

## Ferndale Public Library Improvement Plan Fact Sheet

### **The Ferndale Public Library is an essential community resource;**

- *The Libraries build community.* It is for good reason that libraries are often called “America’s front porch.” Libraries offer a safe, convenient, place for kids, teens, singles, families and seniors to gather, talk, and discuss what is most important to them. A stronger library will serve the needs expressed by the community and will help to attract—and keep—a new generation of Ferndale residents. It will become the focal point for the new energy that has helped transform our community.
- *Libraries educate our children.* Children come to the library long before they start school. The library plays a critical role in early literacy by supporting the development of pre-reading skills, by nurturing a love for reading, and by helping parents understand to their important role in preparing children to learn to read.
- *Libraries educate our adults.* Studies show that libraries are the most important educational resource for adults and seniors. Libraries act as a repository for the community’s memory and a home for the best books ever written. The emergence of the internet has made libraries more important than ever before: librarians are the ideal guides for helping citizens find what they need and what they can trust in today’s flood of electronic information.
- *Libraries are good for our local economy.* Studies show that residents depend on libraries to help them find jobs, and to help them start new businesses of their own. In the 2004 survey of Ferndale library patrons, more than four-fifths reported that the library had provided services they otherwise would have had to pay for. More than one-fifth reported that the library had helped with the specific tasks of finding a job, increasing workplace productivity or starting a new business.
- *Libraries provide value.* Conservative estimates suggest that libraries provide economic benefits for citizens that are four times as great as the cost. In a survey, Ferndale residents estimate that the benefits they presently receive from the library are worth on average over \$200 per year.

### **The Ferndale Public Library stands in need of significant improvement.**

The reduction of library funding over the past 30 years has led to significant needs in the areas of library space, collections and staffing.

#### *Budget*

- The library’s budget declined steadily from the early 1970s until 2004 when the library became autonomous. As part of the shift in control, the city council dedicated 1 mill of revenue to stabilize library funding and provide a small (14%) budget increase that resulted in a budget level prevailing before the significant cuts of the early 2000s.
- In real dollars the library’s budget today only two-thirds of what was thirty-three years ago (a drop from \$865,000 to \$600,000)

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- As a share of the total income earned by Ferndale residents, the library's budget today is only three-quarters of what it was in 1974 (a drop from 0.175% to 0.134%).
- The library's budget per household is only 3/4 of what it was in 1974 (a drop from \$82 per household to \$61 per household).
- As a share of community's total property wealth (based on state valuation) the library's budget is only 1/5 of what it was in 1974 (a drop from 0.148% to 0.033%).
- Libraries in neighboring communities such as Royal Oak, Berkley receive significantly higher budgets and significantly more dollars per capita.

### *Physical Environment*

- The library has not had expanded its physical space since it was built in 1954. The total amount of space is just over 1/2 square foot per resident. This is less than half of the current recommendations for new library construction (between 1 square foot and 1 1/4 square feet).
- The library was constructed before many of today's popular library materials and technology were even conceived. Into its fixed space, the library has squeezed books on tape, music CDs, videos and DVDs, computers, and photocopiers, as well as increased numbers of books, magazines and newspapers.
- As the library has added new materials into its fixed space, the space currently available for public seating has fallen to only half of what it was in 1954.
- The current library also lacks room for comfortable seating for browsers, more computer terminals, flexible space for meetings, a dedicated space for teens and for an expanded children's area.
- Libraries in neighboring communities such as Royal Oak, and Berkley have significantly more attractive and comfortable facilities and considerably larger spaces per capita.

### *Staffing*

- Since the 1970's the library has experienced a drop in staff size from 12 full-time-equivalent staff members to less than seven.
- The small staff size meant a steady reduction in hours to a low of only 40 in 2004. The 2004 and 2005 library surveys showed that the hours of library operation fell far short of community demand.
- After receiving its independence from the city, the library restructured its staffing to restore the hours to 51 1/2. This still falls short of what Ferndale residents have said they want, which includes earlier opening, later closing and more weekend hours.
- The small staff size has limited the availability of librarians with specialized skills in technology resources and teen- and young-adult services, forced the library director to serve also as the primary children's librarian, and limited the availability of programming for adults and children.

### *Collection Development*

- The Ferndale Library has increased the size of its collection over time, but according to the 2004 and 2005 library surveys, the amount of new materials has fallen well short of community demand.

