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# Kalkaska County Library New Building Project Phase III Concept Document

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Kalkaska County Library

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# Project Concept Document



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Role	Name	Signature	Date
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## 1. Mission Statement of the Kalkaska County Library

The mission of the Kalkaska County Library is to provide users with open access to technology, information, and ideas covering a broad spectrum of human thought and experience, and to foster the understanding and development of cultures, communities, and individuals.

The Library will strive to protect intellectual freedom, promote literacy, and encourage lifelong learning.

The Library will strive to maintain a diverse collection of materials, and provide access to educational, informational, and recreational resources, including materials outside its collection.

Our clear vision, strong values, and the way we execute our mission will make our Library one that our peers will want to emulate. As we seek to fulfill our mission, our efforts and resources will be directed towards making our vision a reality in the following ways:

- a. Our Library staff will set the standard for customer service among public libraries. Hallmarks of our staff will be professionalism, teamwork, collaboration, creativity, flexibility in responding to patron needs, and pride in our achievements.
- b. Our Board of Library Trustees will enthusiastically advocate for Library services in the community. The Board will be fully devoted to the mission, vision, and values of the Library. Our collections will be progressive and diverse in breadth and form.
- c. Our Library's physical and virtual spaces will respond to the changing needs of our users.
- d. Our patrons will be proud of their Library and consider it as the first and best source to meet their informational and recreational needs.

## 2. Document Purpose

The purpose of this document is to detail the concept for the Kalkaska County Library (KCL) to relocate to a new site that will meet the current and future needs of the 21st Century and its citizens, through technological advances intertwined with standard print and recorded materials. As technology progresses, the need for KCL to keep pace with society increases, requiring more room for technology and making it difficult to operate within the current small confined space.

In an effort to continue to provide the library services the community has grown to expect, a Strategic Planning Committee has been formed to address solutions to the deficiencies inherent to the current facility.

This document will continue where the Amended Kalkaska County Library New Building Project Concept Document Phase II left off. In that document, the recommendation from the Strategic Planning Committee was to review property available within the Historic Downtown area of Kalkaska.

## 3. Background

KCL was started in 1934 by members of the Academea Club. The library was constructed in 1939 as part of a community building shared with the Chamber of Commerce. The original location has not changed, although additions were completed in 1977 and 1992, bringing the building to its current size of approximately 4,900 square feet.

One decade following the most recent expansion, the library was out of room and had reached its land boundaries with no ability to expand. In 2002 the KCL Board of Trustees contracted The Breton Group, Inc. to conduct a needs assessment. Targeting many deficiencies and evaluating the library based on established standards, their recommendation was to search for a new location and construct a new library to meet the current needs.

To quote “The Needs Assessment & Facility Planning report for the KCL” received from The Breton Group, Inc., *“...The Kalkaska County Library has been faced with the challenge of finding enough space to provide services and resources necessary to meet the community’s needs. The library staff has been using limited space strategically to provide a level of service comparable to much larger facilities. However, serious space constraints are preventing the library from expanding its collection and services, and offering additional programs necessary to meet the needs of both children and adults in the community.”*

Additional information from that report reveals several serious challenges to the library’s ability to deliver programming and services to a community that is statistically growing and deserves at least a standard facility. Among the greatest concerns:

- Kalkaska County Library is 1/3 the size of libraries that serve similar sized communities throughout the State of Michigan, with approximately 41% less space than industry standards suggested to simply house its existing services and collections
- Surrounding site constrictions prevent expansion of the existing facility in its current location. No additional land is available for expansion of the existing library
- Parking is limited to 15 spaces, ¾ of which are leased spaces and subject to lease options being withdrawn should a change of ownership occur
- Children’s circulation less than half of average circulation compared to libraries serving the same size communities within the State of Michigan
- Limited public services, including quiet reading areas, study rooms and staff work space
- Multiple surveys, including the Northwest Michigan Counsel of Governments, indicate that the community prefers that the Kalkaska County Library be located on the west side of US 131 (proximity to schools and pedestrian safety)

### 3.1 Environmental Analysis

Circulation numbers have steadily increased over the last ten years. This is significant for the fact that we have consistently heard how the proliferation of computers and Internet access would mean a decline in library usage and circulation. Despite predictions that libraries were going to be made irrelevant or obsolete by the rapid developments in technology and digital media, the KCL circulation numbers have remained in a steady-state with population fluctuations.

Public demand for computer access has not diminished. Despite increased private ownership, the lack of high-speed access has kept and will keep the demand strong. Despite increased library acquisitions, the demand for public computing hours has stayed on par with availability. The economic climate of our county has driven more and more need for the kinds of services libraries provide.

Since 2004, yearly patron counts have increased by 19% and circulation (material checked out by patrons) has increased by 33%. Similarly, computer and Internet usage has increased 16% since 2007.

Programming has remained strong in our efforts to provide informational, cultural and educational curriculum to the community. In 2012, the KCL took part in a total of 117 programs (children, teen, and adult) with a total of nearly 4,000 people attending. However, the ability to do certain programs always presents a challenge due to lack of space; lack of amenities such as refrigeration or running water; or even as simple as having a space for post program cleanup. There is a great need for everyday conveniences that are lacking in the current facility.

