

CHARLES COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY FACILITIES MASTER PLAN 2017 – 2037



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**Prepared by
Providence Associates LLC
Library Planners Consultants
1530 East Elm Street
Cottonwood, AZ
www.libraryexperience.com**

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PROVIDENCE ASSOCIATES TEAM MEMBERS

Providence Associates LLC	Toni Garvey Associate, Principal
	Laura J. Isenstein Principal
RRMM® Lukmire Architects	William Evans

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I. INTRODUCTION – SETTING THE STAGE

Today's public libraries anchor community life, centered around principles of learning and exploration that have long been endorsed in the state of Maryland. Libraries draw people together. In the best of circumstances, they are "destinations" – places for the community to gather and connect in a variety of ways. The public library in the 21st century is the most highly-used, publicly-supported service provided in a community, a people-centric space. What we know now and what we continue to learn is what it takes to make public libraries indispensable and irreplaceable in their communities. This evolving knowledge has a direct impact on the future of the Charles County Public Library.

Our analysis begins with an overview of public library trends in the 21st century and then proceeds to look at the Charles County Public Library as it is today and how the County will likely change in terms of population and demographics over the next 20 years. We report on the needs and expectations of residents of the Library's service area as shared in focus groups, stakeholder interviews, town hall meetings and an online customer survey. An assessment of the Library's current state of technology offers observations and recommendations. We provide an assessment and report on the physical integrity of the four library buildings. We conclude with space needs requirements (based on service recommendations) for each existing library for the next 20 years. The space needs requirements form the basis of our recommendations for improving current facilities and demonstrate the need to provide additional ways to deliver library service throughout Charles County.

Our goal was to provide a master facilities plan that addresses the Library's Mission and Vision; a plan that results in spaces where everyone in the community will have opportunities to learn and grow. We also strived to develop a plan that supports the vision outlined in the County's Comprehensive Plan – a county where everyone can grow and prosper, where government services "are provided at the highest level of excellence," and where residents enjoy a quality of life that is second to none.

21ST CENTURY LIBRARY SERVICES

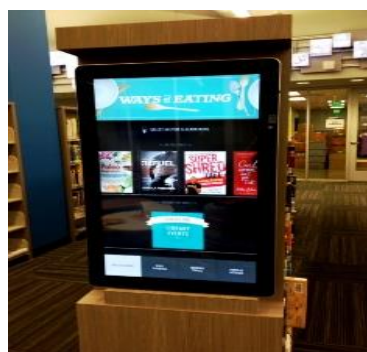
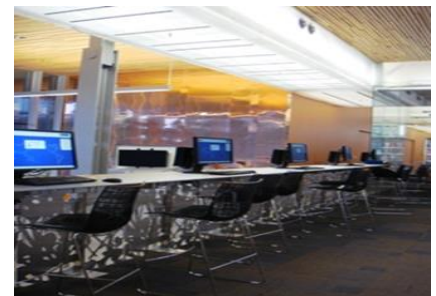
Public library service in the 21st century is about literacy, education, culture, recreation and families. Public libraries are also about economic development and central to core revitalization. They offer individuals a bridge to "cross" economic and technological divides, as well as being a resource for and preserver of local history. As the Charles County Public Library Mission states, they "...create opportunities for the community to engage, discover, and learn."

The public library "industry" has changed significantly over the last fifteen years. The most compelling and continuous change has been the computerization of library operations and services. Computers/technologies have streamlined library operations and functions while enhancing community-wide access to information resources, homework assistance, email, social networking, and work force development services in a 24/7 environment.

Derived from the consultants' experience and a review of the state of public libraries, the following page list the key elements associated with successful public libraries in today's cities and suburbs.

Critical Elements of the Successful 21st Century Public Library

- Customer-focused and driven
- Convenient access to and delivery of services
- The “Place to Meet and Gather” – formally and informally
- Inviting, comfortable, spacious, attractive, colorful and bright facilities
- Functional, flexible and adaptive spaces for all ages
- Core resource for lifelong learning for the entire community
- Fosters literacy and inspires imagination in children from birth to age 5
- Encourages and supports a love of reading and learning for school-age children
- The “happening” place for pre-teens and teens
- Family-focused activities, programs and events
- Engages active adults (55+) through programming, book discussions, and volunteer opportunities
- Collections, in all formats, that are current and responsive to the popular interests of the community
- Up-to-date and plentiful technology access and services (e.g. Wi-Fi, self-service, downloadable e-content, community blogs, streaming video, classes that enhance personal computing skills and “social-networking”)
- Building layout & adjacencies that enhance the customer's experience and ease of use
- Maximizes customer satisfaction through new service models and streamlined operations
- Budget and resource allocations driven by service priorities
- Buildings sized to provide the services needed and expected by an ever changing community with more cost effective staffing and operations
- Sustainable buildings that are built to LEED standards



II. CHARLES COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY – WHAT WAS LEARNED

PROVIDENCE Associates, LLC, a library planning and consulting group, began working with Charles County Public Library in late 2016. Providence contracted with RRMM® Lukmire Architects to assist in the project. Our work focused on the scope identified in the County issued Request for Proposal (RFP) document, which stated that the facilities master plan should “evaluate possibilities for locating buildings in high-traffic, high-population regions” of Charles County and “in appropriate sizes to meet the needs of growing and changing communities.” The RFP went on to state that the plan:

“shall provide a vision for growing and meeting the challenge to create community centers connecting people and foster economic, civic, and personal growth. It shall provide an outline to explore community partnerships and shared facilities which provide added value and benefits to the public. It shall create a basis for:

- *Improving library facilities across [the] County;*
- *Providing adequate space for meeting rooms and programming space at all facilities;*
- *Rebuilding aging infrastructure;*
- *Incorporating advanced technology to reduce operating costs;*
- *Incorporating principles of universal design, as developed and expounded by the Center for Universal Design at North Carolina State University; and*
- *Creating buildings which are energy efficient and environmentally friendly, as measured through the LEED certification program of the U.S. Green Building Council.”*

As Providence started our investigation, we brought to the assessment what we know to be the trends and changes in 21st century public library service. Our process of study included consideration of those trends as we:

- reviewed Library usage patterns and comparisons with other peer public libraries
- reviewed of the Library’s strategic plan and directions and the Charles County Comprehensive Plan
- developed a demographic profile and population projections for the next 20 years
- mapped current Library usage by individual branch library
- gathered direct input from the community concerning satisfaction with library services and facilities along with suggestions for improvements
- determined the physical condition of the four library facilities, and
- assessed the adequacy of the size of the facilities based on the current and future mix of services and collections.

We began by preparing a demographic profile of Charles County along with population projections for the next twenty years. As the community grows and changes, library services and location of library facilities and service delivery methods need to be responsive to and accessible for all residents. We next describe the greater community’s Library experiences and their identification of the Library’s strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for improvement and change. This is followed by an assessment of the current state of the Library’s technology in terms of functionality, impact on staff, customer convenience, and availability and access.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

The population of Charles County grew at a robust rate, 22%, between 2000 and 2010. However, the County made significant changes outlined in its 2016 Comprehensive Plan and believes the growth rate will slow to 1% or less in the near future. A 1% growth rate would result in 37,000 new residents by 2040. The community vision presented in the County's Comprehensive Plan is:

"... a place where all people thrive and businesses grow and prosper; where the preservation of our heritage and environment is paramount; where government services to its citizens are provided at the highest level of excellence; and where the quality of life is the best in the nation."

Most of the County's growth will be absorbed by planned communities, such as St. Charles in Waldorf and Heritage Green in La Plata, along with subdivisions with at least preliminary plan approval. The County's Subdivision Code changed in 2013, however, limiting times that projects can maintain approvals – be "in the pipeline" – to 12 years. This change may decrease the number of "pipeline" projects.

With a 2016 estimated population of 157,705, Charles County is split almost equally by gender with female persons comprising 51.8% of the population. The city of Waldorf makes up almost half of the population, with just over 71,000 residents. Approximately one quarter (25%) of the population is under the age of 18.

Charles is a racially diverse county, more diverse than the state of Maryland overall. According to the U.S. Census, White persons (alone, not Hispanic or Latino) make up 43% of the population, as compared to 59.6% for the state; Black alone 45% (30.5% for the state); and Asian (alone) persons 3.4% (Maryland has 6.5% overall). Persons who are Hispanic or Latino are 5.5% of the county.

The median household income in Charles County is \$90,607, 22% higher than the state median. Just over 7% of the population lives in poverty. There is a high owner-occupied housing rate of 77.7%, compared to the state owner-occupied housing rate of 66.8%. The median value of the housing units in Charles County is \$284,500, which is similar to the state figure.

Residents of Charles County are well educated. Ninety-two percent are high school graduates, and more than 27% have a bachelor's degree or higher. There are educational institutions of all types in the County, including:

Public elementary schools	22
Public middle schools	8
Public high schools	7
Private schools	16
Community colleges	1

The public schools have a robust System-Wide Capital Improvement Plan, which was published in 2014. According to their 10-year facilities report, they will replace La Plata High School in 2017; replace four elementary schools; and build two new elementary schools in Waldorf, one scheduled for 2020 and one for 2023.

The demographics around each of the four branch libraries are discussed below.

BRANCH LIBRARY SERVICE AREAS

Public libraries typically define their service areas in one of two ways. Some look at the amount of time it takes a person to drive to their nearest library; a library's service area may include everyone within a 10-minute drive, for example. Other libraries define their service area by distance, including everyone living within a certain number of miles around the library.

We decided to look at the relative distance between branch libraries. While this method often does not count residents in the most rural areas of the county, it does include the geographic areas with the highest library use.

We secured demographic profiles of each library service area (based on two, four and six-mile rings around each library's street address) from DecisionWhere Inc., a demographic profiling service that we use for the vast majority of our studies and whose data is based upon the same services and data used by state and local planning departments. We then determined the radius that was most appropriate for each of the four Charles County libraries, based on each library's location relative to one another. A description of the demographics of each of the service areas follows, and the full reports from DecisionWhere are included in Appendix A.

Charles County Library staff also determined the number of library card holders in each of the county's zip codes. They then calculated the percentage of residents with library cards in each zip code.

Using this method, we see that the areas with the highest percentage of library cards holders are Marbury (58%); White Plains (57%); Waldorf (zip code 20602 with 53%); and Bryans Road (52%). In the next tier, with library card holders representing 40-49% of residents, are: Waldorf (zip code 20603, 47%); Faulkner (46%); Indian Head (43%); and La Plata (42%). It is not surprising that the areas with the lowest percentage of library card holders are at the county's borders and furthest from a branch library: Mechanicsville (2%) and Benedict (9%).

La Plata Branch Library

We defined the La Plata Branch Library service area using a four-mile ring around the Library's street address. The 2016 estimated population of the area is 17,837. According to DecisionWhere, five percent of the population is under the age of five; 12% is between five and 15 years of age; and 18% are 65 and older. The median age is 43.58.

There are an estimated 6,494 households in the area around La Plata branch, which is an increase of 9.4% from 2010. The average household size is 2.64. The median household income is \$102,262.

La Plata Library's service area is racially diverse. Approximately 68% of the population is White, 24.5% is Black, and those of Hispanic origin make up 3.8% of the area population. Looking at level of educational attainment for adults over 25, 28.2% have a high school diploma; 24.6% have some college but do not have a college degree; 8.7% have an Associate's degree; 19.1% have a Bachelor's degree; and 12.5% have a graduate or professional degree. Just under 7% of residents in this area do not have a high school diploma.

Ninety-six percent (96%) of housing units are occupied; 81% are occupied by the owners and 19% by renters. The median home value in the four-mile ring around La Plata Library is \$323,062 and the median monthly rent is \$1,355.

Potomac Branch Library

Potomac Branch Library in northwestern Charles County has a service area population of 21,144 per U.S. Census estimates for 2016. Those residents are divided into 7,429 households with an average household size of 2.85. The median household income is \$103,568.

Children under five years of age make up 6% of the population in this service area. Five to 15 year olds are 14% of the population and 12% of the service area is age 65 and older. With a median age of 40.88, this is a younger service area than the one for the La Plata Branch Library.

Thirty-six point two percent (36.2%) of residents in Potomac Branch Library's service area are White, 54.5% are Black, 3.6% are Asian and 5% are categorized by the U.S. Census Bureau as other/multiple races. Potomac-area residents have a similar level of education as those who live in the La Plata area. Looking at adults over the age of 25, 31.2% have a high school diploma; 26.1% have some college but did not receive a degree; 6.1% have an Associate's degree; 17.9% have a Bachelor's degree; and 11.8% have a graduate or professional degree. Seven percent (7%) do not have a high school diploma.

Married couples make up 73.5% of the service area. Forty-eight percent of those couples have children under the age of 18 living in the household.

There are 7,792 housing units in the Potomac Branch Library service area; 88.6% are owner occupied and 11.4% are renter occupied. The median home value is \$282,377 and the median monthly rent is \$1,374.

Waldorf West and P.D. Brown Memorial Libraries

Waldorf West and P.D. Brown branch libraries are both in Waldorf and are located just three miles from one another. Waldorf West, however, naturally draws people who might live closer to P.D. Brown as West is a newer library with more resources. For the purposes of this project, we are defining the P.D. Brown service area as a two-mile ring around that library, and the Waldorf West service area as a six-mile ring around its address, understanding that their respective service areas overlap to some degree. In this report we will focus on the distinctions between the two library's service areas.

