



**ILSLEY 100 PROJECT TEAM
UPDATE FOR SELECTBOARD
JUNE 28, 2022**

CHARGE. MEMBERSHIP. MEETINGS.

The Ilsley 100 Project Team was formed by the Selectboard at its meeting of March 22, 2022, following the acceptance by the Selectboard of the January 13, 2022 report by the Ilsley Library Renovation/Expansion Working Group. The charge to the Team was based on a vision statement and key principles (called pillars) on which the renovation/expansion project should proceed. The group is charged with guiding development of design options with a team of professionals to fulfill the vision statement, accomplishing the goals of as many of the building pillars as possible. The Team is further charged with coordinating funding strategies and community engagement efforts to bring the project to fruition. The [charge](#) and the full [report of the working group](#) are available online.

The voting members of the Project Team include two members of the Selectboard (Dan Brown, Farhad Khan), two members of the Ilsley Public Library Board of Trustees (Joe McVeigh, Amy Mincher), and three members of the public (Barbara Doyle-Wilch, Jim Gish, Ken Perine.) There are two non-voting members (Dana Hart, Library Director; Judith Harris, Town Staff Project Team Liaison.)

Between March 24 and June 24, the Project Team has held 8 meetings. All meetings are open to the public and meeting times and agendas are warned in advance. Apart from meetings in the field, all meetings are available to the public in real time via Zoom. Regular meeting times are the 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month¹ at 10:00 a.m. generally in the Jessica Swift Community Meeting Room in the library. [Minutes](#) of all meetings are available to the public online.

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

To ensure that its recommendations for design options are solidly based on the realities of the current space and on best practices in library design, the Project Team has engaged in several types of research. These included first an overview of deficiencies in the current building including a tour of its facilities. Secondly, the Team has toured recently renovated or newly built libraries nearby in South Burlington and Shelburne, and has planned future visits to libraries elsewhere in the state. Third, at each of its meetings, Library Director Dana Hart has presented examples of [a variety of contemporary, award-winning library designs](#), pointing out features of interest. Hart has also explored literature on library design developed by the American Library Association. Barbara Doyle-Wilch has brought her extensive experience in library renovation and design to the process. Meanwhile, Judith Harris's deep experience in architecture and construction has informed Team discussions. As part of [a panel discussion hosted by the Friends of Ilsley Library](#), newly appointed State Librarian Catherine Delneo visited Ilsley and in response to questions [shared her perspective on the future of libraries](#). The Project Team has also had

¹ In fact, the Team meets on the Thursday following Selectboard meetings. Due to peculiarities in the calendar, this can occasionally be the 3rd and 5th Thursdays. Check the library website and town meeting list for details.

access to the work done by the previous Renovation/Expansion Working Group as well as the work of the previous Library Building from 2014-2017.

FOUNDATIONAL ASSUMPTIONS UNDERPINNING DECISION-MAKING

To guide its decision-making, the Project Team has relied on three foundational sources. The first of these is the **vision statement and pillars**, first drafted by the elected body of the Ilsley Trustees and later endorsed by the library renovation/expansion working group and—in its charge to the Project Team—by the Selectboard. The vision statement calls for the library to “...be a welcoming, accessible, and safe community hub with the flexibility and sustainability to enrich community members’ lives now and into the future.” This vision for the future of the library is supported by key principles called pillars: welcoming; accessible; safe; community hub; flexible; and sustainable. Further explanation of the pillars can be found in the [charge](#).

A second source of guidance for the Team is the result of the library’s **Tell Me Tours**. This series of 14 focus groups engaged more than 100 people, focusing not on the library building, but on aspirations for the community of Middlebury and ways that the library could support those aspirations. These focus groups, conducted before the pandemic, revealed several key desires on the part of Middlebury residents. These included building a vibrant downtown, creating opportunities for intergenerational gatherings, filling in the gaps for less served parts of our population, making Middlebury more affordable, and increasing connections and breaking down silos. A [summary of the results](#) can be found online.

The Project Team has also sought to ensure that its decision making is aligned with the [2020 Middlebury Downtown Master Plan](#), a map for the development of Middlebury created with extensive community input. The Project Team has primarily focused on how the new library project can address three of the six guiding principles found on pages 24-25 of the master plan: Inclusivity/Gathering Places and Destinations for All; Cultural Vibrancy; and Sustainability & Resiliency.

DEVELOPMENT OF PROJECT SCHEDULE

The Project Team has developed a rough, tentative schedule, working backwards from a possible bond vote. Such a vote would likely be held in March or November of 2024. Key activities for the planning and design phases include developing a square footage program to estimate space needs; developing a strategic matrix to aid in decision-making; engaging a conceptual estimator to assist in preliminary costing; choosing a future direction among several options; and engaging professionals to work on a feasibility study. These activities will likely take us to July 2023. At the same time we are working on design options, some members of the Team are working on communications and community engagement to ensure public awareness and opportunities for public feedback. Other members of the Team are considering funding from a variety of sources including state and federal funds, grants, and private fund raising.

DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGIC DECISION MATRIX

It is the intention of the Project Team to consider a wide range of possible solutions to improve Middlebury’s library facilities. To aid in the evaluation of these diverse options, the Team is developing a

strategic decision matrix suggested by former Selectboard member Nick Artim based on his extensive work in renovating and expanding a wide variety of structures around the country.

