

STRATEGIC PLAN 2016-2021 BEACON FALLS PUBLIC LIBRARY

Beacon Falls Library Board of Trustees

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BEACON FALLS PUBLIC LIBRARY
Beacon Falls, CT 06403



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	page 2
Town of Beacon Falls	page 3
History of Previous Plans	page 6
Progress since 2008-2102 Plan	page 8
Community Feedback Summary	page 11
Current Library Status	page 12
Roles of the Library	page 14
Goals, Objectives, and Action Plans	page 15
Implementation	page 20
Library Collections and Services 2015 Statistics	Appendix A
ADA Compliance Evaluation of Current Library	Appendix B
March 2008 Focus Group Response Details	Appendix C
May 2015 Survey Response Details	Appendix D

Executive Summary

The Town of Beacon Falls has the smallest library in the State of Connecticut in terms of square foot per capita. Despite the limitations of its size, the Library has successfully met some of the goals of the 2008-2012 Long Range Plan. Its space considerations, however, restrict much of the possible progress that could be made. The goals and objectives outlined in this Strategic Plan include actions that can be made within the existing space and those which need to be taken to build a dedicated 10,000 square foot library connected to a community center for the Town of Beacon Falls by June 30, 2021.

Vision

The Beacon Falls Public Library builds bridges among neighborhoods and individuals, represents the character of Beacon Falls as a small New England town, and is a source of pride and opportunity for all residents.

Library Mission & Roles

The Library's mission is to express the social and cultural foundations of the Town and to play a leadership role in building collaborations and networks. Its roles are to serve the residents as a community center, a learning place for children, and a source of life-long learning and popular materials for all residents.

Library Motto: LEARN...PARTICIPATE...ENJOY

Our Beliefs, Values, and Expectations of Our Service to the Community

We believe the library needs to be the center of our community, a gathering place where

- everyone is accepted and included.
- community groups meet.
- all ages create and “re-create” in a comfortable setting.
- parents help their children get ready to read.
- the next best read is discovered.
- questions are answered.
- new skills are acquired.
- futures are pursued and lifelong learning is the norm.

We believe the Public Library needs to be the heart and soul of our town, an economic resource center, and the “living room” of Beacon Falls. Our library staff values excellent customer service. We learn patrons' names and greet them with “How can I help you?” We want our patrons to be confident that we will get them the information and materials that they need. We are committed to continue these small-town interactions.

Technology is quickly changing our lives and our libraries. We will extend our helping hands during these exciting and, yet sometimes stressful, times. While we will always be there to help one-on-one, we acknowledge there are those who want to become as self-sufficient as they can

be. We will provide training to our patrons who want to be more comfortable using new programs and devices, as needed. We will continue to assess our materials, services and programs and adapt to meet our community's changing needs. We will make our community more aware of our current and future digital resources. We strive to make visits to our digital branch as welcoming as in-person visits.

With the above tenets in mind, the staff of the Beacon Falls Public Library and its Board of Trustees evaluated data and experiences in the library and the Town since the 2008-2012 Five-Year Plan and have developed the following broad goals for the library.

- The Beacon Falls Public Library is the center of the community, building connections, developing partnerships, and fostering collaborations.
- The Beacon Falls Public Library communicates effectively with the community and within the library.
- The Beacon Falls Public Library offers safe, welcoming, and accessible physical and virtual spaces for the community, collection and staff.
- The Beacon Falls Public Library offers materials, programs and services that meet the needs of the community.

THE TOWN OF BEACON FALLS

Beacon Falls is a small town firmly rooted in its history and exemplifies the volunteer spirit. Its residents take pride in the New England small town atmosphere. Members of Town Boards and Commissions are volunteers. Beacon Hose Co. No 1, the volunteer fire department, is very active in the community hosting the annual carnival and Easter Egg Hunt, to name a few. Service organizations such as the Rotary Club and the Lions and the Lioness Clubs hold events such as the Haunted Hayride and the Duck Race/RiverFest. They also work together with a member of the police department and the local churches' food bank to take care of those in need. The Friends of Beacon Falls Library have supported the needs of the Beacon Falls Library for 25 years.

Beacon Falls is part of the Regional School District 16. Laurel Ledge serves as the elementary school for town children in grades K-5. Children in Grades 6-8 travel to the partner town to attend Long River Middle School with children from Prospect. Woodland Regional High School educates students in grades 9-12.

Children in Beacon Falls participate in a variety of sports available in affiliation with the Parks and Recreation Commission and the local school district. The Parent Teacher Organizations are very active as well, providing activities for children and families. The Library hosts an annual summer reading program and monthly craft activities for elementary school age students. The Library recently added Readers Theater and LEGO Mindstorm Robotics programs for the upper elementary school children.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The Naugatuck Valley Councils of Governments publishes a yearly profile of the 19 communities in their organization. Its “Naugatuck Valley Regional Profile 2015” describes Beacon Falls as an “Outer Ring” community. “The traditionally rural outer ring has become increasingly suburban in character over the last two decades. From 2000 to 2010, the outer ring population grew at 12.1%, far faster than the region, state, and nation. These towns have the lowest population densities, the highest incomes, and the highest proportion of elderly residents. With few local jobs, most outer ring residents commute to jobs in neighboring towns and cities.” (NVRP 2015, pg. 4)

Using the data from the NVRP 2015 as outlined below, Beacon Falls appears to be a growing community with more mature residents with greater overall wealth. It is assumed that much of the impact is due to the two communities in town which are limited to homeowners age 55 and older.

Population Growth

Beacon Falls is the second fastest growing of the eight “Outer Ring” communities in the Naugatuck Valley. The population growth in Beacon Falls from 2000-2014 has exceeded that of other “Outer Ring” communities (13.5% in BF, 11% average in Outer Ring). Beacon Falls has become more densely populated since 2000, seeing a 15% increase (vs. an average 12.5% in the Outer Ring communities). The 2010 U.S. Census and Connecticut State Data Center project a population of 6879 in Beacon Falls in 2025, a 13.5% increase (vs. a 10.1% average increase in the Outer Ring communities).

Age Distribution

Beacon Falls has experienced an increase in its elderly population, with the addition of two age 55 and older communities within the town. The median age of Beacon Falls residents increased 27.3% from 1990 to 2010 (32.6 to 41.5, respectively). While the median age in outer ring municipalities have risen only 20.6% during the same time frame, Beacon Falls remains a younger overall town than the rest of the Outer Ring communities (average median age = 45.1).

Projections for the youngest and most mature Beacon Falls residents show both groups increasing over the next ten years. Based on the 2010 U.S. Census and the Connecticut State Data Center’s Population Projections: 2015-2015, Beacon Falls is projected to have a 8.9% increase in the number of those below the age of 16 in Beacon Falls (vs. an average decrease of 28% in the Outer Ring communities). Those age 65 and over were forecasted to increase 53.8% by 2025 (vs. 68.6% in the Outer Ring). While there is a continued need to provide early literacy services and to entice the older elementary school population, the Beacon Falls Public Library will work to provide programming for the older adults as part of this Strategic Plan.

Income and Economic Sectors

Beacon Falls seems economically stronger than most Outer Ring municipalities. The median home value increased 20.8% from 2000-2014, compared to 18.7% increase in Outer Ring communities. This may be due to the price of homes in the age 55+ communities (Pond Spring Village and Chatfield Farms) which are valued between \$300K - 500K vs. the other parts of

town which have lower home values.

Poverty in Beacon Falls has declined to 1.8% of the 2014 population from 5.9% in 2000. When compared to the Outer Ring, Beacon Falls experienced a 64.1% decrease in poverty vs. an average 69.5% increase in poverty in comparable municipalities.

Beacon Falls experienced a rise in median household and median family income from 1999 to 2014. The median household income increased 8.6% from 1999-2014 (vs. decreasing 6.3% in outer ring) and the median family income increased 20.2% (vs. decreasing 5.1% in outer ring). . In fact, Beacon Falls is the only outer ring community to have an increase in both measures. Some of the increase is presumed to have been derived from those who have move to the 55+ housing from other wealthier communities. As the economy continues to improve, the impact of this increased wealth is that more residents may purchase their own reading/viewing materials, rather than waiting for items to be delivered to our small library via the reduced services of the state-wide DeliverIt system. The Beacon Falls Public Library needs to offer value-added services (such as librarians who are certified notary publics) and interesting programs to meet the needs of the wealthier residents.

Despite the increase in overall wealth, there are pockets of individuals that continue to have difficulty finding a new job. According to the Connecticut Department of Labor, Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS), by Town 2007 - 2014, unemployment levels in Beacon Falls moved from a high of 9.2% to a 6.1% unemployment rate in 2014. While this is an improvement and is better than the entire 18 Naugatuck Valley communities, the average outer ring unemployment rate in 2014 has decreased to 5.5%. The Beacon Falls Public Library will continue to provide programs, resources and computer training for those job-seekers.

HISTORY OF PREVIOUS PLANS

The library has had two previous 5-year (1999 – 2004) or Long Range Plans (2008 – 2012) before this current Strategic Plan was developed. The goals were determined via input of the Library Board of Trustees and library staff, town-wide surveys (1997) and interviews and focus groups (2008).

In the 1999-2004 5-Year Plan, goals were developed to:

- Increase the number of registered cardholders
- Expand the size of the collection and materials budget
- Research and plan for a free-standing library
- Expand the volunteer program and improve staff pay and benefits
- Connect programming with other organizations and employ effective publicity methods to increase attendance
- Increase annual financial support to the library
- Increase access to technology and provide staff and patron training

The 2008-2012 Long Range Plan included the following goals:

- Maintain circulation levels at overall annual increases of 10%
- Establish the library as the catalyst for a culture of collaboration within the educational and service community in Beacon Falls
- Evaluate and join an automation consortium to expand access to resources and support services.
- Establish a Beacon Falls Public Library website that supports blogs, wikis, and social networks to expand users' opportunities to take advantage of Library resources.
- Establish a network of individuals and organizations that will build community support for a new library.

The 2008-2012 Long Range Plan also included a Building Program for a 19,000 square foot library to serve a projected population of 8,000 residents. The Building Program was designed to be used by an architect as an initial basis for the new library.

There were several steps taken to implement the building program from 2008-2012.

