of an architectural firm. We always recommend to a library board that they employ a firm that has demonstrated experience in the planning and design of public libraries.

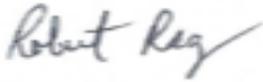
The Elk Rapids District Library Board approved a goal to “explore options for addressing space needs of the library” and developed an RFP for architectural services; several firms were considered, and the Board hired the Hopkins Burns Design Studio and architects Seth Penchansky and Daniel Whistler. These were excellent choices.

We believe that the plans developed by this team are extremely well-done, are historically sensitive to the location, and provide a facility that will serve Elk Rapids well through the 200<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Noble house in 2066. The fact that the State Historic Preservation Office approved the Hopkins Burns design for the expansion of the Edwin Noble House historic property is a very important development for the library project. This is not an easily obtained stamp of approval and indicates that the Hopkins Burns firm has done excellent design work for the building addition and renovation.

In our nearly two decades of work with library clients all over the state of Michigan we have never had a client complain about having overbuilt a facility. In fact, we most often hear the opposite. A public library is open and available to everyone in the community. The decision made today will have influence on the next four generations. Our report suggested that the library add 4,000 sq. ft. to the existing facility. This would bring the library up to the average size building for its peer group of

libraries in Michigan. We certainly did not suggest this figure as a maximum, nor that you settle for “average”. Rather, we would encourage Elk Rapids to aim higher and adopt the Hopkins-Burns plan. You have a head start with the catalyst of the Charles Heffer gift and the Board anticipates a fundraising campaign can raise the remainder of the funds. You have a chance to complete a library renovation project that the community will be proud of for many years to come. Trust and empower the library board and staff members who have been working so hard on this effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert Raz". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Robert Raz, Public Library Consultant  
Hartzell-Mika Consulting, East Lansing, Michigan  
Phone: 574-675-9460