

**HOWARD COUNTY**  
**FACILITIES ASSESSMENT AND MASTER PLAN**  
**2004 – 2030**

*Adopted October 26, 2004 by the Howard County Library Board of Trustees*

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Howard County Library (to be known hereon as HCL) continues to experience significant growth in the community's use of all library services. It outperforms peer libraries in almost all areas of standard accepted performance measures. To plan for the future delivery of library service in this growing jurisdiction the County, working together with the Library, issued a request for consultant services to create a twenty-five year Library Facilities Assessment and Master Plan for Howard County. The goal of both the County and the Library was to be able to provide for library facilities that would not only be responsive to changing service needs, but would also anticipate the service needs and expectations of county residents. One particular area of focus was to address those County's Planned Service Areas which are under-served by existing library facilities. The County selected *PROVIDENCE Associates Inc* for the project and charged the firm with:

- Assessing current library services and identify future services
- Studying the physical condition of existing library facilities and determine the adequacy of those facilities to serve the current county population and the projected population through the year 2030
- Devising standards
- Making recommendations for all aspects of a library capital program
- Developing a program of requirements for a proposed Ellicott City Branch Library.

PROVIDENCE began its work with the Library's Administration, Project Team and Leadership Team in March, 2004.

To date *PROVIDENCE Associates* has:

- Identified both current and projected library usage patterns
- Created a county demographic profile
- Conducted a peer comparison of library output measures that compare HCL with six other Maryland library systems whose boundaries are contiguous to the County, and with four other comparable public libraries in the United States
- Gathered stakeholder input to determine satisfaction levels with current services and to identify changes in the way library services need to be provided in the future
- Assessed the physical infrastructure of all existing library facilities,
- Established library facility service areas for Howard County that will serve for at least the next twenty-five years,
- Focused on the issues related to the current Miller Branch Library facility and service area

- Developed recommendations that will provide for quality facilities that accommodate library services that are responsive to customer needs and expectations for at least the next twenty-five years.

We have worked with the County's Planning Department in determining the projected population growth through the year 2030. Each facility's service area has been correlated to the County's Transportation Analysis Zones. In addition, we have reviewed the County's Growth Plan and have focused on the targeted areas of development and redevelopment. These have been combined with geographic mapping of current library customers to more accurately define the library service areas and project the need for additional library facilities.

Our team analyzed the comments made by 128 men, women, and young adults in 14 different focus sessions. The focus groups represented a broad spectrum of library customers, community stakeholders, and staff. In addition to talking with general library users, we spoke with representative groups of parents of young children, senior citizens, school system administrators and community leaders from both the public and private sector. The focus group comments enabled us to determine the level of customer and community satisfaction with current library services, identify areas for improvement and understand their expectations for future services and facilities.

Taking into account the:

- Extraordinarily high volume of library usage by an almost unprecedented majority of Howard County residents
- County's projected population growth
- Accepted national standards for sizing libraries
- Service improvements and expectations identified by stakeholders in the community.

The consultants reviewed each facility determining its ability to adequately provide the current complement of services as well as its capacity to accommodate future services in a growing community of library users.

What follows is PROVIDENCE *Associates*' key findings and recommendations that comprise the Howard County Library Facilities Assessment and Master Plan and the Program of Requirements for a replacement Ellicott City Library Branch.

## Howard County Out-performs Its Peers

We have reviewed output measures for the HCL between FY 2000 and FY 2003. There has been, over time, a consistent dramatic increase in library usage by HCL customers. Circulation is up 62%; Reference Questions asked have increased by 45%, and Library Visits are up 110%. Program attendance has grown 21%. Electronic access to library resources and services are up 112% in Howard County

The dramatic significance of these output measures becomes clear when compared to the performance of the peer libraries in each of the categories. With but a few exceptions, the Howard County Library out-performs all of its peers:

- Circulation per capita = 19.92 items
- Reference Questions per capita = 1.6 questions
- Visits per capita = 7.0
- Collection turnover = 5.0 (every item circulates at least 5 times in a year).

One noteworthy comparable area is the “percent of population who have library cards and the circulation of library materials per card holder.” Ninety-five percent (95.4%) of Howard County residents have library cards. Each of these cardholders borrows on average at least 21 items a year.

