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# **THAYER PUBLIC LIBRARY**

## **LIBRARY FACILITIES PLAN**

**April 3, 2025**

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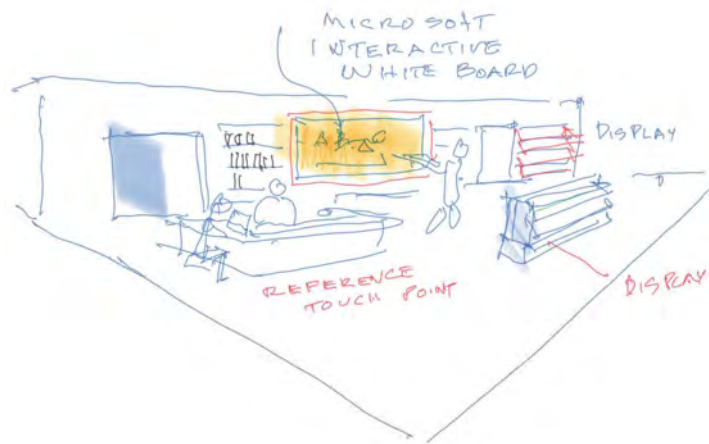
## LIBRARY SPACE PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

### Library Facilities Planning

The Thayer Public Library is 150 years old, a place of unique historical significance endowed with an identity that will create a sense of pride and dedication to learning. Our recent study of the library facility shows a correlation between utilization and performance. Our own research finds that for many libraries, functional space planning metrics such as adult programs, table seating and meeting space can trigger service-related operational savings and growth.

Education is the focus of an inclusive community. In Plato's "Republic—the Allegory of the Cave," education is defined as a process of turning one's soul in the proper direction. According to Plato, knowledge is the illuminating sun. Thus, the services and programs to be offered in the library promise to shed light on essential knowledge, subjects that are important to the people.

Within the modernized Thayer Public Library there will be a series of inclusive learning spaces. These spaces are conceived as clusters of seating that are embedded into the library building. There will be spaces for teens and workstations for adults. There will be spaces for meetings of all kinds; programs that will enhance the community of Braintree.



### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following guiding principles can be used to improve the library's main and lower levels:

1. **Market Plan** – A place of high visual quality that doesn't communicate mixed messages. For example, a marketplace with visual elements provides aesthetic and functional seating environments for small business researchers, teens and adult patrons. This includes updated flooring, lighting, furnishings, paint and fixtures.
2. **Meeting / Working Spaces** – Provide additional privacy and digital workspaces. The community needs more meeting spaces for groups and individuals. For example, there are teens space and the adult training needs that are being unmet. The library needs more small groups settings. This includes creating a marketplace on the lower level and a learning stage on the main level of the library.

3. **Comfort** – Provide a library environment with components that allow patrons to adjust thermal, lighting, and acoustic levels, and to rearrange furniture. This includes adjustable table lighting, stackable seating and dividers. Furnishings that can be moved to create spaces on demand and lighting that can be adjusted to support programming.
4. **Flexibility** – The library spaces consist of components that cannot easily accommodate change. The goal is to be able to reconfigure the space to support different functional activities. This includes lightweight furniture and adjustable lighting controls that can be employed as required.
5. **Collective / Connectivity** – Provide collaboration seating areas that can accommodate small presentations. The library can improve access to the learning stage / library zone by providing pre-set learning stage set ups i.e. floor area set ups that are configured for programming.

This can include track lighting, projection systems and surround sound amplifiers and mixers. This can be implemented through the purchase of systems furniture, equipment and fixtures. For example, acoustic separation tools can include writable screens and dividers.

6. **Reliability** – The Thayer Public Library is a warm place in the winter and a cool space in the summer. Investments in the lighting, furniture, security and display systems/equipment and programming event(s) capabilities will enable the library to be a reliable community partner.
7. **Phased Approach to Improve the Quality of the Library** – The Thayer Public Library can improve the building with a phased approach to improvements. The consultant recommends a series of limited improvements to the building over a 1-to-3-year period. The improvements will focus on renovating the library with limited funds including new paint, cleaning the lighting fixtures, improving signage, updating furniture and making smart improvements to the interior design of the library.

## RENOVATING THE THAYER LIBRARY WITH LIMITED FUNDS

The Thayer Public Library can continue to be a place for learning & discovery while we update the interior of the building. This library plan focuses on creating, developing, and nurturing the existing building:

1. Identify the area to be updated.
2. Update the walls with new paint
3. Update the floors that define the learning stage zones.
4. Clean and update the lighting to support learning spaces.
5. Update the furniture (e.g. tables and chairs) to enable flexibility / adaptability.
6. Design new educational and cultural space for meetings, groups, and individuals.

## History and Community

The Thayer Public Library was chartered in 1874 to serve the Braintree after General Sylvanus Thayer provided \$30,000 from his will. Since 1997 that “1953 modern building became outdated” and the library was left to build the one that now stands at 798 Washington St.

The new building was completed and dedicated in 1999.

The building was programmed to hold a collection of more than 125,000 items, including books, large-print books, periodicals, audiobooks, a Library of Things collection, and books and movies in languages other than English.



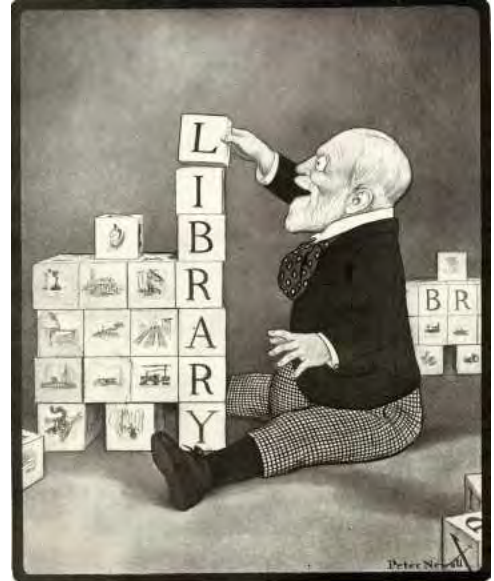
*The building has been maintained very well, but the interior design needs to be updated.*

## Value of the Library

Today, the Thayer Public Library supports adults, students, lifelong teachers, youth, and young learners. It unites the City of Braintree with its past and present. It is truly the Peoples University, which we recommend expanding into a modern the vision of the Public Library i.e. encouraging the “library as place” concept. According to “Library as Place: Rethinking Roles, Rethinking Space,”

“Public leadership needs to understand that the success of the library is best measured not by the frequency and ease of library use but by the outcomes that result from that use. The purpose is not to circulate books, but to ensure that the circulation of knowledge produces learning.”

Working with the community, we developed a vision on how to get the best return on investment for the 25-year-old library building. We looked at the spaces retroactively and tried to value the functions that were originally planned for the building.



## Library Building and Outreach Services



### The Library Building & Outreach Services

In our work with libraries, we start by analyzing the user’s needs. We use standards in library space planning to understand the needs of the community. The architecture of the Thayer Public Library requires understanding of the available assignable space (seating areas, program rooms, teen space, friends’ areas, café, etc.).

This means that the library building may be big, but the functional space use is low. In other words, the interior design in some areas are excellent study



spaces and other spaces need to be improved to support excellence.

## Development of the Marketplace / Teen & Adult Collectives

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### Market Place Zone

The teen(s) library is essential for high schoolers to participate in learning activities. A multi-functional youth-focused educational space will serve as a hands-on inquiry-based center for the Thayer Public Library.

The Thayer Public Library lower level will leverage the teen's space to:

- Provide literacy collections and services
- Promote the love of learning
- Conduct creative sessions for teens and young adults
- Partner with educators to use the latest STEM related audiovisual and computer equipment.
- Establish spaces for teen & adult collectives; collaborative programs and events, skills learning and building tools. Esports, video and gaming events, competitions and networking.



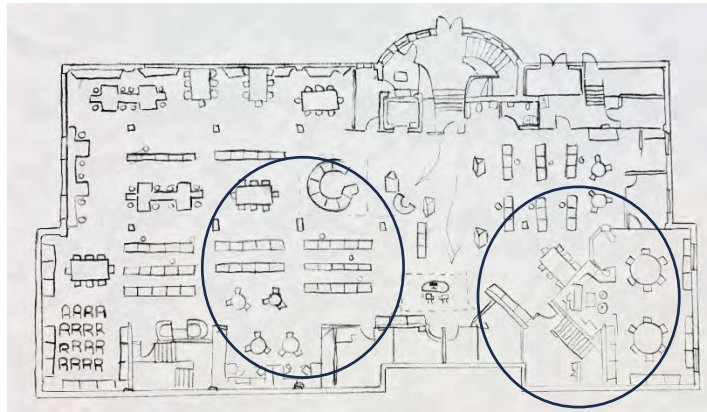
## Collaborative Work Areas

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The plan includes a new concept for the lower level: marketplace. This is a collective, digital-learning environment that is attractive and inviting. Here, the teen librarian can work with the reference staff to offer a unique market for information and/or current topics and titles.

Characteristics of the marketplace learning discovery center:

- Adaptability
- Social networking
- Sustainability
- Resourcefulness
- Stimulating



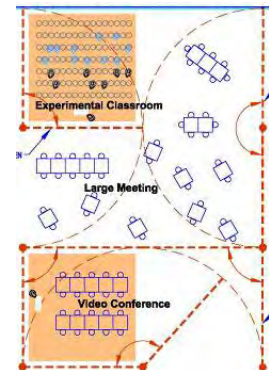
## Local Programming and Events



### Collective Services

The modern library functions as a community center, meeting center and destination for learning. Community space for local organizations, and adult programs generate strategies to solve big community problems. Of course, the library is a place to meet and collaborate, but it is also a space for guest lectures and tech skills programs.