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- The materials budget has declined significantly over time even in the face of demand for newer and more expensive electronic materials such as online databases, ebooks, DVDs, CDs, and audiobooks.
- Libraries in neighboring communities have significantly larger per capita budgets for books and media and more up-to-date collections.

### **Ferndale Public Library has made careful and well-planned use of its limited resources and found these insufficient to meet the needs of the community:**

- The first major effort of the library board was to engage in an extensive process of strategic planning involving community leaders, library users and board members with the assistance of a professional library planning consultant
- The survey of Ferndale residents undertaken as part of the planning process demonstrated an extremely high demand for more library services, longer hours, more materials and improved physical space, and also demonstrated an overwhelming willingness to pay for the improvements with an increase in the library millage.
- The primary recommendation to emerge from planning process was to pursue a series of changes including a major expansion of library space, materials and services.
- Slight increases in funding and reallocation have helped meet short-term goals, but these changes to the library's physical space have depended on funds made available from bequests of library patrons and careful spending from the library's reserve fund.
- Library has actively pursued grant funding. It is clear, however, that such funding cannot meet ongoing operating costs or fund building expansion.
- The only reliable source of funding that can cover the desired changes is a publicly levied increase in the library's budget.
- Without a substantial and reliable source for increased funds, the library will not be able to meet the needs voiced by the Ferndale community and will not be able to maintain its current positive momentum.

**The Ferndale Public Library therefore seeks a 1.0 mill levy for 20 years from the voters of Ferndale.** Half of the new funding will be used to expand and renovate the library facility and the remainder of which will be used to expand and improve library operation. The costs depend on residents' property status, but it is possible to calculate average costs.

- The average homeowner will pay an additional \$65 per year which will bring the total up to \$130 per year, though for the actual amount will depend on the assessed valuation of a particular house.
- For each mill, homeowners pay 0.01% of half of a home's valuation: for a home valued at \$180,000 the mill will cost 0.01% of \$90,000 for a total of \$90 per year; for a home valued at \$80,000 the mill will cost 0.01% of \$40,000 for a total of \$40 per year
- Because assessed valuation rises only at the rate of inflation (while Ferndale house values have risen much faster) those Ferndale homeowners who purchased their homes before 1990, for example, will pay an average of only \$38 more per year.
- The Michigan Constitution guarantees that a homeowner's costs cannot rise faster than inflation during the period of ownership.

**The Ferndale Public Library has carefully produced detailed plans for allocating the funding increase by:**

- Doubling the public space by adding approx. 6,000sq ft, and completely renovating the existing spaces to provide for comfort, efficiency and ease of use. The preliminary plan for library renovation based on surveys and the strategic planning process calls for improvements in the areas listed below. In January and February of 2007 the library will conduct further focus groups and visioning sessions with Ferndale citizens to determine the specific allocations:
  - A new children's wing more than double the size of the children's area,
  - A dedicated teen/young-adult section,
  - An inviting reading room with periodicals and new books and comfortable furniture and décor,
  - Larger meeting space with flexible arrangements for large groups or multiple small groups,
  - A dedicated technology space for computer classes and collaborative computer-based meetings.
- Increasing staffing to the equivalent of 12 full time employees will allow the library to:
  - Increase in the hours of operation from 51½ to 70 hours per week including 9am to 9pm weekday service, full-day 9am to 6pm Saturday service and 12pm to 4pm Sunday hours during the school year.
  - Provide full-time staffing for children's library services and technology services and additional staff expertise in teen and young-adult library services.
  - Provide better training for staff in customer service and new information technologies to put us on the cutting edge of library service.
  - Increase in the number of children's programs from 5 per week to 8 per week
  - Add of teen and young adult programs on evenings and Saturdays/Sundays
  - Add new adult programs including a speaker series, new book clubs, and computer/technology classes.
  - Engage in active outreach to schools, community organizations, and seniors.
- More than doubling the budgets for new materials including:
  - From 1,500 new books per year to nearly 3,500 per year, including nearly 1,000 new children's books and 300 new large-print books per year.
  - From 200 new DVDs and 200 new music CDs per year to nearly 500 DVDs and 800 CDs per year
  - From 100 magazine and newspaper subscriptions to 250 per year with specialization according to user demand
  - From 100 Books-on-Tape/CD per year to 200 per year (including ready-to-play Books-on-MP3) and an service for downloadable on-line books
  - From 1 online-database service per year to 10.
- Eliminating most fees and charges for Ferndale residents including the elimination of rental fees for DVDs.