- August 2008: a Town Meeting was held to purchase property at 35 Wolfe Avenue.
- August 2009: the Wolfe Avenue "Lewis House" Exploratory Committee was convened to explore the potential uses of the property
- September 2009 – February 2010: Requests for Qualifications / Proposals were solicited for a consultant to assist the committee, committee conducted interviews and ultimately hired Paul Bailey's firm.
- May 2010: Bailey presented its Conditions Assessment and Reuse Study report to Board of Selectmen (see report at http://www.beaconfalls-ct.org/Pages/BeaconFallsCT_Bcomm/Media/TracyReport05-10-10.pdf)
- August 2010: Wolfe Avenue "Lewis House" Exploratory Committee completed its work

and sent recommendations to the Board of Selectmen. Board of Selectman voted to raze the structures on the property (2-1)

- September 2010: Planning and Zoning approved the demolition (4-2)
- October 2010: State Historic Commission approved “Lewis House” on the state registry.
- March 2011: Community Media Center Building Committee was formed with the following mission charges:
 - "To design a Community/Media Center to be located at 35 Wolfe Avenue in the Town of Beacon Falls, keeping in mind that the facility must meet the needs of the Community as well as serving as the 'hub' of the Community.
 - The building will be utilized in part to serve the needs of the Park & Recreation Commission, the Historical Society, various Municipal needs such as: Office Space and Meeting Rooms and the Beacon Falls Public Library.
 - To be cognizant of the fact that the facility should adhere to the Beacon Falls Plan of Conservation and Development as well as the Downtown Plan.
 - In developing a plan for the Community/Media Center, the Committee must be able to promote positive awareness of the project through a Public Relations Plan and must also investigate opportunities for funding via Federal, State, Local and Private and other funding sources."
- May 2011 – January 2012: The Community Media Center Building committee visited a variety of libraries, historical societies and community centers to develop the vision of the joint project.
- February 2012: The Board of Selectmen suspended the Community Media Center Building Committee.

LIBRARY PROGRESS SINCE 2008-2012 PLAN

There were five goal areas of the 2008-2012 Long Range Plan, noted below with their associated objectives:

1. Maintain circulation levels at overall annual increases of 10%.
2. Establish the Library as the catalyst for a culture of collaboration within the educational and service community in Beacon Falls.
3. Evaluate and join an automation consortium to expand access to resources and support services.
4. Establish a Beacon Falls Public Library website that supports blogs, wikis, and social networks to expand users' opportunities to take advantage of Library resources.
5. Build community support for a new library.

Progress toward completion:

Goal 1: Circulation increases

- In FY08 there were 24,354 items circulated. By the end of FY15, overall circulation was 31,323. The goal level was met in FY09 and FY10, but fluctuated after that time and could not sustain the 10% increase per year.
- In FY08 there were 142 programs for children with 1472 children attended. Overall children's circulation in FY08 was 9,239 items. In FY15 there were 192 programs for children, with 2552 attendees and 10,763 children's items circulated.
- In FY08 BFPL's children's circulation was 61% of all print circulation. Median/Average of all CT libraries was 43 and 43% respectively.
- In FY14 BFPL's children's circulation was 45% of all print circulation. Median/Average of all CT libraries was 35%.
- Since January 1, 2015, library staff has increased use of the Town Hall Assembly Room (one floor below) for children's craft programs. We have noticed that when programs are held there, it does not translate into increased circulation as it does when we host program in children's room. The downside of using the children's room is that there is no access to the picture book shelves, more noise, and less access to the circulation desk during the program.
- In FY08 DVD/Media circulation accounted for 36% of all circulations. Median circulation statewide was 23%; Average circulation was 26% of all libraries' circulations (not just print items).
- In FY14 DVD/Media circulation accounted for 36% of all circulations. Median circulation statewide was 23%; Average circulation was 26% of all libraries' circulations (not just print items).
- As of June 2016, the library was currently out of room for adult DVD collection and a new shelf unit has been installed.
- In FY08 adult print circulation accounted for 33% of all print circulations. Median circulation statewide was 54%; Average circulation was 53% of all libraries' circulations.

- In FY14 adult print circulation accounted for 50% of all print circulations. Median circulation statewide was 60%; Average circulation was 59% of all libraries' print circulations.
- The adult fiction area is at capacity. The library staff has moved new fiction into the nonfiction room and will again be weeding those which have not circulated in last 5 years, despite having done it one year ago. Books are in so tightly that patrons have difficulty removing them.
- The adult nonfiction collection is not readily accessible for browsing and difficult to reach at most times due to table with laptops.
- CT State Library guidelines indicate 721 square feet is required for the adult current collection within regular shelving; not counting space needed for existing computers and copier, and young adult collection (which are all housed in that area). Our entire library is housed in 1250 square feet.

Goal 2: Collaborative programming, increase all program attendance by 25%

- The library successfully met this goal. In FY08 there were 1817 program attendees. By FY10, the total was 146% greater. Between FY11 and FY15, program attendance has varied between 2861-3862 attendees. Some of the variance may have been due to staff changes in FY10, FY12, and FY15.
- While exact numbers of collaborative programs were not tracked in FY08-FY15, the number of programs have increased from 178 – 246. Some programs have been done in FY16 in collaboration with Parks and Recreation, Beacon Hose Company No. 1 and other organizations.

Goal 3: Automation consortium

- In March 2010, the library served as a pilot library for Bibliomation's new open source system, Evergreen. That allowed the library to receive a substantially reduced rate in the yearly fees. The agreement was that the fee increase would be limited to 5% each year. Beacon Falls Public Library is currently part of the 60+ library consortium.

Goal 4: Website improvements

- In FY09 there were 5449 visits to the website with an additional 18876 in-person visits. (22% were website visits)
- In FY15 there were 12488 website visits with an additional 10175 in-person visits (55% of all visits were website visits).
- When first started, the new website had commenting capabilities. However, library staff found spammers were posting and turned it off.
- Prior to 2015, library events were posted on the Friends of Beacon Falls Library Facebook page as the library did not have its own Facebook presence. Starting in summer of 2015, the Library has its own Facebook page; with the Friends sharing the library's content as needed.
- Direct links were part of the old website but were removed during upgrade to the new website. Links were difficult to maintain on a regular basis with existing staff members.

- Staff has found that local schools are supplying students with appropriate curricular content and decided not to duplicate services.
- Promotional materials were not created by the former director during the 2008-2012 strategic plan timeframe.
- In 2014 the library had the website redesigned to its current state. All 3 full-time and 2 part-time members have been trained to update the website.
- The Library Director recently developed a job description for Technology Librarian and submitted to First Selectman and to the Library Board of Trustees. The Library Board of Trustees included a Technology Librarian in the FY17 budget, but the Board of Selectmen did not fund that position.

Goal 5: Building support for new library

- A Task Force, consisting of Library Board members, worked with a local videographer to create a video promoting the library. It was posted on YouTube.
- Meetings with community groups to deliver presentations did not take place.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK SUMMARY

The Library Board of Trustees has sought community input in a variety of ways throughout the past fifteen to twenty years. Surveys were conducted in the late 1990s and early 2000s. As part of the 2008 Long Range Plan process, the Britton Consultancy conducted interviews and focus groups. In preparation for this current Strategic Plan, another survey, with 315 respondents, was conducted in spring 2015. There has been agreement throughout the measures regarding the services, facilities and programs of the Beacon Falls Public Library.

There is a very high level of satisfaction with the customer service that patrons receive from library staff members. Over 80% of those who completed the 2015 service indicated customer service at our library was excellent.

The appearance and size of the library has been a recurring concern for the residents of Beacon Falls. Specific areas cited during the 2008 focus groups and in the 2015 survey included the inadequacy of the current library spaces. Areas that have been repeatedly noted as needed include, but are not limited to the following:

- User-friendly browsing and collection storage: wider aisles, face-out displays, movable shelving to accommodate reconfiguration, as needed.
- Separate children's area, with access to outdoor spaces and set-apart story time and program space and room for imaginative play.
- Kitchen/sink facilities adjacent to the children's program space.
- Quiet study areas and comfortable places to read.
- Space for conversation and informal small groups.
- An area for young adults, including group study and social activities.
- Display areas.
- Security and preservation conditions for local history and Connecticut collections.
- Small and large meeting facilities, including audiovisual and media capabilities and kitchen equipment.
- Separate exit from program and meeting rooms so they can be used when the library is closed.
- Separate staff areas and separate staff entrance.
- Drive up book and media return.
- Rest rooms.

Specific details will be outlined and available in a Building Program document that will be used to design the library component of the proposed joint library / community center facility.

CURRENT LIBRARY STATUS

The Connecticut State Library's Division of Library Development, in collaboration with the ACLPD Public Library Standards Task Force, has developed “Best Practices for CT Public Libraries”. This document identifies benchmarks to rate a library's facilities, finance, governance, resources & services, and staff as either meeting an essential level, an enhanced level or an exemplary level. The checklist, available at <http://libguides.ctstatelibrary.org/c.php?g=438554&p=2988086>, is one tool that the Library Board of Trustees used to evaluate the status of the Beacon Falls Public Library as of January 2016. Some items listed below have been addressed since that time.

Facilities Benchmarks

- Physical Space: BELOW Essential Level. Most benchmarks within this area are not met. The library should have minimum of 5445 square feet for its current operations and population and at least 7200 square feet for future population of 8,000. The 7200 square foot figure would not allow for any expansion of services, just allow for current operations with a larger population.
- Facility Plan and Energy Efficiency: BELOW Essential Level. The benchmarks which are not met includes ADA compliance and the lack of an Emergency Preparedness Plan.
- Safety/Security/Emergency Preparedness: Meets Essential Level, if staff levels are maintained with 2 employees on duty at all times.
- Access Hours: Meets Essential Level, if staff levels are maintained with at least 2 employees on duty at all times.
- Access Parking: Meets Essential Level
- Access Signage: Meets Essential Level
- Technology Infrastructure: Meets Essential Level
- Internet Connectivity: BELOW Essential Level. The library must upgrade its network / connectivity speed to meet the benchmark.

Finance Benchmarks:

- Funding: Meets Essential Level.
- Use of Funds: Meets Essential Level.