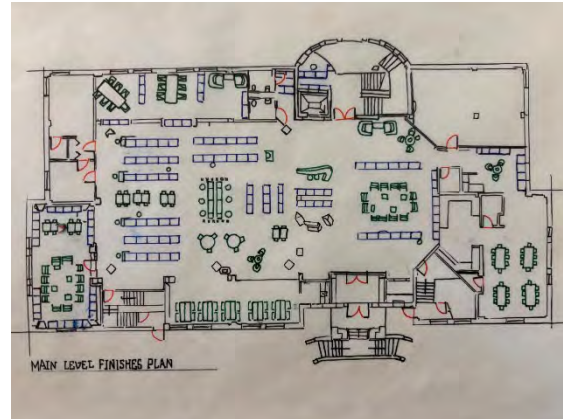
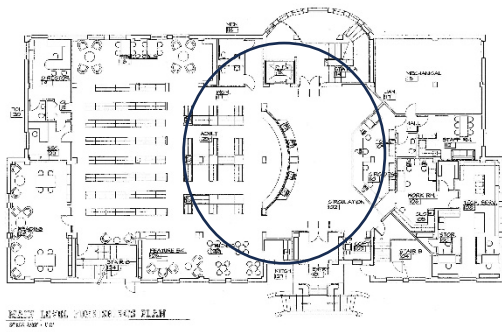
For example, we want the community to feel comfortable in the main-level space. We want the community to enjoy collaborating with friends and working on projects together.



The transformation of the Thayer Public Library represents not merely physical renovation but a fundamental recommitment to flexibility and open spaces. This is an essential role for our libraries. The six-month process thoughtfully integrating spatial design, service evolution, and operational considerations to be improved.

NOTE: If the library develops a phased approach to improvements, updates do not have to wait for the library project to be fully funded. We would recommend a short-term solution to improve the main-level community area: reconfigure shelving, lights, walls and flooring.

***Below is the location of the main level bench seating / shelving area recommended to be removed***



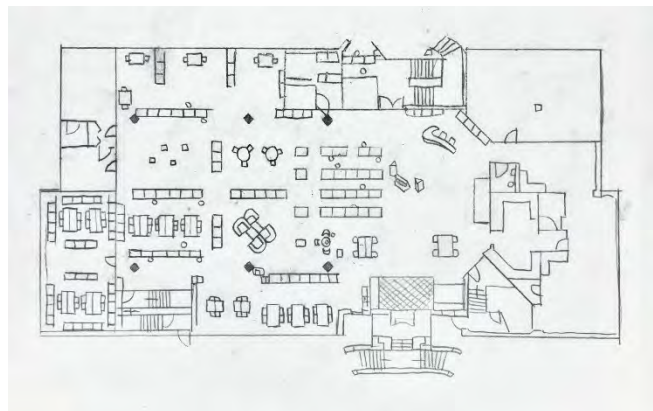
## Community Library Renewal



## Community Library Renewal

The Thayer Public Library has a unique space that can accommodate change. However, it will need to reconfigure access to the library print collections, meeting spaces, and teen's spaces. A new space configuration will enable the staff to coordinate and configure a wide range of cultural programs.

The library can provide a unique physical space with a new configuration of the lower level. The proposed configurations can increase use with an updated space plan. With an updated functional market place the library can offer cultural courses, in-house training, internships, and local craft maker residences. With more meeting rooms, additional programs will be possible. The library will increase the amount of meeting spaces of all kinds.

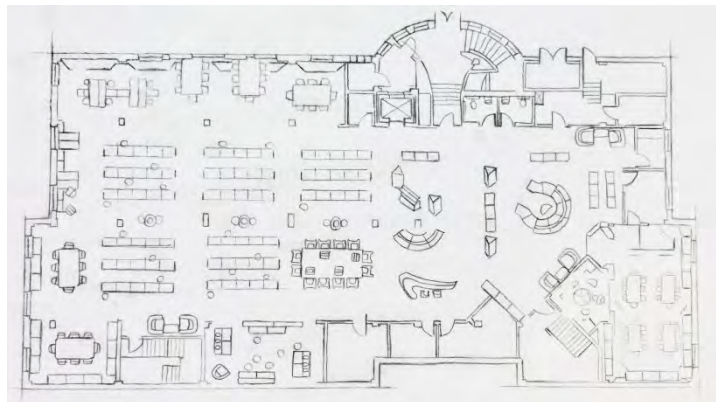


Thayer Public Library's Librarians are endowed with a diverse set of skills including leadership, community relations, multi-language capabilities, events focusing on the humanities, science and business in Braintree.

## Online Learning in a Cultural Space

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Access to information resources in the networked world is not barrier-free, desktop computers and circulating laptops will need to be integrated into the library design. The design above provides a large table that will provide laptops for use, enabling the patrons sit at a large "kitchen-table setup."



## Elements within the Design of the Community Library Renewal

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- Browsing, holds and digital presentation space (e.g. updated shelving in the center)
- Collaborative learning clusters
- Individual seating areas
- Big table learning area
- Learning Stage with browsing displays, oversized books / graphic novel area
- Help Desk
- Educational technical support, laptop lending
- Friends of the Library sale space
- Collection – print and media

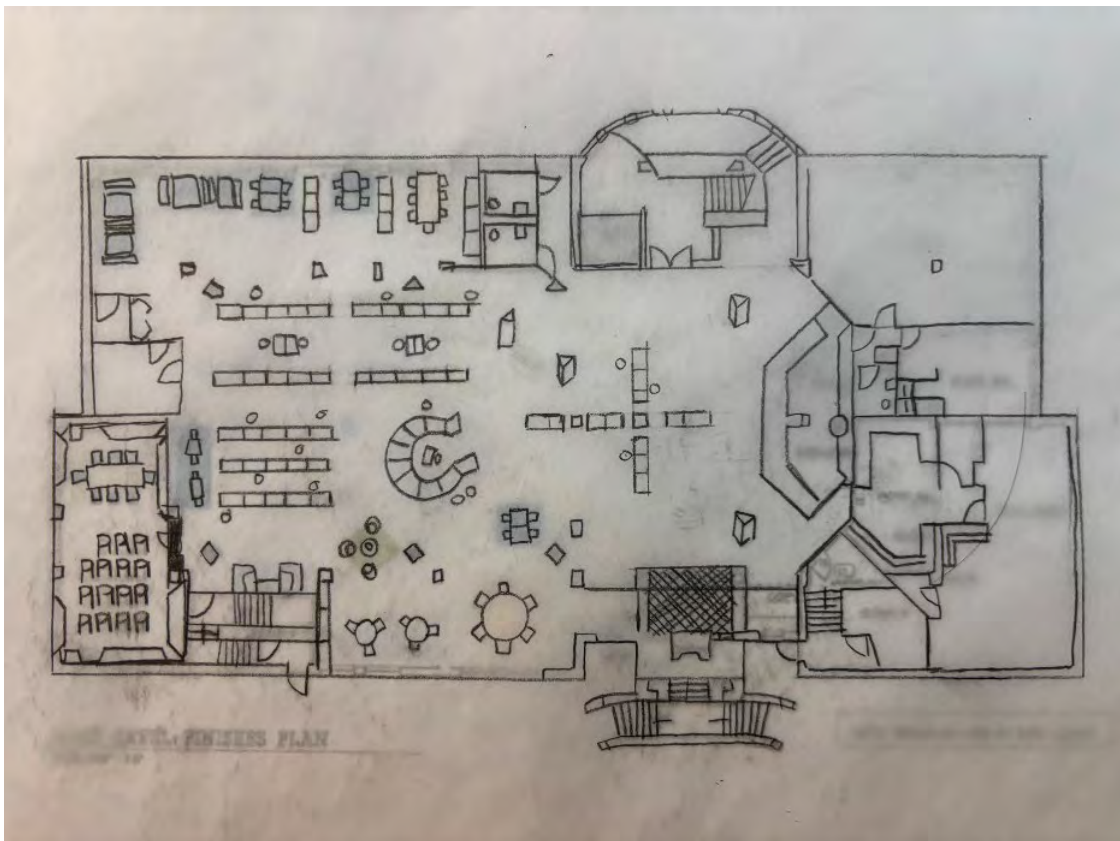
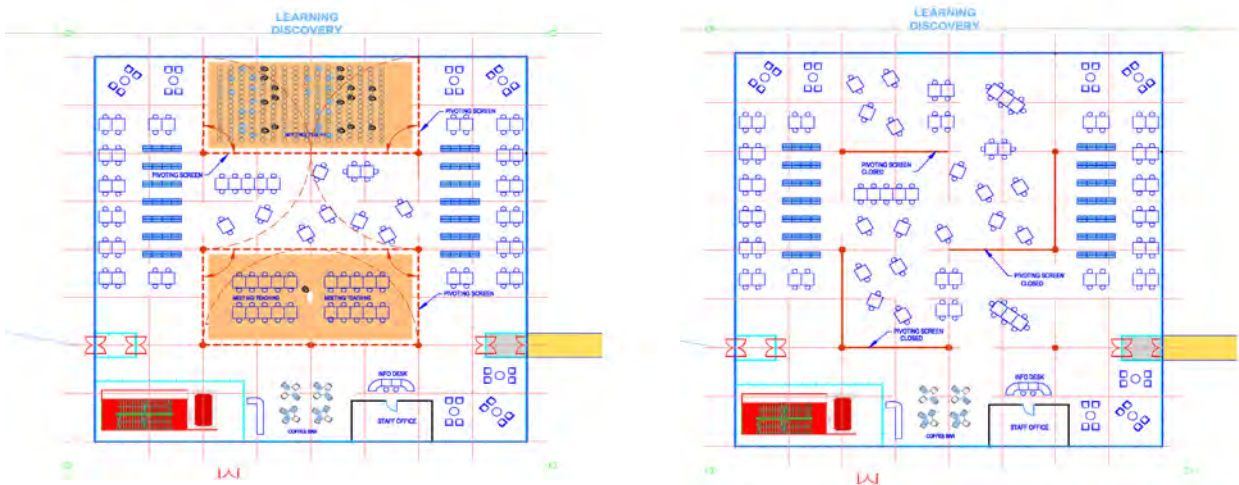
## Learning Stage (main level)

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The plan includes a new concept for the main level: learning stage(s). This is a collaborative, community learning environment that will enable adults to fully leverage the resources at the library.

