



# **LIBRARY STRATEGIES**



**Libraries are our everything – it's right there in the name!**

We know libraries and their support organizations because we're *embedded* in one. Our core services include:

**Strategic Planning**

**Community Needs Assessments**

**Facilities and Space Planning**

**Feasibility Studies + Capital Campaign Counsel**

**Friends and Foundation Assessments/Plans**

**Library Operations Audits**

**Fundraising and Advocacy Training**

**Board and Staff Leadership Training**



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# Project Methodology

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LSCG coordinated a custom project approach comprised of two dovetailing phases of work:

## **Phase 1: Community Engagement**

- **Purpose: Lead stakeholder engagement exercises to assess what residents need, want and expect from their local library – now and into the future.**

## **Phase 2: Consultant Fieldwork / Appraisal**

- **Purpose: Deploy veteran library space planners to visit the First Street facility and assess the basic pros and cons associated with several possible capital reinvestment options now under discussion.**

# Community Engagement

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## Community Survey

- **Advantage:** Secures inputs from a broad swathe of residents.

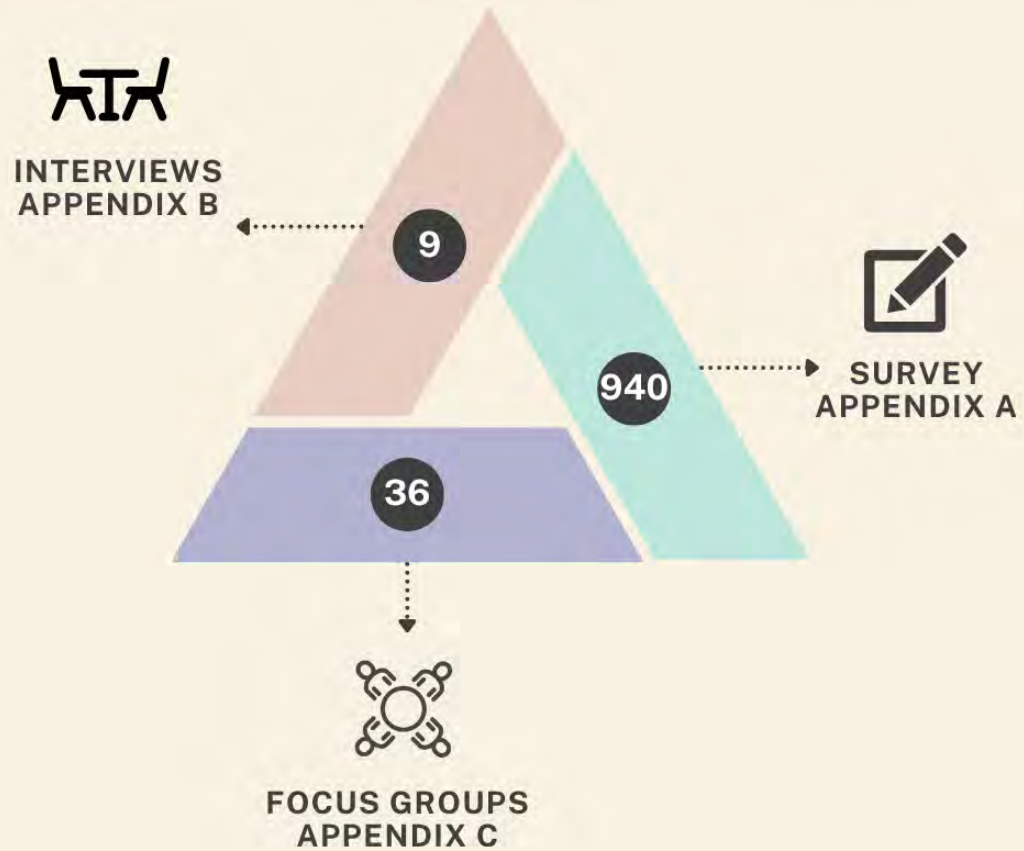
## Focus Groups

- **Advantage:** Allows the consultants to dig deeper into topics of particular interest while stoking real-time community conversations about HAPL's present and future.

## One-On-One Interviews

- **Advantage:** Enables the consultants to learn from community stakeholders who occupy key positions – or are otherwise positioned to provide richer insights than can be mined in the focus group context.

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INPUTS



## Dominant Themes: Location

**Consensus:** In the community's consciousness, HAPL is closely tied to the downtown, riverfront area in which the Library has been embedded for more than a decade.



**Contrast:** Some feel the location's benefits outweigh inherent limitations. However, others contend that shortcomings overshadow the location's real and purported benefits.

