

# Providence Community Library 2014 Facilities Committee Report

Respectfully Submitted by The PCL Facility Committee  
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## I. Introduction

The *Providence Community Library* Mission Statement states that our community libraries should serve as vibrant hubs within the neighborhoods of Providence, providing programs and services that respond to the needs of the community. These programs and services are provided throughout the city in PCL's nine library buildings and its mobile library. The Facilities Committee has two main objectives connected to the PCL mission.

The Committee is tasked with providing guidance to the PCL Board of Directors in order to:

1. Insure the continuing physical operation of each neighborhood library through needed building repairs, and to
2. Support the creation of an exceptional 21<sup>st</sup>-century library system through the renovation and transformation of library facilities

We must achieve both of these objectives in order to accomplish our mission and attain long-term sustainable growth for each library in our system.

The Facilities Committee has undertaken a series of studies designed to determine how best to achieve our two objectives. This report will present the methodology and results of the Facilities Committee research and will provide recommendations captured in PCL's Five-Year Capital Needs Plan.

This report is not definitive and does not represent the "final word" in many aspects. It is designed to grow and evolve as innovation in library services and facilities designs are introduced. In this way, the web presence of these documents that constitute the full report will continue to expand in size and number and, it is hoped, become a repository or clearinghouse for useful information available to all library board members, staff and patrons.

## II. History

Providence Community Library began operation on July 1, 2009, when it assumed responsibility for the nine branch libraries that had been part of the Providence Public Library system. Although PPL had completed extensive renovations of Rochambeau and South Providence libraries in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it had virtually neglected maintenance on the other branches—to the extent that it was forced to close Washington Park in 2006. Community pressure led Providence to renovate Washington Park and ownership of the building reverted back to the City. With the exception of these three buildings, PCL inherited a branch library system comprised of buildings in need of substantial repair and not up to code, with Knight Memorial, Smith Hill, and Wanskuck in the worst shape.

[For an extended History of Individual Library buildings see Appendix A.]

## III. Methodology

In appreciation of the different capital needs of each building and the unique character of the community where each is situated, the Facilities Committee has undertaken a thorough assessment of each PCL building to prepare a Five-Year Plan that identifies and prioritizes needed work. This assessment is based upon three sets of tasks.

A. The first task has been to create a Prioritized List of Capital Needs across our system. [See Appendix B.] This prioritized list is based upon direct input from the PCL maintenance staff and administration and also upon several Capital Needs Assessments on the buildings that have been completed over the last five years. [Appendix C] Along with the Capital Needs Assessments that identify the large needs of each library, the Facilities Committee has also created a “Small Items” list that identifies smaller projects that are still very important. [Appendix D]

B. The second task has involved researching other library systems in the US and conducting a meta-study through published literature in order to learn more about creative uses of public library space, amenities and facility organization. [Appendix E] We have also set goals to guide our development in the areas of energy conservation and green building practices. In our research, we have sought to generate a list of “best practices,” but we have also been interested in learning about creative innovations in practice at other libraries. For instance, the Multnomah County Library in Portland OR has developed a smartphone app that enables users to access the library catalog, manage their library account, or talk to a librarian. The design of children’s rooms also figures prominently in our research, and the

photographs in our study of other library systems across the nation provide many ideas about the placement, layout, and design of children's circulation desks, reading areas and "storyland" theaters.

C. Capital Projects moving forward also must consider the physical needs of the Administrative offices, the Tech Services Department, IT and the Maintenance Department. The space currently available for our Administrative Offices, Tech Services or IT is clearly not optimal and Maintenance needs a dedicated workshop. Appendix F contains the basic space requirements needed for Tech Services and Admin Offices. Any Capital Needs Project for one of the neighborhood libraries that is undertaken during the next few years should consider whether one, or all, of these departments could be incorporated into the plans for the library's renovation.

## **IV. Financing**

In order to finance the larger projects, PCL will need to apply for grants from such organizations as the Champlin Foundations (which has already allocated funds to renovate Smith Hill Library), from Providence's Community Development Block Grant (which is covering the majority of the costs for replacing the Knight Memorial Library's front steps), and actively seek other forms of Capital Improvement funding.

Friends Groups can play an important role in fundraising from individual donors for Capital Projects. This "Small Items" list can be used by Friends Groups for targeted, event fundraising or for personal appeals to wealthy donors. This de-centralized fundraising can be an effective tool in the PCL toolbox and is meant to supplement the larger, centralized fundraising efforts.

The Knight Memorial Library's Friends Group event, "Step Up for Knight" is an example of how a library's unique qualities can become integrated into a targeted fundraising event. The Friends of Knight embraced the inherent historical nature of the building and offered historical tours during its "Step Up to Knight" event that raised several thousand dollars to fill the financing gap in the rehabilitation project of the exterior concrete stairs. Similarly, Rochambeau Friends has agreed to pay for the new blinds at Smith Hill Library.

A key recommendation of our Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan is the creation of a Capital Improvement Fundraising Plan in order to assure that the PCL is vigilantly pursuing every avenue for raising needed capital.

## V. Conclusion

The immediate task of the Facilities Committee is to synthesize the reports generated above, prioritize upcoming facilities projects within the entire system, and begin to carry out these projects. We have already begun to address some of the most pressing facilities issues we have identified. The Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan accompanies this report and represents a one-page roadmap for the PCL to follow in facilities-related matters moving forward.

The Five-Year Plan must be flexible enough to accommodate adjustments dictated by our funding constraints and as we continue to integrate revisions to our “Best Practices” summary. Our “Small Items” list for each library for use in small, de-centralized fundraisers and personal appeals will need consistent updating as well.

We will continue to meet with library patrons through the Friends Groups to solicit their ideas about making their libraries more responsive to library users and to the neighborhood at large. We will also engage PCL staff members in a consideration of how best to utilize each of their buildings to provide programs and services that respond to the needs of their community.

We will be posting new material on the Facilities Section of the PCL website so that the whole PCL community will be able to keep abreast of our projects and our plans. The Facilities Section will include this Report & Appendices, the Five-Year Plan, the Site Visit reports and “Best Practices” Summary, and the “Small Items” list for each library for use in small, de-centralized fundraisers and personal appeal.