## A Growing Howard County Places a Greater Demand on Library Services

Howard County government has developed a laudable plan for controlled growth with no more than 1,750 additional residential units per year. Major new developments are underway in the portion of the county at Maple Lawn Farms and at Waverly Woods, as well as in the eastern portion with the Route 1 corridor revitalization. Each of these projects will bring new residences and businesses to the County, thus increasing the number of library users. Development for future years is identified in the Growth Plan.

The population projections for Howard County have both significant service and facility implications for the Library. The population of Howard County is projected to increase approximately 27.62 percent by the year 2030, from the 2000 census number of 250,760 to an estimated total 320,000. The estimated increase in population for the individual branch library service areas from 2000 through 2030 is:

East Columbia	17.6% (from 94,600 to 111,200)
Elkridge	40.6% (from 27,430 to 38,600)
Savage	37.1% (from 37,270 to 51,100)
Miller	25.8% (from 74,100 to 93,200)
Glenwood	49.2% (from 17,400 to 25,900)
*Central	27.6%

\* The Central Library serves the entire County.

(Source: Howard County Library Service Area Identification and Demographic Reports, prepared by PROVIDENCE Associates Inc, April 2004 and Howard County Planning Department)

There are four nationally recognized demographic indicators that translate into high library usage. They are level of education attained, household income, home ownership, and households with children under the age of 18. Howard County's demographic profile for each of these indicators ranks considerably above the U.S. average resulting in the current pattern of high volume library usage throughout the County. The indicators are expected to be maintained as the County continues to grow.

Projected population increases over the next 25 years, consistently increasing usage by County residents, along with the comments and suggestions made by Focus Group participants, signify a need for additional library facilities throughout the County. This increase in the number of library users will continue to tax the limitations of existing facilities, services, and staffing.

### **What the Community Says**

The vast majority of all focus group participants have nothing but praise for the library and its staff! They do, however, consistently express the need for "more"-- best sellers, new books for adults and children, current non-fiction, and more current titles in areas of science and mathematics. They also desire more programming for adults and children, more seating, and more space for materials. All want more (expanded) hours of operation (earlier opening hours and Sunday hours year-round), quiet study rooms for small groups, dedicated teen spaces in all libraries, additional meeting rooms for community use, and more parking specifically at both the Central Library and the Miller (Ellicott City) Branch Library.

The community leadership group represents a variety of important and influential individuals in the County from both the public and private sector. It is obvious from their discussions that they reflect some very distinct ideas about the HCL and its future role in the community. A large majority believes that the HCL is essential and views it as a formidable element for the "quality of life" that the County wishes to project. They identify the libraries as the core of the communities they serve. A small but vocal group believes that the expanding Internet will replace the need for libraries. This is a common misconception made by those who have not analyzed the Internet's impact on public libraries. However, the reality is that the Internet has actually *increased* the overall use of public libraries not only in Howard County but also throughout the nation. In Howard County this is confirmed by the library's consistently large increases in the output measures statistics of library visits, circulation counts, reference questions asked by customers, percentage of Howard County residents who have and use library cards, and the volume of electronic access of library resources and services.

The need for larger library facilities was also a frequent comment among all focus group participants. The need for larger buildings was based on the need to accommodate:

- More books and materials in a variety of formats
- More information technologies
- More meeting rooms for use by community groups
- Quiet study areas

- Separate and well-defined children's areas
- Areas dedicated to serving teens
- Auditorium space for author lectures and major children's and family programming, etc.

All commented on the need for more parking at the Central and Miller libraries.

### **Library Technology for Today and Tomorrow**

Technology has resulted in the most dramatic change in public libraries in the last 15 years and it will continue to drive change. Therefore, as HCL looks ahead it is important to maintain a keen awareness of developing technologies that will impact how the library will continue to serve the information and life-long learning needs of its customers.

It is imperative that the Library remain on track to migrate to a new Integrated Library System (ILS) in no more than two years. It should keep the existing system current with any new releases, continue to introduce new features to facilitate customer access and use, and minimize the amount of change that both library staff and customers experience in the migration to the next generation of its system.

