



## SERVICE GOALS & SPACE NEEDS

a working paper prepared for the  
**WEST FARGO PUBLIC LIBRARY**  
by  
**Library Planning Associates, Inc.**

In August, 2019, the West Fargo Public Library Board of Trustees engaged Library Planning Associates, Inc. to review and clarify the library's on-going facilities planning efforts. The community the library serves has undergone rapid growth in recent years – a more than two-fold increase since 2000, from 14,940 to 34,858 – and it is estimated to grow to 41,700 by 2040. Like other municipal agencies in a growing community, the library has been challenged to keep pace with population growth and the corresponding demands for enhanced service.

With a growing population, the library experienced increased use – more visits and more circulation – as well as increased demands for a deeper and richer collection and better access to technology and e-content. Moreover, these changes occur as the essential character of library service is changing. The heritage of the public library is one of acquisition and storage, pooling community resources to develop a collection of intellectual content for use by local residents. Today, while that traditional role remains the core purpose of the public library, social trends along with advances in technology are creating a new public library, one that fosters communication and exchange, one that pools community resources to provide a wide array of traditional content as well as other tools for the individual to use and learn and grow.

The library trustees and staff understand that the existing building has begun to hamper their ability to deliver superior library service to the community of West Fargo. They have started to examine the library's facilities needs. They have engaged Library Planning Associates, Inc. to assess these efforts and coordinate the various strands of their planning efforts to date. This working paper outlines the findings and recommendations that emerged from that review.

### **A. Method and Acknowledgments**

Anders Dahlgren, Library Planning Associates, Inc. founding principal, was designated the lead consultant for the West Fargo

Public Library study. LPA approached the review for West Fargo Public Library with a multi-faceted strategy for discovery, to learn

about the library and the community it serves:

- reviewing existing documentation pertaining to the library and the community (census and demographic data, annual reports, the current long-range plan of service) to learn about both
- compiling the library annual reports in to a comprehensive file to understand local trends in service development
- preparing a summary of national service trends to understand how broad national service priorities have changed in recent years
- completing a peer comparative / trendline analysis to assess service trends among a group of the library’s peers and establish service benchmarks to inform an assessment of current conditions at the library and project possible future resource and service inventory goals
- visiting the library – the consultant visited West Fargo on October 10 to tour the library and the community, to see first-hand the services and conditions on offer, and to meet with trustees and staff to explore possible future service goals

With this initial phase of discovery complete, findings were assimilated and distilled into recommendations. To guide this process, LPA used a library space planning methodology that was created and published by LPA founding principal Anders Dahlgren while on the staff of the Wisconsin state library agency. *Public Library Space Needs: A Planning Outline* (<https://dpi.wi.gov/pld/boards-directors/space-needs>) describes the connection between a library’s service goals and its space needs. Every community has its own unique blend of library service demands and needs. One can

identify a menu of resource and service inventory goals that will meet those needs, and in doing so, that menu becomes the basis of an estimate of the library’s space need. This working paper reports out the finding of the consultant’s application of the space needs outline methodology.

On October 10, the consultant met with library trustees and staff. Those discussions informed the consultant’s understanding of the library and its community. The contributions of the following individuals are recognized, with appreciation:

Alanna Rerick	President
Jodie Haring	Vice President
Steve Anglin	Trustee
Larry Schwartz	Trustee
Eric Gjerdevig	City Commissioner
Sandra Hannahs	Library Director
Molly Flaspohler	Adult Services
Lauren Nephew	Children’s Services
Sara Engler	Access and Outreach
Carissa Hansen	Technology and Technical Services

## B. Investigation and Discovery

Key findings of the consultant's discovery efforts are summarized here – local service trends, broad national service trends, and the peer comparative / trendline analyses. A full description of these analyses are available in a series of memos, delivered separately to the library.

### B.1. Local service trends

LPA compiled the library's annual report data from 2000 through 2018 to gain an understanding of how the library's services have developed over time. Most of this data was garnered from a national database of public library statistics maintain by the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS). Key observations include:

- The library's overall inventory (print + audio + video) has increased notably between 2000 and 2018 – by 38.3%, noting a major, coordinated weeding of the collection that occurred in 2006.
- Even so, collection growth did not keep pace with population growth; as a result, the number of items held per capita decreased over the period, from 5.5 in 2000 to 2.1 in 2018.
- The collection has become less print-centric; in 2000, print accounted for 95.6% of the total inventory but by 2018 that ratio had decreased to 86.0%.
- In the nonprint collection, videos have become the dominant format; in 2000, videos accounted for 42.2% of the nonprint inventory, but in 2018, that share had increased to 60.3%.
- Circulation has increased steadily since 2000, from 56,900+ to 152,000+ – almost a three-fold increase.
- Even though the growth in use / circulation is much more

robust than the growth in inventory over the period, circulation per capita has decreased, from 4.6 in 2000 to 3.8 in 2018. This is another indication of the challenges and difficulties facing as a public service tries to keep up with rapid local growth.

- Programming is up sharply; over the last ten years, the number of library-sponsored program increased from just under 400 to 829.
- Program attendance, likewise, is up sharply, from just over 6,000 in 2008 to 14,953 in 2018.

