

VISALIA LIBRARY REMODEL AND EXPANSION

COMMUNITY LIBRARY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

**PREPARED BY THE
TULARE COUNTY LIBRARY
2002**

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OVERALL EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Four component pieces were used to collect public and staff input for this needs assessment of the Visalia Branch library. Each report was prepared independently over a period of four years, by different individuals, and for differing purposes. Each of these four reports is reproduced in their entirety as appendices to this needs assessment. The input from these studies was then combined with appropriate demographic and statistical data to complete the present needs assessment.

There are two governing bodies with agencies that directly impact the Tulare County Library, the City of Visalia and Tulare County. The primary governmental agency that will impact the planning of the facility is the County of Tulare. The main county departments that are involved are the Board of Supervisors, County Counsel, the Resource Management Agency, and the County Administrative Office.

As the governing body of Tulare County the Board of Supervisors is responsible for signing the grant application. They hold fiduciary responsibility for the building project and ultimately determine the level of matching funds that are available for the program. They have the ultimate approval of all building plans. The Board is the administrative board to the Tulare County Library and is the body that appoints the County Librarian to his/her position.

The City of Visalia plays an important role in the planning of the facility. The city has pledged \$500,000 towards the project. There is a Historical Advisory Committee that works with architects and builders to keep the integrity of Historic Visalia intact. The city will be deeding to the County certain properties that are adjacent to the Old Visalia Library.

Many community organizations are served by the library or are closely associated with various library programs and activities. Visalia Heritage, Inc. is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of Visalia's historic architecture and neighborhoods. They are also interested in local history and the preservation of historical information and have published books on the history of Visalia. Their service needs revolve around our continued efforts to gather and preserve historical information and photographs.

Visalia is the county seat of Tulare County. With a population of just under 92,000 Visalia is also the largest community in Tulare County, being more that twice the size of any other city in the county. A rapid growth rate of over eighty- percent throughout the last two decades has let to many changes in the community.

Visalia takes great pride in a thriving downtown area. Local business owners, service providers, service clubs, and the City of Visalia work together to make sure that the services offered in the downtown area are viable. They also work to maintain the natural charm of the downtown area.

The Chamber of Commerce estimates that the population of Visalia doubles most days because of the number of non-residents who come into the city. This is due to many factors. Visalia has the most shopping opportunities in Tulare County, including two malls. Downtown Visalia is a delightful thriving area that entices the public with its fine choice of restaurants, shops, and theaters. Being the County Seat most of the employees that work for Tulare County work in Visalia. Most county services are performed in Visalia, bringing into the city the many residents of Tulare County who utilize these services. Visalia is home to high tech businesses, manufactures, and agricultural support businesses.

The Community surveys and focus groups brought forth a plethora of community needs. While the library cannot mitigate many of these needs the following is an analysis of those needs to which we can respond as the providers of public library services in Visalia.

Computer and Internet access is needed for those in the community who are on the wrong side of the digital divide. While many students have access to computers during the school hours this access is limited by time available and the small number of public access unit's. Computer needs are not limited to any age specific group. Both young and old in Visalia need to have computer access made available to them. Needs differ somewhat within the demographic differences of individual library users. Properly

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trained staff, who can mitigate computer requests and problems, are essential to providing computer services to meet the varying needs. A continual evaluation of the Internet, and what it has to offer all groups, must take place along with the necessary refresher training needed for the continual providence of fresh and relevant services to the community.

The children of Visalia need a library space that they can call their own. The designated area needs to be larger than the current area so that the number of books, computers, and audiovisual materials can increase. An increased number of attractive materials need to be made available to the children and be displayed in attractive furniture. The children need a place that is colorful, warm, and inviting. A place that they know is specially there for them where they can feel secure and welcome and safe.

The children need to feel safe by having a place that is away from Adult Services because some of our adult customers are scary and worrisome to the children. Separate bathrooms must be available to the children so that they can feel safe and comfortable using the facilities without being exposed to the often times harsh reality of adult public bathroom use.

Children need a place where they can be freely express themselves during story time and other programs. The idea behind Children's programming is to get the children to use the library, and more importantly, to inspire them to read or to want to become readers. Allowing the children to either participate directly in the program or to respond to programming prompts most effectively accomplishes this.

The current service limitations of the Visalia Branch are all based on the fact that the current facility is too small. It could be argued that part of the problem stems from the lack of flexibility. We need to provide workspace that is close enough to public desk areas for easy access and for immediate response to public needs. In addition, one could argue that line-of-sight is not adequate due to the design of the building in relation to the public entrances. While the last two arguments are valid there is nothing that can be done to correct these problems without the provision of additional space.

Two buildings are involved in this proposed remodel and expansion. The first is the 1936 Visalia City Library. The second is the 1976 Visalia City / Tulare County Library building. The 1976 building was erected adjacent to the 1936 city library. The two buildings share the same city block, with the 1976 building being located directly north of the 1936 building. These buildings are in close proximity to one another, sharing a common covered courtyard that was designed to physically link the two structures. From 1976 to 2001 the old city library served as storage for the County Library. It is no longer usable as such because of the need to mitigate mold and other hazardous materials.