Governance Benchmarks:

- Laws and Ordinances: Meets Essential Level.
- Library Director: BELOW Essential Level. The benchmark that is not met refers to the need for the library director to conduct annual performance staff evaluations. The Town of Beacon Falls does not have a staff evaluation process in place. The Library Director and staff reach agreement on yearly staff goals. Staff works toward those goals and has conversations regarding their progress toward reaching the goals throughout the year at staff meetings and/or with the Library Director.
- Planning: Meets Essential Level.
- Policies: BELOW Essential Level. To meet the benchmark, the library board needs to establish policies on Challenged Materials, Gifts, Memorials and Sponsorships, and Financial Development, Foundations, Investment and Endowments.

- Funding: BELOW Essential level. To meet the benchmark, the library needs to establish a donations and gifts program.
- Assessment: BELOW Essential Level. To meet the benchmark, the library needs to report annually to the public on the impact of library services on the community.
- Advocacy: BELOW Essential Level. To meet the benchmark, the library needs to clearly outline the person responsible for media relations and identify a process for users to communicate concerns and suggestions.
- Friends of the Library: BELOW Essential Level. To meet the benchmark, the library needs to have a memorandum of understanding between FOL & Library and the Library Board needs to have a member serve as representative to the Friends.
- Volunteers: BELOW Essential Level. To meet the benchmark, the library needs to institute a planned volunteer orientation, handbook & training program.

Resources & Services Benchmarks:

- Resources: BELOW Essential Level. To meet the benchmark, the library needs to provide adaptive technology to ensure access for all persons.
- Services: Meets Essential Level.
- Programs: Below Essential Level. To meet the benchmark, the library needs to establish an ongoing method for public input to review programming.
- Circulation: Meets Essential Level. To meet the Enhanced level benchmark, the library needs to institute a process to allow remote payment of fines.
- Confidentiality & Privacy: Meets Essential Level.

Staff Benchmarks:

- Library Director: BELOW Essential Level. The benchmark that is not met refers to the need for the library director to conduct annual performance staff evaluations. The Town of Beacon Falls does not have a staff evaluation process in place. The Library Director and staff reach agreement on yearly staff goals. Staff works toward those goals and has conversations regarding their progress toward reaching the goals throughout the year at staff meetings and/or with the Library Director.
- Library Staff: BELOW Essential Level. In order to reach the benchmark, the library needs to have 0.5 Full-time equivalents per 1000 population. Beacon Falls Public Library has 0.43 FTE. The library must ensure a minimum of two staff members on main service area at all times.
- Personnel Policies & Compensation: BELOW Essential Level. To meet the benchmark, library staff would work 35 hours per week, similar to other municipal staff, receive salaries that meet Connecticut Library Association minimum salaries, and have annual performance reviews.
- Staff Safety: BELOW Essential Level. To meet the benchmark, there would be two paid staff members on duty at all times and a written emergency preparedness plan would be available to all staff.
- Continuing Education: BELOW Essential Level. To meet the benchmark, professional staff should have a minimum of 14 continuing education contact hours and part-time staff should have a minimum of 4 continuing education contact hours each year.

ROLES OF THE LIBRARY

Based on all of the above, the Library Board of Trustees has designated the following service responses for the Beacon Falls Public Library.

Role 1: Community Center

A library that provides a community center environment helps address the need of people to meet and interact with others in their community and to participate in public discourse about community issues.

Role 2: Visit a Comfortable Place: Physical and Virtual Spaces

Residents will have safe and welcoming physical places to meet and interact with others or to sit quietly and read and will have open and accessible virtual spaces that support networking.

Role 3: Children's Doorway to Learning: Create Young Readers & Early Literacy

Children from birth to five will have programs and services designed to ensure that they will enter school ready to read, write, and listen.

Role 4: Satisfy curiosity: Lifelong learning

Residents will have the resources they need to explore topics of personal interest and continue to learn throughout their lives.

Role 5: Stimulate Imagination: Reading, Viewing, and Listening for Pleasure

Residents who want materials to enhance their leisure time will find what they want when and where they want them and will have the help they need to make choices from among the options.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, and ACTION ITEMS

The Library Board of Trustees worked collaboratively with library staff to develop the following goals, objectives and action items designed to meet the needs of the residents of Beacon Falls.

Goal 1: The Beacon Falls Public Library is the center of the community, building connections, developing partnerships, and fostering collaborations.

Objective 1.A: Open a new joint library and community center building by June 30, 2021.

Action 1.A.1. Library staff and Library Board of Trustees will work with a Board of Selectman appointed Library/Community Center Building Committee, starting in FY 16-17, to explain this Strategic Plan and associated Building program in order design the Library component of the project according to its standards.

Action 1.A.2. Library staff, Library Board of Trustees and Friends of Beacon Falls Library will work with a Development subcommittee to raise funds and seek grants to be used toward upgrades in the new building that would not otherwise be possible through municipal bonding.

Objective 1.B: Actively participate with a variety of town boards, commissions, organizations, and businesses to further develop resources, services and programs.

Action 1.B.1. Library staff will collaborate with the ~~[Rotary Club]~~ *Service Clubs* of Beacon Falls to seek grant sponsorships of literacy programs.

~~Action 1.B.2. The Library Director will attend Board of Selectmen meetings to stay current with community issues and activities.~~

Objective 1.C: Collaborate with other organizations to host a minimum of 30 co-sponsored programs each year.

Action 1.C.1. The Assistant Librarian will continue to serve as the Reading Merit Badge Counselor for local Scouts.

Action 1.C. 2. The Program Librarian will continue to collaborate with the Beacon Falls Parks and Recreation Commission to provide the staff and publicity for co-sponsored Nature and Robotics programs

Action 1.C.3. The Program Librarian will continue to hold two preschool story time programs at/with United Day School each month during the school year.

Action 1.C.4. The Program Librarian will continue Kindergarten outreach in September, inviting students to obtain their first library card.

Action 1.C.5. Library staff will continue to co-sponsor the Nutmeg Battle of the Books at Laurel Ledge Elementary School each Spring.

Action 1.C.6. Library staff will develop an outreach program to meet with grade 3 and grade 6 students in order to encourage renewal of library cards.

Goal 2: The Beacon Falls Public Library communicates effectively with the community and within the library.

Objective 2.A: Share information on a face-to-face basis with community members.

Action 2.A.1 The Library Director will meet with community groups on a regular schedule to share information regarding resources, activities and services

Action 2.A.2. The Library Director will have a booth at local events (St. Michael's Church Fair, Duck Race, etc.)

Action 2.A.3. Library staff shall promote programs as people are checking out materials.

Objective 2.B. Provide information on library services and programs to the community in a variety of formats and media.

Action 2.B.1 Library staff will purchase "A" Frame Sandwich board (or similar item) to place in front of building to promote programs.

Action 2.B.2. The Program Librarian will continue to send press releases to print media (Newspapers).

Action 2.B.3. The Program Librarian will promote and advertise events on Social Media.

Action 2.B.4. Library staff will continue to publish quarterly newsletters in Citizens News.

Action 2.B.5. The Program Librarian will bring program fliers / information to businesses whose customers would likely be interested.

Objective 2.C: Provide clear directions for the location of library, its materials, and its hours.

Action 2.C.1. Library staff will provide signage for each section of the library, as needed.

Action 2.C.2. The Assistant Librarian will change the call numbers for materials in some/all areas of the juvenile collection, as needed.

Action 2.C.3. Library staff will provide signage in the stairwell to indicate the library is upstairs.

Action 2.C.4. Library staff will ensure the message on the phone indicates library hours, and indicate when those hours are changed (staff development, holiday closings)

Action 2.C.5. Library staff will provide signage inside the library to show patrons where materials should be returned.

Action 2.C.6. Library staff will contact the American Legion to request a sign be placed on their flag box to indicate that is not for library materials.

Goal 3: The Beacon Falls Public Library offers safe, welcoming, and accessible physical and virtual spaces for the community, collection and staff.

Objective 3.A. Implement realistic and economically feasible recommendations from the ADA checklist survey (See Appendix B).

Action 3.A.1: Library staff will purchase tactile signs to be placed outside the two main rooms of the library.

Action 3.A.2. The Library Board of Trustees and the Library Director will send a request

to the Board of Selectman asking that the town hall maintenance department take the following actions:

- a. Lower floor signs on elevator's door jamb 2 inches, making the center line 60 inches above the ground.
- b. Replace cracked / misaligned tiles in hallway floor.
- c. Install tactile signs outside of the town main rooms of the library

Action 3.A.3. Library staff will ensure that the hallway floor is as clear as possible and does not have materials jutting out into the walkway space.

Action 3.A.4. The Program Librarian will organize the program materials and media closets to place materials that are used most often at the lowest levels, closest to the door openings.

Action 3.A.5. The Library will purchase a foldable ADA-compliant table to be placed in front of large print books, if/when requested.

Objective 3.B. Ensure that the new library / community center building is accessible to all

Action 3.B.1: As an ex-officio member of the building committee, the Library Director will support and defend all universal design components included the library building program.

Action 3.B.2. As an ex-officio member of the building committee, the Library Director will encourage the Library/Community Center Building Committee to be familiar with and utilize "Checklist of Library Building Design Considerations" by William W. Sannwald.

Action 3.B.3. As an ex-officio member of the building committee, the Library Director will ensure that a changing table in a family lavatory is located near the children's room.

Objective 3.C. Ensure that online resources provided by the library are easy to use and accessible to all.

Action 3.C.1. The library staff will evaluate the library's website to ensure adherence to web accessible standards <https://www.w3.org/standards/webdesign/accessibility>

Action 3.C.2. The library staff will assign a library volunteer the task of checking links on the website twice per year.

Objective 3.D. Offer visual pleasing spaces within the existing library and hallway.

Action 3.D.1. Library staff will purchase an additional shelving unit for the under-the-stairs storage area on the ground floor in order to organize that area.

Action 3.D.2. Library staff will ensure that the hallway and Friends book sale area is visually pleasing by storing book sale items which do not fit on the hallway shelves in the under-the-stairs storage area.

Action 3.D.3. The Program Librarian will store craft materials in appropriate area after use.

Action 3.D.4. Library staff will continue to monitor usage of library materials on a yearly basis, removing and/or replacing items which are no longer of interest or visually unappealing.

Action 3.D.5. The Assistant Librarian will continue to develop and implement the library's records retention policy and remove documents no longer needed.