## Dominant Themes: Library Size

Even patrons who rave about the naturescapes and downtown proximities afforded by the First Street location are quick to note that interior space (or rather, a lack thereof) contributes to a library experience that falls short of their needs and expectations.



**“Location is amazing but more space is needed.” \*\***

**“Location is great but size I feel should be rethought about.”**

**“The location is fine. The areas feel tight.”**

**“Location: It’s great to have the library on the river and as part of Hudson’s cultural amenities. Size: It would be better if the library could handle more books.”**

*\*\*representative direct quotes from March-May 2024 survey work [unless otherwise specified]*



## Dominant Themes: Parking

The shortage of convenient, reliable parking spots is the single biggest flashpoint for visitor dissatisfaction. Regular guests, sporadic patrons, and self-described nonusers all agree that on-site parking is too limited.



**“I drive farther to go to other libraries because of ease of parking.”**

**“Parking is atrocious and so is the hill. We avoid in winter.”**

**“Parking is a problem and an obstacle to me physically using the library.”**

**“Parking lot is tight and often full, making street parking and crossing necessary.”**

*\*\*representative direct quotes from March-May 2024 survey work [unless otherwise specified]*

## Dominant Themes: Programming Spaces

HAPL maintains a diverse, robust and popular programming slate. Residents speak positively about what their Library is able to achieve with finite resources: limited staff, budget, but above all space. This last is a particular pain point.



**“It would be so nice if the library just had one bigger space for programs vs. using the lobby.”**

**“The library seems to make use of every bit of space it has. Sometimes, i.e. for kids programs, these seem cramped for the number of participants.”**

**“The lobby gets very tight with big programs.”**

*\*\*representative direct quotes from March-May 2024 survey work [unless otherwise specified]*

## Dominant Themes: Meeting Rooms

Hudson residents noted consistently that the community offers few low- or no-cost meeting spaces for small groups to convene and collaborate. HAPL is an illustrative case in point, since it holds just one bookable space for groups of 8+ participants.

Over a recent, 3-month period, HAPL staff tracked all requests for meeting rooms. During that period the Library turned down 39 groups who wished to use the conference suite due simply to room schedule capacity.



**“Our HOA met in the large meeting room on the 2nd floor and we were crowded. Could have used a larger room.”**

**“[We] need a community meeting room with flexible seating options...”**

**“I think our library should offer a top-of-the-line conference room suite - Hudson's best. We're not great as a community in this regard.”**

## Dominant Themes: Study & Reading Spaces

Now as ever, a significant portion of visitors also want their public library to be an accessible, welcoming space for quiet, individual pursuits: leisure reading, research, homework, and the like. The retrofitted nature and limiting floorplan of the current building provide a serious check on HAPL's ability to meet this need.



**“[I] need private study rooms and more/any tables to accommodate laptops and research materials.”**

**“I would love to have more quiet study spaces that are not meeting rooms.”**

**“I'd love to see places that allow for people to find a nook where they could study or read in a quiet way, away from people coming and going.”**

*\*\*representative direct quotes from March-May 2024 survey work [unless otherwise specified]*

## Dominant Themes: Children's Area

Families with young children are extremely appreciative for what HAPL makes available to its youngest patrons. However, here as elsewhere, HAPL's ability to cater fully to the needs of this vital demographic is hampered by a restrictive physical footprint.



**“I love the children’s area and I really wish it could be bigger and the sensory room be open more.”**

**“It’s a little crowded in [the] children's due to [the] amount of toys that are out and accessible.”**

**“I think the library does an excellent job catering to little ones, and also has the separate teen section... but there’s not much specifically for those middle kids.”**

*\*\*representative direct quotes from March-May 2024 survey work [unless otherwise specified]*

## Dominant Themes: Collections / Shelving

HAPL's maintains a physical collection that is modest compared to peer libraries and acc. to Wisconsin Public Library Standards. Space constraints, together with floor load limitations in the current facility, make it impossible for HAPL to prioritize net gains to its physical collections on anything near the needed scale.



**“The library collection should not be limited by a floor that can't hold the weight.”**

**“Either the second floor needs to be fixed so it can hold more books or I feel the location should change so that there is more room for the collection.”**

**“[I] sometimes have to wait a long time to get books from other libraries because we don't have the book in Hudson.”**

*\*\*representative direct quotes from March-May 2024 survey work [unless otherwise specified]*



## CHECKPOINT

Questions So Far?