### B.2. National service trends

Just as it is useful to understand how library services have tracked and evolved at the local level over time, it is useful to understand how services have evolved nationally. Every year, LPA uses the IMLS database to aggregate annual report data from the 9,200+ public libraries across the country. Those results are compiled into a summary that tracks trends over time. Key observations include:

- In the aggregate, the inventory held by U.S. public libraries is getting leaner; the combined inventory of U.S. public libraries (print + audio + video) peaked in 2009 at 919 million items and has been in gradual decline every year since.
- This overall decline in inventory is driven by a decrease in the aggregate print inventory; print holdings effectively peaked between 2005 and 2009, when the combined print holdings of U.S. public libraries flat-lined between 815 and 816

- million volumes. As of 2017, the combined print inventory tallies 715 million volumes, a decrease of 12.3% from its peak.
- In the early 2000s, the rate of increase for total volumes held in U.S. public libraries fell below the rate of increase for total population served; as a result, the number of volumes held per capita in U.S. public libraries peaked in 2003 at 2.83 volumes per capita and has decreased consistently since.
  - In contrast to print holdings, the combined nonprint holdings of U.S. libraries continue to grow, albeit recently at a slower rate. From 2000 through 2009, the national nonprint inventory increased at an average rate of 7.8%; from 2010 through 2017, the increase averaged 1.1% per year.
  - The reason behind this shift in acquisition rates is the combined inventory of audio recordings. Among all U.S. libraries, that inventory reached its peak in 2009 and has been decreasing consistently since.
  - Video inventories, by contrast, continue to grow.
  - As a result of these shifting development patterns, nonprint holdings in U.S. public libraries continue to grow as a share of total. In 2017, nonprint represented 13.2% of the combined inventory in U.S. public libraries.
  - Since 2000, the combined inventory of technology stations for public use has increased every year, save just one. The rate of growth from year to year, however, is clearly slowing.
  - Total circulation in U.S. libraries peaked in 2010 at just under 2.5 billion transactions. In 2017, U.S. public libraries reported a combined 2.2 billion transactions.
  - Total visits in U.S. libraries peaked in 2009 at just under 1.6 billion. In 2017, U.S. public libraries reported just over 1.3

billion visits.

- Programming activity and attendance has surged, with the number of library-sponsored events more than doubling from 2005 to date and total attendance almost doubling during the same period.

### *B.3. Peer comparative / trendline analysis*

This analysis examined the experience of two groups of libraries deemed to be peers of the West Fargo Public Library. By distilling the combined experience of these peer cohorts, benchmarks are created that can be used to assess the current condition of the library. In its 2017 annual report, the library had 74,269 items in its collection. This is good to know, but is that a large collection or a not-so-large collection? Placing the library in the context of a group of peer libraries can inform an answer to that question.

Three peer cohorts were established using the IMLS database. Libraries were selected for each cohort based first on population served. The assumption was that libraries serving a population more similar in size to the subject library would bear greater relevance to the subject library; the experience of libraries serving a notably smaller or larger population would have little bearing on or meaning for the experience of West Fargo PL.

The first cohort included libraries that serve 30,000 to 40,000 population, intended to bracket West Fargo's current service population ( $\pm 34,800$ ). This cohort was used to define benchmarks to use in assessing the current state of the West Fargo PL. This cohort was then filtered to focus on libraries located within the same

geographic region (within roughly a 500-mile radius) and to include only libraries that operate a single facility (libraries that operated branches were excluded).

The second cohort included libraries that serve 35,000 to 50,000 population. This range was established to bracket the library's *projected* service population ( $\pm 41,700$ ). This cohort of all public libraries in the country serving 35,000 to 50,000 population was then filtered to exclude libraries that operate branches.

The third cohort was a subset of the second, filtered to include only those libraries in the region (defining region as within roughly a 500-mile radius). The impetus to develop separate national and regional cohorts is to acknowledge that there are in fact regional variations in service expectations and heritage as well as variations in support for library service. While the national cohort would factor in all of those variations, the regional cohort expected to factor out service patterns from parts of the country that vary from those found in the upper Great Plains.

All data for this review was drawn from 2017 annual reports, this being the most recent year for which the IMLS has released data.

Key observations from the examination of the current population cohort include:

- West Fargo PL is behind its current regional peers on all measures regarding collection inventory, probably an indicator of how difficult it is for a municipal service to keep pace in a setting of rapid year-to-year growth and a reflection of insufficient shelf space in a constrained building..
- Based on the experience of the library's current regional peers,

a library serving 34,800+ would be expected to support a collection of 118,000 items. West Fargo's collection as of 2017 was 74,260 items (a lag of 37.0%)

- Breaking inventories down further by format reveals a current shortfall across the board: print holdings lag the regional cohort benchmark by 36.4% (63,509 volumes versus a benchmark of 100,000); audio recordings lag by 56.3% (3,933 items versus a benchmark recommendation of 9,000 items); and video recordings lag by 33.1% (6,816 items versus 10,200 items).
- In this analysis, the library comes closer to the current-day benchmark regarding the number of technology stations for public use. Per the 2017 annual report, the library offers 30 stations, while the experience of the current-year cohort suggests a library serving 34,800+ population should offer 36. (For the sake of consistency, this comparison must be based on the library's 2017 annual report, and since that report was submitted, ten older machines have been removed, and the present-day inventory tallies just 20 computers for public use.)
- The library also lags on key measures of activity. Total circulation in 2017 tallied 134,662 transactions, while the corresponding benchmark emerging from current-day regional cohort is 337,000 population. Total visits in 2017 tallied 80,711, while the regional cohort benchmark was 200,000. It's difficult to determine from the data at hand why this discrepancy exists. Possibly it has to do with the challenge of connecting with the influx of new residents. Possibly it has to do with the library's location as part of a larger civic complex, which may dilute the identity of the library. It could also be the result of how the service area has

developed: with continuing strong development to the south, the traditional city center is farther and farther north for more and more residents.