Here, the library staff and operations can be updated to offer flexible and adaptable seating spaces (café, main floor, quiet spaces, puzzle / game areas, and programming spaces, etc.). Below is the original development of the learning stage. It is current at the SNFCC in Athens

Greece. This space was designed to provide an adaptable and attractive learning environment.



## REVIEW OF WORKPLAN AND PROCESS

### Six-Month Journey to Define Thayer Public Library's Future

The six-month study for the Thayer Public Library followed a structured yet flexible workplan. Our work was designed to deeply understand community needs, assess existing conditions, and collaboratively envision a vibrant future for the library.

Our process was rooted in principles of community engagement, data-driven analysis, and future-oriented design thinking. This methodical approach ensured that the recommendations presented to the Board of Trustees are not only innovative but also grounded in the realities and aspirations of the Braintree community.

The library consultant allowed for an iterative planning process. Each phase was built upon the previous one, creating a natural progression from the needs assessment to this report. This structured journey helped the library's leadership manage the complexity of this library planning project. Collaboratively, we wanted to make sure all aspects of the Thayer Public Library were thoroughly addressed within the six-month timeframe.

### REVIEW OF PROCESS

#### **Project Initiation and Discovery (Month 1)**

This initial phase focused on establishing the project framework and gathering preliminary information. Key activities included:

- **Project Kick-off Meeting with Library Leadership and Board Representatives:** These meetings served to launch the project, clarify objectives, and establish communication. We expanded the project scope, discuss the community's expectations, and met with the Mayor to align on library space planning deliverables.
- **Research and Document Review:** We immersed ourselves in understanding the Thayer Public Library and its building lifecycle. This involved reviewing existing strategic plans, annual reports, community demographic data, library usage statistics, facility assessments, and any relevant historical documentation. This provided a foundational understanding of the library's current operations, challenges, and opportunities.
- **Site Visits and Facility Assessment:** A series of visits to the Thayer Public Library building allowed us to gain a firsthand understanding of the physical space, its layout, condition, and existing service areas. The visual scan, a facilitated tour of the library, helped us identify potential spatial constraints and opportunities, informing subsequent data gathering efforts. For example, we learned that the circulation desk was an attractive space. We also learned that the Friends bookstore is a local best kept secret.

- **Stakeholder Identification and Outreach Plan:** We identified key stakeholder groups within the community by employing a needs assessment survey. This survey was distributed in the library's newsletter, shared with library staff, Friends of the Library, community organizations, educators, local government representatives, and diverse user groups.

### **Community Engagement and Needs Assessment (Months 2-3)**

This phase was the heart of the study, focusing on actively listening to the community and gathering comprehensive data on their needs and aspirations for the library. Library Consultant activities included:

- **Community-wide Survey:** We designed and deployed online and paper-based survey to gather input from a broad spectrum of community members. This survey explored library usage patterns, satisfaction levels, unmet needs, desired services, and future aspirations for the Thayer Public Library.
- **Stakeholder Interviews:** In-depth interviews were conducted with community stakeholders, including members of the public, library staff at all levels, Board members, Friends of the Library leadership, and representatives from community organizations and local government. These interviews provided qualitative insights into changes in the perception of the library, space challenges, service delivery limitations, potential community partnerships, and strategic space planning priorities.
- **Public Forums and Library Board Meetings:** Open library board meetings were organized to provide opportunities for community members to be part of the process. The library board meetings were facilitated to encourage dialogue and gather diverse perspectives on the library's space needs, role in the community and its future direction.
- **Visual Scan Workshops:** ACA facilitated the Visual Scan workshops. These workshops involved guided tours of the library facility, prompting participants to identify and prioritize areas for improvement and envision potential spatial reconfigurations based on service needs and community priorities.
- **Data Analysis and Synthesis:** The data collected from surveys, interviews, public forums, and Visual Scan workshops were systematically analyzed. This involved identifying recurring themes, space planning priorities, and areas of consensus in community feedback. Demographic data and library usage statistics were integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of community needs and library performance.

### **Visioning and Scenario Development (Months 4-5)**

Building on the assessment of user needs, this phase focused on translating community input and data analysis into a future vision. Here, we explored different space planning scenarios. The sketches visualized the pathways and spaces in the new library. Consultant activities included:

- **Scenario Planning Workshop with Library Building Committee:** A collaborative space planning workshop brought together library board members from the building committee to collectively test out a 20-year space plan for the Thayer Public Library. This workshop encouraged creative thinking and consensus-building around the desired future state of the library.
- **Development of Space Planning Scenarios:** Based on the needs assessment findings and the articulated vision, we developed several distinct space planning scenarios. These scenarios represented different approaches to facility improvement, ranging from renovation and reconfiguration of existing spaces to limited construction possibilities. Each scenario was designed to address identified needs and align with changes in book use.
- **Service Programming Options for Each Scenario:** For each space planning scenario, we outlined potential service programming options, detailing how the proposed spaces could be utilized to enhance existing services, introduce new programs, and respond to evolving community needs. This included considering different service delivery models, technology integration, and staffing implications for each scenario.
- **Preliminary Financial Considerations and Phasing Strategies:** For each scenario, we explored potential phasing strategies. We looked at how improvements could be implemented incrementally over time to align with budget realities and minimize disruption to library services.

#### **Board Presentation (Month 6)**

The board meeting focused on sharing the findings and recommendations. Activities included:

- **Scenario Presentation:** A presentation was prepared, outlining the design process, consultant findings from the needs assessment, the 20-year space planning scenarios, and service programming options.
- **Presentation Preparation and Rehearsal:** Alexander Cohen provides an informative presentation to effectively communicate the key findings and recommendations to the Board of Trustees. The presentation was rehearsed to ensure smooth delivery and effective time management.
- **Presentation to the Board of Trustees:** The final presentation was delivered to the Board of Trustees, summarizing the study process, findings, vision, scenarios, and recommendations. The presentation provided an opportunity for the Board to ask questions, discuss the findings, and provide direction for the next phases of the library improvement project.

## PRIORITIZED IMPROVEMENTS FOR THAYER PUBLIC LIBRARY

### Insights from Community Meetings

Drawing upon our community meetings, several key themes consistently emerged regarding desired improvements for the Thayer Public Library. These meetings, designed to capture the community's voice, provided invaluable insights into the everyday experiences of library users, their aspirations for the future, and the areas where they felt the library could better serve their needs.

While the meeting notes were captured and provided granular detail, we could see a recurring feedback loop. The community's collective vision is to make the library more usable, accessible, and seating-oriented. Stakeholders expressed their needs and desires for more meeting spaces of all types. For example, the main level needs to be more adult friendly with more meeting spaces and areas for work.

It is important to remember that a prioritization plan based on the frequency and intensity of concerns and aspirations voiced during the community engagement process is critical. This study aims to address the most pressing needs and maximize the library's positive impact on the community.

1. More meeting spaces
2. New furniture that is flexible and adaptable
3. Improved browsing areas
4. Updated service points / help and support
5. Improved ambiance (lighting, flooring, wall / paint, connectivity, etc.)

Based on a synthesis of our meeting notes, here is a prioritized list of improvements for the Thayer Public Library. This program list responds to the common themes and best practices in modern library development:

### **Priority 1: Enhance Flexibility (teens & adults)**

- **Need:** Our meeting notes emphasized the need for improved meeting spaces throughout the library building. This includes adding collaborative areas for seniors, families, teens, individuals with disabilities and adult residents.
- **Examples from Meeting Notes:**
  - Mixed messaging throughout the building.
  - Need clearer signage, especially pathways to programs.
  - Lack of collaborative spaces to support work / study.
  - Desire for flexibility and adaptable furniture.

- **Rationale:** Inclusivity is missing from the current library space plan. Ensuring that the library space is welcoming and usable is paramount. Addressing book shelving that has turned into barriers will directly improve the library experience. For a significant portion of the population, they need the library to offer seating spaces of all kinds (quiet, collaborative, presentation, and social).

### Priority 2: Upgrade from Just Books to Digital Services & Books

- **Need:** Meeting notes highlight the need for an updated approach to digital services. This encompasses staff desks and collaborative program spaces designed to support digital literacy and technology access. Community members expressed a desire for the library to be a vital hub for digital access and skills development in an increasingly digital world.
- **Examples from Meeting Notes:**
  - Circulation desk is quiet sometimes, could be updated.
  - Thayer needs a new concept for the public computers.
  - Need more workshops and spaces for smaller groups (2-4, 6-8, 10-16)
  - Desire for more spaces to use digital resources and online learning platforms.
- **Rationale:** In the 21st century, books no longer dominate library services. Upgrading meeting space infrastructure is essential for providing more programming and enabling the community to engage in their own events and programs. This investment enables the library to increase its value in the digital age.

### Priority 3: Create Flexible and Engaging Spaces for Teens and Adults

- **Need:** The meeting notes underscored the importance of dedicated and engaging spaces for teenagers. This includes age-appropriate areas for group reading, learning, collaboration, and recreation. Discussions focused on creating spaces that are not only functional but also inspiring, comfortable, and designed to enhance teenage learning experiences.
- **Examples from Meeting Notes ( ):**
  - The teens area is outdated, hard to use if another group is in there.
  - Teens need a dedicated space that feels like their own.
  - Teen staffs desire more hands-on learning activities and interactive displays.
  - Need comfortable seating and study areas for teens to work on homework and projects.

- **Rationale:** Investing in spaces for teens is an investment in the future of the community. Creating flexible areas for this age groups will attract high schoolers, support literacy, good learning habits, and ensure the library remains a vital resource for future generations.