The concept of the matrix is first of all to consider and describe a number of possible ways to address the issues of the building. One option might be to renovate the building, repairing the obvious defects such as the elevator, HVAC system, and leaks in the basement, but not to expand the footprint. A second option might be to renovate and expand the current building as suggested in the 2017 feasibility study. A third option might be to renovate the current structure, but house some programs and activities in a non-adjacent annex for more square footage. A fourth option might be to expand the library in an easterly direction, possibly with a second-story structure extending towards or into the EDI site above existing parking. A fifth option might be to relocate the library to an alternate site within downtown, while finding an adaptive re-use for the 1924 building. No decision on design direction has been made at this time, the Team is simply working to remain open to a variety of possibilities.

The Team is currently working on refining a decision matrix with which to evaluate these options. In addition to estimated cost, the Team will evaluate the options based on criteria such as fulfillment of the desired square footage program; suitability of site and location; alignment with stated community aspirations; and funding viability. These criteria are still a work in progress at the time of this report.

DEVELOPMENT OF SQUARE FOOTAGE PROGRAM WITH DESIRED FEATURES

Dana Hart, Judith Harris, and Barbara Doyle-Wilch have been working to develop a square footage program. This process has been proceeding in several stages. Harris, working from older schematic diagrams, mapped out the square footage that is currently devoted to different elements of the library program. This resulted in the identification of an above average amount of “overhead” or space which cannot be used for programming purposes, such as stairwells and hallways, for example. Doyle-Wilch interviewed library staff about their work and shadowed them in their jobs to find which tasks work best when adjacent to each other and to identify efficiencies of design that might make work function more smoothly. Hart worked with library staff to measure the linear feet or shelf space taken up by the current physical collection. They came up with precise numbers of feet taken up, for instance, by adult non-fiction books, by children’s picture books, by periodicals, etc. The staff then estimated the likelihood that these collections would expand (e.g. children’s books) or contract (e.g. DVDs) to estimate the amount of linear feet that will be needed to house the physical collection in the future. These figures of linear feet were then converted to square feet. See Hart’s [detailed report and explanation](#).

Hart, Doyle-Wilch, Harris, and library staff then began work on a detailed narrative outlining needed space which incorporates square footage needs together with an explanation of the purpose and function of the space. Several of these spaces will then be highlighted and tied to the foundational assumptions in the vision statement, pillars, and community aspirations. These documents, in preliminary form, are currently under review by the full Project Team.

It should be noted that this overall optimum square footage program is assembled without assumptions as to the ultimate design direction. That is—it does not make any assumptions about whether the ultimate recommendation will be renovation, expansion, or a new structure. As is best practice, the data are assembled in the abstract without regard to form.

COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In January 2022, IIsley Director Dana Hart began a series of op-ed pieces in the Addison Independent called “Building the Library of the Future.” In these opinion pieces, Dana articulates a benefit of the library to the community. A Middlebury resident writes a similar piece from their own point of view. [Three such pieces](#) have been written so far.

To keep citizens apprised of the work of the Project Team, the library has developed a [web site](#). This site includes information about the charge to the committee, a list of its members, notifications of upcoming meetings, and [minutes of past meetings](#). The web site also links to a [document repository](#) and to [reports to the Selectboard](#) such as this one. For those with a deep and abiding interest, the website also links to the previous work of the [2021 Renovation/Expansion Working Group](#) and to documents from the earlier [2014-2017 Library Building Committee](#).

Jim Gish has developed a [blog](#), similar to the one he maintained as town liaison to the rail-bridge project. It is not anticipated that this will be published weekly as was the case with the rail-bridge project, but Jim’s goal is to explain to townspeople the thinking behind the project, the steps involved, and to offer some insight into the planning process. Middlebury residents are [encouraged to subscribe](#) to receive notifications of when the blog is updated.

Joe McVeigh, Amy Mincher, and Dana Hart deliver regular updates to the IIsley Library Board of Trustees at their monthly meetings.

The Project Team is contemplating the best ways to engage the public in providing input to the design process. At present it is anticipated that the first step will be to share the initial plans for the square footage program plan for input.

The Project Team is also keen to explore possible partnerships with organizations with similar missions. Such partnerships might result in shared spaces that would lead to lower costs for the library and participating groups.

FUNDING

In order to bring the project to fruition the Project Team believes the town must obtain funding from a variety of sources. Possible sources include but are not limited to federal and state funding, grants, philanthropic giving and private fund raising, and public contributions. The library has engaged the consulting services of non-profit fundraising expert [Christine Graham](#), who has worked on many projects of this kind. Dana Hart and Joe McVeigh have met with state senator Ruth Hardy to explore state funding. Dana and her staff submitted a request for congressionally directed funding for the project from the office of Senator Leahy. This request was unfortunately not funded, however some money may be available through a separate request for funding made by the Vermont State Department of Libraries. Additionally with the aid of the Town of Middlebury Energy Committee, the library may be eligible for funds to assist with HVAC needs. Ken Perine is lending his expertise in capital projects and advising on funding issues as well. The Project Team plans to work closely with Town Manager Kathleen Ramsey to ensure close collaboration in the timing of major town capital projects.

NEXT STEPS

The Team will continue to move forward on three fronts: pre-design, communications, and funding. In terms of pre-design, the immediate work is to refine the square footage program, solidify criteria for the decision matrix, and consider how best to engage a cost estimator in the decision-making process. In communication and community engagement, key next steps involve obtaining feedback from the public on the elements of the square footage program and exploring possible partnerships. On the funding side, identifying possible funding from a variety of sources is ongoing.

The Project Team welcomes questions from the Selectboard and the public and reminds both that all of its meetings are open to all for community participation.