Action 3.D.6. Library staff will encourage artists to display photos or artwork related to a specific theme for a 1 to 2-month showcase.

Action 3.D.7. Library staff will create book / material displays for both children and adults according to seasonal or program themes.

Objective 3.E. Ensure that the new Library/Community Center includes a variety of spaces for community members to gather.

Action 3.E.1. The Building Program, at minimum, will include the following areas:

- a. Areas for a tutor and a student to meet
- b. A 10 person "board room" area
- c. A 25-50 person program room which has access to water
- d. A program room for 100-200 people
- e. A kitchen next to the largest program room

Objective 3.F. Ensure that staff works in a safe and healthy environment.

Action 3.F.1. The Library Board of Trustees and the Library staff will develop an Emergency Preparedness policy in collaboration with the Town of Beacon Falls and its Emergency Management Team.

Action 3.F.2. The library will ensure that a minimum of two staff members are working on the main level of the library during any given shift and, unless there are extenuating circumstances, staff members are not alone for more than 30 minutes at any time.

Action 3.F.3. Ensure that the new library/community center has a restroom on each floor.

Goal 4: The Beacon Falls Public Library offers materials, programs and services that meet the needs of the community.

Objective 4.A Offer a wide variety of adult programs that allow attendees to learn new skills, participate in new activities, and meet new people.

Action 4.A.1. The Program Librarian will develop a list of local talent (business people, artists, authors, etc.) who would be willing to share their knowledge at a library program.

Action 4.A.2. The Program Librarian will increase the number of programs that appeal to men.

Objective 4.B. Improve/Expand early literacy materials and services for preschool children and their parents.

Action 4.B.1. Library staff will analyze the picture book collection to determine weaknesses in terms of themes and purchase books to meet those needs.

Action 4.B.2. Prior to moving to a new building, library staff will reorganize the picture book collection according to themes (i.e. all concept books together, all vehicle books, all

animal books, etc.)

Action 4.B.3. Library staff will display new books.

Action 4.B.4. The Program Librarian will have access to professional development opportunities to stay current on early literacy research.

Action 4.B.5. The Program Librarian will use current early literacy research to modify existing preschool story time programs.

Action 4.B.6. The Library will institute a “1000 books before Kindergarten” program.

Objective 4.C. Offer additional STEAM activities for children.

Action 4.C.1. The Library Board of Trustees will advocate for the hiring of a Technology Librarian, who can present additional STEM programs.

Action 4.C.2. The Program Librarian will collaborate with other organizations (i.e. Parks & Recreation, Friends of Beacon Falls Library, etc.) to provide additional materials to support STEAM programs.

Action 4.C.3. The Program Librarian will increase the number of creative arts programs for children, those which are open-ended and not step-by-step craft programs.

Action 4.C.4. Library staff and/or volunteers will continue to offer Math Mondays or other student assistance during the summer.

Action 4.C.5. The Program Librarian will identify agencies to present inexpensive STEAM programs.

Objective 4.D: Expand training opportunities to increase patron's ability to use computers and other electronic devices and software.

Action 4.D.1. The library will continue one-on-one classes with volunteers and/or Book-a-Librarian sessions.

Action 4.D.2. The Library Director will ensure that library staff has access to reference training resources to improve their knowledge and proficiency in the use of library databases.

Action 4.D.3. The Library Board of Trustees will advocate for the hiring of a Technology Librarian who shall hold small group classes for adults focused on one technology product/type (i.e. Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Facebook, etc.).

Objective 4.E. Ensure the existing library resources meet the needs of the community.

Action 4.E.1. The Library will add additional titles with a “New Age” or Self-Help focus.

Action 4.E.2. The Library will add additional nonfiction titles with a focus on history.

Action 4.E.3. Library staff will review the copyright date of books in the juvenile nonfiction collection and purchase new titles to replace those which are out-of-date.

Action 4.E.4. Library staff and Library Board of Trustees will survey residents in 2018 to evaluate the library’s progress toward meeting their needs.

IMPLEMENTATION

The following narrative provides some perspective on implementation of the recommendations in this Strategic Plan.

Implementing Objectives and Action Plan Items

Staff time: Many of the action items require reallocation of staff time.

The Library Director will need to spend time working with the Community Media Center Building Committee and time outside of the library attending meetings. The Library Director will also need to spend time working with Library Board of Trustees and other town officials to develop the Emergency Preparedness policy. Objectives 1A, 1B, 2A, 3B.

The Program Librarian will need to reallocate time to learn about early literacy and the 1000 Books before Kindergarten program. It will be important to learn about grant writing and other ways to fund programs.

Many objectives and action items are continuing activities of existing staff. There is a limited additional time required for Action 1.C.6 (to develop an outreach program for grade 3 and grade 6 students). There are some purchases required (A- Frame Sandwich board, ADA compliant folding table, signage) which can be made through the existing library budget.

Other action items can be completed with the use of volunteers. These areas include helping to evaluate and periodically weed the collection, helping to reorganize the picture book collection, and checking the website for broken links and information, to name a few.

Financial Costs: This Strategic Plan requires an increase in funding to carry out its components.

Building Costs: Members of the Community Media Center Committee will be responsible for the capital plan for building a new library / community center. Experts previously consulted determined that the committee should estimate building costs at approximately \$400 per square foot.

A Connecticut State Library building grant of up to 1 million dollars may be available for the project. The grants are awarded on a competitive basis and can cover up to one-half of the cost of the library portion of the multi-use project. According to requirements published on the CT State Library website (http://libguides.ctstatelibrary.org/ld.php?content_id=6054372), the library portion of the project must be a minimum of 1.6 square feet per 1000 population (1.6 x 6.055 = 9688 square feet) to gain preferred status in the grant award process. Should the 9688 square foot space be built for the library, that portion of the building would cost approximately \$4 million dollars. This cost does not include additional space added on for the purpose of the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Historical Society or any other town group or agency.

For future reference, according to the state guidelines, *“In a multi-purpose building that contains a library, space shared with another town agency for multi-purpose or meeting room use counts toward the square feet, provided that during at least 50% of the library’s open hours, the room(s) is/are available for library-sponsored and library-related activities and that there are policies regarding the availability of shared multi-purpose and meeting room space. The percentage of such space that counts toward the square feet of the library must match the percentage of time it is available for library purposes during the library’s open hours. In a facility containing the library and another town agency, the ratio of library space to total building space determines what portion of the total mechanical space counts toward the square feet of the library.”*

Staffing costs: A criterion for the Connecticut State Library Building grant award process is the number of hours that a library is open to the public. Beacon Falls Public Library is currently open 42.5 hours per week during the school year. In order to increase our chances of procuring the \$1,000,000 grant, the library must be open a minimum of 45 hours.

Unless staff is added before the new facility opens, the town should plan for an additional full-time staff member. With current staffing levels, using the state standard of 40 hours as the full-time work week, the Library has 2.6 full-time equivalent employees, or 0.43 FTE per 1,000 of our population. As noted earlier, in order to meet an ESSENTIAL level on State Benchmarks, the library needs to have 0.5 Full-time equivalents per 1000 population. Staffing levels average 0.61 FTE per 1000 statewide.

This Strategic Plan calls for the hiring of a Technology Librarian. That staff member should hold a Masters of Library Science (MLS) degree and/or other professional degrees or certifications and work a minimum of 30 hours per week. Current Connecticut Library Association (CLA) salary guidelines for a librarian with an MLS require a rate of \$27 / hour. While the Town does not meet the CLA guidelines for its entire library staff, this position will require a high level of technology skill and 10% of the employee’s time can be shared with other town departments. The town should plan for \$42,210 added to the library’s full-time salary line item.

The Library Board of Trustees included a 20 hour/week Technology Librarian in its 2016-2017 budget proposal. The Boards of Selectmen and Finance did not support that recommendation. This Strategic Plan recommends that this position is added as soon as possible to allow the STEM program goals to move forward. Currently the Library Director is fulfilling some of the program responsibilities in that area. However, due to increased work responsibilities to work with the Community Media Center Committee on the implementation of a building project, the Library Director will not have the time to fulfill those STEM program responsibilities. Adding the position now as part-time will lessen the overall salary increase prior to the opening of the new facility.

Ongoing costs of a new facility: Once the new facility is operational, the town should plan for additional costs for building utilities and maintenance.

APPENDIX A

Library Collection and Services 2015 Statistics
as of FY 2015-16

Beacon Falls Public Library

COLLECTION as of June 30, 2016

*Downloadable Collections include those which are shared with Bibliomation consortium

Adult Print Books	5803
Young Adult Print Books	1155
Juvenile Print Books	9036
Audiobooks on CD	243
Adult DVDs	2566
Other Physical Materials	107
TOTAL PHYSICAL ITEMS	18910
*Downloadable eBooks (OverDrive & Tumblebooks)	2739
*Downloadable Audiobooks (OverDrive)	8735
Number of Online Databases (not including ResearchIT CT)	6
Magazine Subscriptions	10

FY 15-16 CIRCULATION OF MATERIALS

<u>MATERIALS</u>	<u>YTD</u>
ADULT PRINT	6260
YOUNG ADULT PRINT	1023
JUVENILE PRINT	9889
AUDIO BOOKS	623
DOWNLOADED AUDIOBOOKS	529
ADULT VIDEO	6372
JUVENILE VIDEO	2580
E-BOOKS	1729
FAMILY PASSES	158
<u>OTHER</u>	<u>88</u>
TOTALS	29251
(included in above)	
ILL-BORROWED	2852
ILL-LENT	2423
CONNECTICARD LOANS	1171

ILL Borrow/Lent = Interlibrary Loan through the DeliverIT CT system.

Items sent to our library for our patrons (Borrow) or our materials sent to other libraries (Lent).