Community meeting space is also a challenge at the current facility. Quite often public groups or individuals come into the library looking for private meeting rooms or study and tutoring areas, which are nonexistent. Those looking for quiet spaces often compete with the everyday goings on such as staff helping patrons or library programming. A larger space is needed to accommodate those looking for quiet spaces.

The dearth of space in the staff area has also posed problems. Currently the staff room is a 15'x12' space that hosts a multiple number of functions. The staff room serves as storage area for media (DVD's, audio books, music CD's) and newspaper archives. Also housed in this room is the desk of the Administrative Assistant, the desk of the Children's Services Director, the book processing table, and the staff kitchen which consists of a small refrigerator, a microwave oven, and a chair. The facility has no doors or lockers to protect the personal valuables of the staff. There have been instances of patrons wandering into the staff area and personal items being stolen.

The facility restrooms also are inadequate, as there is a single stall each for the men and the women. Staff must share the bathroom with the public, and the lack of adequate stalls has been an issue with large groups.

Overall, the current site of the Kalkaska County Library lacks the room that is needed to provide the proper services that are expected of a Class 4 library.

## **3.2 Problem Analysis**

### **Problem Identification: Inadequate infrastructure:**

The current library, a single story, 75 year old building consisting of a main floor and a basement, utilized the available capacity on all levels. The location is bounded by US 131 to the West, a railroad grade to the East, a side street to the South, and private property to the North. The library is unable to increase its use of the older/southern third of the facility (load bearing capacity is

inadequate) and in the newer/northern 2/3 of the facility, it has utilized all of the capacity available on both floors. The parking is also inadequate, and even if engineers and architects were able to find a way around the structural deficiency, the fact remains that the parking situation would only be exacerbated.

## **Problem Remediation**

The perception is that the community would like to see “something done” to improve the library’s ability to carry out their mission and has expressed discontent with the numerous studies and failed attempts. Numerous studies and surveys have demonstrated that the community supports the library in principle, recognizes and sympathizes with the overcrowding dilemma. However, the economic challenges facing the county taxpayers hinder the ability of the community to rally fiscal support for a new facility.

In August 1999, a separate fund called “The County Library Building Fund” was set up by the KCL Board of Trustees. \$100,000 was set aside into that fund with the understanding that fund would be used for the building, land to build and / or moving expenses associated with a new library. Frugal spending and careful planning has allowed this fund to continue to grow steadily.

A “New Library Construction Fund” has been established with a major donation from the estate of Charles “Chuck” Heffer and gifts and donations from patrons toward a new library. This windfall gift plus the County Library Building Fund creates an opportunity to leverage the money into this project to secure an improved library facility and enhance services.

## **4. Project Vision**

A new facility is necessary to properly serve the residents of Kalkaska County.

Libraries are an integral part of a community’s infrastructure. Historically, when libraries expand, so does their circulation. A new facility would give Kalkaska a much-needed boost to its cultural and educational offerings. A facility that meets the current needs, with adequate parking, would be a step in the right direction. A new site with an option of future expansion possibilities is the most prudent path. A facility that “only” meets current needs will face the same crowding conditions in the future.

The Strategic Planning Committee recommended to the KCL Board of Trustees to pursue an existing building within the Village of Kalkaska (see Kalkaska Library New Building Project Concept Document). Three offers were submitted and countered on the New Life Assembly building, and all were rejected.

The Strategic Planning Committee continued its due diligence and recommended to the KCL Board of Trustees to pursue a lease agreement with the Kalkaska Board of Commissioners for the County Complex property while simultaneously pursuing an agreement with the Village of Kalkaska on the “Railroad Square” property (see Kalkaska Library New Building Project Concept Document Phase II).

---The Lease/Option-to-Purchase Agreement with the BOC for the County Complex (Water Tower property) was rejected by the Library. Unable to come to a mutually satisfying terms, the County property is no longer a viable option for a new Kankaska County Library.

---The new direction of the Kankaska Village's Grand Vision for "Railroad Square" (being utilized as an Open Space) did not include space for a new library, making that property no longer a viable option for a new Kankaska County Library

## 5. Project Objectives

### North Property

#### Pros

- Within "Historic Downtown" District
- Highly Visible location
- Reasonable cost of acquisition
- Satisfies public preference for a downtown facility
- Village officials' support
- Business owners' support
- Meets "Grand Vision" of the Village
- Removes blighted site from Village
- Alleviates immediate parking concerns
- New library significantly improves downtown
- Collaborative effort with: DDA, Brownfield, Great Lakes Rail, and Village may increase grant opportunities
- Brownfield authority guidance and advice
- Very strong support from DDA
- Alleviates the need to sell current facility
- Capital campaign, ease of marketing
- Known operating costs during transition to new
- Can continue to operate during remodeling
- Zero setbacks on 131 (can build out to sidewalk)
- No contractual complications to purchase site
- No contractual timeline pressures to construct
- Current facility could be sold without contractual complications
- Expansion plans can be scaled to funding received
- Would be easier to market location of combined sites if necessary
- Wise investment of Library funds
- Allows for a two-story concept
- Environmental "Phase I and II" complete