- Programming activities occur at an “expected” rate. In 2017, the library sponsored 733 program events, while the expected number of programs based on the experience of the library’s current-year peers is 700. Because the library currently maintains a leaner staff complement than would be expected based on the experience of its peers, this translated into a strong show of productivity. While West Fargo’s peers produce 35.0 programs per year per FTE staff, WFPL produces 70.4.

Key observations from the examination of the national and regional peer cohorts based on the library’s *projected* service population include:

- Findings from the regional peer cohort on measures relating to collection inventory and use levels are consistently more assertive than those emerging from the national peer cohort, suggesting that libraries in the upper Great Plains in fact *do* operate in a broad service context where there are higher user expectations regarding library service and stronger support for library service.
- Based on the experience of the national peer cohort, a library serving 41,700+ population could expect to support a collection of 118,000 items; based on the experience of the regional cohort, the West Fargo PL could expect to maintain a collection of 160,000 items by the year 2040.
- Examining inventory benchmarks by format using the national cohort produces recommendations of 100,000 volumes,

7,600 audio recordings, and 10,000 video recordings (17,600 total items, corresponding almost exactly to the result for total items held, reported above).

- Also note the happenstance of the similarity between the results of the national peer cohort based on the library *projected* population and the results of the regional cohort based on the library’s *current* service population. The library’s current-day regional cohort is already at the place where the national cohort will be in twenty years.
- The year 2040 regional cohort suggests a collection inventory by format of 135,000 volumes, 12,700 audio recordings, and 14,000 video recordings. Approaching this examination by format produces a result (161,700 total items) similar to the result of the analysis of total items held reported above (160,000).
- Per the experience of the national year 2040 cohort, the library should expect to provide 34 technology stations for public use; based on the experience of the regional year 2040 cohort, the library should expect to provide 44 technology stations.
- Based on the experience of the national year 2040 cohort, WFPL could expect to register 322,000 circulation transactions and 189,000 visits by the year 2040, when its service population reaches 41,700+. The libraries in the regional cohort are much busier, highlighting a notable distinction between libraries in the upper Great Plains and libraries in other parts of the country. The regional year 2040 cohort suggests a library serving 41,700+ can anticipate 515,000 circulation transactions and 251,000 annual visits.

### C. Recommended service goals for the West Fargo Public Library

Any library's space needs are predicated on its service goals. Specifically, space needs are conditioned by the inventories the library should house to meet the needs of the community. The service inventory extends beyond collections, although collections remain a crucial part of the overall service menu in today's public library.

The space needs assessment methodology applied here, based on the publication *Public Library Space Needs: A Planning Outline* from the Wisconsin state library agency (<https://dpi.wi.gov/pld/boards-directors/space-needs>), seeks to establish essential resource and service inventory goals regarding:

- collections (print, audio, video, magazines)
- technology
- reader seating
- staff work space
- meeting and programming space(s)

The specific goals established for the West Fargo Public Library in each of these areas become the basis for an estimate of space need, which is detailed in the following section of this working paper.

The fundamental question is this: what kind of collections and services should the West Fargo Public Library anticipate to meet the needs of the community to the year 2040?

The continuing evolution of the library's service landscape poses the underlying challenge in making this forecast. The landscape is

much changed today from what it was at the turn of the century, and it will be much different from what we know today by the time we arrive at the year 2040. In practical terms, it may well be impossible to make a forecast like this (who knew, in 1999, what would transpire with the advent of the smartphone in the early part of that coming century?). But because facilities planning projects typically occur at best once in a generation, the board and staff at the West Fargo Public Library need to offer their best effort to define services and spaces that will meet the current *and future* needs of the community.

The upside, in the face of these challenges and uncertainties, is that building design strategies and construction techniques continue to evolve as well, and libraries today are positioned much more effectively to plan and build buildings that meet conditions that library planners have espoused for almost 100 years. Library planners have long advocated for flexible and adaptable buildings, but historically the ability to deliver on that goal has been limited. The advent of the current electronic era and the need for ubiquitous access to power and plugs has only highlighted the limited flexibility and adaptability of most existing buildings. But newer design and construction techniques hold the promise of developing spaces that are truly flexible and responsive, and the board and staff will be encouraged to explore those options in design efforts with an architect.

#### C.1. Collections

LPA approaches the assessment of future collection inventories

from two broad vectors: total items held and magazines.

**Total items held:** Total items held includes print, audio recordings and video recordings. Many libraries offer additional segments of collection to meet specific local needs, but these three elements – print, audio, video – are the common and predominant components of the typical public library collection. One could assess the needs for each of these three elements individually – making a separate forecast for the print collection, another for the audio collection, another for video – but LPA prefers to consider the collection inventory holistically, in terms of total items held, because acknowledges more effectively that the collection is an organic whole and that the balance within the collection between print and nonprint (and other) formats is expected to shift over time.

Per 2017 annual report data, the West Fargo PL maintains a collection of 74,260 items (63,509 books, 3,935 audio recordings, 6,816 video recordings). This translates into a collection of 2.1 items per capita. The year 2017 regional cohort suggests that the current-day collection *should* be 3.4 items per capita.

Looking to the future, the examination of the year 2040 national and regional cohorts suggested that a library serving 41,700+ should anticipate a collection of 2.8 items per capita or 3.8 items per capita respectively. These parallel examinations address the same issue from two different perspectives (national and regional) and lead to two different conclusions. Of those two, LPA recommends using the regional perspective in consideration of future resource and service inventory goals for West Fargo PL. The delta between the regional and national results suggests that there is in fact a higher expectation of service in the upper Great Plains region than is the case in some

other parts of the country, and recommendations for WFPL looking forward should acknowledge that higher standard.