### **Service Areas**

The Library Administration's philosophy related to the number and size of libraries needed to serve Howard County is a very practical one. As a primarily suburban county they believe that the appropriate library service model is that of several large full service libraries which are easily accessible via major transportation routes rather than many small service-limited facilities located within neighborhoods. The consultants concur with that approach for library service for this jurisdiction.

In fact, as the consultants reviewed current usage statistics and the residential concentration of library users for each existing facility, our recommendations are based on expanding the size of libraries in most of the current service areas rather than creating many new service areas. This rationale is based on the fact that there already are several "mixed" service areas where there is significant interaction and overlap of usage between Miller and Glenwood, Elkridge and Miller, and Savage and East Columbia. East Columbia is basically a subset of the Central Library. The Central Library serves almost the entire County population with the exception of the far west end and a few other scattered areas.

PROVIDENCE is recommending that the following service areas remain the same – Central, East Columbia, Glenwood, Miller and Elkridge. The service area for what is currently Savage needs to be expanded to include serving the current and future development in the areas of west of US 29 and south of Johns Hopkins Road. Relocating the Savage facility more toward Scaggsville, west of Interstate 95 and East of US 29 should be considered.

## **CONSULTANT'S SERVICE RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on all of the data, documentation, and comments that have been gathered, reviewed, and assessed by PROVIDENCE we propose below the recommendations requiring the most immediate implementation to enable the Howard County Library to maintain its preeminent position of providing relevant, high quality library services to Howard County residents for years to come.

### **Hours of Service**

- The HCL should immediately begin to explore ways to cost-effectively provide more hours of service per week to Howard County residents. A good place to begin is opening all libraries in the County earlier in mornings. The next focus for expanding hours should be is to identify cost-effective ways to open some or all libraries on Sundays throughout the year.
- While expanding hours of service (especially Sundays on a 52-week basis) will require some additional staffing, modifying work schedules along with investing in additional automated services would allow for expanding service hours in a cost-effective manner.

### **Collections**

- Increasing the total percentage of operating funds spent on library materials to 20% percent over the next five years.
- Providing more copies of popular materials that will reduce reserve lists and the length of time it takes to respond to demand.
  - Evaluating new resources as they become available and integrating them into the library's services as appropriate.

### **Programming**

- Engaging in a countywide survey of residents to identify the types of programs that would engender large audiences.
- Improving the marketing of library programs by determining how and where, e.g. which media outlets, County residents learn about what is happening in their communities.

### **Information Technology (IT)**

- Budgeting for the continual development of the current and future ILS with the introduction of new features as they become available and with the addition of new services from the ILS vendor; these new service need to promote-the full use of the system by Library staff and customers.
- Selecting and implementing, as soon as possible, a time, print, and PC reservation management system to manage public computers and printers.
- Increasing the number of public use computers based on use and demand.

- Establishing a regular replacement cycle for public and staff computers in order to take advantage of continually increasing functionality.
- Creating a webmaster position to focus on the development of the Library's web site as a viable and reliable information portal for all Howard County residents and business establishments.

### **Youth/Teen Services**

- Establishing a county-wide "Teen Advisory Board" to work with the Youth Coordinator and a staff committee to develop an engaging plan of service for teenage library customers and the creation of a building program for dedicated teen spaces to be incorporated in all future renovated, expanded, and new library facilities.
- Identifying non-profits and Howard County departments serving teens and developing collaborative relationships to better serve the educational and recreational interests of teens residing throughout the County.

### **Senior Citizens**

- Scheduling Senior programming for morning and early afternoon hours.
- Publicizing senior programs via senior newsletters, County senior centers, independent living communities, and local church bulletins.
- Hiring a "Senior Services" specialist who will work collaboratively with other local senior service agencies to develop a library program of senior service and outreach.
- Providing assistive technologies for persons with vision and hearing impairment.

### **Public Library/Community Collaboration and Partnerships**

- Continuing the joint planning of activities and services focused on cooperatively enhancing educational support of K through 12 learning in the County.
- Developing a formal family literacy program and strengthening a support program focused on emergent learning for children 0-5 years of age and for the parenting of children from ages 0 through 17 in collaboration with local education, human, and social service agencies.
- Continuing the growth and enhancement of health information services.

## **LIBRARY FACILITIES ASSESSMENT**

The appropriate sizing of public library facilities is determined by the complement of services to be offered in response to community need and expectation and the population of the service area.