Waldorf West

The six-mile ring around Waldorf West Branch Library has a 2016 population of 95,874. That number represents an 11% increase over the 2010 population, per the U.S. Census. Children under the age of five make up 6.5% of the population; children from five to 15 are 14%; and adults 65 and older are 10% of the service area population. The median age is 38.66, making this the youngest of the library service areas.

There are 38,354 households in the Waldorf service area; the average household size is 2.79. The median household income, \$96,473, is the lowest of the three service areas.

The Black population makes up the majority of this service area, 53.9%. Approximately 34.8% of the population is White and 4.6% is Asian; 6.3% is classified by the Census as other or multiple races.

The level of educational attainment in the Waldorf area is similar to the other two library service areas. Twenty-nine point one percent of residents have a high school diploma; 25.7% have some college but

not a degree; 8.2% have an Associate's degree; 18.5% have a Bachelor's degree; and 12% have a graduate or professional degree. Nearly 7% of service area residents have no high school diploma.

There are fewer married couples in the Waldorf area; 69.8% compared with 77.2% in Potomac and 77.3% in the La Plata service area. Fifty percent (50%) of those couples have children.

There are 40,096 housing units in this service area. The median home value is \$276,544 and the median rent is \$1,440, making this the least expensive of the service areas in terms of housing costs.

P.D. Brown

The P.D. Brown service area has a 2016 population of 29,257. The population breakdown by age is similar to that for Waldorf, though the median age is slightly younger (36.79).

There are 10,999 households in the two-mile ring around P.D. Brown, with an average household size of 2.64. The median household income, however, is \$74,333 – more than \$22,000 less than the median household income in the greater Waldorf area; almost \$28,000 less than the median in La Plata and \$35,000 less than Potomac.

There are also differences in the educational attainment of individuals in the two mile area immediately around P.D. Brown and the six miles around Waldorf West:

	<u>P.D. Brown</u>	<u>Waldorf West</u>
No high school diploma	9.0%	6.5%
High school diploma	35.7%	29.1%
College, no diploma	24.3%	25.7%
Associate degree	7.1%	8.2%
Bachelor's degree	15.8%	18.5%
Graduate/professional degree	8.2%	12.0%

Clearly, the residents living in a six-mile ring around Waldorf West Library have more education and higher incomes than those living in the two-mile ring around P.D. Brown. It is not surprising that the median home value is lower in the P.D. Brown area, though the rent is fairly comparable.

Mobile Services

The Library's Mobile Services Department brings the Library – books, materials, programs and technology – to those who are unable to visit one of the four branch libraries. The Mobile Services Department consists of a van and the new Mobile Library. The van makes stops at senior centers, daycares and to the homebound, doing story times, home visits and visiting seniors in their rooms; i.e. Library staff takes resources into buildings and homes. The Mobile Library is a full service, 24-foot-long library on wheels, with materials available for checkout, free Wi-Fi, laptops for public use, an outside area for programs and staff assistance. People come on board the Mobile Library to get their resources.

LIBRARY USAGE

Library usage in Charles County has increased with the growth in population. Since 2014, the Library's total customer contacts (circulation + visits + programs) are up 8.3 percent with the greatest increases in the area of circulation of materials. There is a 16.3 percent increase in program attendance.

Chart 1, below, illustrates the usage patterns for the library system.

Chart 1 – System Usage Patterns

Charles County Public Library – Three Year Review of Customer Contacts* (Circulation, Visits, Program Attendance)

	FY2015	FY2016	FY2017*	%Change From 2015
Circulation**	717,646	747,487	893,339	24.5%
Visits	634,200	638,697	568,448	-10.4%
Program Attendance***	26,995	30,801	31,397	16.3%
Total	1,378,841	1,416,985	1,493,184	8.3%

*Prorated from monthly statistics through February 28, 2017

**The Auto Renewal function began in FY17 and accounts for some portion of the circulation increase.

***Does not include "passive" programs (i.e. programs which require little or no effort or money for the library's part), with simple set up and little to no staff supervision) and off-site visits

Over the three-year time period of FY15 through FY17, customer contacts in three of the four branch libraries increased:

La Plata	up 19.0 percent
Potomac	up 6.3 percent
Waldorf West	up 17.6 percent

P.D. Brown experienced increases in program attendance (16.6 percent) and circulation (28.2 percent), but a decrease in visits (-44%).

Chart 2, below, illustrates the progression of those changes. The decreases shown for P.D. Brown may be due to the opening and increasing usage of Waldorf West. The other three branches have maintained steady growth in usage over all three areas – visits, circulation and program attendance.

Chart 2 – Branch Usage Patterns

Charles County Public Library – Three Year Review of Customer Contacts by Branch (Circulation, Visits, Program Attendance)

	2015	2016	Percent Change	2017	Percent Change	Percent Change FY15-17
La Plata	252,096	275,947	9.5%	300,030	8.7%	19.0%
P.D. Brown	336,164	331,714	-13.2%	295,598	-10.9%	-12.1%
Potomac	189,491	176,869	-6.7%	201,397	13.9%	6.3%
Waldorf	600,362	632,455	5.3%	706,165	11.7%	17.6%

PEER LIBRARIES

The Consultant also compared the Charles County Library with Maryland library systems in Carroll, Frederick, and Wicomico counties and with the Alexandria Library in Virginia. Through this comparison, we find that Charles County falls behind three of those library systems in *almost every category*. Only Wicomico County has fewer library resources than Charles County, with the exception of library space. Wicomico has 0.12 SF more per capita than Charles County. Charles County would need to add more than 18,000 square feet of library space to reach the level of Wicomico County.

It is especially telling to look at the peer comparisons in light of personal economic data about each of the communities. As Chart 3 shows, Charles County has the highest median household income and the second highest median family income and earnings for workers among the peer communities, yet lags most of the others in operational and capital library support.

Chart 3 – FY2015 Peer Library Comparisons

Source: 2015 Maryland State Department of Education Division of Library Development and Services Public Library Statistics; 2015 Library of Virginia

Income of Workers, Families, Households					
Library	Median Earnings for Workers	Median Family Income	Median Household Income	Persons in Poverty	
Alexandria	\$52,964	\$109,075	\$89,134	8.3%	
Carroll	\$41,358	\$101,208	\$85,385	6.2%	
Charles	\$50,155	\$102,498	\$90,607	7.1%	
Frederick	\$42,044	\$ 98,064	\$83,700	7.4%	
Wicomico	\$27,600	\$ 63,231	\$52,278	14.7%	
Library Operating Expenses					
Library	Total	Salaries	Salaries as % of Expenditures	Benefits	Other
Alexandria	\$ 7,067,533	NA	NA	NA	NA
Carroll	\$11,905,852	\$6,447,926	54.2%	1,272,428	2,712,710
Charles	\$ 4,542,891	\$2,944,459	64.8%	562,060	717,457
Frederick	\$10,596,578	\$5,748,468	54.2%	2,167,954	1,333,104
Wicomico	\$ 2,420,182	\$1,330,575	55.1%	521,008	368,354
Personnel					
Library	Total Paid Staff	MLS Librarians	Other Staff	Staff per 1000 pop	
Alexandria	80.55	33.80	46.75	0.55	
Carroll	164.00	23.00	141.00	0.98	
Charles	62.00	10.00	52.00	0.41	
Frederick	130.00	34.00	96.00	0.54	
Wicomico	37.00	4.00	33.00	0.37	
Library Holdings					
Library	Total Holdings	Holdings/ Capita	Materials Expenditures	Materials Exp./Cap.	
Alexandria	564,828	3.83	NA	NA	
Carroll	648,918	3.88	\$1,472,788	\$8.81	
Charles	365,688	2.43	\$318,915	\$2.12	
Frederick	621,434	2.59	1,347,052	\$5.62	
Wicomico	295,051	2.93	200,245	\$1.99	

Circulation					
Library	Total	Circ/Capita	#Registered Borrowers	Percent of Population Registered	
Alexandria	1,339,000	9.09	103,533	70.2%	
Carroll	3,970,949	23.75	95,283	57.1%	
Charles	805,540	5.35	88,355	58.7%	
Frederick	2,823,695	11.79	140,809	58.8%	
Wicomico	526,931	5.24	44,940	44.7%	
Other Customer Contacts					
Library	Visits	Program Attendance	Annual Hrs		
Alexandria	746,908	70,024	13,416		
Carroll	1,074,319	145,318	23,942		
Charles	634,200	35,849	11,574		
Frederick	1,027,236	155,766	19,737		
Wicomico	224,560	16,696	8,045		
Facilities					
Library	Main Library	Branches	Bookmobile	Total SF	SF per Capita
Alexandria	1	4	0	104,592	0.71
Carroll	0	6	1	131,702	0.79
Charles	0	4	0	64,129	0.43
Frederick	0	8	0	142,500	0.60
Wicomico	0	3	0	55,000	0.55
Electronic Access					
Library	Annual Wireless Uses	Total Public Internet Terminals	Annual Terminal Uses	Population per Terminal	
Alexandria	54,289	89	108,620	1,656	
Carroll	86,537	136	365,203	1,230	
Charles	72,817	105	130,721	1,434	
Frederick	100,220	228	270,948	1,051	
Wicomico	38,116	93	56,140	1,082	

There are also some key categories of support and funding in which CCPL is below average when compared with its peers. This may prevent the Library from being as responsive to the needs and expectations of its current customer base and from being able to meet the needs that will result from future growth in the County.

This is most notable in the area of available operating expenditures as shown in Chart 4 on the next page. The Library's per capita expenditures for operations, in general, and library materials expenditures specifically, when compared with libraries serving similar sized populations are below average. Its per capita operating expenditure of \$30.17, for example, is \$14.00 less than Frederick County. In Wicomico County, where the median household income is close to \$37,000 less than the median household income in Charles County, overall library expenditures per capita is just \$6.00 less than Charles County.