At the same time, it's important to keep in mind that the recommendation emerging from the regional peer cohort represents a particular snapshot in time. The national service trend summary confirms that public libraries are maintaining leaner and leaner collections. This consistent pattern suggests that the year 2017 benchmark should be adjusted in some way to acknowledge the trend toward leaner inventories.

One way to adapt the year 2017 benchmark is to note the ten year rate of decline, then extend that rate of decline across the longer, twenty-year planning horizon. This acknowledges the broad national trend toward leaner inventories, but hedges the bet by stretching out the period in question. This approach suggests, cautiously, that the rate of decline might moderate in the years to come.

Over the last ten years, the national measure of items held per capita has declined by 16% (from 3.0 in 2007 to 2.5 in 2017). The regional cohort benchmark becomes 3.20 items per capita (3.80 less 16%), corresponding to an inventory of 133,500 items (41,700 x 3.20).

A more assertive way to adapt the 2017 benchmark would be to reduced the current year benchmark by 16% for the decade leading to 2030 and then by a second 16% for the decade leading to 2040. In this instance, however, LPA is reluctant to recommend this more assertive approach owing to the board's expression that the municipality's estimate for future population growth could be understated. Taking a cautious approach to these projections better

preserves future options should this alternate scenario play out regarding population projections.

Reducing the year 2017 benchmark of 3.8 items per capita by 16% anticipates that by the year 2040, the library's collection should support 3.1 items per capita, or roughly 130,000 items.

**Magazines:** Magazines represent a smaller and smaller slice of today's public library space needs. Subscription lists are dwindling and libraries are maintaining shorter and shorter runs of back issues. Maintaining a line item for magazine holdings as part of an estimate of public library's space needs is fast approaching the point where it will be considered a vestige of the past.

That said, there's certainly no harm done in including a line item for magazines in this estimate.

According to 2017 annual report data, WFPL maintains a subscription list of 183 titles – 5.3 per 1,000 population. Noting that the broad national trend documents a decrease of roughly 35% in the ratio of magazine titles received per 1,000 population between that measure's peak and the latest available data, if WFPL's current ratio of 5.3 titles per 1,000 population experiences a similar decrease in the coming generation, the library's subscription rate would decrease to 3.4 titles per 1,000 population. Against a projected population of 41,700+, this corresponds to a subscription list of roughly 140 titles.

With regard to back issues, most public libraries today maintain one or two years back at most. For WFPL, anticipate a single years back run on average per title.

## *C.2. Technology*

Over the past generation, providing access to content and collections in electronic form has become an increasingly important part of the library's overall mission. In space planning terms, supporting that access takes the form of technology stations provided by the library for public use. In short order, following the introduction of computers for public use in the library setting, the form of those stations took on a familiar form: a CPU, a screen, and a keyboard / mouse. Over time, the specifics have evolved and changed (hulking CRT screens gave way to slim flat panels, for example) and in the future, more of the access public libraries provide to e-content will be supported by way of wi-fi networks that users will access using their own Internet-connectable devices, but in terms of how much space a library needs, access to e-content will be based on the inventory of technology stations on offer.

As of the 2017 annual report, WFPL provides 30 technology stations for public use. The current-day regional cohort suggests the library should have 36, based on a population of 34,800+. The library's year 2040 regional cohort suggests the library should have 44 to meet the needs of the community when the library reaches its projected population of 41,700+.

Except that this measure, like the measures relating to collection inventory, is guaranteed to shift over time.

The national service trends summary documents that the aggregate inventory of technology stations for public use has increased every year except just one since 1998, when the IMLS first started gathering data on this metric. The rate of increase, however, is

clearly slowing. From 2000 to 2005, the year-to-year increase averaged 13.3%; from 2005 to 2010, 5.8%; and from 2010 to 2015, 3.7%. The rate of increase in this inventory is slowing, maybe even reaching a saturation point, perhaps because more and more users bring their own Internet-connectable devices to the library.

But suppose that trend continues. Assume the rate of growth will be 2.25% year-to-year, on average, from 2015 to 2020; 1.50% year-to-year from 2021 to 2025; 0.75% from 2026 to 2030; 0.25% from 2031 to 2035; and 0.10% from 2036 to 2040. In this scenario, the year 2040 regional cohort benchmark morphs from 44 stations to 54 stations.

It's entirely possible that this could overstate the case. It could be that a saturation point does arrive. It's possible that enough visitors to the library bring their own devices, to the point that the number of stations the library needs to provide may decrease. It may be that the library only needs to provide physical technology stations to provide access to software and e-content resources that are not readily available by way of the users's own devices. But establishing – for now – a resource and service inventory goal that the West Fargo PL will provide 54 technology stations is a cautious recommendation.

### *C.3. User seating*

The literature on public library planning includes several formulas recommending a suitable inventory for reader seating. Most are based on a formula of X seats per 1,000 population, with X decreasing as population served increases, acknowledging the economies of scale at work as a library and its community grows.

Over the years, LPA has worked with those formulas in the literature, developing a single, consolidated, population-based formula to recommend a benchmark for reader seating. For a library that is to serve 41,700 population, LPA's "Grand Unified Theory of Public Library Seating" recommends a benchmark of 144 reader seats.

Note that this includes general, open reader seats – seating at carrels, tables, and lounge settings. There will likely be additional places for a library user to sit, but these will be purpose-driven seats – seats at a technology station, seats in a small-group study room, seats that are provided in support of a specific activity.

Also be aware that this benchmark can be considered a starting point, a kind of opening bid. Depending on the library's specific service priorities, the benchmark may be adjusted up or down.