#### Priority 4: Enhance Community Meeting and Collaboration Spaces

- **Need:** Meeting notes revealed a strong desire for more and improved library spaces. This includes learning stages of various sizes to accommodate different types of gatherings, from small study groups to larger community events. Flexibility, adaptable space set ups, and ease of access were highlighted as key features for these spaces.
- **Examples from Meeting Notes:**
  - Meeting rooms are always booked, hard to find space for community groups.
  - Current meeting spaces are too large for smaller events and programs.
  - Need more informal collaboration spaces for adults to work in the library.
  - There was an overall desire for library spaces that can be easily reconfigured for different events and activities.
- **Rationale:** The Thayer Public Library is recognized as a collective hub. For example, it provides functional friends of the library bookstore that is a gathering place for low-cost books. The Friends of the Library create community connections through volunteering. The Thayer Public Library must continue to support local organizations and facilitate local engagement.

#### Priority 5: Modernize and Improve User Experience on the Main Level.

- **Need:** Meeting notes expressed a desire for a general modernization of the library's aesthetics and functionality in core service areas, such as the circulation desk, customer holds and reading areas. The library needs to improve the furniture, lighting, wayfinding, and overall ambiance to create a more welcoming and user-friendly environment.
- **Examples from Meeting Notes:**
  - Libraries feel a bit dated and confusing in some areas.
  - The circulation desk area is often quiet in need of activation.
  - Need more comfortable and varied seating options throughout the library.
  - Improve lighting in library, especially around the bookshelves.

- **Rationale:** The overall user experience significantly impacts how the community perceives and utilizes the library. For example, modernizing the main level will enhance the library's appeal, improve functionality, and create a more positive and welcoming environment for all users.

This prioritized list provides a strategic framework for guiding improvements at the Thayer Public Library. It is essential to delve into the actual meeting notes for more detailed and nuanced feedback to further refine these priorities and translate them into specific design and service solutions.

### **Prioritized Areas: Book vs. Digital Dialogue**

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Our community engagement process at Thayer Public Library revealed clear priorities for improvement, which can be categorized into key functional and service areas. Basically, the library facilities study provides a fascinating glimpse into the community's perspective on the role of books in the digital age, revealing a desire for balance, integration, and forward-thinking adaptation rather than a simple either/or choice.

Understanding that books were prioritized in the original space plan is necessary for shaping a library that is both responsive to current needs and prepared for future evolution.

- **Enduring Love for Sharing Books:** Our notes express a deep appreciation for physical books and the library of things. Participants spoke of the tactile experience of reading a physical book, the joy of browsing shelves, and the importance of physical collections for children's literacy and discovery. There was a clear sense that physical books remain a part of the library's identity and service. At the same time, people recognize that the library is changing and they are willing to explore eBook's and streaming Audio books.
  - **Community Notes:**
    - Please don't get rid of the books! I love holding a real book in my hands.
    - My kids love coming to the library to pick out books, it's a special experience.
    - Browsing the shelves is how I discover new authors and topics.
- **Recognition of the Digital World's Importance:** The notes acknowledge the increasing importance of digital resources and services. Participants recognized the convenience of e-books, the necessity of digital literacy skills, and the vast information access provided by online databases and digital platforms. There was an understanding that the library space plan must adapt to the digital age to remain relevant and meet current needs.
  - **Note Examples:**

- We need spaces to teach the community how to use online resources and e-books.
  - Tech classes are essential for seniors in the community.
  - E-books are great for travel.
  - The library should be a place to learn about and use new book/reading technologies."
- **Desire for Integration and Balance:** The overwhelming staff message was not about choosing books or digital, but about finding a balance in the space plan. Participants envisioned a library where physical collections are thoughtfully placed in the library. They sought a library that honors the tradition of books while embracing the opportunities of the digital age.
    - **Note Examples:**
      - Can we have comfortable seating areas near or in the bookshelves?
      - We need dedicated spaces for book clubs.
      - The library should be a place where people of all ages can learn to navigate both the physical and digital worlds.

## **Strengthening the Partnership**

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### **Friends of the Library and Volunteer Support Strategies**

The meeting notes contain valuable insights into the role and contributions of the Friends of the Library group, as well as community perspectives on how to increase support for this volunteer organization. Friends' groups are indispensable assets to libraries, providing local support through fundraising, advocacy, program assistance, and community outreach.

- Recognizing and strengthening the Friends' role is essential for the long-term success and vibrancy of the Thayer Public Library.

The meeting notes reflect an appreciation for the Friends' current efforts and a desire to enhance their effectiveness and integration within the library's operations and future development plans. By proactively addressing the needs and aspirations of the Friends, the library can cultivate an even stronger partnership that benefits both the organization and the community it serves.

### **Insights from Meeting Notes Regarding Friends of the Library**

Based on typical discussions about Friends groups in library planning contexts, the meeting notes touched upon the following themes:

- **Appreciation for Current Contributions:** Notes express gratitude for the Friends' existing fundraising efforts, volunteer hours, and advocacy for the library. Specific examples of their activities, such as book sales, programming support, or community events, might be mentioned.
  - **Note Examples:**
    - "The Friends book sales are a great source of funding for programs."
    - "We really appreciate the volunteers who help with children's programs."
    - "The Friends group is a strong advocate for the library in the community."
- **Desire for Increased Fundraising Capacity:** There was a recognition that the library's needs are growing, and there's potential for the Friends to expand their fundraising efforts to support larger projects, including building improvements and expanded services.
  - **Note Examples:**
    - "How can we help the Friends raise even more money for the library renovation?"
    - "We need to explore new fundraising avenues beyond book sales."
    - "Could Friends play a bigger role in a capital campaign?"
- **Need for Better Communication and Collaboration:** Notes might indicate a desire for clearer communication channels and stronger collaboration between library staff and the Friends group to ensure alignment of goals and efficient use of volunteer resources.
  - **Note Examples:**
    - "We need to improve communication between the library board and the Friends leadership."
    - "How can we better integrate Friends volunteers into library programs and events?"
    - "Clearer roles and responsibilities for library staff and Friends volunteers would be helpful."
- **Opportunities for Expanded Volunteer Roles:** The discussions may have explored opportunities for Friends volunteers to take on more diverse roles within the library, beyond traditional tasks like book sorting or event assistance. This could include

supporting technology programs, assisting with community outreach, or providing specialized skills.

- **Note Examples:**
  - "Could Friends volunteers assist in new ways?"
  - "Maybe Friends volunteers could assist with library tours and community engagement."
  - "We have Friends members with valuable skills in marketing, event planning, etc."
- **Importance of Space and Resources for Friends Activities:** Meeting notes might highlight the need to consider the Friends' operational needs in the library improvement plans, such as dedicated space for book sorting and storage, meeting rooms, or promotional materials.
  - **Note Examples:**
    - "The Friends need a better space to sort books for their sales."
    - "A flexible meeting room where the Friends bookstore is located would be very helpful."
    - "We should ensure the new library design includes space for Friends' activities."

### **Strategies to Support the Friends of the Library and Enhance Volunteer Engagement:**

Based on these potential insights, here are strategies to support the Friends of the Library and strengthen volunteer engagement as part of the Thayer Public Library improvement project:

#### **1. Dedicated Space for Friends Operations:**

- **Strategy:** Incorporate dedicated space for the Friends group within the library design. This could include:
  - **Book Sorting and Storage Room:** A designated, organized space for sorting, pricing, and storing donated books for sales.
  - **Friends Meeting Room/Office:** A dedicated room for Friends meetings, administrative tasks, and potentially a small office space.
  - **Friends Information/Sales Area:** A visible and accessible area within the library to promote Friends activities, sell merchandise, and provide information about membership and volunteer opportunities.

- **Rationale:** Updating dedicated space acknowledges the Friends' importance and facilitates their operational efficiency, making it easier for them to organize events and manage their activities.

## 2. Enhanced Communication and Collaboration Framework:

- **Strategy:** Establish clear communication channels and regular meetings between library leadership (Board, Director) and Friends leadership.
  - **Regular Liaison Meetings:** Schedule regular meetings (e.g., monthly or quarterly) between a designated library staff liaison and Friends leadership to discuss upcoming events, needs, and collaborative opportunities.
  - **Joint Planning Sessions:** Involve Friends representatives in relevant library planning processes, especially those related to fundraising, community events, and volunteer programs.
  - **Shared Online Calendar/Communication Platform:** Utilize a shared online calendar or communication platform to keep both groups informed of events, deadlines, and important updates.
- **Rationale:** Improved support enhances a stronger partnership, ensures alignment of efforts, and prevents duplication or miscommunication.

## 3. Capacity Building and Training for Friends Volunteers:

- **Strategy:** Invest in training and development opportunities for Friends volunteers to enhance their skills and effectiveness.
  - **Fundraising Workshops:** Offer workshops on fundraising best practices, grant writing, and donor cultivation specifically tailored for Friends groups.
  - **Volunteer Management Training:** Provide training on volunteer recruitment, onboarding, management, and recognition to Friends leadership.
  - **Library Service and Technology Training:** Offer training on library services, programs, and technology to enable Friends volunteers to assist in a wider range of library activities.
- **Rationale:** Empowering Friends volunteers with new skills and knowledge increases their capacity to contribute meaningfully to the library's mission and enhances their volunteer experience.

4. **Recognition and Appreciation Programs for Volunteers:**

- **Strategy:** Implement formal and informal programs to recognize and appreciate the contributions of Friends volunteers.
  - **Annual Volunteer Appreciation Event:** Host an annual event to celebrate and thank Friends volunteers for their service.
  - **Volunteer Spotlight in Library Communications:** Feature Friends volunteers in library newsletters, social media, and website to highlight their contributions to the community.
  - **Certificates of Appreciation/Small Tokens of Gratitude:** Provide certificates or small tokens of appreciation for volunteer service milestones.
- **Rationale:** Recognizing and appreciating volunteers is crucial for volunteer retention and motivation. Publicly acknowledging their contributions reinforces their value to the library and the community.