Chart 4

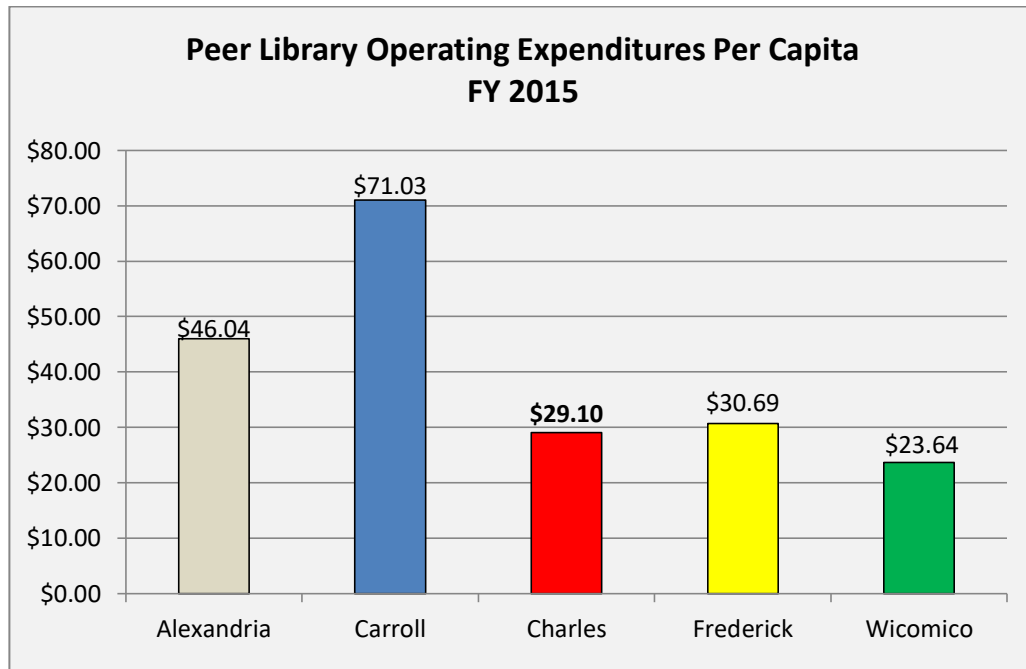
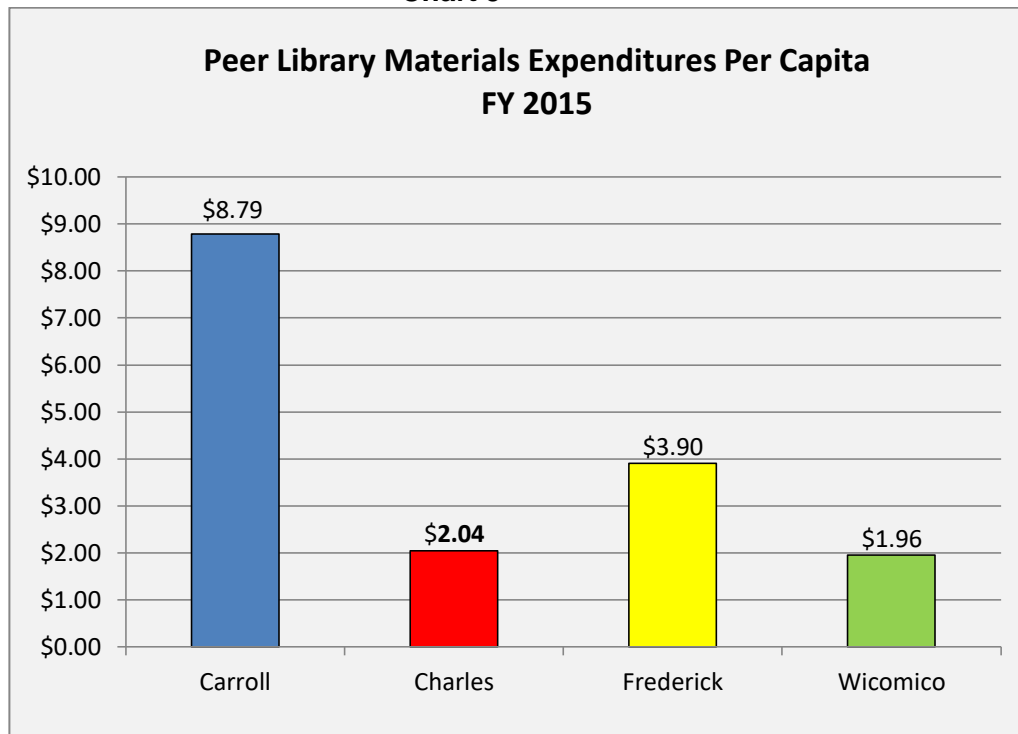
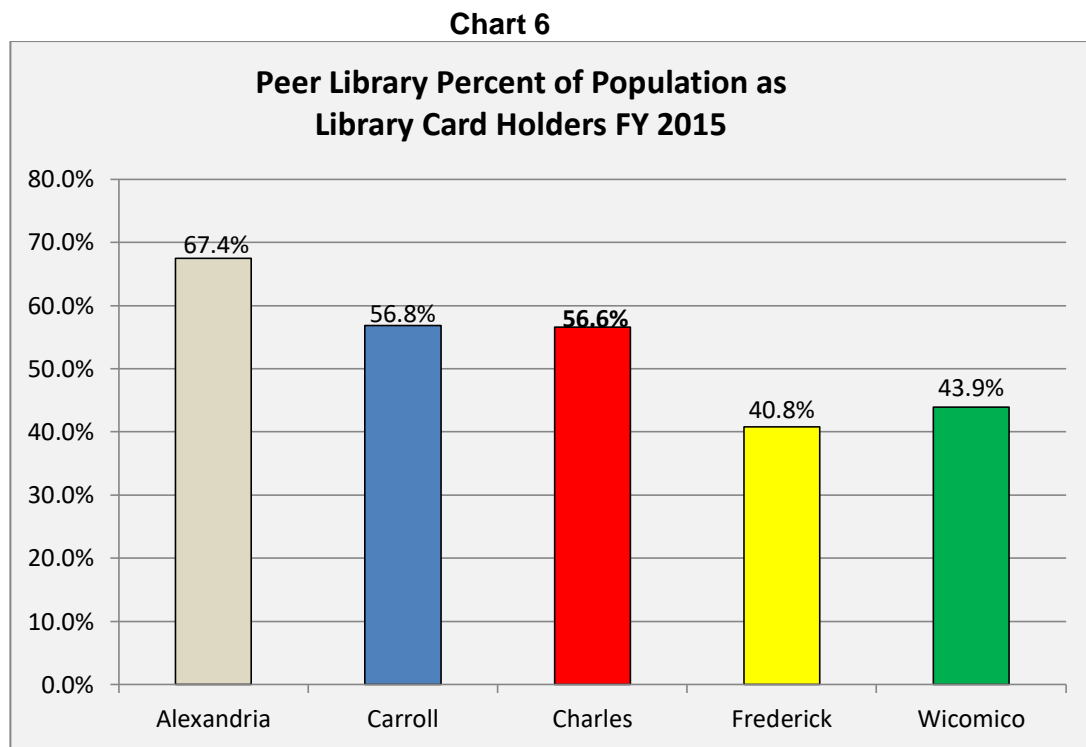


Chart 5 shows that the Library's materials expenditure per capita of \$2.12 is less than half that of Frederick County and just 25% of the Carroll county number. Wicomico County spends just \$0.13 per capita less than Charles County for books and other materials.

Chart 5



Despite this disparity in library expenditures, Chart 6 (below) illustrates that Charles County's percentage of library cardholders per total population is almost equal to Frederick and Carroll Counties and higher than Wicomico County. The comparatively lower number of customer contacts (circulation, program attendance, visits) in Charles County is most likely due to the difference in annual hours of service. Charles County offers the public fewer library hours annually than three of its four peer libraries.



TECHNOLOGY

Charles County Public Library has a Polaris ILS (integrated library system). An ILS is a resource management/planning system for a library, used to track items owned, orders placed, and information on items borrowed and the library's card holders. Charles has the latest version of the Polaris software, 5.1, which offers efficiencies and functional opportunities for both library staff and patrons.

The Library has a three-year system-wide technology plan which it describes as a "living" document that will be revisited and revised as needed throughout its life. The plan addresses all aspects of library technology, from specific devices and systems to the Library's Federal E-rate applications. We believe the plan would be strengthened, however, with specific, time-based and measurable actions that can be updated as needed throughout the life of the plan. For example, the 2014-2016 plan includes a chart detailing hardware and software refresh cycles but there is not an update to indicate if and when new hardware and software have been purchased and deployed.

The four libraries are maintaining their hardwired desktop computers and most are planning to add wireless laptops for adult use in the next five years, per the Technology Scans each branch completed for this report. We recommend they also consider the addition of "express" computers, which allow users 15 minutes to check email or quickly print out a document. Express computers allow users to quickly complete their business without waiting for a computer to become available. Space permitting, the

branches are also responding to the need for computers in designated teen spaces, one of the services most-requested by teens.

In its next Technology Plan, the Library should consider the acquisition of personal electronic devices – tablets, smart phones, and so on – for library users to “play” with in at least one of the libraries. These types of technology “sandboxes” are increasing in popularity and were mentioned in the community meetings.

All libraries currently have patron self-checkout equipment, enabling library users to check out their materials without staff assistance. We recommend the Library review its policy on patron self-checkout use to determine how to maximize the efficiency of this service and reach a usage level of 85-90%, freeing staff for other library services.

Comparing the branch technology plans, we did notice that there are inconsistencies among the branches in terms of the hardware and services they would like to provide. For example, with the exception of La Plata Branch, all the libraries would like to add wireless laptops for use by adult patrons in the next five years. Potomac and Waldorf West would like to add wireless laptops for children, but not La Plata and P.D. Brown. We believe it would be more efficient if public and IT staff worked together with Library Administration to determine the type and amount of hardware for each location.

In summary, Charles County Public Library is addressing the continuing effectiveness of existing systems and equipment and looking forward to new technologies that will increase library efficiency and respond to user demands. We believe the recommendations outlined above would strengthen their ability to meet those demands.

CONCLUSIONS

Our analysis of the demographic data demonstrates that growth in Charles County will continue along the policy guidelines established by the county’s Comprehensive Plan. The moderate growth that is projected – one percent per year for the next 20 years – will take place primarily in the Waldorf and La Plata areas.

The differences in service area composition (age, education, income, ethnicity, families with children, etc.) will require slightly different service emphases for each of the service areas. The La Plata service area, for example, has a higher percentage of residents 65 and older than the service areas of the other three branches – 18% compared to 10-12%. Services and collections need to be somewhat more focused on an older population. Here again teaching users how to use computers for communicating via email and searching the Internet for information may need to be a focus. Book clubs, cultural programs, travelogues and other programs of interest would be valued by the community. Particular attention should be paid to shelving of materials that facilitates ease of access for older residents. That is not to say that the library doesn’t need to offer collections and services to families and children for it does need to serve this group as well. However, their program of service requires recognition of the fact that the profile of the services area is of one that is aging.

P.D. Brown Library serves a community that earns significantly less than residents in the other library service areas. The level of educational attainment is also lower at the Bachelor’s and graduate degree level. The Library’s collections and services will need to take into consideration these differences. More

computers may be needed, for example, and the branch may need to highlight its educational resources. P.D. Brown may be an excellent location for a one-stop shop for college resources.

Charles County Public Library is getting busier. More people are attending programs, checking out books and other materials and visiting its branch libraries. However, the lack of library hours – the lowest among the Library’s peers – will continue to make it difficult for some residents to get to their branch library. As we will show in the next section, *The Community Speaks*, the lack of library service hours is a “hot topic” for many residents. There are two ways to address hours of operation: more hours at existing locations and more locations. We strongly recommend that Charles County look at both.

In the subsequent sections of this report we will:

- discuss what the residents of Charles County need and expect from their libraries,
- review and assess the state of the Library’s automation and technology,
- assess the physical “health” of each of the branch library structures, and
- make recommendations to provide facilities that accommodate service for the future.

III. THE COMMUNITY SPEAKS

Providence facilitated a series of 11 community engagement sessions over a five-day period, March 2 through March 8, 2017. Four of those groups were town hall meetings comprised of the general public; and three were with particular affinity groups reflecting the small business/non-profit, arts, and education communities. We also met with teens, active older adults, new adults, and parents of young children in small focus groups; and with Citizens for Charles County Public Library (C⁴), the Library Board of Trustees, and Library staff. A total of 85 persons attended the public meetings (i.e. not including the staff and Board meetings) to share their opinions about Library services and facilities, including their likes, needs, expectations, and suggestions for improvements.

We also conducted an online public survey about current and future library services, and received responses from 571 individuals.

The critical questions answered by the community's direct input were:

- What services are needed and expected by the residents of Charles County and how do they differ from the current offerings?
- How has the Internet and increased access to information via digital technologies changed the public's use of the library?
- Do the library's collections, in content and format, reflect the interests of all age groups?
- Are the facilities appropriately outfitted and located to conveniently meet the needs of residents of throughout the county?

SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY GROUP MEETINGS

In response to "What do you especially like about the Library? What keeps you coming back?"

Staff is excellent: knowledgeable, gracious, helpful and generous with their time.

The **Collections** are interesting and there is a great variety in subject matter. DVDs are popular, as are books on CD, and people appreciate the Tri-County resource sharing agreement. Online services like Hoopla and Rosetta Stone are valued by Library patrons.

Library users enjoy the **Programs** offered at all the branch libraries. They specifically mentioned game nights, business classes, activities like knitting and crocheting, and children's story times and crafts. Programs and classes for adults are especially popular. Users also appreciate **Services** like the new Automatic Renewal feature of the Library's computerized circulation system.

Technology continues to be well-used by the public. Many people go to the Library to use the library's computers or they bring their own laptops and use the library's WiFi. The kids and teens appreciate having gaming available in the library.

The positive responses we received about the library **Buildings** were almost exclusively about Waldorf West. People like the open spaces, teen area, café space, meeting/study rooms, children's section and the natural light. When asked about the other branch libraries, people talked about convenience of location to their homes or their familiarity with the branch.

In Response to “Is there anything you don’t like? Do you have any challenges using the Library?”

- hours – limited Friday and Saturday hours; no Sunday hours
- lack of (or not enough) meeting/study rooms
- not enough computers
- parking
- buildings that aren’t large enough

There were many comments about the La Plata Branch Library in particular. Attendees mentioned

- lack of parking;
- the fact that the building isn’t ADA accessible;
- lack of meeting/tutoring/program space;
- no comfortable spaces to sit and read;
- small children’s space; and
- the need for more computers.

Negative comments about the size and condition of the La Plata facility far outweighed comments about any other branch library.

*We showed a PowerPoint presentation about 21st century public libraries in some of the public meetings (included in Appendix B). In response to “**Did anything in the presentation resonate with you? Was there anything you particularly liked?**” We heard multiple comments reflecting desire for*

- comfortable, inviting spaces to read
- meeting spaces of various sizes
- quiet study areas
- flexible, multi-function spaces; moveable furnishings
- after-hours access to materials via lockers or a Red Box-type machine
- spaces that are open and colorful and have natural light
- outdoor spaces
- maker space

*We were curious about what the public saw as **the Library’s role in providing technology for the community**. They most often mentioned:*

- continuing education - “Their role is to be able to help us with new technology.”
- training on new devices – computer labs
- staff who are knowledgeable
- access to databases
- computers – there are adults and children whose only access is at their library
- charging stations
- video and music production

*In response to “**If you could design a library, what features would it include?**” we received a long wish list! It is interesting that most of the features we heard about are present in the Waldorf West Branch Library design:*

- wired study/meeting rooms
- outside space

- colorful, open spaces with comfortable seating
- natural light and good artificial light
- bookstore arrangement of books
- teen spaces
- ample parking
- drive-thru book drop
- wall space for local artists to display their work
- hot spots to check out
- café or vending
- quiet space
- laptops to check out
- changing displays
- a space in Children's for toddlers
- bookstore
- space to spread out – work space
- co-working space for entrepreneurs
- “It would be a duplication of Waldorf West.”

We also asked questions that were specific to the different affinity groups. For example, we asked the Education group about their students' use of the public library. Answers to those group-specific questions are in Appendix C, which contains notes from all the town hall, stakeholder and focus group meetings.