### *C.4. Staff work stations*

Forecasting the number of staff work stations a library needs is often a challenging topic, for many reasons:

- By the time a library starts to explore future space needs, staff is typically operating out of inadequate conditions. A library tends to reserve its space for the public it serves, often doing with less for staff. So the existing allocation for staff does not necessarily afford a meaningful baseline for future comparison.
- The unit of measurement for staff work stations does NOT correspond directly to FTEs. There is a rough correspondence, of course – a library with a large staff will likely need more staff work stations than a smaller library will – but not a direct one. One needs to determine the number

of *stations* or places where staff will be needed to perform a certain task or operation. Some stations will be dedicated to a specific task or a specific individual while others may be shared by several staff during the course of a work week. Many of those spaces are likely to take the form of a desk or a Dilbert cube, but not all. One must quantify how many places will be needed in all.

- Work patterns are changing. For example, most libraries have moved or are moving toward a self-service circulation model, which changes the number and configuration of work places needed in support of the circulation function.

- More libraries are moving away from a traditional, monumental service desk in favor of smaller, more compact service points like the one from the public library in Gothenburg, Sweden (at left). The compact, fluid form suggests approachability. It can be raised and lowered so as to operate in a standing or seated configuration. It can be placed on the floor in a way that creates a traditional definition of staff side / public side, but it can also be placed in a way that blurs the line and encourages a more collaborative approach to engagement with the user – something that's needed more



and more as staff and users need to look at the same information on the same screen at the same time.

In West Fargo's case, any inventory of staff work places must acknowledge the library is poised to enter a new phase of development. Many of the current staffing practices and protocols were established when the library was a small organization. It was not that long ago that the library had just one MLS-accredited librarian – the director. Today, there is a management team of five. The organization of the current staff space is based on assumptions that no longer apply. As the board and staff move into more and more detailed facilities planning efforts, it will be important to revisit considerations surrounding staff support space, to make sure the configuration addresses future needs and not be bound by past practices and familiarities.

Among the questions or issues to track:

- Is a consolidated, single desk service model appropriate as the library grows?
- What alternatives exist to a multi-desk service configuration (roving, mobile staff)?
- Does WFPL anticipate a shift toward self-service circulation, and how will that change service protocols at the entry to the library? (Even as libraries shift toward self-service circulation, it is commonly recognized that staffing is not reduced, but *re-purposed* – it is mission-critical to retain the person-to-person engagement that occurs as the user enters and exits the building.)
- How will staffing develop at a departmental level?

Acknowledging the need to revisit and reconsider the model for

staff work stations, the following preliminary list is offered:

Public service points: a three-service-point configuration is suggested, based on the compact, “Gothenburg” desk model.

- 1 station at a customer service / circulation desk
- 1 station at an adult service desk
- 1 station at a children’s service desk

Back of house, Part 1: give strong consideration to a single, combined back-of-house work space, in lieu of a series of departmentalized spaces. A single space will encourage cross-talk and collaboration among departments and will be more responsive to the inevitable, unanticipated changes in staffing patterns that will arise.

- 2 general clerical station2 (circulation)
- 1 check-in station (circulation)
- 2 paging / shelving stations (circulation)
- 3 stations for adult service staff
- 3 stations for children’s service staff
- 3 project tables (most of the work stations listed here will need to support a computer work station and will take the form of a desk or an office landscape cube or equal; but some staff activities will involve “project work” – tasks that need to be spread out – and these stations are large islands or counters that accommodate just such projects)
- 1 station for a future teen librarian
- 1 station for a future outreach librarian
- 1 station for a future “maker” librarian
- 1 station for cataloging
- 1 project table for processing & repair
- 1 station for maintenance (this may be relocated apart from the shared, combined workroom and closer to the building’s

mechanical equipment)

- 1 station for an administrative assistant (this station may be relocated or given particular proximity to the director’s office)

Back of house, Part 2: The library’s director and the other members of the management team, inasmuch as they have supervisory responsibilities, will require an enclosed office for their work station. Ideally, these can be configured in close proximity to the shared, combined workroom, so the managers have easy access to the staff they supervise.

- 1 office for the library director
- 1 office for the adult services manager
- 1 office for the children’s services manager
- 1 office for the access and outreach manager
- 1 office for the technology and technical services manager
- 1 office for a future marketing manager
- 1 office for a future technical services manager (presently these responsibilities are combined in the technology and technical services manager, above)

In addition, the library wishes to include a work station to reserve the possibility of supporting a social worker, a position that would be provided in cooperation with local social service agenc(ies) and located within the library, for public convenience.

Together, this tallies 32 work stations.

#### *C.5. Meeting / programming support*

Space to support meeting and programming efforts is a more and more important element in the library’s overall facilities plans. Public

libraries today place greater emphasis on providing spaces that foster engagement and dynamic exchange among users and groups of users. As noted in the national trends summary, library-sponsored programs and program attendance have grown dramatically over the last ten years. These services need to be accommodated in a suitable space.

Meeting space come in a variety of types and sizes, the particulars of which will vary according to the needs and priorities of each individual library. In West Fargo's case, for a library that will serve 41,700+ population, three meeting spaces are recommended, reflecting the library's interest in sponsoring regular program events and the community's interest in having such spaces available to book for other events.

**Multi-purpose room to seat 120:** This is a flat floor space, supporting flexible audience arrangements with move-able chairs and tables. At an audience capacity of 120, strong consideration should be given to designing the space with a de-mountable partition to divide the space into two smaller rooms for concurrent programming. The space should support as much technology and audio-visual presentation support as the budget will allow.