5. **Strategic Alignment of Friends Goals with Library Vision:**

- **Strategy:** Ensure that the Friends group's strategic goals and fundraising priorities are aligned with the overall vision and strategic plan for the Thayer Public Library.
  - **Joint Strategic Planning:** Involve Friends leadership in library strategic planning processes to ensure alignment of goals and priorities.
  - **Designated Fundraising Priorities:** Collaboratively identify specific library projects or initiatives that the Friends group will focus their fundraising efforts on, ensuring these align with the library's most pressing needs and strategic objectives.
- **Rationale:** Strategic alignment ensures that the Friends' efforts are directly supporting the library's overarching goals and maximizing their impact on the library's development and service delivery.

## BUILDING SURVEY INSIGHTS

### **Strengths and Challenges of Thayer Public Library's Physical Space**

The library building review provided a crucial data-driven assessment of the Thayer Public Library's physical infrastructure, moving beyond anecdotal observations to offer a systematic evaluation of its condition, functionality, and capacity to meet contemporary library service needs.

This space planning served as a vital reality check, highlighting both the inherent strengths of the existing building and the areas requiring attention to ensure the library can effectively serve the community for years to come.

The findings spanned various aspects of the building, focusing on functional changes. The process informed us of the opportunities and constraints inherent in the existing facility. Specifically, regarding the main floor browsing areas, the space planning study offered us valuable insights. Including reimagining the audio books and DVD's role within a modern library service model.

## KEY FINDINGS FROM THE BUILDING SURVEY

Based on our space planning, the Thayer Public Library revealed a mix of positive attributes and areas needing improvement. Here's a synthesis of potential findings:

- **Structural Integrity and Exterior:**
  - **Positive Findings:** The building structural integrity is sound. It is well-maintained. The foundations, roof, and exterior walls do not require immediate updates. However, architectural features are outdated, including the entrance logo, historic corner stone and front facing entrance. These areas need a proactive plan for renewal.
  - **Challenges:** Potential issues include aging paint colors and flooring patterns. The lighting also needs to be updated to improve ambiance and functionality. There can be landscaping improvements to enhance the historic appeal and accessibility to town hall. Exterior lighting and outdoor seating were identified as areas for modernization, including a connection to the historic park.
- **Interior Space and Layout:**
  - **Strengths:** The analysis of the building's spatial volume indicated that there are areas in the center of the main floor in need of more light. The meeting rooms have original architectural details that need to be preserved and enhanced. We

recommend bookcases and historic objects and/or facsimiles to enhance the cultural space.

- **Challenges:** Common issues in public libraries often revolve around inflexible layouts, inefficient use of space, and heavy furniture. The library consultant analysis pointed out:
  - **Limited Flexibility:** Furnishing are outdated restricting reconfiguration options.
  - **Space Constraints / Meeting Areas:** The library has limited meeting rooms. The secretary's office on the lower level, the teen area, public computer area, Friends of the library books store and staff areas were identified as potential new meeting rooms.
  - **Suboptimal Furniture and Wayfinding:** Confusing furnishing layouts, lack of clear sightlines, and unmovable furniture creates a maze. It confuses the public / user navigation though the building. Removing old furniture and replacing old materials with modern, flexible, lightweight and movable items is recommended.
  - **Insufficient Staff Workspaces:** Oversized and/or outdated staff areas, lacking in ergonomic design and efficient workflow, were identified as opportunities for improvement.
- **Accessibility:**
  - **Challenges:** The Thayer Public Library building presents unique accessibility challenges. The library consultant identified areas to be improved:
    - **Entrances:** The library has two entrances. The parking lot entrance is accessible. However, a traffic analysis could be employed to improve safety.
    - **Elevators:** The elevator is hidden upon entering the back entrance, needing a window or update to the vestibule to improve accessibility.
    - **Wayfinding and Signage:** Improving the signage to inform people of space options, available meeting areas, or events would improve the library.
- **Interior Finishes and Aesthetics:**
  - **Mixed Findings:** The library consultant identified that the library is well-maintained. However, the original finishes are 20 years old. The age of the building is starting to show, contributing to the library's character. The team

identified areas with outdated or worn finishes on the main and lower floors, impacting the overall ambiance and user experience. Lighting levels, paint colors, flooring, and furniture conditions need to be assessed.

### **Circulation Desk: Future Change or Status Quo**

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The circulation desk analysis coupled with community feedback and library service trends, points towards a need for reimagining and evolving the circulation area rather than maintaining the status quo.

- **Library Consultant Findings:**

- **Functional Inefficiency:** The consultant noted that the current circulation desk layout is not optimally efficient for the staff. The consultant recommends installing a window that connects the back office with the circulation desk. This will allow staff additional flexibility combining front and back-office functions with limited staff.
- **Self-Service Options:** The self-checkout stations integration with the holds shelf could be identified as deficient compared to modern library practices. A new design for the holds shelf and self-checkout is required.
- **Physical Barrier:** The existing desk is configured as a traditional, large, and imposing circulation desk. This can create a physical barrier between staff and users, potentially feeling less welcoming and approachable. Additional study is required.
- **Space Utilization:** The circulation desk area occupies a significant amount of prime library space. This area could be better utilized for more user-focused services or flexible spaces on the main floor.
- **Aesthetic Considerations:** The circulation desk detracts from the overall aesthetic appeal of the library's entrance area. A new model that is more efficient and adjustable depending on staff members needs should be considered.
  - **Smaller, Modular Service Points:** Analyze whether to replace the large desk with smaller, modular service point.
  - **Improve Sightlines and Wayfinding:** A redesigned service area would improve sightlines and wayfinding, making it easier for users to locate assistance.
  - **Welcoming Ambiance:** This is an opportunity to create a more inviting and less transactional atmosphere in the circulation area through improved lighting, furniture, and décor.

- **Space Reallocation:** Our library planning scenarios indicated that the library could reallocate space currently occupied by the circulation desk. Our space planning indicated that the library could create more user-enhanced spaces, such as:
  - **Welcome Zone/News Area/Friends Welcome Area:** Expanding the entrance area to create a more welcoming and comfortable arrival experience.
  - **Flexible Program Space:** Create a small, flexible program or event space near the entrance.
  - **Enhanced Browsing Area:** Leverage the columns in the building to enhance the browsing areas for new materials, books or featured collections.

## REPORT TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

### Charting the Course for Thayer Public Library's Future

Following an interactive six-month study, this report includes our findings and strategic recommendations to the Board of Trustees. This report serves not just as a summary of our work, but as a roadmap for the Thayer Public Library's transformation into a dynamic, future-ready institution.

Our study was structured to provide clarity, inspire confidence, and facilitate informed decision-making by the Board. This is a synthesis of the data gathered, highlighting the key opportunities and challenges that lie ahead.

- A collaborative methodology is key to a successful phased implementation plan.
- The community's vision has been integrated into the proposed strategic direction. It is essential to communicate the potential for enhanced services and increased community impact.

This library facilities report is not merely an update; it is a crucial step in securing the Braintree's endorsement to move forward with the next phases of the library improvement project, ensuring that the Thayer Public Library remains a cornerstone of community enrichment for generations to come.

During the six-month study, we held community meetings and stakeholder interviews. We performed the Visual Scan, and collected data regarding the existing library, usage and demographics. This was an inclusive study that included the library staff.

### Needs Assessment

The library space needs assessment was structured around three themes – collections, seating and staffing space requirements. For example, members of the community requested enhanced meeting areas, expanded spaces for adults' and teen services, flexible meeting spaces, and individual workspaces. New audio and eBook apps (e.g. Libby) are changing the ways users access the library. Staff and operations are changing too, requiring new skills and strategies.

The strengths of the current library are clear: the staff. However, this is an opportunity to address operational challenges identified, such as meeting space constraints and staff space(s). These are not insurmountable obstacles but as opportunities for creative solutions.

### Vision for the Future Library

This is an aspirational 20-year vision co-created with the community stakeholders. This vision is more than just a list of desired features. This is an opportunity to dream about the future library

and build a phased approach. As directed by the board, this report does not include one narrow road to take. It provides scenarios to explore and test, new furniture to demo and new spaces to acquire more community use.

## **Space Planning Scenarios/Options**

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The library consultant develops three scenarios for the main and lower levels of the Thayer Public Library. They are distinct approaches, realizing the future library vision. Each scenario includes its own set of advantages and considerations. For example, we tried to focus on maximizing flexibility within the existing footprint. On the other hand, we also strived to explore strategic expansions or reconfigurations to create new types of spaces. During this process, we introduced the learning stage and its potential to create a magnet that attracts community use.

It's important to note these are not final designs but rather conceptual frameworks for discussion and further refinement. For each scenario, there are potential changes to service delivery models. For this reason, the types of spaces need to be prioritized. It is important to manage the overall impact each change has on the library's functionality to ensure that the library is open.

## **Considerations**

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While a detailed budget may not be feasible at this stage, the board should plan for the potential financial implications associated with each space planning scenario. This could include estimated costs for renovation, expansion, technology upgrades, and ongoing operational expenses. We typically consider \$350 per square foot as a guide for renovations. However, we believe the building committee can manage costs and possibly get the square footage down to \$150 per square foot. If the zone renovation is limited to furnishings the budget can be reduced to \$75 per square foot.

The library should provide a budget to the city for improvements and identify potential funding sources, such as grants, foundations, and state funding options. The library board needs to demonstrate a realistic understanding of the financial requirements of each scenario. We need to be responsible and transparent here. Our assessment of the resources required to achieve the envisioned transformation will require funding for library space and building improvements.

## Programming

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Our team developed a detailed program of the existing number of seatings, collections and staffing. The program summary outlines the existing spaces and requirements for the library.