Connecticard Loan= Items taken out by people from other towns

<u>DATABASE & OTHER USAGE</u>	<u>YTD</u>
Universal Class (new users)	9
Universal Class (# lessons completed)	415
Job Now (total usage)	11
Job Now (resumes submitted)	0
CT News (Newsbank)	52
Rocket Languages	33
Magill Medical Guide	5
Wowbrary Subscribers (total)	2399
Wowbrary Subscribers (new this year)	201
Book-a-Librarian Sessions	46
Driving Test	14
GenealogyBank	360
Ancestry Library Edition	2308

PROGRAMMING

ADULTS AT ADULT PROGRAMS	726
ADULTS AT CHILD PROGRAMS	968
CHILDREN AT PROGRAMS	2457
<hr/>	
TOTAL	4151
# of CHILDREN/FAMILY PROGRAMS	202
Average # children at child programs	12.16
# of ADULT/YA PROGRAMS	68
Average # adults at adults programs	10.7
# of COMPUTER SESSIONS	119

OTHER SERVICES

COMPUTER USAGE (HRS)	3020.4
COMPUTER (#PEOPLE)	2440
WEB SITE VISITS	11842
VOLUNTEER HOURS	818
HOMEBOUND DELIVERIES	6

**Beacon Falls Public Library (BFPL) Collections and Services 2015 Statistics
as reported to the CT State Library in November 2015 and compared to CT Libraries**

- ⤴ The percentage of the residents of Beacon Falls who own library cards (32%) is less than state average (42%), and is lower than the percentage in 2011.
- ⤴ BFPL's square footage per capita (0.21) is less than the state average (1.09) and is the lowest of all main libraries.
- ⤴ BFPL's hours of operation (42) are fewer than the state average (51). These have remained unchanged since 2011.
- ⤴ BFPL's Full-time equivalent library employees per capita (0.43) less than state average (0.61)
- ⤴ BFPL's volunteer hours per capita (0.14) is higher than the statewide average (0.07). BFPL's hours per capita have declined since 2011.
- ⤴ BFPL receives less town \$ per capita (\$41.63) than the state average of other libraries (\$45.78). However, the gap has narrowed since 2011.
- ⤴ BFPL's children's program attendance per capita (0.42) higher than state average (0.34). This has been stable since 2011.
- ⤴ BFPL's number of children's programs (192) is lower than state average (210). The gap has slightly narrowed since 2011.
- ⤴ BFPL's number of YA programs (1) is lower than state average (15). The gap has widened since 2011.
- ⤴ BFPL's number of Adult programs (52) is lower than state average (89). There has been a slight improvement since 2011.
- ⤴ BFPL's circulation has increased in the last 20 year; less than 2 per capita in 1996 to 5.2 per capita in 2015. This has remained stable since 2011.
- ⤴ BFPL's percentage of BorrowIT CT (formerly known as Connecticard) circulation as compared to the total circulation (5%) is lower than that of the state average (15%). This percentage, while just slightly higher than 2011, has been relatively stable when compared to 2011.
- ⤴ BFPL's percentage of adult materials as compared to the total collection (50%) is lower than the state average (59%). The gap has narrowed since 2011.
- ⤴ BFPL's percentage of adult circulation as compared to the total circulation (46%) is lower than that of the state average (60%). The gap has narrowed since 2011.

- ⤴ BFPL's percentage of young adult books per capita as compared to the total collection (7.4%) is higher than the state average (4%). These percentages, while slightly higher, are stable when compared to 2011.
- ⤴ BFPL's percentage of YA circulation as compared to total circulation (4%) is higher than the state average (3.6%). These figures have been stable since 2011.
- ⤴ BFPL's percentage of juvenile books per capita as compared to total collection (50%) is higher than the state average (34%). The gap between BFPL's percentage and that of the state average has narrowed slightly since 2011.
- ⤴ BFPL's percentage of juvenile circulation as compared to total circulation (46%) is higher than that of the state average (36%). The gap between BFPL's percentage and that of the state average has narrowed slightly since 2011.
- ⤴ BFPL's Print collection per capita (2.29) is less than state average (3.76). These statistics have remained stable when compared to 2011.
- ⤴ BFPL's Non-print collection per capita (0.45) is less than state average (0.56). These figures, while slightly higher, are relatively stable when compared to 2011.
- ⤴ BFPL's percentage of e-book circulation as compared to total book circulation (7.3%) is higher than the state average (4.9%). While BFPL's percentage has just slightly more than doubled, the state average has increased ten-fold.
- ⤴ BFPL's percentage of down-loadable audio book circulation as compared to total audio book circulation (33%) is higher than the state average (16%). While BFPL's percentage has just slightly less than doubled, the state average has quadrupled since 2011.

APPENDIX B

ADA Checklist for Existing Facilities

Beacon Falls Public Library

The following survey of the existing spaces at the Beacon Falls Public Library was done in March 2016 by SCSU intern, David Makusevich, at the request of the Library Director, Susan Dowdell. Makusevich used the ADA Checklist for Existing Facilities for Priority 2 – Access to Goods & Services as found at <http://www.adachecklist.org/doc/fullchecklist/ada-checklist.pdf>

Dowdell indicated the actions to be taken and the implications of implementing Makusevich's recommendations.

INTERIOR ACCESSIBLE ROUTE:

The interior accessible route for the library is the path from the elevator to all the public spaces. All public spaces for the library are on one accessible route that is comprised primarily of the hallway. The children's room, adult nonfiction room, and elevator can be all reached with a wheelchair from the hallway. The adult fiction room is accessed from the adult nonfiction room.

- The route from the adult nonfiction room to the adult fiction room is carpeted and stable.
- The hallway has tile flooring that is in poor condition, many tiles are cracked causing the floor to become uneven and therefore unstable to patrons using accessibility equipment. [2.3: *Is the route stable, firm and slip resistant?*].
- The hallway route remains at least 36 inches wide at all points with its narrowest being 48 inches between the paper book stand and floral pamphlet stand.
- Upon exiting the elevator to the immediate left is a floral pamphlet holder protruding 13 inches from the wall. To the immediate right is a cabinet protruding 18.5 inches from the wall. Since the bottom leading edge of the cabinet touches the ground it is safe where it is, however the bottom leading edge of the floral pamphlet holder is 29 inches above the ground which is 2 inches over ADA guidelines [2.8: *Do all objects on circulation paths through public areas protrude no more than 4 inches into the path? OR If an object protrudes more than four inches, is the bottom leading edge at 27 inches or lower above the floor? OR Is the bottom leading edge at 80 inches or higher above the floor?*].
- All other aspects of the interior accessible route meet or exceed what is defined on the ADA checklist. [Refer to **Figure A.**]

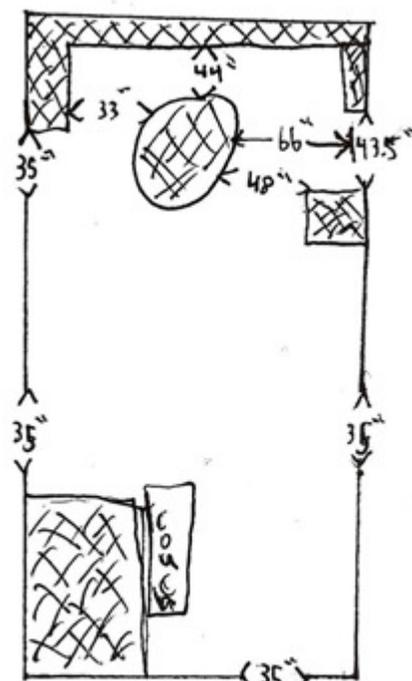


Figure A - Hallway

Recommendations:

- Replace hallway floor to make it level and stable.
- Relocate floral pamphlet holder.

Action to be taken:

- Removed folding chairs behind floral pamphlet holder to place it fully against wall, reducing protrusion into interior accessible route.

Implications of implementing recommendations:

- In order to make the hallway floor level and stable, it will require replacement, requiring funds to do so. The recommendation will be passed on to the Custodian, carbon copied in a memo sent to the Board of Selectmen. *(This has been completed as of August, 2016.)*

ELEVATORS FULL SIZE & LULA:

The elevator used in the library is a full size model that meets the bulk of ADA specifications, with the only exception being the location of a door jamb sign.

The call buttons are 41.5 inches above the ground, well below the max of 54 inches. The opening to the elevator is 43.5 inches wide and will not close if the doorway is obstructed. The interior of the elevator is 51.75 inches deep and 81 inches wide giving it 29.11 sq. ft. of clear floor space, exceeding the ADA minimum of 16 sq. ft. *[2.25: Is the interior at least 54 inches deep by at least 36 inches wide with at least 16 sq. ft. of clear floor space?]*.

The open, close, and alarm buttons are 37 inches above the ground and the floor call buttons are 53.75 inches above the ground which all fall within guidelines. The elevator meets all requirements listed in sections [2.29] and [2.30] but not all of [2.31].

ADA guidelines require that the floor sign located in the door jamb of the elevator should be mounted with the lowest character 48 inches or higher, and with the highest character no more than 60 inches above the ground. The lowest character is 60.25 inches above the ground and the highest character is 63.5 inches from the ground, making it slightly out of compliance. The guidelines state that if the elevator was constructed before 3/15/2012 and the centerline of the sign is 60 inches above the ground then the sign's location is adequate. The construction of the elevator precedes the aforementioned date but the centerline is 62 inches above the ground making the sign location out of guidelines regardless. All other elevator related guidelines either don't apply or are met.

[2.29: Are the car control buttons designated with raised characters? Are the car controls designated with Braille?]

[2.30: If there is a full size or LULA, are there audible signals which sound as the car passes or is about to stop at a floor.]

[2.31: Is there a sign on both door jambs at every floor identifying the floor? Is there a tactile star on both jambs at the main entry level? Do text characters contrast with their backgrounds? Are text characters raised? Is there Braille? Is the sign mounted between 48 inches to the baseline of the lowest character and 60 inches to the baseline of the highest character above the floor?]

Recommendations:

- Reposition door jamb sign 2 inches lower making center line 60 inches above ground.

Action to be taken:

- None

Implications of implementing recommendations:

- The cost of repositioning the door jamb sign appears to be minimal. The recommendation will be passed on to the Custodian, carbon copied in a memo sent to the Board of Selectmen.