**Conference room to seat 16:** This space will be used for smaller-scale library programs, such as book discussion groups. The conference

room will be used by the library board for their regular meetings and committee meetings, and for larger staff meetings. The conference room will also be available for booking by community groups for small group meetings.

**Storytime room to seat 50:** A dedicated space can be provided within the children's department to support storytimes and routine children's programs. Occasional, larger programs would be shifted to the multi-purpose room. An audience capacity of 50 accommodates children attending a program, along with their expected, extended entourage (caregivers, siblings, and such).

A dedicated storytime room offers a two-fold advantage. First, it locates routine children's programming in the context of the collections that programming means to promote. And second, it frees the larger multi-purpose room for greater accessibility for other library programs and community events.

**Staff conference room to seat 10 :** A modest conference space is proposed for staff use, when staff needs a quiet setting to concentrate on tasks, apart from the shared work space described previously. A staff conference room would be available for group work projects, training and webinars, and making confidential calls.

#### D. Space needs of the West Fargo Public Library

Based on the resource and service inventory goals enumerated above, the space needs of the West Fargo Public Library can be

estimated using the protocols described in *Public Library Space Needs: A Planning Outline*. The *Outline* is organized around eight

types of space, five of which relate directly to the service categories discussed in the previous section of the working paper, space allocations for which are made based on the specific resource and service inventory goals recommended for WFPL:

- Collection space
- Technology space
- User space
- Staff work space
- Meeting / program space

The *Outline* incorporates three additional types of space to round out an estimate of a library's space need. These include:

- Special use space – this refers to a variety of public and staff spaces that many libraries wish to offer, but that haven't been accommodated in the first five types of space, including, for example, small group study rooms, a staff break room, a refreshment area / café for patrons, a copier / business center, and so on. At West Fargo, the Friends of the Library maintain an ongoing used book sale, and space to support the book sale (including storage and sorting) is another example of the type of activity that's supported by special use space.
- Nonassignable space – LPA defines nonassignable space as “all the space that's needed to have a functioning building but where the fire marshall won't let you put books.” Nonassignable space includes the mechanical space, the restrooms, the stairwells / elevator shaft in a multi-level building and so on.
- Dedicated allowances – in some instances, it is appropriate to call out a specific space allowance to support a specific, dedicated function. A library that operates a bookmobile might call out space for a bookmobile garage because this

function is not likely to be accommodated any other way in these calculations. A library that includes partner space for the local literacy office might include that as a dedicated allowance. In West Fargo's case, a dedicated allowance will be made for the History Center, to insure space is reserved for this important function.

**Collection:** The space needed for the collection can vary, depending on factors including how tall the shelves are, how full each shelf should be, how wide the aisles are, how much face-out marketing display is incorporated into the shelving, and so on. Taking these variables into account the collections can be housed at fewer than 10 volumes / items per square foot and up to 15 volumes / items per square foot. The number of items housed per square foot can be considered the collection density.

A generation ago, it was a measure of efficiency to be able to press toward a higher collection density. It mattered to be able to squeeze a bit more capacity from a given amount of floor space. The problem with greater collection density was that it stored and displayed collections in a setting that was difficult for users to use. Shelving was too tall for people to reach. Aisles were so narrow that it was uncomfortable to use, and difficult for a wheelchair to pass.

Today, libraries place a higher priority on deploying the collections in accessible, usable settings. More and more, this translates to using shelving that is, at most, 72" tall (instead of traditional, full-height shelving 84" tall – seven feet). More and more, libraries are applying an even lower maximum shelving height – 66", even 60". Most libraries employ a 42" clear aisle for collections; although accessibility regulations require a minimum 36"

aisle, the same regulations “strongly recommend” a 42" aisle.

For West Fargo, an allowance of 1.0 square foot for every ten items / volumes held is recommended, the better insure a 42" aisle and to preserve an option to possibly employ a maximum shelf height of less than 72" tall.

Regarding magazines, accessibility requirements limit the reach height for current issue magazine display to 54" if one can approach the shelving from the side in a wheelchair. This effectively translates magazine storage capacities to 0.5 square feet needed per title received. If the library limits its back run to a single year, that back run can be incorporated into the current issue display.

**Technology:** Technology stations, like collections, can occupy varying spaces depending on various factors. Some libraries deploy some stations in a stand-up setting to encourage fast turn-around for “express” use. A stand-up station needs relatively little floor space in comparison with a sit down station. Other stations might be deployed with additional input devices – a scanner, for example – which will require more floor space. A library with a larger inventory of technology stations is likely to achieve economies of scale in the layout of those stations, over the experience of a library with a more modest inventory.

The space allocation for technology stations can range from 35.0 square feet per station to as much as 50.0 square feet per station. For West Fargo, given the extent of the recommended inventory, an allocation of 45.0 square feet is suggested.

**User seating:** User seating, likewise, can occupy varying spaces

depending on what kind of seating, on balance, is preferred, as well as the size of the recommended inventory. A low allocation per seat is 30.0 square feet; a moderate allocation is 32.5 square feet; and a generous allocation is 35.0 square feet per seat.

**Staff work spaces:** Many, but not all, staff work stations in the library involve work routines that require support for a desktop or laptop computer. Oftentimes, these will take the form of a conventional desk or an office landscape cubicle. Some stations involve work routines that are more project- or activity-based and will take the form of a counter or island or work table. Still others can take different forms. A work station for paging / sorting may simply be an open space where a worker can assemble carts containing returned material waiting to be shelved and sort and organize that material for re-shelving.