#### Cons

- Lack of space for geo-thermal
- Limited future facility expansion
- Limited future parking expansion
- Renovations will be more costly than new build
- US 131 hazards
- Pedestrian hazards
- East side of 131
- Adjacent to active railroad tracks
- Noise and vibration
- Demolition costs
- Removes a business facility from tax rolls
- Property is of a constraining shape, which limits design options
- Cost is too much to pay for a "tear-down" property
- Staying with a 2-story design may still impact staffing decisions
- Not a "green" area



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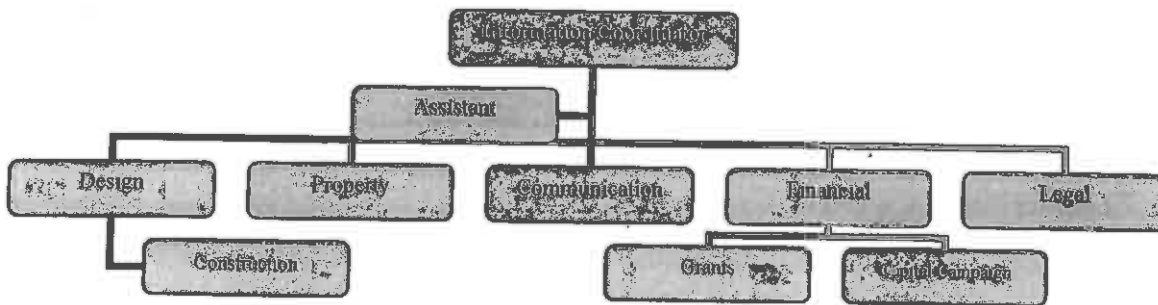
## 6. Scope

With the door closed on a lease/option to purchase the County Complex property with the Board of Commissioners and the new direction of "Railroad Square" being utilized as an Open Space, the Strategic Planning Committee continues to investigate property available within the Village of Kalkaska, narrowing the focus to a specific option(s), and making a formal recommendation to the Library Board of Trustees.

The goal is to find land to accommodate a facility that meets industry standards. Key factors to consider are:

- Cost
- Proximity to Historic Downtown area
- Safe and easily accessible location
- Sufficient room for parking

In support of the decision by the Board of Trustees to pursue a purchase agreement, the Board and the Strategic Planning Committee will explore funding options. Amongst many the options are: Northsky (a Rotary Charities organization), DDA and Brownfield Authority funding avenues, fundraising in conjunction with the Friends of the Kalkaska County Library, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, organizing volunteers and donors, grant writing, State and Federal funding opportunities, and exploring the possibility of creating of a Capital Campaign. Continued due diligence would be accomplished in the following committees:



The above list of committees is NOT all-inclusive. It is a list of preliminary committees

## 7. Budget and Financials

### North Property

The Strategic Planning Committee recommends that the Kalkaska County Library Board of Trustees pursue negotiations with the seller of the property located directly to the north of the library's current location. It is considered to be a wise investment of Library and Heffer Trust resources primarily due to the contiguousness of the two parcels. This purchase would increase the US 131 real estate frontage (with adequate room for an 8000 square foot two story building or single story with full basement) and still provide desperately needed additional parking spaces. Just these two factors alone would make the property significantly more attractive to a purchaser

should the Library Board ever want or need to sell the property. It is a significant improvement to the current location, which lacks parking, making it a very difficult property to market. Proximity to the current facility and Historic Downtown is also an attractive feature.

There is tremendous support for this recommendation from key Kalkaska Village officials involved in this project. Those officials have pledged to facilitate the vision of a New Library on the property in question should a mutually satisfying purchase agreement with the seller come to fruition. Remaining in our Historic Downtown location should be expected to garner considerable community support from library patrons, the public, business owners, community leaders, and possibly from foundations, benefactors and donors.

It should be noted that the seller's property was available and under consideration during the 2005-2006 Feasibility Study, but at that time other options were deemed more worthy of pursuit. Given the current circumstances, this property has now shifted to the forefront and is considered to be the best option.

## **8. Project Recommendation**

The Strategic Planning Committee has come to the conclusion that it would be in the best interest of Kalkaska County residents and of the Library to pursue acquiring the North Property located at 237 S Cedar Street in the Village of Kalkaska.

The Strategic Planning Committee recommends that the KCL Board of Trustees, using due diligence, pursue the purchase of the North Property for the new location of the Kalkaska County Library.

Acquiring this property would give the library an infrastructure upgrade that:

- At minimum, can double the floor space of the current facility
- Secures adequate parking
- Is within the Historic Downtown on the county's main thoroughfare
- Could be purchased with existing funds
- Grant opportunities may be increased by partnership with the Village and business interests in the community
- Allows for an extended period to conduct a thorough Capital Campaign