INTERIOR DOORS:

- The doors leading to the staircase and emergency exit offer 35 inches of space, as do the doors leading into the adult nonfiction room and the door into the children's room. The checklist requires there to be at least 18 inches of maneuvering clearance from door latch to wall, and 60 inches of clear depth away from the door.
- The door leading into the children's room only has 6 inches of space beyond the latch but offers 72 inches of depth meaning there would be room to maneuver [2.41: *If there is a front approach to the pull side of the door, is there at least 18 inches of maneuvering clearance beyond the latch side plus at least 60 inches clear depth? On both sides of the door, is the floor surface of the maneuvering clearance level?*].
- The door into the adult nonfiction room only has 7 inches beyond the latch and a depth of 34 inches meaning a person using a wheelchair would have a very tough time opening the door. Since the doors leading into the children's room and adult nonfiction room remain open during hours of operation this may be a non-issue since a wheelchair user wouldn't need to do any opening.
- Floor surfaces on both sides of doors, as well as the thresholds all fall within suggested ranges [2.42: *If the threshold vertical, is it no more than 1/4 inch high?*].
- The emergency door and door leading to stairwell use push hardware to open, while the other doors use lever hardware meaning that all doors in the library can be opened with one hand and no grasping or twisting [2.43: *Is the door equipped with hardware that is operable with one hand and does not require tight grasping, pinching or twisting of the wrist? Door handle?*].
- All remaining interior doors specifications are either met or don't apply.

Recommendations:

- Consult with ADA to determine if doors that remain open during operation hours need to meet door opening requirements.

Action to be taken:

The Library Director contacted the Connecticut Library Association's ADA committee chair, Maria Bernier, who stated, "*If the door is always open, then I don't think you need to worry about the 18 inches of maneuvering clearance. That item probably assumes that the door is closed and someone needs room to move while swinging the door open. But if the door is already open, you have cleverly removed that obstruction from the pathway.*"

Implications of implementing recommendations:

None.

SIGNS:

The ADA checklist includes all signs but there is an emphasis on the tactile nature of signs to ensure that sight impaired patrons can determine where they're going.

There are three signs in the library in total, two exit signs and one that says "Library". One exit sign is located above the emergency exit and the other above the door to the stairwell, the "Library" sign sits above the door to the children's library. These signs meet the ADA standard of text characters contrasting with their backgrounds, but not others [2.38: *If there are signs designating permanent rooms and spaces not likely to change over time: do text characters contrast with their backgrounds? Are text characters raised? Is there Braille? Is the sign mounted on the wall on the latch side of the door? With clear floor space beyond the arc of the door swing between the closed position and 45-degree open position at least 18 x 18 inches centered on the tactile characters? So the baseline of the lowest character is at least 48 inches above the floor and the baseline of the highest character is no more than 60 inches above the floor?].*

The ADA checklist for signs relates primarily to those that designate permanent spaces or rooms that are unlikely to change. There are currently no tactile signs affixed to any wall to designate what the room is.

Recommendations:

- Install tactile signs for permanent spaces.

Action to be taken:

- Research options for purchasing customized signs main/children's room and for adult/computer room

Implications of implementing recommendations:

- Cost of each sign range from \$20-\$60. This amount can be taken from library budget in FY 16-17.

ROOMS AND SPACES:

The ADA checklist states that aisles and pathways to goods and services must be at least 36 inches wide [2.47: *Are aisles and pathways to good and services, and to one of teach type of sales and service counters, at least 36 inches wide?*].

In the children’s room the aisle between the rectangular table and book shelf along the windows is 32 inches wide. The aisle between the round table and children’s nonfiction shelf is also 32 inches wide with no chair. [Refer to **Figure B**]

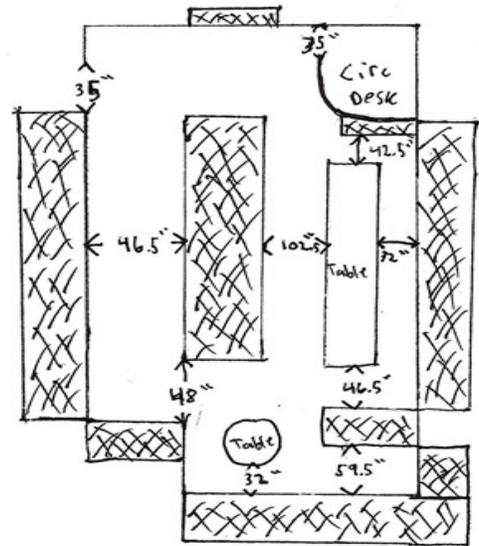


Figure B – Children’s Room

In the adult nonfiction room there is 23.5 inches of space between the desk with two computers and the book shelf on one side, and 27 inches of space on the other. The aisle between the four computer desk and the tall bookshelf is 33.5 inches wide. The space between the printer and table with four computers is 26 inches wide. [Refer to **Figure C**]

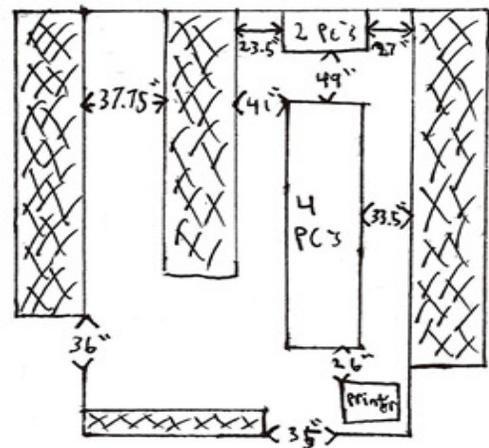


Figure C – Adult Nonfiction Room

In the adult fiction room there is 28 inches of space between the paperback book stand and corner of the fiction half-shelf. There is 33.5 inches of room from the paperback book stand the shelf by the windows. The aisle between the final shelf of young adult fiction and first shelf of adult fiction has a width of only 25.5 inches.

There is a staff closet located in the corner of the room that has a door which meets standards. The aisle inside of the closet of is far too narrow for a wheelchair user because of the storage shelves and other items that are taking up floor space. [Refer to **Figure D**]

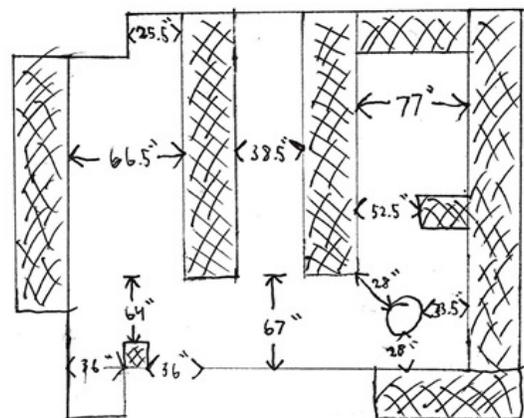


Figure D – Adult Fiction Room

In the hallway the aisle that is between the paperback book stand and books for purchase shelf is 33 inches wide. The shelf that houses DVDs to purchase has boxes in front of it that restrict 22 inches of space which may impede a wheelchair user's ability to reach and browse through the DVDs.

The floor surface in each aisle is stable, firm, and slip resistant with exception of the floor in the hallway which is not stable due to cracked tiles. [2.48: *Are floor surfaces stable, firm and slip resistant?*]. The areas that are carpeted have carpet that measure less than a .25 inch, meeting guidelines.

All other pathways and aisles to goods and services meet or exceed a width of 36 inches.

Recommendations:

- Reposition computer tables, both paperback book stands, and final young adult fiction shelf to allow more aisle room.
- Move boxes that are in front of purchasable DVDs.
- Reconfigure staff closet so wheelchair users can enter.

Action to be taken:

- Boxes in the hallway near the window were relocated to the storage closet under the stairs on the ground floor.
- The DVDs were removed from the window sill and relocated on to the Friends of Library's book sale shelves.
- Staff has been instructed to offer assistance to those who physically cannot reach the access-limited areas of the library.

Implications of implementing recommendations:

- It is not feasible to remove or reposition the computer tables. To remove the computer tables, all access to technology would be eliminated. To reposition the tables to accommodate ADA compliance, would require the removal of the double sided bookshelf unit (17 shelves). If each shelf holds a minimum of 15-20 books, 255-340 nonfiction books would need to be eliminated from the collection.
- It is not feasible to remove or reposition the paperback book stand. There is nowhere to reposition it in the library. To remove the circular rack would require eliminating up to 160 paperback books from the collection.
- It is not feasible to remove or reposition the brown young adult book shelf. There is nowhere to reposition it in the library. To remove the brown young adult book shelf would require eliminating up to 150 young adult books from the collection.
- It is not feasible to reconfigure staff closet to allow wheelchair access as there is limited storage space available. However, the closet shall be better organized and materials which are used more often placed on a lower level and closer to the front of the closet as much as possible. The program librarian shall also reduce the amount of materials by planning programs which require the use of materials which have been stored for a year or more.

CONTROLS:

The light switches in children's room operable parts meet the maximum height of 48 inches. The switch located in the small space between hallway and the adult nonfiction room, as well as the switch in the adult nonfiction room itself are located 49 inches above the ground, an inch above maximum [2.50: *Is there a clear floor space at least 20 inches wide by at least 48 inches long for a forward or parallel approach? Are the operable parts no higher than 48 inches above the floor? If constructed before 3/15/2012 and a parallel approach is provided, controls can be 54 inches*].

All light switches have enough room in front of them for a wheelchair user to be able to use, and can be used without tight grasping, pinching or twisting of the wrist [2.51: *Can the control be operated with one hand and without tight grasping, pinching, or twisting of the wrist?*].

Recommendations:

- Lower light switch in small space that leads to adult nonfiction room, and light switch in adult nonfiction room by 1 inch.

Action to be taken:

- None

Implications of implementing recommendations:

- It is not economically feasible to move the switches. Library staff would be the only ones to use the switches. Staff members who may become unable to reach due to disability would be exempted from having to do this and alternate staffing arrangements would be made to make sure the tasks are completed at the beginning and end of work days.

SEATING AT NON-EMPLOYEE WORK SURFACES:

The ADA checklist asks for there to be "at least 5%, but no fewer than one, of seating and standing spaces accessible for people who use wheelchairs [2.64]." As it stands there is currently no suitable table and/or workspace for a wheelchair user to comfortably utilize. [2.64: *Are at least 5%, but no fewer than one, of seating and standing spaces accessible for people who use wheelchairs?*]

In order for a work space to be considered accessible it must adhere to the following standards:

[2.66: *At the accessible space(s), is the top of the accessible surface no less than 28 inches and no greater than 34 inches above the floor? Note: If for children the top should be no less than 26 inches and no greater than 30 inches above the floor.*]

[2.67: *Is there a clear floor space of at least 30 inches wide by at least 48 inches long for a forward approach? Does it extend no less than 17 inches and no greater than 25 inches under the surface? Is there knee space at least 27 inches high and at least 30 inches wide? Note: If for children, the knee space may be 24 inches high.*]

There are four work surfaces used by the public, all with varying measurements. The knee width measurements were taken without factoring in neighboring chairs since they can be moved and it offers the best chance of accommodating a wheelchair user.