## **Context: Fast Facts**

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- **HAPL's current footprint is 19,024 square feet, including lobby and "unassignable" spaces.**
- **Library's legal service area (as defined by the State) is pop. 32,433 as of the '23 reporting period (and still includes outlying communities).**
- **For communities with Hudson's profile, architects and space planners commonly recommend this durable starter formula:  
0.9 sq. ft. of space per resident.**
  - **Formulation takes into account "book spaces" and "people spaces," as well as emergent trends in and interplay between each.**
  - **When a library offers less than 0.9 sq. ft., it is likely that the building offers inadequate space to fully meet the community's present needs.**



## Context: Fast Facts

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- HAPL offers approx. .59 sq. ft. per resident (*19,024 sq. ft. ÷ 32,433 pop*).
- For context, most peer libraries across Wisconsin offer +1.0 sq. ft. or more per capita.

Public Library	County	Pop.	Sq. Ft.	Sq. Ft. / Resident
West Bend Community Memorial Library	Washington	32,255	67,000	2.08
Neenah Public Library	Winnebago	27,560	50,000	1.81
Manitowoc Public Library	Manitowoc	34,475	54,120	1.57
Muskego Public Library	Waukesha	25,496	40,000	1.57
Frank L. Weyenberg Library	Ozaukee	28,335	33,600	1.19
Fitchburg Public Library	Dane	34,019	38,000	1.12
North Shore Library	Milwaukee	26,112	16,160	0.62
Hudson Area Public Library	St. Croix	32,433	19,024	0.59

- Likewise, most *ongoing* library construction projects across WI comfortably exceed the 0.9 yardstick (cf. Sun Prairie, Whitehall).

## Context: Fast Facts

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- **You don't invest in library facilities for today. You do so for tomorrow.**
- **Even in a favorable climate, capital investments in a library building usually take 5-10 yrs to realize.**
- **Further: Space planners and architects who design library build-outs advise floor plans large enough to accommodate 10+ yrs of *subsequent* growth.**
- **St. Croix County is projected to be the fastest-growing county (in terms of % change) through 2040, increasing by 41%.**
- **Reasonable preliminary target: 40,865 sq. ft. (= 45,406 pop.\* x 0.9 sq. ft.), or roughly x2 today's 19,024 sq. ft.**

*\*extrapolating from demographic forecasts (further detailed in written report)*



## CHECKPOINT

Questions So Far?

# Expansion Possibilities

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**Reinvestment options explored by LSCG at HAPL's request:**

## **Option 1: Hudson P.D. Space:**

- HPD will soon relocate to a new campus on Hanley Road, allowing the City to repurpose their vacated premises for other use(s).

## **Option 2: Second-Floor Expansion**

- “Landlocked” libraries may consider expanding their second floor over the parking lot, adding usable interior space without jeopardizing coveted parking space.

## **Option 3: New Location / New Build**

- HAPL has moved operations twice before and could conceivably do so again.





## Option 1: Hudson P.D. Space

**Advantage 1.1: Retain Existing Location:** The majority of HAPL patrons, and even Hudson residents who seldom visit the Library, are in principle favorable to the idea of a downtown, riverfront library.

**Advantage 1.2: Square Footage Gains:** The 8,300 sq. ft. vacated would allow for a meaningful (if far from perfect) reconfiguration of library spaces and functions.

**Advantage 1.3: Non-Public Spaces:** Garage and basement spaces could also be devoted to storage and other back-of-house library needs, thereby de-cluttering several staff spaces that are currently serving double duty.



## Option 1: Hudson P.D. Space

**Disadvantage 1.1: Parking:** If the Library takes ownership of the vacated police offices, that addition will bring a negligible number of new parking spaces.

**Disadvantage 1.2: Continued Space Deficit:** While this expansion would ease some space-related tensions for patrons and staff, the addition would not compensate completely for existing and projected space deficits.

**Disadvantage 1.3: Adjacencies:** Retrofits to the police facility could effectively make HAPL a three-floor library with an atypical blueprint and sub-optimal adjacencies (spatial relationships between areas).

**Disadvantage 1.4: Renovation Costs:** Conversion projects can be costlier than is generally appreciated. Ex.: Conversion of existing facilities can trigger stringent code requirements, adding significant expense toward overall cost.

**Advantage 1.5: HVAC:** HPD's existing mechanical infrastructure provides inconsistent temperature control.



## Option 2: Second-Floor Expansion

**Advantage 2.1: Retain Existing Location:** The majority of HAPL patrons, and even Hudson residents who seldom visit the Library, are in principle favorable to the idea of a downtown, riverfront library.

**Advantage 2.2: Square Footage Gains:** A major construction project along these lines could conceivably add 10,000 square feet to the Library's interior.