# User Space Needs



SUMMARY OF BUILDING SPACE REQUIREMENTS							
Rm. No.	Department Name	Room/Area Name	L.F.of Shelving	Patron Seating	Staff	Room or Area NASF	Subtotal NASF
<b>LOWER LEVEL</b>							
<b>A. LOBBY</b>							
A1	Lobby	Building's Lobby					
A. Lobby Subtotal							-
<b>B. REFERENCE</b>							
B1	Reference	Reference Desk			1	80	
B2	Reference	Reference Work Room (G16)			1	120	
B3	Reference	Reference Office (G7)			1	160	
B. Circulation Subtotal							360
<b>C. MARKETPLACE</b>							
C1	Marketplace	New Seating Area (mixer)	96	4		256	
C1	Marketplace	New Teen Area Collection	270			189	
C2	Marketplace	Reference Collection	90			63	
C3	Marketplace	Reference Collection Items	90			63	
C4	Marketplace	Display New and Current				60	
C4	Marketplace	Display Historical				60	
C5	Marketplace	Booth(s)		4		240	
C3	Marketplace	Readers Advisory	96			96	
C3	Marketplace	Library Supplies	90			63	
C3	Marketplace	Opac/Self Check/Events/Map Display				120	
C3	Marketplace	Reference Desk			1	80	
C4	Marketplace	Friends Library Selection	90			63	
C. Reference Library Subtotal							1,353
<b>D. YOUNG ADULT AREA</b>							
D1	Young Adult Area	Meeting Room	357	12		550	
D. Young Adult Area Subtotal							550
<b>E. STAIRWAY B</b>							
E1	Quiet Seating Area	Seating Area (G14)		2		50	
E. Quiet Seating Subtotal							50
<b>F. GROUP STUDY ROOM</b>							
F1	Group Meeting Room	Group Conference Room (G10)		2		80	
F. Group Meeting Room Subtotal							80
<b>G. SECRETARY OFFICE</b>							
G1	Old Secretary Office	Small Meeting Rm (G11)			1	100	
G. Secretary Office Subtotal							100
<b>H. FRIENDS STORAGE ROOM</b>							
H1	Friends Book Store Area	Books for Sale (middle)	54			38	
H1	Friends Book Store Area	Books for Sale (along the wall)	189			132	
H2	Friends Storage Room	Larger Office and Storage Room (G15)				160	
H1. Friends Storage Room Subtotal							330
<b>I. ADULT COMPUTERS</b>							
I1	Adult Services	New Flex Computers in Alcove		9		270	
I2	Adult Services	Table Area				100	
I. Adult Services Subtotal							370
<b>J. QUIET SEATING AREA</b>							
J1	Adult Services	Adult Table Seats		22		440	
J2	Adult Services	Large Table Area		12		300	
J3	Adult Services	Carrel Area		8		160	
J4	Adult Services	Booth		2		40	
J5	Adult Services	Carrel Area (Next to Friends Book Store)		5		125	
J6	Adult Services	Tables / Reading and Seating Area		16		400	
J7	Adult Services	Non Fiction Collection	2,250			1,575	
J. Quiet Seating Area Subtotal							3,040
<b>K. CUSTODIAL OPERATIONS</b>							
K1	Custodial Operations	Custodial Supplies Storage				120	
K2	Custodial Operations	Storage Closets					
K. Custodial Operations Subtotal							120
<b>TOTALS</b>			3,672	98	5		6,353

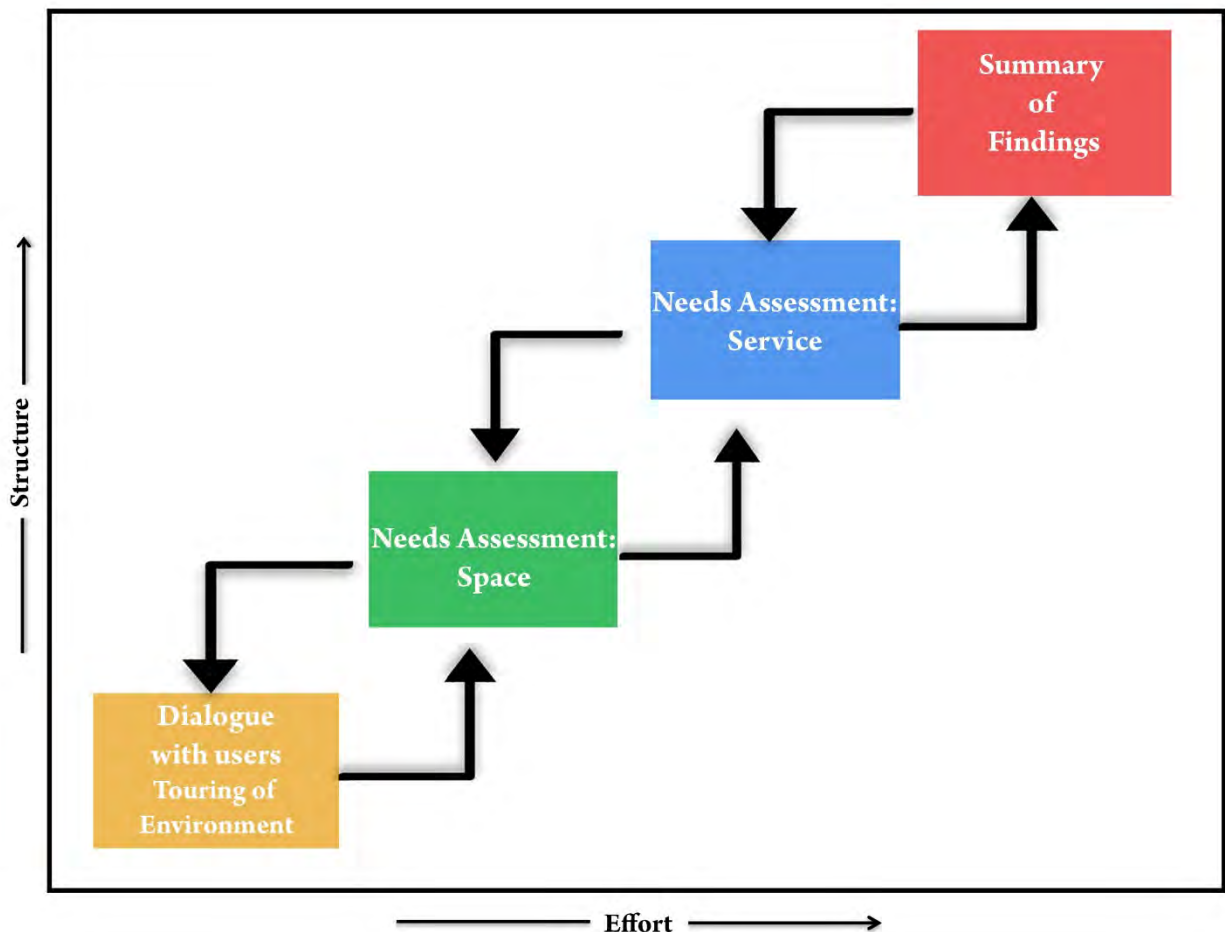
# Thayer Public Library / Facilities Planning

SUMMARY OF BUILDING SPACE REQUIREMENTS							
Rm. No.	Department Name	Room/Area Name	L.F. of Shelving	Patron Seating	Staff	Room or Area NASF	Subtotal NASF
<b>TOTALS</b>			3,672	98	5		6,353
<b>MAIN LEVEL</b>							
<b>A. LOBBY</b>							
A1	Lobby	Building's Lobby					
A. Lobby Subtotal							-
<b>B. CIRCULATION &amp; STAFF OPERATIONS</b>							
B1	Circulation & Staff Operations	Circulation Desk			3	360	
B2	Circulation & Staff Operations	Circulation Work Room (105)			1	120	
B3	Circulation & Staff Operations	Workroom (106)			4	240	
B4	Circulation & Staff Operations	Workroom (107)				80	
B5	Circulation & Staff Operations	Workroom (108 - Processing Area)				120	
B6	Circulation & Staff Operations	Workroom (108)			4	240	
B7	Circulation & Staff Operations	Staff Room (112 - Sink Area)			6	360	
B8	Circulation & Staff Operations	Copy Room (105)				120	
B. Circulation & Staff Operations Subtotal							1,640
<b>C. POPULAR LIBRARY</b>							
C1	Popular Library	Building's Lobby Area Bookshelf Bench	162			113	
C2	Popular Library	Popular Library Collection DVD	192			134	
C3	Popular Library	Library Collection (CD & Audio Books)	128			90	
C4	Popular Library	Library Holds	42			29	
C5	Popular Library	Library Collection (Fiction)	2,016			1,008	
C6	Popular Library	Library Collection (Genre)	252			176	
C8	Popular Library	Library Collection (Library of Things)	72			50	
C. Popular Library Subtotal							1,602
<b>D. ADULT AREA</b>							
D1	Adult Area	Adult Collection (New Books)	60			42	
D2	Adult Area	Adult Lounge Seats / Newspapers (118)		7		140	
D3	Adult Area	Adult 4-Top Table Seating (118)		8		160	
D. Adult Area Subtotal							342
<b>E. PERIODICALS</b>							
E1	Periodicals	Periodicals Collection (magazine rack)	56			56	
E. Periodicals Subtotal							56
<b>F. CAFÉ</b>							
F1	Café	Café Vending Area				60	
F1	Café	Café Seating		12		240	
F. Café Subtotal							240
<b>G. ADULT PROGRAM SPACE</b>							
G1	Adult Services	Seating Area (25)		16		400	
G2	Adult Services	Shelving on the Walls	168			118	
G. Adult Services Subtotal							518
<b>H. ADMINISTRATION AND SERVICES</b>							
H1	Administration and Services	Library Directors Office			1	160	
H2	Administration and Services	Assistant Directors Office			1	120	
H. Administration and Services Subtotal							280
<b>TOTALS</b>			3,148	43	20		4,677
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>			3,672	141	25		11,030
<b>LIBRARY TOTAL NET ASSIGNABLE SPACE</b>							11,030
<b>LIBRARY TOTAL NON-ASSIGNABLE SPACE</b>							4,727
<b>LIBRARY TOTAL GSF (NET/GROSS RATIO IS 70%)</b>							15,757