- The two-computer desk in the adult nonfiction room has a work surface 26.5 inches above the ground with a knee space that is 23.75 inches high and 55 inches wide. The approach is 39 inches wide, and the space immediately in front of the desk has at least 50 inches of area for maneuvering.
- The four-computer desk has a work surface that is 29 inches tall with a knee space height of 25 inches and width of 56 inches on the long sides and 31 inches on the short sides. There is not enough clear floor space to provide the required forward approach area of 30 x 48 inches to sit on the long sides without moving the table.
- The round table located in the children's room has a work surface 28 inches tall with a knee space height of 27 inches for the first 9 inches under the table, after which the knee space height drops to 23.25 inches. The knee space width at all sides of the table is only 26.5 inches, but there is plenty of room to make a forward approach.
- The rectangle table located in the children's room near the windows has a work surface that is 26 inches tall with a knee space height of 25 inches and width of 24 inches. There would be enough clear space to make a forward approach from a couple different angles. None of the aforementioned tables would be able to accommodate an adult wheelchair user; the four-computer desk and round table are high enough but fail to meet other specifications like knee space height or width.

The ADA checklist states that for a work station to be accessible to child wheelchair users the table top surface must be no less than 26 inches above ground and no more than 30 inches [2.66]. Children require the same minimum knee space width but a shorter knee space height of only 26 inches [2.67]. Under those guidelines the four-computer desk would be able to sit a child wheelchair user, in order to have the required amount of clear space for a forward approach the patron would have to move down the aisle towards the two-computer desk and sit at the short end of the four computer table. The rectangle table in the children's room would also fit a child's wheelchair user as long as the chairs are removed or rearranged.

Recommendations:

- Increase height of both computer desks to achieve appropriate knee space height for adult wheelchair users OR...
- Purchase at least one table that meets all requirements.

Action to be taken:

- None

Implications of implementing recommendations:

- Purchase a foldable table in FY 16-17 that meets all requirements for an adult wheelchair:
 - *The top of the accessible surface is no less than 28 inches and no greater than 34 inches above the floor*

- *The floor space extends no less than 17 inches and no greater than 25 inches under the surface.*
- *The knee space is at least 27 inches high and at least 30 inches wide.*

SEATING – GENERAL:

The ADA checklist asks for there to be at least one space where a wheelchair user would be able to sit [2.68: *Is there at least one space at least 36 inches wide by at least 48 inches long for a person in a wheelchair?*].

- There is currently no such space in the library that would be applicable, certain areas like directly next to bench in the hallway would be suitable if it didn't place the wheelchair user in front of main pathways.

Recommendations:

- Reposition bench in hallway to fit wheelchair at one side.

Action to be taken:

- None

Implications of implementing recommendations:

It is not feasible to move the bench to make a space as recommended. Moving the bench would encumber the space of movement within the hallway, causing another issue to solve this one.

CHECK-OUT AISLES:

There is one self-check-out station located in the hallway that is intended for use by patrons.

- The aisle immediately in front of the station is over 39 inches wide and has over 36 inches of depth away from the table [2.71: *Is the aisle at least 36 inches wide?*].
- The location of the self-check-out station offers more than enough room for a wheelchair user to maneuver and access the computer. While there is enough room for a parallel approach, it could be greatly improved if the food donation bin was relocated. The counter surface is 37.25 inches above ground, just within the maximum allotted height of 38 inches [2.72: *Is the counter surface of at least one aisle no higher than 38 inches above the floor?*].

The remaining checklist items are not applicable to the current self-check-out station set up.

Recommendations:

- Relocate food donation bin.

Action to be taken:

- Staff will be instructed to ensure that the food donation bin is moved as close to the opened door as possible, allowing better access to the self-check-out station.

Implications of implementing recommendations:

- None

SALES & SERVICE COUNTERS:

The circulation desk is located in the children's room and is the library's sales and service counter. It is the central point of interaction between patron and librarian, and where all business is conducted.

- The counter is 37.25 inches above ground, beyond the maximum of 36 inches. The width of the counter is 63 inches and within guidelines [2.76: *Is there a portion of at least one of each type of counter that is: No higher than 36 inches above the floor? At least 36 inches long?*].
- The accessible portion of the counter extends 30.75 inches while the depth of the counter top is only 7 inches, the ADA checklist states that the counter and countertop should extend the same amount [2.77: *Does the accessible portion of the counter extend the same depth as the counter top?*].
- There is clear floor space in front of the counter that exceeds the minimum of 30 x 48 inches, allowing for a parallel approach [2.78: *Is there a clear floor space at least 30 inches wide by at least 48 inches long for a forward or parallel approach?*].
- The opening that allows employees to go behind the desk has a width of 35 inches. Since the minimum width for a wheelchair user to move through a passage is 32 inches as established in the INTERIOR DOORS section a wheelchair user would be able to enter the area behind the service counter [2.40: *Is the door opening width at least 32 inches clear, between the face of the door and the stop, when the door is open 90 degrees?*].

This area is intended to seat two librarians at any given time which is currently only barely manageable because the two chairs take up such a large space. The only way there is enough space for a wheelchair user to make a forward approach into any of the librarian work surfaces would be for both chairs to first be removed. However, both librarian work surfaces do meet the established measurements as outlined in the SEATING AT NON-EMPLOYEE WORK SURFACES section in regard to adults.

- Limited space causes the computer tower, power strip with accompanying wires, and other library materials that can't be housed elsewhere must be stored under the work surface area. As a result, the area underneath both work surfaces extends a depth between 9 and 10 inches, not meeting the required minimum of 17 inches [2.66: *At the accessible space(s), is the top of the accessible surface no less than 28 inches and no greater than 34 inches above the floor? Note: If for children the top should be no less than 26 inches and no greater than 30 inches above the floor.*]
- The work surfaces are 30 inches above the ground which is within the ADA checklist range, however the knee space height is 25.5 inches due to the sliding keyboard tray thus not meeting the necessary 27 inches; the knee space width is about 30 inches [2.66 – 2.67]. Without the sliding keyboard tray there would be a knee space height of 29 inches,

but since work surface space is so limited placing the keyboard on the work surface itself would be impractical. [2.67: *Is there a clear floor space of at least 30 inches wide by at least 48 inches long for a forward approach? Does it extend no less than 17 inches and no greater than 25 inches under the surface? Is there knee space at least 27 inches high and at least 30 inches wide? Note: If for children, the knee space may be 24 inches high.*]

Recommendations:

- Install desk that meets necessary standards.
- Relocate materials beneath desk as much as possible.

Action to be taken:

- Staff is instructed to provide assistance to those who physically cannot reach the circulation desk.

Implications of implementing recommendations:

- It is not feasible to install a desk that meets standards. To do so would require that the circulation desk take up more than the current 14 ft. x 11 ft. space. A one-staff-member ADA compliant desk takes up approximately that space. According to the Library Space Planning Guide published by the Connecticut State Library, 150 square feet should be planned for each workstation. Putting in a standard 2-person ADA compliant circulation desk would require at least 300 square feet, almost ½ the size of the current Children’s Room. That would require the removal of the small rectangular children’s table and the removal of more than 750 children’s books from the collection. The cost for such a desk would be a minimum of \$5000.
- Should a library employee require such accommodation, the library administration would need to find an alternate solution including replacing the director’s desk with a suitable one for the employee. The cost for such a work space would be a minimum of \$300.

APPENDIX C

2008 INTERVIEWS WITH COMMUNITY LEADERS (taken from 2008-2012 Long Range Plan)

During meetings and interviews, we gathered information about the perspectives and concerns of community leaders. Meetings included the Library Board, Building Committee, Long-Range Planning Committee, Library Friends, Recreation Commissioner, Town Selectman, and First Selectman. The following is a summary of themes and listing of additional issues from different meetings.

1st Theme—Understanding of Library Services

Public Expectations for Library Service

Beacon Falls does not have established traditions or expectations of well-supported library services in an up-to-date building, so there is no commonly understood context for library service. The current facility is completely inadequate for the level of services that are provided. As a result, discussion of the library's needs becomes, at the same time, a discussion of where it should be located; people think of the library in terms of a location, rather than a service, because location is a context that is understood.

Another consistent theme is what a 21st century library includes. Because there is no experience of fully equipped and adequately sized library facilities (except new residents who come from towns with extensive library services), people mention a feature—meeting rooms, perhaps, or comfortable reading areas—and ask if it is reasonable to expect it from a library. In general, a library that is being planned currently includes many of the following features.

- A separate children's area, with access to outdoors spaces and set-apart story-hour and program space, fish tanks, dioramas, etc.
- Kitchen/sink facilities adjacent to children's program space
- Space for collections of 3-5 items per resident, 15-20% in media formats
- "User-friendly" browsing and collection storage—aisle widths, shelves high, face out displays, self-service, etc.
- Radio-frequency book security
- Seating – 5-7 seats per 1,000 residents
- Quiet study areas and comfortable places to read
- Space for conversation and informal small groups
- Retail amenities—book sale space, snack bars
- An area for young adults, including group study (information commons) and social activities
- Display areas—art, topical displays, local clubs and organizations, community information, etc.
- Small and large meeting facilities, including av and media capabilities and kitchen equipment

- Separate exit from program and meeting rooms
- Efficient staff work facilities of roughly 150 SF per work station
- Drive-up book return, and sometimes drive-through pick-up
- Space for computers, including necessary electronics and power
- Security and preservation conditions in space for local history and Connecticut collections
- Activities space for Library Friends
- Outdoor library space—reading gardens, etc.
- Room for expansion, arranged to permit conversion of functions (e.g. fewer books, more computers; less YA, more children's)

As part of raising awareness, it will be important to convey the possibilities of these sorts of facilities as part of a modern library.

As part of setting priorities, a menu of features such as this can be used to define the size and type of library.

Different partnerships will affect which features are emphasized.