Citizens for Charles County Public Library (C⁴)

The meeting with the Citizens for Charles County Public Library, also known as C⁴, was primarily to discuss their space needs in a new La Plata Branch Library. C⁴ has storage and sales space downstairs in the current La Plata Library. Their used book store is open every Saturday, and they hold periodic book sales (bazaars) in the Library's meeting room. C⁴ is a volunteer organization.

There are several positive aspects about C⁴'s current space. It is close to exterior double doors, making it easy to load and unload items to be sold. Both the book sale and bazaar space are near those doors and near their storage space; i.e. everything they need is on one floor.

On the negative side, there is generally a lack of space – space for storage, retail space and space for the bazaars. As the Library has just one meeting/program room, the C⁴ bazaar, which lasts multiple days, has to be packed up if the room is needed and then set up again afterward. The retail and storage/workroom space need to be connected, and the downstairs location of the store is not ideal. Members of C⁴ would like to see a retail space adjacent to the Library's entrance. The groups would also like to have a space to hold their meetings.

There are some connectivity issues, as well. The computer connection is unreliable and there is no cell phone reception, making it difficult for members of the community to reach C⁴ about book donations.

SUMMARY OF STAFF FOCUS GROUP MEETING

We included the PowerPoint presentation about 21st century public libraries in the meeting with Library staff. In response to **“Did anything in the presentation resonate with you?”** We heard

- outdoor spaces
- quiet spaces
- children’s areas with zones for different age groups
- flexibility
- spaces dedicated to teens
- storage
- customer conveniences like drive-thru windows and lockers for after-hours retrieval of holds

We asked **“What do you think works really well in this library system?”** and heard about staff having the opportunity to get out into the community and do outreach; and about the value of the Tri-county agreement.

“What doesn’t work as well? What frustrates you as you work with the public?”

- La Plata Branch Library – lack of enough electrical outlets for people to plug in devices; a building that isn’t ADA accessible; and lack of parking
- P.D. Brown – no meeting rooms at all
- lack of outside space/inefficient use of outside space
- printing/copying is confusing and not user friendly
- lack of space for displays to promote and feature various collections at some branches

In response to **“What do you think the community values most about your public library?”** we heard

- staff
- free access
- quality programs
- ease of use (e.g. Overdrive, meeting room booking system)
- customer service
- being able to use a computer even if their library card is blocked

“Are there things the community asks for that the current space prevents you from providing?”

- sewing machines
- maker spaces
- meeting space
- background music

In response to **“How would you sum up – in a few words – the 21st century public library?”** we heard:

Technological

BRIGHT

community

FLEXIBLE

comfortable

outside spaces

COLORFUL

ROBOTS

SUMMARY OF ONLINE SURVEY RESPONSES

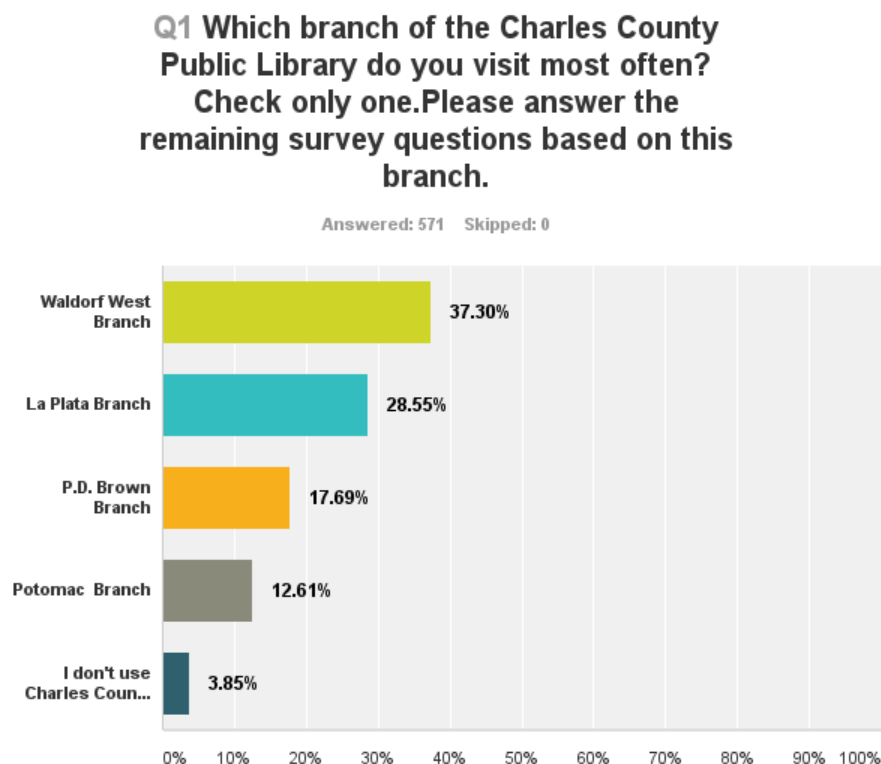
A Survey Monkey online survey was made available to Library users on the Charles County Public Library's web site for approximately six weeks beginning in early January 2017. The survey was also made available in paper format both in the four libraries and out in the community by Library staff.

We looked at the survey results in several ways; first looking at all 571 responses as a group, then looking at them by the branch people told us they used most often. We also divided the respondents by age group (10-17, 18-25 and so on) and, finally, we looked at responses from male respondents only; males made up approximately 20% of the total number of respondents.

A summary of responses follows. A copy of the survey is included in Appendix D. All survey results have been shared electronically with the Library.

All Survey Responses

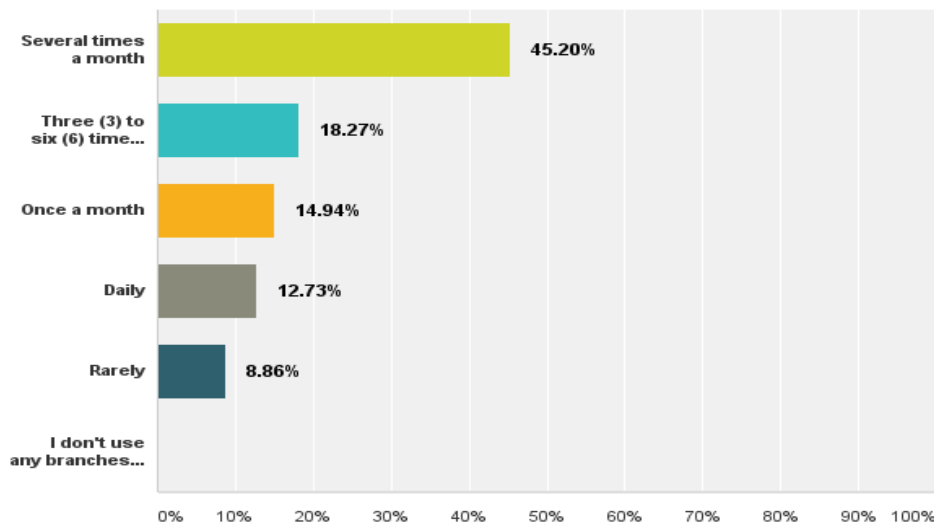
We began by asking people **which branch of Charles County Public Library they use** most often. Waldorf West was identified by the majority of survey respondents (37.3%). Next was La Plata Branch with 28.55%, P.D. Brown with 17.69% and then Potomac with 12.61%.



We also wanted to know **how often people visit the branch** they identified. Sixty percent (57.93%) visit their library at least several times a month; 14.94% visit at least monthly; and 18.3% visit three to six times a year. Fewer than 10% of respondents replied that they visit their library "rarely."

Q2 How often do you visit this branch of the Charles County Library? Check only one.

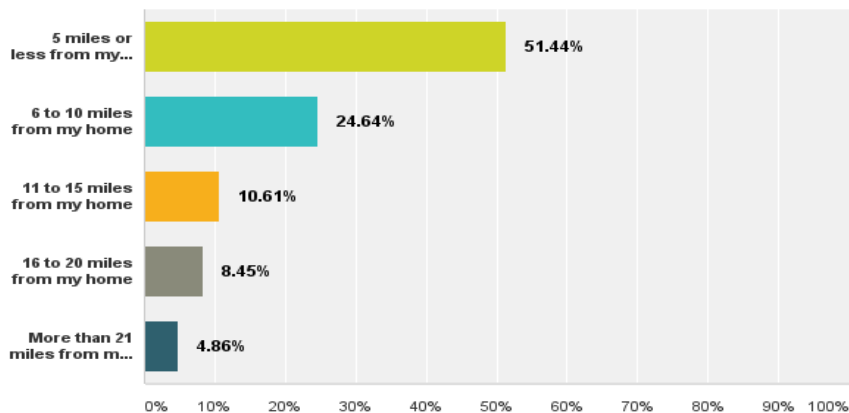
Answered: 542 Skipped: 29



When asked ***how far their branch library is from their home*** (in miles), we received responses that are typical in most communities; the people living closest to the library use it the most. In this case, 51.44% said they live five miles or less from their library; 24.63% live from six to 10 miles away; 10.61% between 11 and 15 miles; 13.3% live 16 or more miles from the library.

Q3 How far is this branch of the Charles County Public Library from your home? Check only one.

Answered: 556 Skipped: 15



We were interested in what ***library materials and services people use***. The top five responses were:

- Borrow print books and/or books on CD – 75.24%
- Borrow DVDs – 45.33%
- Use the Library's web site from home, school or work – 43.62%
- Use the Library's online databases or resources – 39.05%
- Use the Library's computers – 37.9%

“Use WiFi in the Library,” “Read ... in the Library,” and “Get help from Library staff” were also mentioned by at least 30% of respondents.

In addition, we were interested in **how people find out about programs and events** happening in the Library. The top three responses were

- from the Library’s web site (56.95%);
- from flyers and posters in the Library (50.39%); and
- by email notifications sent from the Library (33.59%).

There were, interestingly, some differences in the top responses to this question when we looked at the survey by age group; those are discussed below.

Next we asked people to identify the **strengths of the Library**. The top response, “Approachable and helpful staff,” was also mentioned by library staff as something the public values about Charles County Library. This response was identified by 77% of survey respondents. The other top responses were:

- Book and audio-book collections that reflect my interests – 52.12%
- Free WiFi in the Library – 45.37%
- Days and hours of service – 39.77%
- Branch or Charles County Public Library website – 36.1%
- DVD collections - 32.63%.

The survey listed 23 possible **changes or improvements** to the Library and asked respondents to rank them as Very Important, Important, Somewhat Important, Not Important, or Don’t Know. According to their weighted average, the top five responses were:

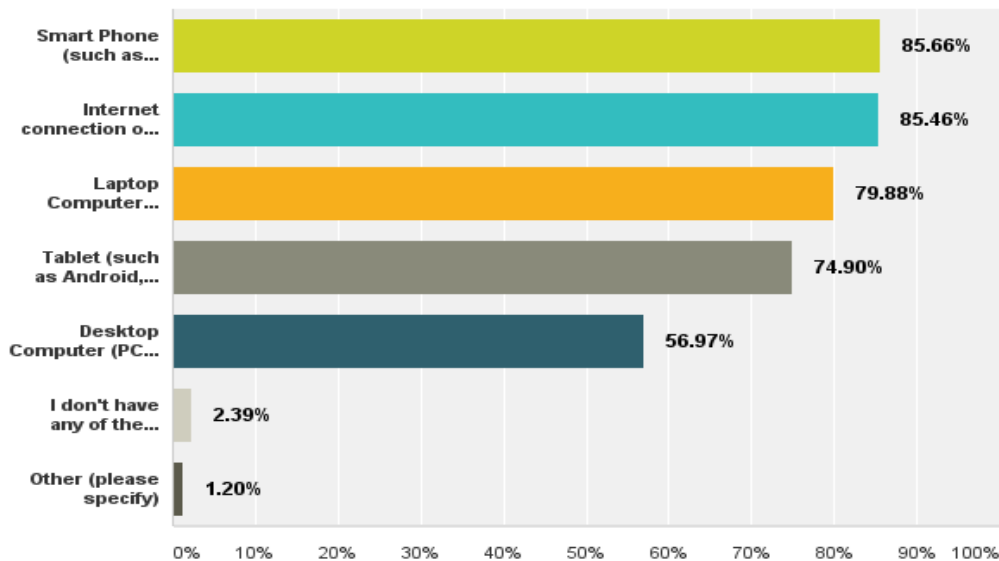
- More current books
- More current DVDs
- Expanded branch hours and days of service
- More places to plug in/re-charge your personal digital devices
- Renovated and expanded branch library at the current location
- More e-books, video, music to download

The fifth response in the list (Renovated and expanded...) was identified much more often by those using some branches (e.g. La Plata) than by those who primarily use another branch (e.g. Waldorf West).

We were curious about the types of **electronic devices people have in their homes**. The responses reflected the national trend of more laptops than desktop computers and highlight the proliferation of smart phones (85.66% of respondents said they have at least one in their home). Fewer than 3% of respondents indicated that they didn’t have any of these types of devices.

**Q9 Which of the following do you or your family members have in your household?
Check all that apply.**

Answered: 502 Skipped: 69



It is important to remember, however, that Library staff often assists people who have no computer access at home. Looking at the percentage of Charles County residents living in poverty (7%), as well as those who fall far below the median income, we know that for some residents the public library is their only source for free access to computers and computer assistance.