### **Size of Library Facilities**

All Howard County libraries at this time, with the exception of Glenwood, are too small for providing the current array of service offerings and collections to the number of residents being served. With the County's population expected to increase by approximately 28% over the next 25 years and with new services and additional technology resources that will need to be provided, the existing library facilities are also too small to provide future service to a growing customer base throughout the County.

Nationally established best practices for adequately sizing library facilities recommend one square foot (1 SF) of library space per capita. Currently Howard County is providing .62 SF of library space per capita, or 178,000 SF for a population of 273,400. Hence, the library system is under-sized for served its current population base. It requires 35% percent more space than it currently has.

The need to increase the library space for Howard County is especially significant given the extraordinarily high proportion of residents who use their libraries regularly, which at 95%, is among the highest in the nation. By the year 2030 the County's population is projected to grow to 320,000. At that point the Library will need a total of 320,000 SF of library space to adequately serve County residents. Therefore, HCL needs to add at an additional 142,000 SF of space over the next 25 years.

As libraries engage in adding space through both the expansion of existing facilities (where possible) and the construction of new facilities, it is imperative that the design of these spaces include maximum adaptability to accommodate not only what we know is needed today, but also to accommodate what we do not yet know will be needed in the future. As the core of the communities they serve, all libraries should include spaces that welcome users and that provide for a variety of community activities and gatherings.

Any new and replacement facilities need to be located in highly visible, frequently traveled, accessible areas of the communities they serve. Ample parking is an essential requirement.

## **CONSULTANT'S FACILITY RECOMMENDATIONS AND COST ESTIMATES**

Based on the array of services, the projected population growth of service areas and the current physical condition of the buildings, PROVIDENCE *Associates* recommends adding approximately 142,000 SF of library space to the HCL over the next 10 years. The consultants have also identified immediate facility infrastructure issues that need to be addressed in the existing facilities.

### **General Infrastructure Maintenance**

In order to address the immediate problems (structural, mechanical, plumbing, electrical, site, life safety, and architectural) identified in the physical assessment of existing facilities, an estimated \$904,400 will be need to be expended over the next two years.

Over the long-term (3–10 years) the estimated costs for maintenance and on-going repairs/replacements for current infrastructure is estimated to be \$1,037,600. This number is in terms of 2004 dollars.

### **Increasing Library Space**

The following plan, recommended by the HCL Board, adopted achieves the additional 142,000 SF of public library space over the next 10 years and maximizes efficiency of operations. The projects are in order of priority. All costs are estimated costs. All estimated costs exclude site acquisition that may be needed.

#### **Library Board's Adopted Recommendation:**

- Construct a brand new 82,500 SF Ellicott City Library. Estimated Cost: \$26,000,000 (projected to the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2006).
- Relocate the Administrative Offices from the East Columbia Library and Back-of-House operations from Central Library to the current 23,500 SF Miller Library facility, renovated to accommodate office space. As a result the Central Library will gain approximately 7,000 SF of space and the East Columbia Library will gain approximately 9,000 SF of space. In addition, Central will gain 30 parking spaces for the public previously need for back-of-house staff. Estimated Cost: \$1,000,000 (2004 dollars).
- Renovate both the Central and East Columbia libraries to incorporate the vacated administrative space as public service space. Estimated Cost: \$1,164,300 (2004 dollars).

- Provide for a new Elkridge Library of approximately 35,000 SF, on the existing site, pending a site analysis. Estimated Cost: \$11,000,000 (2004 dollars). \*
- Provide for a new Savage Library of approximately 35,000 SF, on the existing site, pending a site analysis. Estimated Cost: \$11,000,000 (2004 dollars).\*
- Construct a new 25,000 SF library (likely in the Maple Lawn Farms or Waverly Woods areas) depending on the ultimate location of the Ellicott City facility. Estimated Cost: \$7,500,000.

The total estimated capital cost is \$57,700,000 excluding site acquisitions. The sites for new facilities should be large enough to accommodate future expansion of the building and/or parking.

Estimated 2004 dollar costs should consider an annual escalation rate of 3.5%.

\*Estimated costs include demolition of the existing structure. Site Analysis recommended to determine amount of space and parking that can be constructed on the existing site per County planning guidelines.