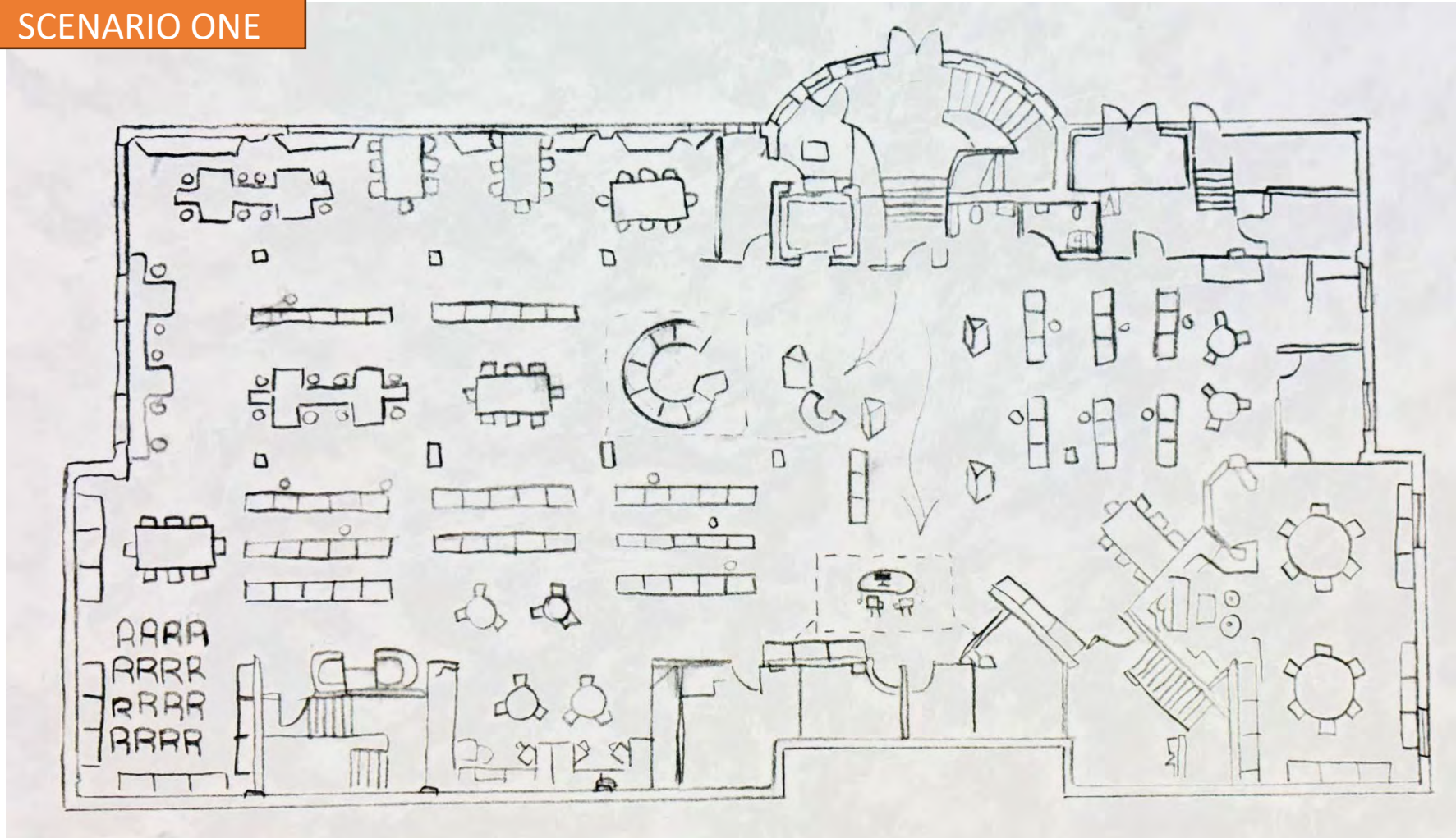
## SCENARIO PLANNING

The planning team surveyed the community, toured the facility with the public and staff, and analyzed the interior architecture of the building. Although the plans are not made to scale, they have been measured using our programming methodology. Understanding the sizes and spaces in the existing library gave us the ability to visualize future options to optimize the library over the next 10 years.

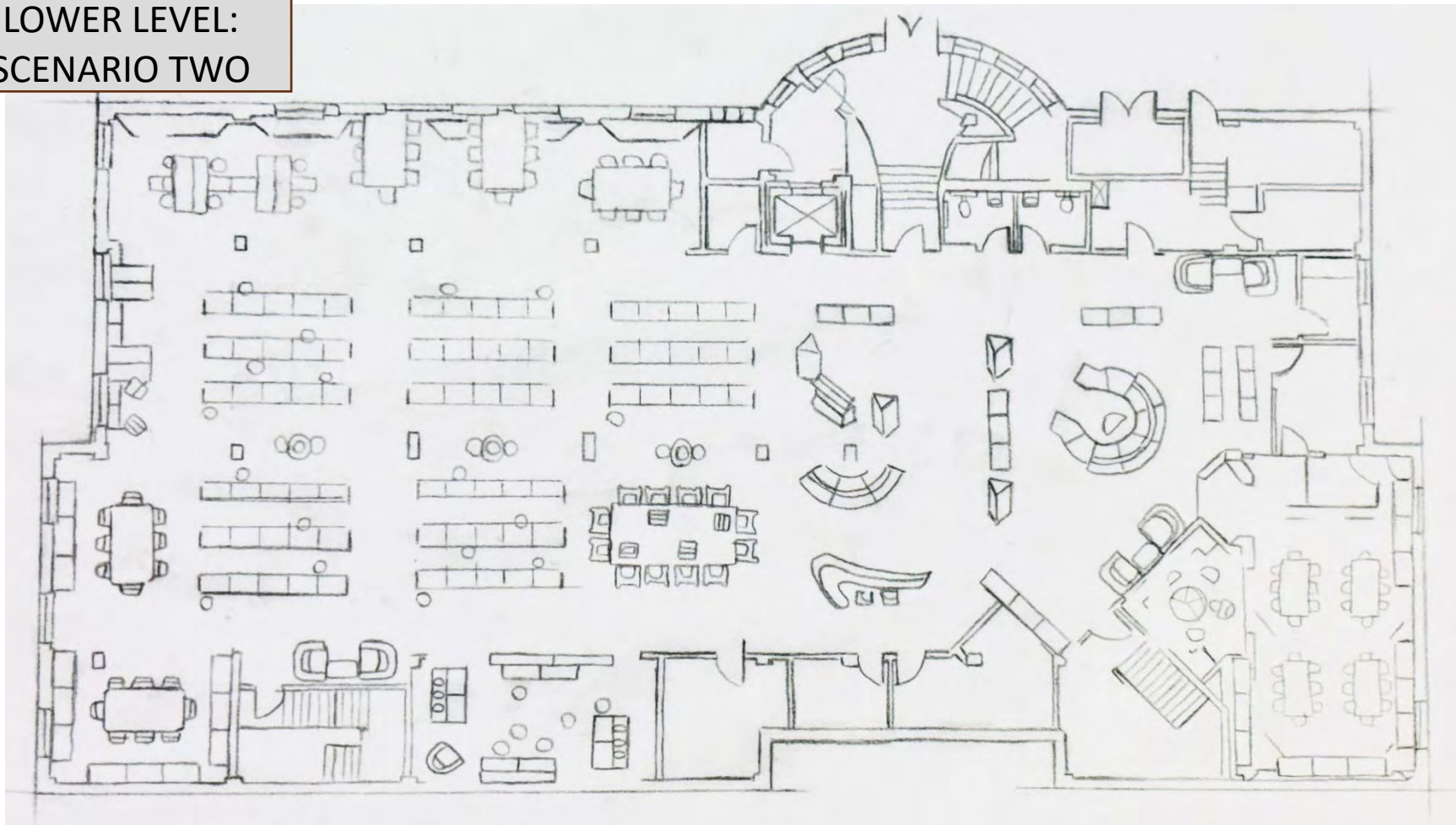
Below is our methodology for the development of the library. We used this methodology to develop preliminary interior plans for the library and options for the community to consider. The costs for each improvement can be estimated by determining the square footage and the area to be updated.