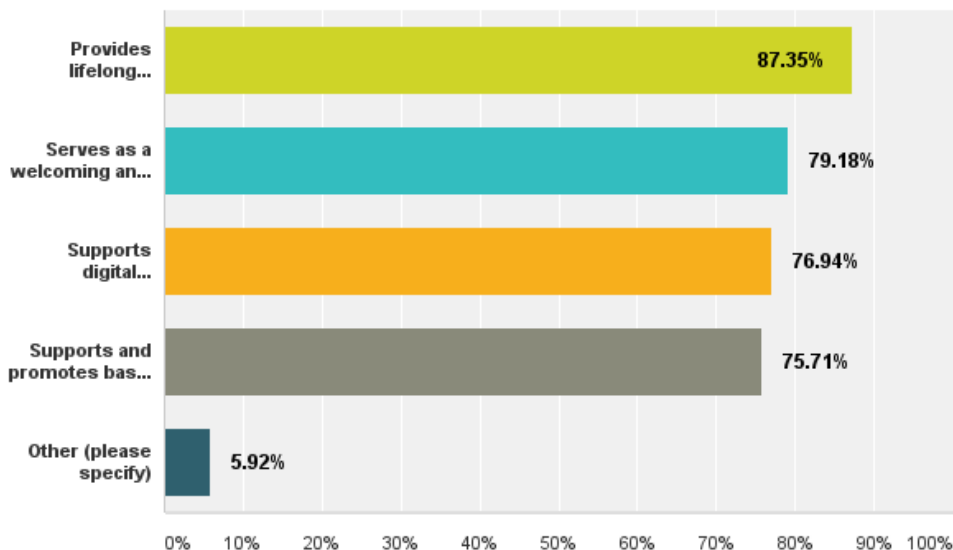
Survey respondents were asked about the **roles the Charles County Public Library plays** in the lives of their community. Four options were presented, as well as an “other” option, and respondents could select as many roles as they wanted. The four options were:

- Provides lifelong learning resources for all ages.
- Serves as a welcoming and safe place for community interaction and gathering.
- Supports digital (computer & technology) literacy for all ages.
- Supports and promotes basic literacy (reading) for all ages.

It was not surprising that all four roles received substantial support, ranging from 75.71% (Supports basic literacy) to 87.35% (Provides lifelong learning). What we did find interesting, however, was that 25% of the respondents did *not* see supporting basic literacy (i.e. reading) as a role of their public library.

Q10 What roles does the Charles County Public Library play in the lives of your community? Check all that apply.

Answered: 490 Skipped: 81



Finally, we asked “In your opinion, what are the **Most Important Changes** you would like to see the Charles County Public Library make over the next several years to ensure its value to you, your family and all residents of Charles County?” This was an open-ended question, and we received close to 300 responses.

Most of the responses related to the library buildings, including parking. People want to have

- wired meeting spaces,
- teen spaces,
- study rooms,
- more and better parking, and
- more/updated technology.

La Plata Branch Library was specifically cited more than twice as many times as any other library, with respondents noting the inadequacies of the current building and/or stating the need for a new or expanded building.

The next-most-mentioned topic was an expansion of hours, particularly Sunday hours. Library classes and programs was third, with people asking for family activities, book clubs, teen programs and simply more programming for all ages. Technology-related comments were fourth. In the technology arena respondents mentioned

- training,
- more and updated computers and
- having tablets to use in the Library.

Close behind technology were books, with people asking for more new titles and more copies of popular titles.

The remaining questions were designed to give us a picture of who completed the survey. We learned that approximately 80% of the respondents are female; 29% of the total respondents are between 51 and 65 years of age; and 43% have lived in Charles County for more than 20 years. The five zip codes most represented are 20603, 20602, 20646, 20601 and 20640.

Survey Responses by Branch Library

Survey responses among the four branches were similar, as we expected given their similar demographics. The specific exceptions are described below.

Once respondents identified the branch library they use most often, we gave them a list of statements about the branches and asked them to tell us how strongly they agreed or disagreed with those statements. The nine statements were:

- The Branch is a welcoming and inviting place.
- It is clean and well maintained.
- I feel safe at this Branch.
- There is adequate parking at this Branch.
- The hours of operation are adequate for my needs.
- The Branch is an important part of this community.
- The Branch is up to date and has pretty much everything we need.
- I can easily find what I'm looking for.
- The Branch is conveniently located for my use.

La Plata users overwhelmingly agreed with most of those statements. However, 58% said they moderately disagreed or disagreed that there is adequate parking at the branch, and 23% did not agree that the branch is up to date and has what they want.

Users of the other three branch libraries agreed with all nine statements, with no more than 13% disagreement on any one of them.

When we asked people to identify the strengths of their branch library, Waldorf West patrons were the only ones to mention meeting rooms in their top responses. This was not surprising given the variety of meeting/study room options at Waldorf West compared to the other three branches.

Survey respondents were given a list of possible changes or improvements they would like to see in their branch. With the exception of Waldorf West, a renovated/expanded building was one of the top responses. La Plata users, however, were the only ones to cite a new building in their top responses.

Survey Responses by Gender

We learned from the survey that more than twice as many men as women visit their branch library daily. When we asked how far from their branch library respondents live, we learned that 15% more males than

females live within five miles of the library. Further, 33% of males who live within five miles of the library visit that library daily.

While these are not statistically significant figures, it may serve the Library well to identify these men and have a small focus group with them to understand better how they use Library services and materials. This could become an effective advocacy group for the library system.

Survey Responses by Age

Survey respondents self-identified into one of seven age groups: 10-17; 18-25; 26-35; 36-50; 51-65; 66-75; and 76 and older. Following are insights we drew from any of these groups.

10-17 Year Old Respondents. There were 23 young people under 18 years of age who responded to the survey. More than 56% of this age group visits their library daily, as compared to 13% of the entire group of respondents. While there were not a sufficient number of respondents to draw conclusions about all young people's library use, it is clear that the public library is the after-school place for this particular group – whether that is the parent's or young person's choice.

The vast majority of this age group, close to 74%, lives five miles or less from their branch library. Most of the young people in this group still rely on others for transportation, so they likely are walking to the library after school. They use the library primarily as a place to study and use their own or the Library's computers. We expected that the majority in this age group would learn about branch programs and events through social media; however, that was not the case. Fifty percent (50%) find out about library events by word of mouth, the only age group to do so. They believe that WiFi, access to computers, and the Library's staff are the Library's greatest strengths, and in the future they would like to see more computers and other digital devices; more current DVDs to check out; and a maker/creation space.

18-25 Year Olds. Half of the respondents in this age group use Waldorf West Branch. They totaled 5% of the respondents. Seventy-six percent (76%) visit the Library several times a month with 32% visiting daily. One hundred percent (100%) agreed with the statement "The Branch is an important part of this community," versus 87% of the total survey pool. While they primarily use the library for books and DVDs, 62% said they study there. This is the group that uses social media - that's how 42% find out about library programs compared to 26% of the general pool of respondents. This is the first group to have "more adult programs" in the top changes they'd like to see. They are also interested in more computers and places to plug in, as well as books and DVDs.

26-35 Year Olds. These respondents accounted for 14% of the total number of respondents. This is the first group to include attending programs for preschoolers in their top library uses. They also hear about library programs via social media (25%), though that comes after the Library's web site and flyers and posters. They believe that programs for preschoolers are one of the Library's top strengths (after staff and Wi-Fi). In their top 5 changes/improvements are more programs for 5-12 year olds and maker spaces. Eighty-seven percent (87%) of the respondents in this age group are female, compared to 80% overall, and most of them have lived in the County less than 5 years.

36-50 Year Olds. This age group made up 20% of total respondents. This group does *not* learn about library programs via social media - that was 5th on their list. Their top three are the same as for all the respondents as a group: the Library's web site, flyers and posters, and email. Their other survey

responses are also close to those of the entire group. Fifty-seven percent (57%) have "Renovated and expanded branch library at current location" in their top 5 changes/improvements. This is not surprising, as 32% of them use La Plata Branch Library. Twenty-six percent (26%) have lived in the County more than 20 years, compared to 43% of overall respondents.

51-65 Year Olds. People in this age group accounted for 25% of the total number of respondents. This is the first group to have "read in the Library" in their top five uses. They are also the first group to want "computers dedicated to use by adults" in their top changes/improvements; and would also like to see more adult programs. Fifty-three percent (53%) have lived in the County more than 20 years.

66-75 Year Olds. Sixteen percent (16%) of survey respondents were in the 66-75 age group. Their library use is pretty evenly divided between Waldorf West and La Plata. Sixty percent (60%) of this group find out about programs by flyers and posters, versus 50% in the overall respondent group. They are the first group to have computer classes in their top five changes/improvements.

Respondents Over the Age of 75. A very high percentage of respondents in this age group primarily use Potomac Branch Library, 44% compared to 13% of the overall group. One hundred percent said the Library's hours meet their needs. Eighty-eight percent (88%) borrow print books and books on CD from the Library (vs. 75% of overall group) and just 19% borrow DVDs (vs. 45%). Getting help from staff is second on their list of top five library uses. Seventy-five percent (75%) find out about Library programs and events from flyers and posters (vs. 50% of overall group) and 38% from articles in local publications (vs. 17%). Just 13% believe the DVD collection is a library strength. They are the first to include book discussion groups/clubs in their top changes/improvements. Twenty percent (20%) indicated that they do not have any of the electronic devices we listed (e.g. smart phones, laptops). Thirty-one percent (31%) of the respondents in this age group are men, and 80% of the age group have lived in the County more than 20 years.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEWS WITH COUNTY ELECTED OFFICIALS

The Consultant held telephone interviews with three members of the Board of Charles County Commissioners: Commission President Murphy, Commissioner Amanda Stewart and Commissioner Ken Robinson.

All three Commissioners stated that the replacement of La Plata Branch Library is their top priority. Commissioner Stewart is also concerned about hours of service, which was a top priority for the library users, as well.

Commission President Murphy noted that public libraries are becoming more like community centers. He is very pleased with the robust schedule of programs for community members of all ages. Commissioner Murphy also discussed the importance of building libraries with a variety of meeting room sizes and types; he hears about meeting spaces from his constituents "all the time." The Commissioner would also like the Library to find ways to better advertise their programs and services to families.

CONCLUSIONS

First, the Consultants want to commend the Library and the residents of the County:

- the Library, for its ability to identify and recruit engaged community members as focus and stakeholder group participants and
- the participants, for taking time from their busy lives to participate and offer thoughtful and sincere comments about the Library, its services and spaces, and their expectations and needs related to those services spaces.

The comments and input of the community and the staff during the focus group process are reflective of what we hear in similar settings throughout the country. The anecdotal comments captured in the focus groups are similar to those published in very recent national statistical research and studies.

Based on community input, the people in Charles County value their public library and the staff who work there. While they would like to see more new books and DVDs, they feel that the collections meet their needs. Library users appreciate and, in some cases, rely on the free WiFi in the library branches and on the Library's computers. People of all ages commented on the Library's excellent programs – just under 28% of adults we surveyed attend them – and would like to see more.

In terms of library buildings, what community members want to see in Charles County is, as some people mentioned, branch libraries similar to Waldorf West in other parts of the County. That is, they want

- naturally and well-lit buildings
- open and comfortable spaces
- community meeting spaces of various sizes
- program space to support Library offerings
- ample parking adjacent to the buildings, and
- buildings to be accessible to everyone in the community
- up-to-date technology and reliable WiFi.

They appreciate the Library's role in the lives of children and teens and want their libraries to include spaces dedicated to those age groups. The facility that the public and County Commissioners mentioned most often that is in need of replacement is La Plata Branch Library.

In addition to new and enhanced library spaces, the community would like to see additional library hours of service. In community meetings and the online survey, residents expressed a need for longer weekday hours and, in particular, Sunday hours.

We found that the community and the staff have the same awareness and understanding of how Library facilities need to change. This is a positive and important fact as, on occasion, we find a disconnect between the needs of the public and a staff's perception of those needs. We believe the community is poised to become effective advocates for the kind of branch library facilities needed to sustain the Library as a vital quality of life resource and a valued lifelong education resource for the taxpayers of Charles County.

More specific recommendations related to the facility issues identified by community residents, Library staff and the Consultants will be addressed in the following sections of this report.

IV. LIBRARY FACILITY ASSESSMENTS

RRMM® Lukmire Architects of Bel Air, Virginia conducted facility and property assessments of the four Charles County branch libraries. The building survey forms developed by the architect are in Appendix E. A consultant with Providence Associates also toured each facility to review its functionality as a public library. The corresponding reports follow.

WALDORF WEST BRANCH LIBRARY

General Description

Waldorf West Branch Library, which opened in 2012, is sited across a storm water pond from St. Charles Town Center (two-story mall, built in 1988). Because the Library sits isolated on its own building pad surrounded by parking, pedestrian traffic is discouraged. The Library site is, as its name suggests, not located in the core of Waldorf, but in a newer suburban development. The only commercial buildings within a five-minute walking distance of the Library are a hotel and restaurant, each with its separate parking lot.

The 30,000 square-foot facility has two levels, and many areas are suffused in natural light. There is a combination of comfortable seating and tables and chairs; dedicated areas for children, teens and adults; and easy-to-find staff assistance on both levels.