Partnerships and Public Support

Partnerships

People consistently mentioned the issue of combining the library with another agency. The most common were Parks and Recreation and the Senior Center. Different combinations will gain support within the community because there is a wider constituency, and some partnerships have greater funding chances so local funding can carry a lesser burden.

Partnerships are also seen as a means of establishing uniqueness for the project, each one pointing to some advantages of specific locations. As examples: a combination with Parks and Recreation could become identified with creating a “green” building (perhaps located in Matthies Park as a nature lab for children), or a combination with seniors could leverage strong local history emphasis (perhaps located downtown, near the historic “Hill” area.) Another partnership option could be combining with Oxford, which is also moving forward with new building plans.

Each of these partnership options presents a different emphasis for the Library. During interviews there was no information that specifically indicated one agency as more needy as another; each one had general needs for a location to centralize, or expand, their activities. Developing the rationale and specifics for a beneficial partnership will be an important issue to develop more clearly as planning proceeds.

Public Support

There is a mix of optimism and pessimism about the likelihood of building public support. The pessimists feel that no items that will increase taxes will be approved in Town Meetings. Optimists believe that the energy and interest of new residents—with young families and experience of larger libraries in other towns—can be harnessed to gain approval for a new library.

It is important to communicate the issues, particularly financial issues, thoroughly and in a planned, strategic way. A variety of techniques should be used, including a web site, and presentations to groups.

Surveys can be used to determine specific types of information or to raise awareness of a need for a new building.

Finances

A consistent theme was the difficulty of getting support for major capital improvements in the face of other demands, particularly for schools. There has been a history of 'surprises' of the full cost of school projects, which has soured the expectation that projects will cost as forecast.

Different partnership designs have different funding opportunities, and this will to some degree direct the library toward the most effective partnership.

State aid in various forms is an important source of outside funding, including state library construction aid, Community Development Small Cities Block Grants, and legislative discretionary funds. State funds can often be used for construction, while most foundation funds support programs. Beacon Falls is recognized at the state level as having significant development needs.

Other Issues

Possible Sites

There are 5 sites (1 downtown and 4 outside downtown) that have been evaluated for a new library. The more viable options seem to be the downtown "commuter lot" location, the Pent Rd recreation complex, and Matthies Park. Each one presents excellent opportunities; the commuter lot to fulfill downtown development needs for a 'destination' facility; Pent Road for collaboration with recreation activities, and Matthies Park for programming opportunities related to its location, and proximity to the high school.

There is a very strong planning foundation for the downtown location.

Seniors' interviews

- ❖ Discussion of what a modern library is... people do research at home, get entertainment, etc.; why is a new library needed?
- ❖ Mobility—people are used to being in their cars and driving to various locations. Walking to a library is not a central requirement.
- ❖ People on the north and south ends of BF gravitate to other towns.
- ❖ There are several good libraries nearby and people tend to use them if their normal patterns take them that way.
- ❖ Interest in sports in community—previous activities to organize around that; parks, youth, library as community center

Friends of the Library

- ❖ Interest in multi-purpose building as a means to improve funding
- ❖ What would get a non-user into the library?
- ❖ Uniqueness—green building; special collections, etc.
- ❖ New residents as a support base
- ❖ Combination with another Town? Not a favorable environment for this—precedent of school district structure, which has bred ill-will
- ❖ Appreciation of the scope of services from the library

Recreation Commission

- ❖ Interest in combined facility
- ❖ Recreation programs run primarily with volunteer leadership
- ❖ Many activities are sub-contracted to providers
- ❖ Lots of creativity and energy for innovation

Dominic Sorrentino

- ❖ Discussion of what a 21st century library is like; smaller generation of readers
- ❖ Combination with Parks/Recreation and seniors fills a need
- ❖ Community center role is needed
- ❖ Competition among towns for new residents

Susan Cable

- ❖ Interested in free-standing library with partners
- ❖ Build cohesion with a cultural and community center
- ❖ Issue of perception that computers and schools reduce the need for a library
- ❖ Southbury Library as a model building
- ❖ Interest of Library and Parks/Recreation for new facility—Library Friends and Parks Pals.
- ❖ Described interest of Pent Rd owner to discuss options

FOCUS GROUPS

Two sets of three focus groups were attended by 35 people. The first session was to gather basic impressions, perceptions and needs, and the second set was to review current progress in the study. The basic themes of the sessions are summarized below, and an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) was developed to help summarize the groups' perceptions.

Results of Focus Group Discussions—What people said

Library Use

*How do people use the Library and what do they think needs improvement?
What other libraries do you use?*

- ❖ The most frequent responses addressed programs—both children's and adults. These were appreciated and used to some extent.
- ❖ People often went to programs at other libraries, either in addition to or in place of programs in Beacon Falls.
- ❖ Participants had extensive experience with other towns' libraries.
- ❖ The collection was mentioned as a typical use—children's, adult, and media. Inter-loan was mentioned often as the recourse of a small collection. People often went to other libraries to have access to larger collections.
- ❖ People credited staff with their efforts in meeting needs.
- ❖ Improvement is needed in the amount of space—for collections, for programs, for separate types of activities, for specific purposes. People assumed that more space would settle most of their dissatisfaction.

Activity within the Community

What activities do you participate in and what is that connection to the Library?

- ❖ Participants were active in many other community organizations. Specifically, participants were in arts groups, PTO, seniors, and some in recreation programs.
- ❖ There was a general recognition of the benefits of a combined facility, usually seen as a way to get more support as well as to provide better sense of BF as a community.

What is Beacon Falls like and how does that affect the type of library it has?

- ❖ The Town is seen as quite a ways behind in meeting the demographic and social changes in the last decade. It's geography, and lack of a true center—neither physical or social or residential—forces people to go to other towns for most of their needs. Participants saw this as a drawback—there is no sense of community—and a benefit—people are in their cars anyway and the library could be anywhere; the town's center is wherever they need to go.
- ❖ Participants have a vision of Beacon Falls as a place they are proud of, that makes them part of a community, and that keeps a small town flavor. They consider a library to be a source of this type of community feeling, both due to the way they personally use the Library and for their image of what library represents.
- ❖ They say that they would give up going to other libraries if Beacon Falls had a better one.

If there were a proposal to build a new library, what do you need to know to support it?

- ❖ This was answered almost uniformly in terms of cost. Participants felt willing to support a library, but they felt its success, often put in terms of overcoming resistance, required detailed cost information as well as appealing to the benefits residents will have.
- ❖ There was little discussion about specific locations for a library. Participants consistently state that they, and others, would drive to get to a Beacon Falls library. "If you build it they will come" was repeated in each group.

Results of Focus Group Discussions—Consensus of Groups

Summary—Group 1 March 16—

- ❖ Beacon Falls is a demographically similar community with significant separations socially and geographically.
- ❖ There are trends toward newer residents and developments setting up their own community facilities---libraries, meeting places, recreation, etc.
- ❖ There is a need for a community center to give a chance for these separating forces to become more cohesive... there is a sense of community pride that needs expression.
- ❖ Costs are a major issue for the Town, with significant tax increases within past 7 years.

Summary Group 2 March 16

- ❖ People have very busy lives and, although they want to improve things, they do not have time.
- ❖ The Town has grown and become more diverse, but town amenities have not—people came here to get cheaper property, upgrade their standing, and then taxes have increased a lot recently...delayed sticker shock.
- ❖ Discussion of a variety of uses of the library and of the need to communicate the range of functions as well as the importance of the library.

Summary Group 3 March 17

- ❖ There is a lot of energy and interest in improving library services. Participants had an extensive knowledge of service possibilities from other libraries.
- ❖ Participants felt that the Town has many types of inertia to prevent change, but were positive in their assessment of the favorable views toward the library.
- ❖ Many people would support a new library if there were a deliberate and well-planned communications program.

“SWOT” ANALYSIS

Focus Group participants identified what they considered strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats relating to the Beacon Falls community and the prospects for a new library.

STRENGTHS

- ❖ Desire to support local activities and services
- ❖ Small town flavor
- ❖ Pride of community
- ❖ People enjoy living here
- ❖ People know each other—close-knit feeling
- ❖ Rich in volunteerism
- ❖ Many civic groups
- ❖ New residents with high expectations for the library
- ❖ Library staff
- ❖ Interest in sports

WEAKNESSES

- ❖ People do most things outside Town
- ❖ Communications vehicles are lacking
- ❖ Lack of information and awareness about the Library
- ❖ Lives are very busy and people over-committed
- ❖ Inertia prevents moving forward
- ❖ Resistance to change
- ❖ Isolation and separation among residential areas

- ❖ Small tax base

- ❖ No long-range Town plan
- ❖ Town services have not caught up with the expectations of newer residents

- ❖ There is a feeling that the residents' expectations for improvement are low. There is a perceived level of satisfaction with things as they are.

OPPORTUNITIES

- ❖ Multiple stakeholder and interest groups
- ❖ (Seniors, clubs, 'over 55', Fire Dept., apartment occupants, etc.)

- ❖ Many potential allies and partners
- ❖ Library project can bring town together
- ❖ Cooperation with schools

- ❖ New residents with high expectations are a source of support

- ❖ Exposure to other libraries in a large group of the population

- ❖ "Extended family" in the Town—people with influence

- ❖ Library as a communications source
- ❖ Schools as a communications source

- ❖ Town's new Activities Coordinator position

THREATS

- ❖ Isolation of neighborhoods and groups into self-sufficient communities
- ❖ Resistance to additional taxes
- ❖ Competition for favorable votes and funding
- ❖ Economic challenges
- ❖ Disinterest in seeing improvements in Town services
- ❖ Lack of control over building and development
- ❖ Issues are easily made political
- ❖ The town's residents are accustomed to finding their daily needs in other communities

Conclusions from the SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis helps crystallize 2 dominant themes. On the one hand, residents' approach to change and growth is generally conservative—to preserve the character of the Town—rather than articulate a new direction or new focus. This tendency is described as inertia and satisfaction with things as they are.

At the same time, the library is seen as an important *potential* means to express the energies for improvement and the community's values. Beacon Falls residents are looking for civic expression of their values, and the library building is understood—in a general way-- as a vehicle for this expression. This is expressed as a need for soundly reasoned and complete presentations of the costs and benefits of a new library.