**Advantage 2.3: Load-Bearing Floors:** In order to handle the weight of library shelving ranges, second-story floors should be graded to carry 150 lbs per sq. ft. This could finally be accomplished through a second-floor build out.





## Option 2: Second-Floor Expansion

**Disadvantage 2.1: Parking:** A second-story buildout would not address (and perhaps exacerbate) the parking issues that so obviously hamper the experience of many library users.

**Disadvantage 2.2: Continued Space Challenges:** This investment alone would offer only approximately half of the square footage needed to 1) remedy existing space deficits and 2) account for projected population growth.

**Disadvantage 2.3: Cost-Benefit Analysis:** Further research will likely yield a “cost-benefit” analysis that makes the public investment needed for a second-story build out difficult to justify (high cost per square foot gained).

**Disadvantage 2.4: Disjointed Floor Plan:** Expanding over the parking lot would result in an unconventional and sub-optimal building blueprint.



## Option 3: New Build

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**Advantage 3.1: Parcel and Building Size:** A new and larger build on an alternative site would allow HAPL to expand with interior spaces that fully address current community needs and anticipated growth.

**Advantage 3.2: Floorplan Configuration:** A new build on a comparatively uncomplicated site allows an architect to design a library that adheres to best practices for the industry.

**Advantage 3.3: Ample Parking:** No capital reinvestment option short of removal to a new location will fully address current parking challenges and frustrations.

**Advantage 3.4: Outdoor Spaces:** Central libraries in similar communities often offer outside amenities for seasonal use. HAPL's current premises does not allow for such spaces. This would be possible at a different location.



## Option 3: New Build

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**Advantage 3.5: Viable Options:** Many communities at a similar crossroads conclude that a more permanent library “home” is essential only after all suitable land is spoken for / cost-prohibitive to acquire. By most accounts, Hudson still has options.

**Advantage 3.6: New Neighbors:** “New build” libraries planned today are often sited within easy walking distance of (in some cases, even co-located with) other high-traffic public facilities. A new location would allow Hudson to consider synergistic adjacencies.



## Option 3: New Build

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**Disadvantage 3.1: Unsocialized Message:** The normality and necessity of a downtown location are broadly taken for granted. The advantages associated with moving the library are many – but would need to be messaged intentionally, broadly, and over a course of years.

**Disadvantage 3.2: Price Variables / Overall Cost:** Capital reinvestments on the scale of new construction initiatives naturally come with substantial site acquisition and construction costs. The price tag for such a large-scale project will be closely scrutinized – and so requires methodical prework.



## CHECKPOINT

Questions So Far?

# Report Recommendations



# Long-Term Recommendations

**Create A Building Program:** A “building program” is a pre-development exercise used to capture the precise functional and spatial needs of the project under consideration. It is standard for new construction, but is equally instructive for expansions.

- Plan will sketch out all interior areas: relational positioning, needed square footage, fixtures, furnishings, etc.
- It will allow library leadership to justify square footage requirements (and generally helps with funding advocacy, as well).
- Supports exist for staff. Library Strategies’ written report lists templates and other relevant resources.

# Long-Term Recommendations

**Building Planning Committee:** The Board should establish and recruit for a working group to spearhead the research, public advocacy, fundraising, and other stakeholder engagement necessary to shepherd through this long-term investment in the community.

- Rationale: An initiative as multi-dimensional, expensive, and impactful as the complete overhaul of the community's library requires a broad coalition of supporters.
- Early and principal goals include 1) the identification and greenlighting of a specific expansion plan, and 2) an exploration of the funding mechanisms available to realize that plan.



# Long-Term Recommendations

**Determine Expansion Plan:** We know, it's obvious – but crucial!

it is difficult to estimate, let alone pinpoint, project costs without first knowing the site (if relocated) or manner (if remodeled) of construction.

- Major unknowns hamper a library's ability to explore public or private funding at anything more than a surface level.
- Early and principal goals include:
  - 1) the identification and greenlighting of a specific expansion plan, and
  - 2) an exploration of the funding mechanisms available to realize that plan.

# Long-Term Recommendations

**Identify Funding Channels + Levels:** Attaining public investment on this scale requires careful financial planning. With few exceptions, library buildings today require all three of the following:

- **A. Local Funding:** Whether through a city-wide referendum or the reassignment of an existing tax, a new library cannot take shape without public support. Local funding sources are the bedrock for library construction and (usually) a prerequisite for the pursuit of supplemental financing.
- **B. State/Grant Funding:** Grants and other financing support may be available from State sources.
- **C. Private Support:** In today's environment, library rebuilds accomplished without support from the private sector are the exception rather than the rule. On average, private support accounts for ~15-20% of the total project budget.