Waldorf West has many of the elements people are asking for in today's libraries: meeting space of various sizes; a vending/café area; open, uncluttered spaces with good lighting; a drive-up book return; sufficient places to charge personal devices; and computers for all ages. In addition to branch staff, Waldorf West houses the Cataloging and Acquisitions, Information Technology, and Programming staff for the library system.

The Library is visible from the community and from a main road, but does suffer from being remote from pedestrian traffic.

Waldorf West has a LEED Silver designation (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) from the U.S. Green Building Council.

Library Layout

The first floor houses the Children's area; a multi-purpose room that can be divided into three spaces; circulation; new materials; materials that are on hold and waiting for patron pickup; a vending/café space; public restrooms; DVDs; and staff offices (in addition to branch staff, this library houses Cataloging and Acquisitions, Programming and Information Technology operations for the entire library system).

There is a program space in Children's that can hold a maximum of 20 persons and remains closed when not being used for programs; and an enclosed early childhood space that also remains dark much of the time. A well-paved outdoor reading area accessible from Children's is unused due to a lack of physical security from the adjacent parking lot and lacks any shade on the south facing side of the building. Coupled with overall improvements in pedestrian circulation, the Library would serve as an example of how to link public space to public buildings if this patio area were developed.

The first-floor circulation desk is too far from the security gates to be practical and efficient for staff to effectively supervise the entrance area. In addition, the s-shaped desk abuts the door to the staff workroom, making for a congested operation at peak activity times. DVDs and new materials are conveniently located in alcoves off the Library's main entrance corridor; however, the alcoves are too deep to be visually monitored from a service desk.

The second floor houses the adult collection; a space for teens, quiet study/meeting rooms; a periodicals area with comfortable seating; public computers; and two information desks. A large atrium space with a staircase joins the floors visually. The study/meeting rooms are in the adult area. However, the layout of this floor offers several spaces adjacent to the teen space which could be easily captured for group study. This would help reduce noise from the teen area. There is only one unisex bathroom on the second floor, arguably with more patrons than the first floor.

Some of the signage is confusing; "Knowledge Central," for example, could have many interpretations. We understand, however, that the Library is currently working on signage for this branch.

Physical Conditions

Being recently constructed, the building systems are generally good. The rooftop HVAC equipment and exposed ductwork, however, will degrade at a more rapid rate than interior units would. Exposed ductwork running across the roof is also less efficient than ductwork inside the building envelope would be. Roof access for maintaining the equipment via a vertical wall ladder is a safety hazard and impedes good maintenance.

Recommendations

Waldorf West is, for the most part, a light-filled, uncluttered, beautiful space. We did not identify any building, life safety or ADA code violations. We do, however, have several short-term (to be completed in the next 5 years) capital project recommendations that would increase the functionality of the space.

- Noise abatement. Noise is also generated from the tall entry "spine" and hard surfaces. This could be ameliorated by acoustic wall/ceiling panels in that space.
- Outdoor reading patio. An attractive, five-foot fence or wall set immediately behind the low edge wall would address the safety issue. Shade sails, trees and low ground cover edges would make the space more physically comfortable and attractive, and the addition of tables and chairs would turn this into an appealing, useable space for adults and children. This patio could also be used for children's programming.
- Meeting rooms. There is no ceiling projection in the meeting rooms and the flat screens are too small for group viewing. We recommend that the Library investigate the possibility of ceiling-mounted projectors which are controlled from a podium.
- Storage. There is insufficient storage for meeting room tables and chairs. After a new La Plata Branch Library is constructed and Acquisitions and Cataloging moved from Waldorf West to that location, it is recommended that storage space be added to Waldorf West.
- Early childhood space. There is a room dedicated to early childhood education that is sometimes locked due to the electronic equipment that is also located in that room. Moving that equipment and keeping this space open at all times would be a wonderful service to parents/caregivers and young children.

- Circulation desk. We recommend that a new desk be designed or the existing desk be reconfigured, if possible, and that the desk be relocated closer to the security gates.
- Mobile display shelving. The wide entry corridor is an ideal location for the display of new books or materials related to library programming. The Library should consider purchasing several and using them throughout the facility, as needed.
- Teen study space. We recommend, and teens requested, a quiet study space within their area. An alternative would be to enclose the gaming space, which would decrease the noise level throughout the area and make it easier for those teens who are studying.
- Roof access. Replacing the current vertical ladder with a ship's ladder from Stair #2 would create safer access for maintenance staff.
- Pedestrian orientation. Planning to expand and improve the surrounding sidewalks, with crosswalks given priority at the street intersections and driveways in the vicinity of the Library would begin to shift the balance, and improve the quality of life in this part of the community. It would also raise the image of the Library as a centroid of people-oriented activities. The nearby storm water detention pond also has potential as a park setting, if it were re-conceptualized with casual paths to invite pedestrians instead of keeping them away with fencing.

P.D. BROWN MEMORIAL BRANCH LIBRARY

General Description

P.D. Brown Branch Library was built in 1980 and renovated in 2001. This single-level, 14,300 square-foot facility is located in Waldorf. While not sited on a main road, the building signage is good and the branch is easy to access.

The interior space is open and inviting, with much of the high shelving on the perimeter of the space, enhancing sight lines and the feeling of spaciousness. There is a children's area with an adjacent, dedicated storage room; a small area for teens; and a vending/café space. The adult area has tables and chairs as well as comfortable seating, and power has been added to all tables. Some end panels have slat wall for merchandising the collection.

The Library has no meeting or program spaces; all programming is conducted in the general public space. There is a 24/7 outside materials return that feeds directly into the staff workroom.

Library Layout

The Library is organized generally in a coherent manner and laid out with a traditional circulation desk near the entrance and the reference desk further back along the "spine" of the building. The building's entrance is functional but not inviting. Generally, the building suffers from a lack of natural light and views to the exterior. The lack of windows is particularly noticeable in Children's.

The aesthetics of the Adult high bay area continues to be the interior's best feature, and should be emphasized in any interior renovation. Removal of the suspended acoustic tile (SAT) ceilings in the adjacent area would offer significant opportunity to enliven the interior character. Extending round-oval

ducts with integrated linear lights would provide greatly-improved lighting, while indirect LED directed at the wood ceiling would celebrate the building's most important interior.

Shelving appears to be relatively new and in good condition. However, shelving for the Adult collection is tall and closely spaced, contributing to poor lighting; some aisles appear to be less than three feet wide, which would violate building code. Some shelving in the Children's area is too high for visual security of the space.

Physical Conditions

The 1980 sloped and flat roofs need to be replaced. The entry porch, where it joins the two pavilion roofs, creates deep valleys that trap snow and ice. Both of these projects are included in the County's Capital Improvement Program, and have been deferred by the County until 2018.

Installed as part of the 2001 renovation, the rooftop HVAC equipment has been damaged by hail, and the unit's roof mounting contributes to ongoing roof leaks in the Children's area. Access to the rooftop equipment is only by ladder via a roof hatch, making maintenance unnecessarily difficult. In severe weather, the existing condition is hazardous. We strongly recommend that an internal ship's ladder or stair be planned for any upcoming renovations. We also recommend that a pre-fab HVAC penthouse be investigated (with direct interior access) to extend the life of the HVAC equipment and provide better weather protection for the occupied space below (i.e. Children's). Noise transmitted from the rooftop units is another important consideration in any renovation project.

Several windows are missing their interior glass. Evidence of dry rot on the frames can be seen, possibly due to poor slashing behind the frames. The glass is mostly discolored, possibly from the applied film. Windows should be replaced with new low-E glazed, insulated units, properly flashed to the masonry surrounds. Due to the limited areas of natural light, unless additional glazing was added, the building will remain fully dependent on electrical lighting. Likewise, natural ventilation via the fenestration is not possible.

Recommendations

In addition to the items mentioned above, we recommend the following short-term capital project (within the next three years) changes to enhance the functionality of the space.

- Circulation desk. The circulation desk is extremely large. If all materials check-in was accomplished in the workroom, this service desk could be cut down to a much-smaller size. The space gained could be used for a glass-enclosed quiet study space, for example.
- Information/reference desk. This service desk is well-placed, easily seen by anyone entering the Library. However, traffic into the Library does not warrant a two-person desk. We recommend that the desk be reduced in size to accommodate one staff person. A second option would be to combine the circulation and reference desks into one service desk with space for two staff members. This desk would need to be located near the self-checkout machines so that staff could easily see if patrons need assistance. Combining the two desks into one may free up sufficient space for two to three small, glass-enclosed study "rooms."
- Teen area. The current Teen space is adjacent to the Library's front door, but is nondescript and easy to miss. A larger area with the computers integrated into the space rather than on the perimeter

and relocated away from the Children's area would be more attractive to teens. We recommend that Library staff work with a teen "council" to re-design this space.

- Children's area. Picture books are currently on stacks that are four shelves high, too high for preschoolers to easily reach them. We recommend that picture books be no higher than three shelves, even if the collection has to be weeded to accommodate that solution. In addition, there is no comfortable seating for a parent or caregiver and child in the Children's area. A large upholstered chair or small loveseat would be a wonderful addition to this space.
- Carpet. The Library has broadloom carpet in several different patterns and colors. County records indicate that replacement of the carpet is overdue. We recommend replacing the broadloom with carpet tiles to allow for better, more cost-effective replacement of soiled/damaged tiles.
- Windows. In any expansion and/or renovation of this Library, it is recommended that full height window sections be introduced at key points throughout the library, for better lighting and views to the outside world.
- Pedestrian Access. Because this Library sits next to a strip shopping area, in any renovation or expansion it is recommended that attention be paid to improving pedestrian access along with streetscape / landscape improvements. Additionally, the now-observed site areas around the library should be re-landscaped to improve visibility and invite patron comfort with their surroundings. Coupled with windows looking onto these areas, the overall appearance would be greatly enhanced.

POTOMAC BRANCH LIBRARY

General Description

The 9,500 square-foot Potomac Branch Library was built in 1995. The space is efficiently laid out, with the Children's and Adult areas in opposite wings and the circulation desk in the entry space between them. There are seven computers in a small, enclosed room in the Adult area. A collection for teens is also in this area, but there is no designated teen space. The Branch has one meeting room. The Children's area includes several computers, one with early childhood software, and there is a storage room adjacent to this space.

Potomac Branch Library is adjacent to a beautiful public park. There is a 24/7 outside book drop, and there appears to be ample public parking. While the Library is not on a major street, there is a sign with the universal library logo on the nearest major road.

Library Layout

The Library is coherently laid out, but suffers from restricted sight lines from the circulation desk into the Adult and Children's areas due to colonnaded entrance features that obscure more than they define. The current areas occupied by the circulation and reference desks could be better used if these oversized elements were consolidated in a single combination service desk. Further, the staff workroom area appears to be inefficiently laid out and could be consolidated to recapture some space for public functions.

There are no small meeting/study rooms or tutoring spaces in the Potomac Branch. Tutors and students currently meet at the Library sit in the open public areas of the building.

Physical Conditions

A structural evaluation of the Library's roof should be done to determine whether structural reinforcement is required. Half-inch ply sheathing on 2" centers likely exceeds the capacity of the sheathing under current design wind loads (i.e. 90 miles per hour). Truss roofs of this type can be vulnerable to failure due to loss of diaphragm strength of the sheathing. Given the Library's location in a tornado-prone area, this facility may not be a safe place of refuge in high-wind conditions. Where the sloped roof meets the low slope roof (at the center of the roof), the change-in-slope joint is particularly vulnerable in high wind conditions. We recommend that a roof hatch with a 30 degree ship's ladder be installed for regular roof inspections; current conditions risk injuries to maintenance staff.

The airport-style entryway to the men's toilet room is too narrow for ADA standards. The room also does not appear to have a five-foot turning radius to accommodate wheelchairs. In addition, the urinal stall is less than three feet wide. The women's toilet room has only two stalls, versus two stalls plus a urinal for men. There is no family toilet room.

Library staffs complain of high humidity in the building, particularly in the meeting room. The meeting room humidifier cannot maintain humidity control. Vinyl composition tile (VCT) adhesive in the staff workroom appears to be pushing up between the joints, suggesting water presence above the floor slab. Original 1965 construction documents call for under-slab drainage channels and perimeter foundation drains, suggesting the site has always been wet. Walking the site, it appears that groundwater may be very close to the surface on this flat site generally. It may be possible to inspect the 4" under-slab pipes at multiple cleanouts to investigate the below-slab water level, along with core samples where required. If a site sump pump has not been installed, we recommend an investigation to see if a sump pump would help with under-slab conditions.

Recommendations

In addition to the items mentioned above, we recommend the following short-term capital project (within the next three years) changes to enhance the functionality of the space.

Public Space Enhancements

- The Library should evaluate the possibility of repurposing the existing porte cochere as an interior casual reading space or quiet reading room as part of a redesigned entrance area. This would help to open up the Library from the parking lot. Using full height glass windows as infill would improve the Library's public face, and help to open it up from the public parking lot.
- The large circulation desk takes up much of the sizeable entry space. Reducing that desk and moving all non-public-service work (e.g. check in of materials) to the staff workroom would result in more space for the public. Another alternative is to combine circulation and reference into one service desk, which would free up space in both the entry and adult areas of the Library.
- The computer lab is small and cramped. It could be repurposed into a small meeting or tutoring room and the computers moved out into either the adult area or into the space freed up by downsizing the circulation desk.
- The children's collection should be appropriately sized for the space. Books for toddlers and preschoolers need to be on low shelving.