Depending on the requirements of the particular task(s) supported at a specific station, the space need for a staff work station will commonly range from 75 square feet to 150 square feet. In some cases a work station may require less or more space. Stations that are demarked by walls to create an office often need an allocation toward the higher end of that range to accommodate the enclosure. Stations that share an open workroom with adjoining stations typically need a lower allocation. As was discussed previously, a larger library with many staff work stations is likely to realize economies of scale in the layout of those stations, producing small, more efficient space allocation per station.

A low allocation for staff work stations is 110.0 square feet. A moderate allocation for staff work stations is 125.0 square feet. And a generous allocation for staff work stations is 140.0 square feet.

**Meeting spaces:** In a flat-floor, multi-purpose room, allow 10.0 square feet per seat in the audience. An additional allocation should be included to accommodate the space needed at the front of the room for presenters / performers. How large that space for presentation needs to be will depend on the type of programs the library expects to sponsor. At the library's option, further allocations may be made for equipment storage, table / chair storage, or sound equipment and audiovisual controls. Be aware that the space allocation of 10.0 square feet per seat supports theater-style seating. Seating at a seminar table requires 20.0 square feet per seat, with a corresponding adjustment to the audience capacity.

In a conference room, allow 30.0 square feet per seat. If the conference room will be used as a board room, consider adding an allocation for a gallery for attendees at board meetings (10 square feet per seat) and a presentation area (75 to 100 square feet, or more). A similar allocation is made for the seating in the staff conference room.

In a storytime room, allow 10.0 square feet per person if the library's modus operandi for storytimes involves only reading a story. If the library's storytimes include craft activities or movement activities, allow 15.0 square feet per person. If the library's protocol allows caregivers (and others – siblings, for example) to remain during the storytime, include the members of the entourage in the audience count.

**Special use space:** this category of space supports miscellaneous functions and services such as small group study rooms, photocopiers, a staff lounge and similar spaces. Special use space is allocated as a percentage of the gross area of the building. A low allocation for special use space sets aside 12.5% of the gross area of the building for

special use purposes. A moderate allocation sets aside 15.0% of the gross area. A generous allocation sets aside 17.5% of the gross area.

**Nonassignable space:** A similar allowance is made for nonassignable functions. A low allocation sets aside 27.5% of the gross area of the building for nonassignable functions. A moderate allocation sets aside 30.0% of the gross area. A generous allocation sets aside 32.5% of the gross area for nonassignable functions.

**Dedicated allowances:** For West Fargo, four dedicated allowances are recommended

- 1,250 square feet to support the History Center. This allocation is roughly half again more space than the History Center occupies today.
- 750 square feet to support a Maker Lab. In today's library, a Maker Lab supports a variety of technologies and equipment that help individuals learn new skills. Through a Maker Space, the community pools resources to provide tools for learning and self-expression. These can include audio and video capture stations, or editing stations. Libraries use maker spaces to support coding classes and other STEM / STEAM-related activities. The specific production activities to be accommodated here remain to be defined, but this placeholder establishes a benchmark for these uses.
- 750 square feet to support an Entrepreneurs' Center. This is a space that caters to local small businesses and home-based businesses by providing tools and technologies to be used to advance and develop their businesses. Some similarities exist between activities in this space and those in the Maker Lab, but this space speaks directly to small business support.
- 500 square feet to support an RFID-based Automated Materials

Handling (AMH) sorter to automate check-in of returned materials. This will improve efficiencies and speed the return of materials to the shelves.

**Putting It All Together:** The table to the right summarizes the recommended service goals and space needs of the West Fargo Public Library, based on the resource and service inventory goals described previously. Given the stated goals, the West Fargo Public Library will need a building of roughly 55,300 square feet by the year 2040.

Changes to the underlying assumptions expressed here will necessarily change the result. Revising these service goals or applying a different parameter for space allocation will percolate through this math. As the library proceeds into more detailed architectural planning, this understanding of the library’s service goals and space needs will be honed, and a more accurate estimate will emerge.

In any case, this estimate confirms the need for expanded facilities and helps guide the thinking of trustees and staff.

The first task of trustees and staff is to consider the service goals defined in this working paper and confirm or alter those goals. Any changes to the resource and service inventory goals will re-calibrate the estimate of space needs.

Is it feasible to expand in place? With the rough scale of the library’s needs defined, trustees and staff can consider in an informed way the possibility of expanding to 55,300 square feet in the present location, either by occupying more of the adjacent space, or relocating to a new part of the complex, or adding onto the library’s space.

<b>WEST FARGO PUBLIC LIBRARY SPACE NEEDS ESTIMATE</b>	
	Sq.ft.
<b>Collections:</b>	
130,000 items @ 10 items / sq.ft.	13,000
140 magazine titles @ 0.5 sq.ft. / title	70
<b>Technology:</b>	
5+ stations @ +5.0 sq.ft. / station	2,430
<b>User seating:</b>	
144 seats @ 32.5 sq.ft. / seat	4,680
<b>Staff work stations:</b>	
32 work stations @ 125.00 sq.ft. / station	4,000
<b>Meeting spaces:</b>	
Multipurpose room to seat 120 @ 10 sq.ft. / seat (1)	1,450
Conference room to seat 16 @ 30 sq.ft. / seat (2)	580
Storytime room to seat 50 @ 15 sq.ft. / place (3)	825
Staff huddle room to seat 10 @ 30 sq.ft. / seat	300
<b>Special use space:</b>	
Allow 17.5% of the gross area	9,112
<b>Nonassignable space:</b>	
Allow 30.0% of the gross area	15,620
<b>Dedicated allowances:</b>	
History Center	1,250
Maker Lab	750
Entrepreneurs' Center	750
RFID sorter	500
<b>GROSS AREA NEEDED</b>	
	<b>55,317</b>
(1) includes allowance of 250 sq.ft. for presenter / kitchen / storage	
(2) includes gallery to seat 10	
(3) includes 75 sq.ft. allowance for storyteller	

Is new construction on a new site a possibility? If the board and staff consider this possibility, this estimate of scale will help the library evaluate prospective new sites.