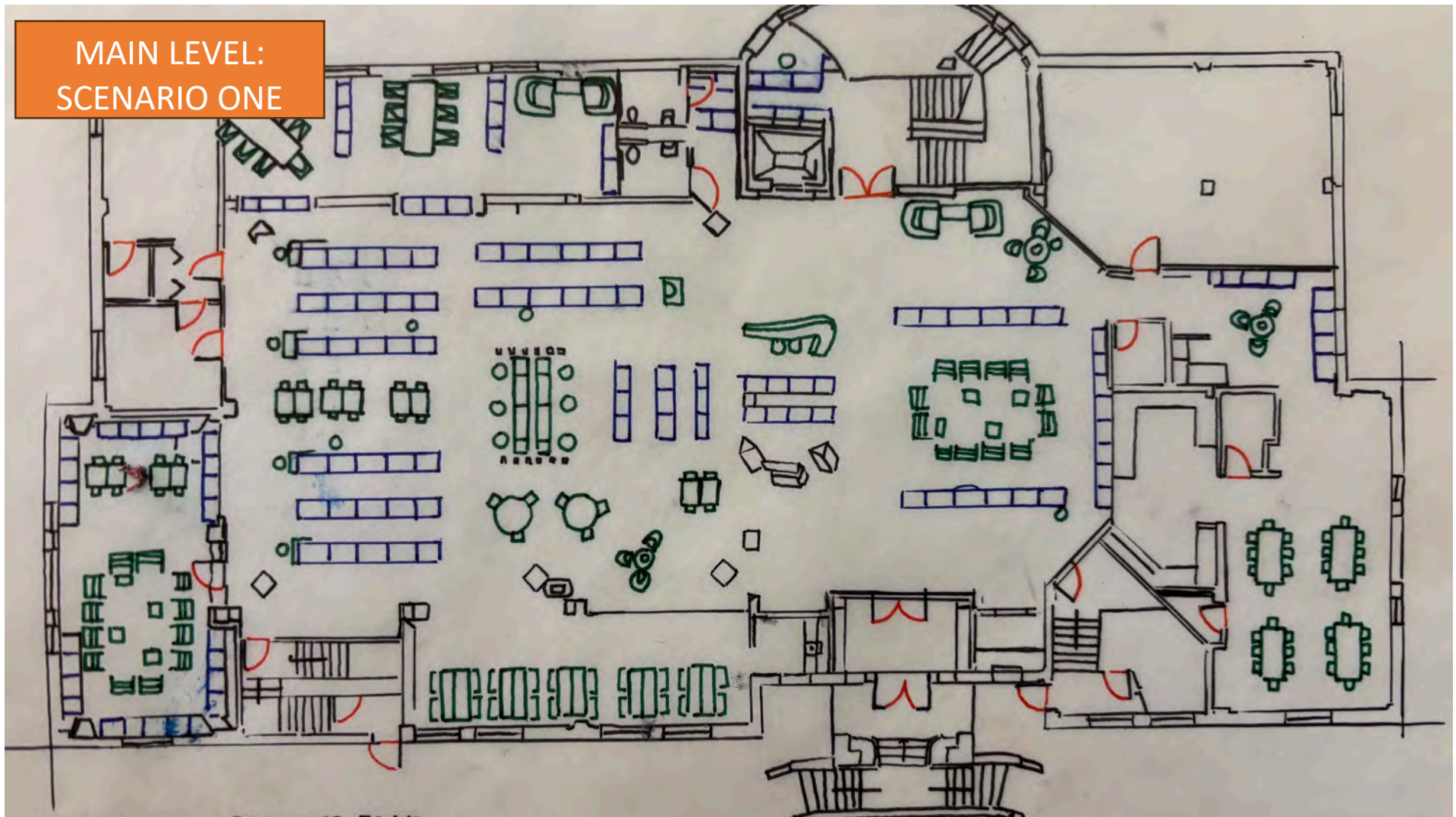


LOWER LEVEL:  
SCENARIO ONE

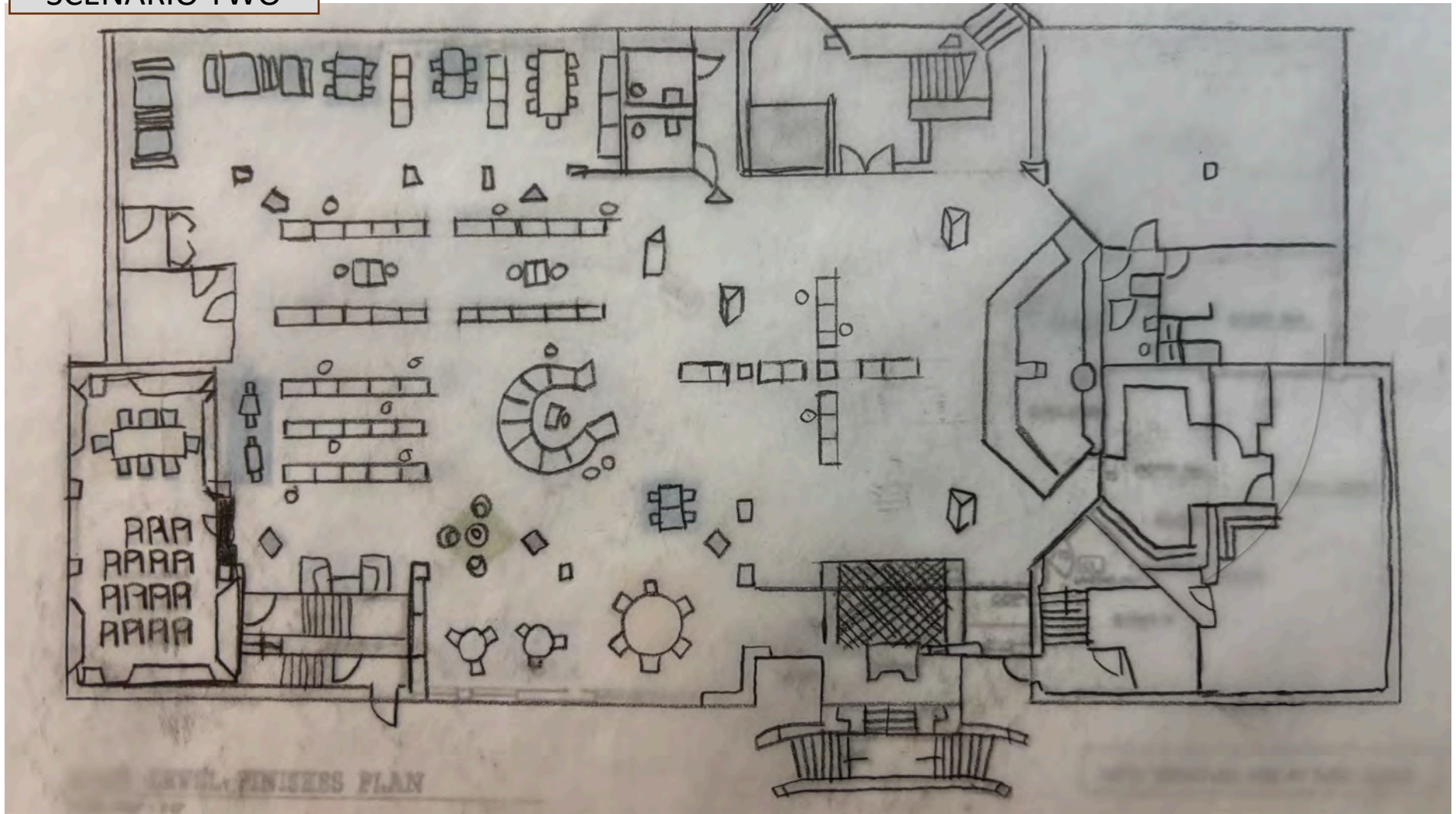


LOWER LEVEL:  
SCENARIO TWO

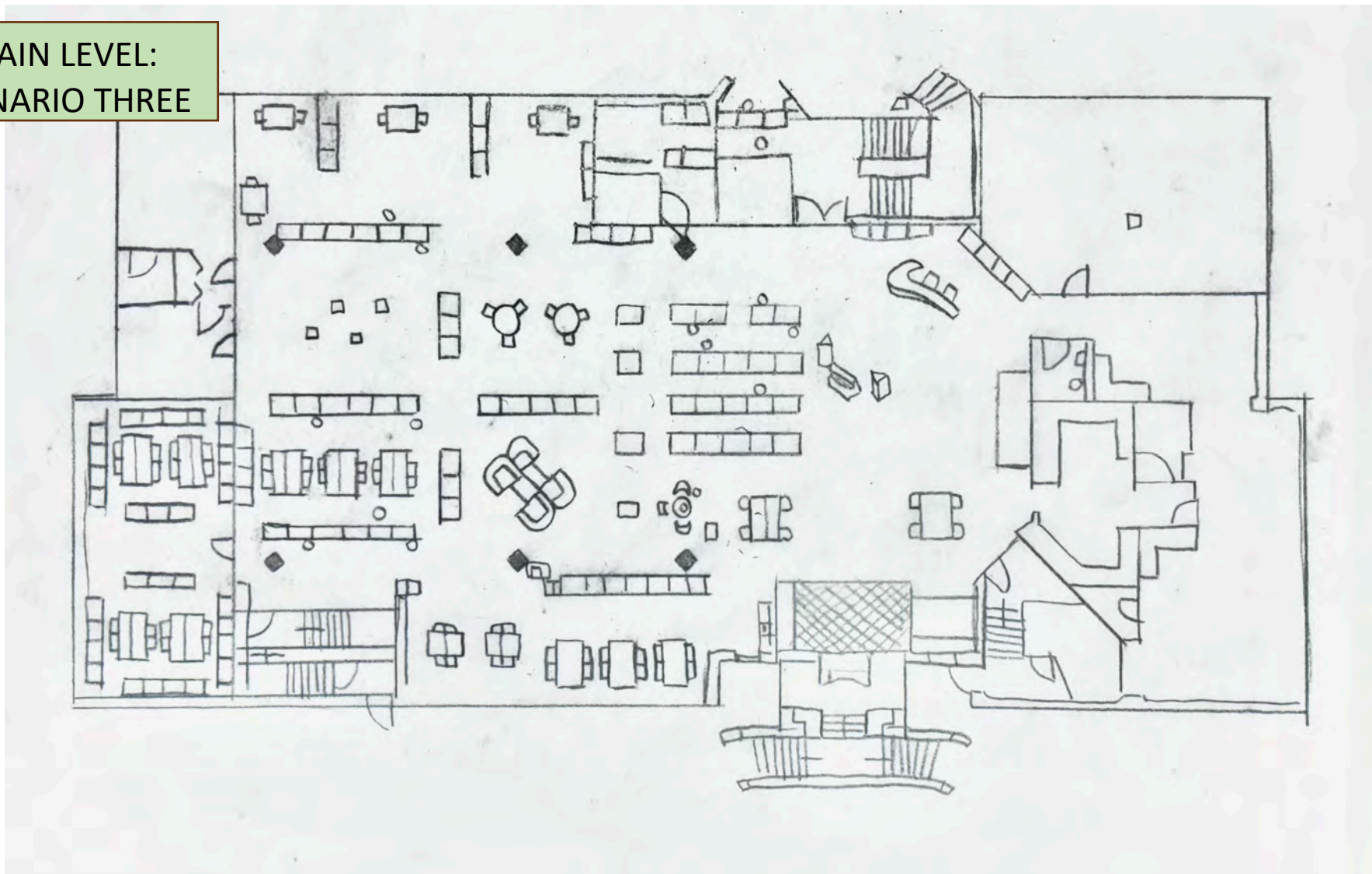




MAIN LEVEL:  
SCENARIO TWO



MAIN LEVEL:  
SCENARIO THREE



Recommendations for Next Steps

This is a formal request for the Board's endorsement to move forward with a phased space planning direction. The next steps include initiating schematic design, conducting more detailed furnishing analysis, beginning preliminary fundraising efforts, and moving forward with a prioritized list of renovation zones.

THAYER PUBLIC LIBRARY MASTER PLAN SCHEDULE