- The staff workroom is inefficiently designed. We recommend that the space be studied and re-engineered when the branch is renovated to make the space more workable for staff and, possibly, to free up additional space for the public.

Safety Issues

- The staff parking area is dark. More or more-effective lighting should be added as soon as possible.

Humidity and Moisture Issues

- We recommend a moisture analysis of the floor slab be done in test patches prior to any flooring being replaced. Recommendations for the Potomac Branch Library are addressed in the next section.

Energy Efficiencies

- Recladding the exterior to improve R-value and air-water barriers to create a more energy-efficient envelope should be studied. Rain-screen technology, using thin-panel stone or precast, covering air/water barriers and rigid insulation are available. Commercial-grade low-E windows should replace the existing clerestory windows, and in select areas the existing windows could be replaced with full-view windows to open up the interior and make the facility more inviting from the public parking area.

LA PLATA BRANCH LIBRARY

General Description

La Plata Branch Library is the library system's oldest facility, and is located in the seat of Charles County government. The 50-year-old, two-story facility serves not only as the branch library for the La Plata area, but contains the offices of the Director and Assistant Director of Charles County Public Library as well as the Mobile Services Branch.

The upper level of the Library contains all of the collections and service desks. There is a separate Children's area, which also houses the Teen collection, and an Adult area with a large service desk.

Both the circulation and reference desks are larger than necessary. The Library should consider smaller desks in a new facility or even a single desk for both reference and circulation functions. There is no soft seating in the Children's area.

The Library's lower level includes the facility's only program room; a large storage room; Outreach Services; public toilets; and a used-book store. The store is operated by the Citizens for Charles County Public Library (C⁴) and is open every Saturday. The storage room is shared by the Library and C⁴. There are stairs connecting the two levels. There is a dumbwaiter for supplies for books, but no elevator for library staff or patrons.

Building Layout

The current facility layout is coherent and easily understood at the main level. The lower level, however, is isolated from the rest of the public spaces, as are the public toilets.

There is an outside book drop. It is open only at night, however, because it empties into a bin in the Children's area and, therefore, is a noisy distraction and cannot be monitored.

Access to and from the site on Charles Street is good; however, the parking lot entrance is too close to the intersection with Garrett Street and for that reason is a traffic problem as well as a safety issue. Twenty-six long-term parking spaces are provided, but are only accessible by a steep stair/ramp. The building drop-off area has signed ADA spaces; however, the pavement slope is greater than 2% and does not meet code. The Library is across the street from the University of Maryland Charles Regional Medical Center, which adds to the general traffic congestion in the area.

General Building Assessment

The building is not sized for its population. La Plata Branch Library was built in 1966; it is 50 years old. The Library building is just over 10,000 square feet, which translates into 0.21 square feet per capita for its service area. The Waldorf service area, by comparison, has approximately twice that number of square feet of library space per capita. The Consultant also looked at library space and services in four peer library systems: Wicomico County, Frederick County and Carroll County in Maryland and Alexandria Library in Virginia. Of the five libraries, Charles County has the least amount of total library space at 0.43 square feet per capita. The high was 0.79 square feet per capita in Carroll County, followed by 0.71 in Alexandria, 0.6 in Frederick County and 0.55 in Wicomico County.

The building's primary physical problems stem from its age. The roofing and insulation should be replaced. The flat roof should be rebuilt to add insulation and create positive drainage (a minimum slope of one quarter inch per foot). The roof dead load likely doesn't meet current code requirements. The exterior building envelope is substandard by today's energy standards with minimum insulation and doubtful air/water barriers; this would be confirmed by a thermal heat loss analysis. Increased thermal insulation and added air/water barriers would reduce energy usage and improve patron comfort.

Though the building appears to be well maintained, the interior is worn and outdated, particularly the suspended acoustic ceilings. A complete HVAC replacement should be done. Electrical service and distribution system should be replaced and brought up to code. Lighting should be replaced with high-efficiency lighting, and a lighting control system introduced.

As mentioned above, there is storage and retail space dedicated to C⁴, a volunteer library support group that raises much-needed funds for the entire library system. However, the retail space is open just one day a week. We do not recommend that any library have usable square footage devoted to a once-a-week function. An alternative is to have shelving for used books in the public area that functions on the honor system (i.e. purchasers are asked to place the correct amount of money into a locked box).

The storage room has too many items that are old and need to be discarded. There need to be guidelines about what is allowed to be housed in this space.

The Outreach Office, located in the lower level of the Library, is dark and cramped. However, due to the overall crowding in the Library, nothing short of a new building will alleviate the problems in the Outreach space.

Building Code and ADA Violations

No ADA toilets are available on the lower level. No public ADA toilets are available on the upper level; patrons with mobility issues must ask to use the staff office toilet room. There is no comparable ADA access between levels – i.e. no elevator – for either patrons or staff, which violates ADA guidelines. Fire exits on the south side of the building from the Adult and Children's areas do not continue to a public way and are not ADA accessible routes.

The building entrance short term/drop off parking exceeds a two percent slope in both directions. The ADA ramp from the lower level parking lot exceeds the one inch per eight feet maximum slope. Existing roofs do not meet current 30 pound per square foot dead load standard.

The existing building envelope does not meet current ASHRAE (American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers) energy standards.

Issues Impacting Expansion/Renovation

There are three key issues related to expanding this facility:

- existing “split-level” grading that unduly complicates parking and service
- lack of visual connection between the two floors
- a building that is not oriented to property lines, limiting expansion options.

Recommendations

We strongly recommend that the County revise their Capital Improvement Program and construct a new La Plata Branch Library of 30,000-35,000 square feet (rather than the 13,000 SF facility in the 2016 CIP) in a new, more prominent and easily-accessible location. This will be addressed more fully in Section IV, Facility Master Plan Recommendations and Time Line.

V. FACILITY MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS AND TIMELINE

The reader of this report should by now have a clear understanding of the data and input that have led us to our recommendations for this 20-year Facilities Master Plan for the Charles County Public Library. The recommendations are based on the greater community's expectations of library service and the projected growth and development of the County in terms of population, residential housing, transit routes, schools, parks, etc.

The Plan was developed with the County's 2016-2018 CIP goals in mind. We used a transparent process, soliciting input from all residents and Library staff in a variety of ways and reporting back to the Library's Board of Trustees in open meetings. The Plan includes the type of automation and technology that leads to transformation government, and all recommendations were based on stated customer needs.

Implementation of the plan will result in access to conveniently located, full-service branch libraries for every resident of the Charles County, positively impacting the County's quality of life for the next 20 years.

THE PRINCIPLES OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN

Public libraries are one of the most democratic institutions in any community. They welcome everyone in the community to enter and enjoy all the library has to offer. While each branch library will certainly have its own unique design and offer services, materials and programs that respond to its particular community, all libraries should embody a set of design principles that insure access to all residents.

In 1997, a group of architects, product designers, engineers and environmental design researchers at North Carolina State University's Center for Universal Design worked together to establish the Principles of Universal Design. The Consultant recommends that the seven principles, which are meant to guide a range of design disciplines including environments, products and communications, be used to guide the evaluation of existing Charles County Public Library facilities and the design of new facilities.

The seven Principles of Universal Design are:

Principle One: Equitable Use

The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse disabilities.

Principle Two: Flexibility in Use

The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.

Principle Three: Simple and Intuitive Use

Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.

Principle Four: Perceptible Information

The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.

Principle Five: Tolerance for Error

The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.

Principle Six: Low Physical Effort

The design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue.

Principle Seven: Size and Space for Approach and Use

Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility.

Additional information about the seven principles is included in Appendix F.

DETERMINING THE SIZE OF A BRANCH LIBRARY

There are no longer national standards for sizing public libraries. Some library systems develop their own internal guidelines that work for their particular community. In the Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County (PLCMC), for example, their guidelines identify Branch Libraries of 16,000-20,000 square feet and Regional Libraries of 40,000-60,000 square feet. Other library systems have a goal of a certain total number of square feet per capita. For example, many libraries today are striving to achieve one square foot per capita. The bottom line, however, is that a library should be sized to accommodate the service functions expected by its community. Currently, there are no standards in the State of Maryland for sizing public libraries.

In Section I, we described the 21st century public library and the expectation by communities that it serve as the “hub” and community gathering place. It provides multiple meeting venues, programming spaces, dedicated zoned areas that support and promote the physical and intellectual development of children, dedicated areas that serve and engage teens, a place for quiet respite, ample access to technologies for information, social networking, and communication, and of course a place for books and media. All of this requires larger spaces. Currently, Waldorf West Branch Library is the only branch in Charles County that meets the community's expectation for 21st century spaces and services.

Charles County is projecting slow population growth over the next 20+ years, just one percent per year or 37,000 new residents by 2040. But the County cannot meet community needs by simply building space to accommodate those 37,000 new residents. Other than Waldorf West, the branch libraries in Charles County all have physical facility conditions to mitigate. In addition, residents throughout the County are requesting spaces and services that cannot be accommodated in the current buildings as we heard in community meetings and online survey. And, as we demonstrated in the Section I discussion of peer libraries, Charles County is significantly behind its peers in almost every category, including the amount of library space per capita. Therefore we are recommending the following library capital projects.

CAPITAL PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS**La Plata Branch Library – Construct a New Larger Library Facility of 30,000 - 35,000 Square Feet**

The current La Plata Branch Library was built in 1966; it is 50 years old. The Library building is just over 10,000 square feet, which translates into 0.21 square feet per capita for that service area. The Waldorf service area, by comparison, has approximately twice that number of square feet of library space per

capita. As addressed earlier in this report the Consultant looked at library space and services in four peer library systems: Wicomico County, Frederick County and Carroll County in Maryland and Alexandria Library in Virginia. Of the five libraries, Charles County has the least amount of total library space at .43 square feet per capita (see Chart 7, below).

Chart 7

Facilities					
Library	Main Library	Branches	Bookmobile	Total SF	SF/Capita
Alexandria	1	4	0	104,592	0.71
Carroll	0	6	1	131,702	0.79
Charles	0	4	0	64,129	0.43
Frederick	0	8	0	142,500	0.60
Wicomico	0	3	0	55,000	0.55

While the La Plata Branch Library is on a main road, the parking lot entrance is too close to the intersection of Charles St. and Garrett Dr. resulting in a traffic problem for drivers and a safety problem for pedestrians. The facility's parking lot is also seriously undersized. This was confirmed by users of this branch in both comments made in public meetings and on the survey. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of La Plata library users who completed the online survey indicated that parking is not adequate. In addition, the slope from the Library's ADA parking spaces to the building does not meet code.

Significant ADA issues continue inside the building. There are no elevators in this two-story library. If a patron with mobility access issues wants to attend a program they must call ahead and ask a staff member to unlock the outside door on the lower level where the meeting room is located. None of the restrooms in the building are ADA compliant.

The roof of the building is original (from available records) and needs to be rebuilt to address code and energy issues, and the HVAC system (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) needs to be replaced.

In addition to public library services and collections, the La Plata Branch Library includes space for system-wide service functions including offices for the Library Director and Assistant Director and space for the Mobile Services Branch. The remaining administrative functions are located in Waldorf West Branch Library.

The size and age of the La Plata Branch building compromise the ability to provide 21st century public library spaces and services. Library users in Charles County are looking to their public library for meeting/gathering spaces of all sizes – from small tutoring and group study spaces to large meeting and programming spaces. The La Plata Branch Library offers a wide array of programs for the public. In excess of 26% of survey respondents attend Library programs for adults and are asking for even more. The current meeting room, being remote from staff on the main level, makes staff supervision difficult. Visual observation by staff and patrons is a key ingredient in physical security.

Users also want comfortable, inviting spaces for reading in the Library; an abundance of natural light; and a children's area with space for imaginative play, discovery and learning. Modern libraries also have spaces designated for teen users – the one at Waldorf West is an excellent example – with computers and space for teens to study and connect.

In the online public survey, library users were asked to identify “the most important changes” they would like to see the Charles County Library make over the next several years. Building (including parking) issues were at the top of the list, and La Plata Branch was mentioned *four times more* than any other Charles County branch library.

Recommendation

The 13,000 square-foot facility in the County’s current CIP is undersized for meeting the needs of La Plata’s current and future residents. The La Plata community is asking for tutoring, meeting, study and program spaces, as well as comfortable reading areas, designated spaces for children and teens, and a rich collection of print and non-print materials. If those needs are met in a 13,000 square-foot building, the collection will need to be significantly decreased from its current size and Administrative Services – including Mobile Services and the new Mobile Branch – will need to be relocated to an off-site location.

P.D. Brown Library, for example, is just over 14,000 square feet and has *no* meeting, study or program rooms; i.e. none of the spaces the La Plata community is requesting. It is simply not possible to fit a robust collection, designated children’s and teen spaces, and meeting/study and program rooms in a 13,000 square-foot library. Further, the County will have the cost of renting off-site space for Library Administrative and Mobile Services.