Whether expanding in place or building new on a new site, this presents an opportunity to re-examine the benefits of occupying a mixed-use / multi-use building. The effectiveness of any mixed-use building depends entirely on the character and compatibility of the uses in question. The library's present mixed-use configuration brings publicly-funded entities under the same roof. Chicago Public Library recently opened three branches that co-locate a neighborhood library with low-income housing. The public library in Marion, Iowa has been exploring a new facility as part of a commercial-public partnership with a private developer. How separate do the uses need to be? What kind of security might each require? Can the uses share certain features or spaces within the building to mutual advantage (a meeting / program space perhaps, or mechanical / support spaces)? Do the respective uses gain or lose identity and definition as a result of the collaboration? Is there an advantage regarding financing the project (a la Marion, Iowa)? Does the mixed-use promote other civic benefits (a la Chicago Public Library)?

At 55,300 square feet, the scale of the building strongly suggests a multi-level configuration (probably two levels). At this scale, spreading out on a single level creates a footprint that can be difficult to navigate and manage. At this scale, a public library typically envisions more than one staff service point, so portions of the public service space in the building can be moved onto a secondary level without losing access to crucial staff support. At this scale, the costs you save by building up (less roof surface engineered to carry snow

loads) typically offset the costs you incur (elevators, stairwells). Local planners can start to think about what functions or departments belong on an entry level and what functions belong on a secondary (probably upper) level.

The prospect of a multi-level / two-level design will also figure into site selection for new construction: ideally, any site being considered will already be zoned for multi-story construction.

As the board and staff zero in on a likely expansion strategy, this initial estimate of scale can point to a rough estimate of the project budget. It must be emphasized that the estimate produced here of the combined gross area the library needs is not sufficient to produce a cost estimate that is sufficiently accurate for public presentation. More detailed planning and a more thorough understanding of just what an expansion will entail is needed to produce a budget solid enough to stand public examination, but even a rough estimate can point to a preliminary, not-quite-ready-for-full-disclosure project budget that planners can use to start to explore financing options.

As a preliminary budget is prepared, it may prompt the library to consider an expansion planned in phases. While it's almost always most cost-effective to implement the full expansion all at once, sometimes that proves to be too costly. In that case, the board could explore phasing or staging options. How does an acceptable price point impact the scale of a first phase project? Now can an initial phase be organized to accommodate a seamless subsequent second phase? There are many possible strategies the library may be called upon to explore.

As the board and staff assimilate these findings, it will be

important to weigh the strategies for engaging the community and the municipality in the planning process. How can this information be

released most effectively? Who needs to be involved in the planning process when, and how?

## E. Next steps

Eventually, as the board and staff come to terms with these concerns, the library will embark on a detailed architectural planning process. The library will select an architect and work with the architect to develop a specific plan for expansion.

The library may wish to initiate architect selection sooner rather than later to engage the architect's training and knowledge to help with some of the preliminary planning efforts mentioned above – the question of whether to expand in place or build new; site selection issues, if the latter expansion strategy is chosen.

The architect's plan will form the basis for a reliable estimate of project cost, which in turn will form the basis for a financing strategy and a likely public campaign to gain approval for the project.

As the project moves into architectural planning, this initial needs assessment working paper should be elaborated into a companion report known as a building program statement. As important as it is to have this understanding of optimum resource and service inventory goals, as useful as it is to have this understanding of how big the West Fargo Public Library needs to be, the information conveyed in this working paper is not sufficiently thorough to guide the architect in planning a building. The results derived from this examination lay down a critical benchmark, from which further, more detailed

planning may proceed, and developing a building program will be central to the next phase in the planning process.

A building program is, in the simplest of terms, the library's instructions to its architect. Just as a computer program is a set of instructions that tells a computer what to do, a building program is a set of instructions that tells an architect what is to be accommodated and accomplished in the design of the building.

While a building program can go into great detail regarding the physical characteristics to be found in different parts of the building (floor coverings, lighting preferences, and more), a program should address four key questions that an architect will need to focus on as the design process begins, four questions that inform the early stages of design most directly:

- How big does the library need to be (verifying the results of this examination and the overall scale of the building)?
- How should the building be subdivided into departments, rooms, offices, spaces and areas?
- How big should each of those functional areas and departments be?
- How should those functional areas and departments relate to one another to optimize utility for the user and effective operation for the staff?

If the library doesn't produce a program for the expansion, the architect will "program" the building. Architects are trained to program buildings. But in concluding this working paper, LPA's last bit of counsel to the West Fargo Public Library is to encourage the library to produce the program.

If the library produces the program, that task will likely fall to the library director, or the library can engage the assistance of a consulting librarian (LPA or some other firm or individual). The choice here between library staff or consulting librarian is immaterial. What matters is that the program come from the point of view of a librarian.

Years ago, an architect of LPA's acquaintance made the following observation: a program written by an architect is a statement of the solution while a program written by a librarian is a statement of the problem to be solved. It's the difference between "what we're going to do" and "what we *want* to do." The latter, with its inherent expression of *aspirations* makes a program prepared by the library and written from a librarian's perspective a more powerful, a more productive planning tool.

However the West Fargo Public Library chooses to proceed, the board and staff and the community are about to embark on an effort that will define the West Fargo Public Library for many years to come. As Winston Churchill, that noted British architect (!), observed: We shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us.