

FINAL REPORT

NEEDS ASSESSMENT & PROGRAM PLANNING REPORT FOR KALKASKA COUNTY LIBRARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Prepared for:

Kalkaska County Library Board of Directors

Prepared by:

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I. CURRENT STATUS

Following a careful and intensive study over a 60-day period, a dedicated and committed volunteer committee, led by The Breton Group, compared the Kalkaska County Library to like-sized libraries in the state of Michigan and then measured the library's needs against national library planning standards.

Although the library facility is highly regarded by the patrons who use it, closer study reveals several serious challenges to the library's ability to deliver programming and services to a community that is growing and that deserves excellence in its library.

Among the areas of greatest concern are:

- A library collection that is 39% the size of similarly-sized libraries.
- Children's programming in which event attendance is only 20% of that of like-sized libraries.
- Children's circulation is less than half the average.
- A lack of computer access and space to accommodate it without disrupting other library activities.
- Limited public services, including quiet reading areas, study rooms, and staff workspace.

Generating these concerns can be summarized in one word: space. The Kalkaska County Library is less than 50% the size of libraries that serve similar-sized communities throughout the state of Michigan. Any change staff makes to alleviate concern in one area, encroaches upon the library's ability to deliver quality programming or services in another area.

Space concerns even transcend the building itself. The Planning Committee repeatedly referred to the library's severely limited parking options that often force patrons to cross the five lanes of US 131 to access the library. Patrons inconvenienced by lack of parking, especially those with children, may frequently choose not to participate in library programs and their visits become more sporadic.

Total visit numbers to the Kalkaska County Library confirm that likelihood. In the last reporting year, the library reported total visit numbers as 63% below the average of like-sized libraries. For a community whose patrons expect and desire excellent library programming and services, other options are apparently being sought due, in large part, to the fact that the Kalkaska County Library has approximately 41% less space than industry standards suggest simply to house its existing services and collections.

II. FUTURE STATUS

Once a library's programs and services are identified, and factored in as a value to the community, the Planning Committee then needs to predict a future service population to project the size and the needs of the community's library.

Using recently-released Census 2000 figures, demographic population projections from the State of Michigan's Information Center, and summer resident/visitor numbers provided by the Kalkaska County Sheriff's Department, the Planning Committee agreed that the area may continue to grow at a 23% rate in each of the next two, ten-year periods, placing total population close to 34,000.

Areas identified by the Planning Committee as important considerations for future planning are:

- An enhanced collection with greater emphasis on genealogy materials, religious materials, and periodical/reference holdings.
- More seating options, including private study areas, comfortable reading room seating, and age-appropriate options for children.
- A community meeting room which will provide an additional option for groups in the area seeking meeting space.
- A rich audio CD resource.
- Expanded service desk and staff work area space.

III. PROJECT COSTS

To accommodate the space needs that will place the Kalkaska County Library into an efficient as well as community-leading position, the Planning Committee recommends consideration of a facility approximately 23,714 square feet in size. Using an estimated construction cost of \$110 per square foot and factoring in a contingency budget and an opening day collection expansion, costs for the expanded facility could approximate \$2,879,394. Not included in this figure are any costs for site purchase, development, and relocation expense, budget items that the Library Board needs to consider.

Costs to operate a facility of 23,714 square feet can also be projected, though not as exactly as construction estimates. Two models were used to approximate possible operational costs, including a comparison of similarly-sized library budgets and a pro forma analysis of the current Kalkaska County Library budget. Neither model, however, may be entirely accurate since they are both based on the library's current budget (\$12.75/capita) which is far below even the current average Class IV library budget (\$24.38).

In other words, no matter which budget forecasting model is used, all projections will still produce budgets far below state averages, using the current Kalkaska County Library budget as a base. This poses another area of concern for the Library Board.

Both budget models, however, clearly show an operational budget deficit beginning with the move-in year to a new facility, indicating a clear need for an operational budget increase.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

After a thorough and objective study, and in consideration of the information gathered and put forth in this needs statement, the following recommendations are for the consideration of the Kalkaska County Library Board of Directors.

The board should:

- Consider a project that will provide approximately 23,714 square feet of space to serve the library needs of the Kalkaska community for the next 20 years. The Planning Committee also recommends that the board evaluate the possibility of executing the plan in phased, 10-year segments.
- Engage the services of an architect to:
 - Establish preliminary designs and costs.
 - Ascertain if preliminary cost estimates can be reduced and the associated compromises and/or trade-offs any changes will entail.
 - Ascertain the possibility of phasing the project (if necessary).
- Upon receiving preliminary architectural renderings of a new library facility, evaluate the Kalkaska County Land Use Plan, identify a building site that would be consistent with county planning, and secure needed commitments for building construction.
- Conduct a review of anticipated operating expenses to determine if existing funding mechanisms are sufficient for the expanded facility. If not, consider community assistance through use of an operational millage.
- Address the current operational budget to:
 - Investigate means of increasing revenues to reflect more closely the average operational budgets of similarly-sized libraries in the state of Michigan.
 - Reduce the precarious dependence on state assistance, i.e., penal fines, state aid.
- Finalize capital funding strategies which incorporate both a realistic community-wide capital campaign goal and millage initiative. In determining final project costs and funding strategies, ensure all associated costs are identified, including:
 - Facility construction and/or renovation costs.
 - Land costs (if any).
 - Capital campaign costs.
 - Opening day collection costs.
- Monitor additional development plans in the county, including the new, co-generation plant just north of the village, which may add substantial value to the county's tax base, thereby making it possible to reduce the millage/bond issue level.

- Establish an information/development committee to:
 - Communicate what resources the library offers the Kalkaska community.
 - Communicate the library's critical needs, as identified by the needs assessment Planning Committee.
 - Communicate the library board's proposal for a funding plan.
- Initiate a feasibility study to determine the level of private support and community acceptance of the:
 - Proposed library construction project.
 - Estimated costs associated with the library project.
 - Prospect of an operational millage to ensure adequate and efficient use.
 - Funding strategies developed (community-wide capital campaign and millage).
- Should it be determined through the feasibility study that sufficient private support exists to fund the capital costs and operating millage, proceed with suggested funding strategies.