We strongly recommend that a new, 30,000 – 35,000-square-foot library in the La Plata area be the top construction priority for Charles County Public Library. Based on the Consultant’s and Architect’s investigations, this service area needs and would benefit greatly from a library of this size. The Heritage Green pipeline development, an 800-acre mixed-use community with a 20-25 acre park; short- and medium-range road projects along US 301 and roads that feed into the 301; and public school construction projects, including a new high school, insure that the greater La Plata area will continue to grow and thrive.

In addition to the public spaces, it is recommended that the new La Plata Library includes and centralizes system support space for the Library Director and Assistant Director, Mobile Services, Collection Development and Acquisitions, and the Programming Office. The Mobile Services Branch includes the Bookmobile and one van; therefore, covered parking for both vehicles and space for their collections will be needed. Centralizing support services into one library location will not only increase administrative efficiency, it will also give the Waldorf West Branch Library space needed for future growth.

Both one-story and two-story options for the new library should be investigated once a site has been identified. A single-story building eliminates the need for costly elevators, stairwells, and the duplication of spaces such as restrooms and janitorial closets and is less costly to operate from a staffing perspective. A two-story facility may offer a more efficient site footprint with potentially less site costs, grading and storm water complications.

The new La Plata Library should be inviting, comfortable, spacious and attractive. It must incorporate flexible and easily-adaptive spaces for a variety of functions and age groups throughout any given day or year, and should be sufficiently flexible in design to accommodate changing community needs and interests over the coming decades. It should be built to LEED standards with sustainable materials, energy efficient systems and indoor/outdoor spaces.

Areas zoned by age groups for youth, an area for popular books and media for adults, and a quiet zone for those wanting to read, study and reflect without distractions are necessary for a positive user

experience. Comfortable, lounge-style seating spaces for reading magazines, newspapers and books are a must. A large computer area for adults and table/carrel seating are needed to accommodate tutoring and other types of study. A variety of types of meeting spaces were requested in the community meetings and surveys. A large-group space should allow for dividing into smaller separate spaces with sound-proofed, movable partitions.

The Consultant offers the following functional recommendations for the new La Plata library facility:

Service Profile:

- Basic information assistance
- Collections (all formats) focused on community needs and interests
- Self-service express check-out accounting for at least 90% of all circulation
- 24/7 materials return that goes directly into the staff workroom
- A combined circulation/reference service desk located near the main entrance; a small service desk in the children's room; and at least one moveable reference kiosk
- Living room-like reading areas with comfortable seating for adults
- Dedicated teen services, spaces, and computers
- Dedicated children's rooms zoned by developmental age groupings for children 0-12 with computers
- Food and beverage vending

Meeting Spaces:

- A dedicated multipurpose children's program room with ample storage accommodating a minimum of 75 children and their parents
- One large multipurpose group meeting/program room accommodating up to 100 persons that can be subdivided to accommodate smaller groups and that can be available to community members after hours
- At least two small group study room for 2 to 6 persons per room equipped with appropriate connectivity, technologies and white boards
- A quiet study room accommodating up to 8 persons with a mix of furnishing including lounge seating, easily moveable tables and chairs

Technology:

- Multipurpose (flexible) meeting/program spaces to accommodate technology training using 12-16 portable laptops stored in powered carts in the building
- Wireless access throughout the building with plentiful wall/floor and furniture outlets
- Computers (desktops and laptops) offering a combination of electronic database access, Internet access and productivity software (e.g. MS Office Suite)
- Raised floor to accommodate data and power to efficiently and cost effectively accommodate flexibility for today and the future
- Computers with basic assistive technologies for visually and hearing impaired
- Copiers, scanners (black and white and color) and faxes for public use

Cost

While costs related to library construction are very much a local factor, current year costs for library furniture, fixtures and equipment run between \$25 and \$30 per square foot. The estimated cost to

construct, furnish and equip the new La Plata Branch Library is likely to be somewhere in the range of \$350 to \$400 per square foot in today's dollars with an escalation figure of 5% per year (excluding land acquisition, as needed, owner costs and contingency). The cost for design services is typically 10-12% of the construction cost, depending upon the number and type of consultants the client wants the architect to include on their team.

While a site for the new library has not been identified, the Consultant recommends that the Town and County consider among its options a co-location with a park project or a site convenient to students of the new high school.

Potomac Library - Renovate and Expand to 13,500 Square Feet

Potomac Branch Library was constructed in 1996 and has not been renovated since that time. The windows and roof are in poor condition; there are moisture issues inside the building; and the men's restroom is not ADA compliant. The two main heating/cooling units are original to the building and do not meet current ASHRAE standards for air quality and energy efficiency.

At 9,483 square feet, Potomac Library is undersized for its community. While the Library provides almost half a square foot per capita (looking at a four-mile ring around the Library), the building is too small to provide the services the public is requesting. There is no quiet-study or tutoring space and the computer lab accommodates just seven adults. There is no comfortable seating in the children's area, no space for a parent and child to sit and read a book together; and while there is a teen collection, there is no designated space for teens. The staff work space is inefficiently designed.

Recommendation

We recommend that Potomac Branch Library be completely renovated and that 3,000 to 4,000 square feet of new space be added. If the current site will accommodate an expansion, it is recommended that Potomac remain in its current location adjacent to Ruth B. Swann Park. The renovation/expansion should accommodate the technology identified for a new La Plata Library, above, as well as:

- Meeting, tutoring and computing spaces
- Collections (all formats) focused on community needs and interests
- Self-service express check-out accounting for at least 90% of all circulation
- 24/7 materials return that goes directly into the staff workroom
- A combined circulation/reference service desk
- A designated teen space
- Separate food and beverage vending area with seating
- Living room-like reading areas with comfortable seating for adults
- Dedicated teen services, spaces, and computers
- Dedicated children's room zoned by developmental age groupings for children 0-12 with computers
- A children's program room
- One large multipurpose group meeting/program room accommodating up to 100 persons that can be subdivided to accommodate smaller groups and can be used by community residents after hours
- A minimum of two small quiet/group study rooms for 2 to 6 persons per room equipped with appropriate connectivity, technologies and white boards

It should be renovated/built to LEED standards, as possible, with sustainable materials, energy efficient systems and indoor/outdoor spaces.

We recommend that this project begin in FY2022. However, it is imperative that the County address the roofing and humidity/dampness immediately beginning with the necessary tests and observations to determine the extent of the issues and the mitigation needed.

Cost

The estimated cost to renovate the existing Potomac Library is \$200 to \$250 per square foot. An estimated cost of \$350 to \$400 per square foot will be needed to construct, furnish and equip the 3,000 to 4,000 square-foot addition. Those costs are in today's dollars with an escalation figure of 5% per year (excluding land acquisition, as needed, owner costs and contingency). Design services are typically 10-12% of the construction costs.

P.D. Brown Memorial Branch Library – Renovate and Expand

P.D. Brown Memorial Branch Library opened in 1980 and was renovated in 2001. At just under 15,000 square feet, it is a good size for its community with one exception: there are no meeting or program spaces in the Library. All public programs, including story times for children, are conducted in the public area.

In addition, P.D. Brown has physical conditions that must be addressed. The windows are in poor condition and evidence of dry rot of the frames can be seen. There is little natural light – none in the children's area – and the fluorescent fixtures are not energy efficient and provide poor lighting levels. A new roof is in the County's current CIP, and the HVAC units are scheduled to be replaced in 2018.

We recommend that the branch be renovated; that the physical and functional conditions noted in this report be addressed; and that approximately 2,000 square feet be added to accommodate public meeting and program space. The renovated/expanded branch should include the technology identified for a new La Plata Branch Library, above, and:

- Meeting, tutoring and computing spaces
- Collections (all formats) focused on community needs and interests
- Self-service express check-out accounting for at least 90% of all circulation
- A combined circulation/reference service desk
- A designated teen space
- Living room-like reading areas with comfortable seating for adults
- Dedicated teen services, spaces, and computers
- Dedicated children's room zoned by developmental age groupings for children 0-12 with computers
- A children's program room
- One large multipurpose group meeting/program room accommodating up to 100 persons that can be subdivided to accommodate smaller groups and can be made available to community members for after hours use
- A minimum of two small quiet/group study rooms for 2 to 6 persons per room equipped with appropriate connectivity, technologies and white boards

It should be renovated/built to LEED standards, as possible, with sustainable materials, energy efficient systems and indoor/outdoor spaces.

Cost

The estimated cost to renovate P.D. Brown Memorial Library is \$200 to \$250 per square foot. An estimated cost of \$350 to \$400 per square foot will be needed to construct, furnish and equip the 2,000-square-foot addition. Those costs are in today's dollars with an escalation figure of 5% per year (excluding land acquisition, as needed, owner costs and contingency). The cost for design services is typically 10-12% of the construction costs.

Rural Service Delivery Enhancements

As libraries are faced with the demand to provide increasingly convenient access with fewer operating dollars, they are also faced with exploring new ways of doing business. In order to meet their communities' needs, better integrate themselves into their communities, more cost effectively manage operations, and improve flexibility and capacity for growth, public libraries are exploring new and innovative service delivery approaches. Such approaches are especially relevant for communities like Charles County with large, rural areas that lack the population density to support a bricks and mortar library.

One such service approach is automated materials dispensing units such as Envision-Ware 24-Hour Library and Media Bank currently in use by public libraries across the country. These units handle the processes of checking out and returning books and audiovisual materials. Accessed 24/7 using a regular library card, these units require no staffing, are compatible with most Integrated Library Systems, and have a low cost of operation. Such units tend to be located off site to extend library services when a full service facility is not feasible, cost effective or an appropriate solution.

In addition to locations in rural areas of Charles County, the County's long-range plan for light rail stations in the Waldorf corridor connecting the County to the Branch Avenue Metro Station may provide the perfect opportunity to provide access to popular materials available 24/7 for the regular commuter and the occasional mass transit user.

An increasing number of libraries are utilizing electronic or "smart" lockers to provide after-hours access to materials patrons have requested. Using their library card and the locker's key pad, residents can retrieve their materials 24/7. These lockers can be placed any place in the community that residents frequent. LEID Products, LLC, and Southwest Solutions Group are two vendors of this type of product.

Finally, a low-tech approach to after-hours access – deposit collections – may work well in some areas of Charles County. In fact, the Library has already placed some of these collections in locations like community and senior centers. We recommend the Library continue to identify potential sites for small deposit collections.

In combination with the Library's new Mobile Library and its Mobile Services Van, high- and low-tech means of after-hours access will extend the Library's reach into its more rural communities.

CAPITAL PROJECTS TIMELINE AND ESTIMATED COSTS

Following is an estimated timeline and construction costs (*not including land acquisition, site preparation and owner costs*) for the capital projects recommended in this report. All dollar estimates are based on 2017 dollars. Annual Escalation Percentages must be calculated and added to each project upon the County's adoption the final timeline for each project. Starting and completing projects in a shorter timeframe will result in considerable construction cost savings.

Chart 8

Project	Start FY	Complete FY	New Construction Cost/SF (2017 dollars)	Renovation Cost/SF (2017 dollars)	Total Estimated Cost/SF (2017 dollars)
La Plata - New Building 30,000 – 35,000 SF	2018	2024	\$350-\$400	NA	\$10,500,000- \$14,000,000
Potomac – Renovate and Expand by 3,000 to 4,000 SF	2022	2025	\$350-\$400	\$200-\$250	\$2,950,000- \$3,975,000
P.D. Brown – Renovate and Expand by 2,000 SF	2024	2026	\$350-\$400	\$200-\$250	\$3,565,000- \$4,381,250
Total Estimated Project Cost in 2017 Dollars	2018	2026			\$17,015,000- \$22,356,250

Notes: Timelines for both Potomac and P.D. Brown projects assume that existing sites can accommodate expansion.

A structural evaluation of the roof at Potomac, as well as an investigation into the humidity/dampness issues, should be conducted as soon as possible.

Roof and HVAC replacement at P.D. Brown should proceed as planned in the County's CIP.

Estimates do not include design services, which are 10-12% of construction costs.

VI. PERIODIC REVIEW OF MASTER FACILITIES PLAN

ANNUAL REVIEW OF PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The Consultant strongly urges that the recommendations in this plan be reviewed every one to two years. There may be opportunities to acquire land in the recommended locations at more affordable prices and hold that land until construction dollars are available. New opportunities for co-location may arise with new private and/or public development. Therefore, the Library's vigilance in monitoring what is developing, changing and happening in all areas where library facility needs are identified is vital, as is their monitoring of land costs and construction costs.

ANNUAL REVIEW AND UPDATING OF THE CAPITAL COST ESTIMATES OF THE PLAN

The project cost estimates included in the Facility Master Plan were based on information provided to the consultants at the time of the study. There was no comprehensive physical assessment addressing current structural, mechanical, electrical, plumbing, roofing, or life safety conditions of existing facilities. Therefore cost estimates for expanded and renovated buildings were based on the consultant tours, any documentation provided by the County, age of the facility and the furniture and equipment needs required to provide 21st century public library service as desired by residents of the City and County.

When it comes time to prepare capital improvement budget requests, all cost estimates included in the Plan must be reviewed and revised based on annual rates of escalation in the area. Buildings that will be renovated and/or expanded need to have a thorough physical assessment to avoid any costly surprises related to systems, safety and structural integrity of the existing facility.