The 1936 city library operated in its present location for a period of forty years, undergoing at least two different expansions. This building would be completely renovated primarily for children's services, the literacy program and storage. Total area of the old city library is 9,800 square feet. It is proposed that 8,000 square feet of that total be integrated into public service areas.

The library site is located within the downtown historic district of Visalia. It is located within short proximity of major north/south and east/west thoroughfares. Public transportation is good, with the city transfer points to most bus lines less than three blocks from the library. There is extensive street-side parking, as well as handicapped parking. This has been the traditional library site for sixty-six years, and is identified as such in the community.

Access to the Visalia Library is currently provided from both the east and west sides of the library block. Access for all patrons is through the courtyard that connects the 1936 and 1976 buildings. Maintaining these dual approaches is essential. Most public transit access is located on the east side of the block. Most of the parking and bicycle access is available on the west side of the block. It became important to sustain access from both sides of the property in any remodel plan.

The ADA survey for this application, notes some minor alterations that will be required to improve site access. Most of these changes involve improved sidewalk cuts at corners and driveways. The report also notes the need for additional handicapped parking.

INTRODUCTION

From the beginning, the design of this building project was the renovation of the 1936 city library, and the creation of a connecting lobby that would unify the 1976 building with the older structure. Other options were discussed, but eventually it was determined that a renovation of existing space was the most effective means of expanding the Visalia Library facilities. The four primary factors in this decision are enumerated below.

- The County of Tulare does not have sufficient funds to augment the special district status of the Tulare County Library. Consequently, any expansion of library services in Visalia would be constrained by existing funding. This currently rules out the possibility of additional branch libraries in Visalia.
- Through community support, a master plan was developed for phased expansion of the Visalia building. The first phase of this project is the renovation of the 1936 building and its connection to the 1976 building. A second phase would provide additional space for meeting rooms, special collections, and expanded service areas. Early in the process it was made clear that the City of Visalia would be prepared to assist with funding for library expansion. It was also made clear that only the first phase renovation of the 1936 building was an acceptable option to the city.
- Popular support and fund raising for this project would be feasible. However, the agencies willing to support such a fund drive were only interested in the project as a proposed expansion of children's services.
- The local Visalia historical building ordinance specifies that any restoration of historic buildings will not significantly alter the physical appearance of that building. Therefore, expansion of the 1936 building was not possible with the exception of new bathrooms, and the connecting lobby between the two buildings would need to present a minimal change in the physical appearance, thus reducing available space in this area as well.

On this basis, library staff began to further assess community needs. Since expansion space was predetermined, the focus was to identify the areas of greatest need within the community that could be accommodated by the new space. This assessment was not an attempt to develop the optimum library, but to optimize the available space.

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METHODOLOGY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Four component pieces were used to collect public and staff input for this needs assessment of the Visalia Branch library. Each report was prepared independently over a period of four years, by different individuals, and for differing purposes. Three of these reports, those specifically designed to gauge customer input, are reproduced in their entirety as appendices to this needs assessment. The input from these studies was then combined with appropriate demographic and statistical data to complete the present needs assessment.

The first report was the 1999 Needs Assessment for Visalia Library Project. For this assessment, a Library Planning Committee was organized. This focus group was composed of twenty local citizens from Visalia and the County Librarian. Using the Planning for Results Model, this committee prepared a list of community needs. Through a roundtable discussion, each need was addressed. The committee then ranked each need, focusing on the top three needs for the community of Visalia in relation to library service. The identified needs were literacy, business and careers, and family support. The group then identified specific goals for each of the three designated needs.

The second report was also a focus group, but composed of library staff. This study from January of 2000 was the first step toward creating a Master Plan Building Program for the Visalia Library. This report was prepared as a guideline for architects to develop proposals for expansion and renovation on the current library site. Portions of this study included general functionality and specific concerns, including such items as children's services, entrance access, study areas, and computer access. No conclusions were drawn from this study, but the material on functionality and space usage are valuable components.

Third, as part of a study session for the Tulare County Board of Supervisors in March of 2001, the library conducted a customer service survey. The study session was designed to present the board with information regarding the needs that could be addressed by passage of a countywide sales tax initiative. The customer survey was conducted over a five-week period in early 2001. It was designed to address all levels of customer service. Feedback was solicited on several levels including limited demographics, public perceptions regarding library needs (books, hours, computers, space, programs, etc.), and evaluation of service performance. The Visalia portion of the survey generated responses from more than 660 customers.

The most significant limitation of this survey was the fact that it was only conducted among library users.

Designed to require only checkmarks and a numeric ranking of services, the survey asked for minimal demographic information, identifying only sex and age group. The survey was designed to allow customers three simple forms of input regarding library service and needs. First was a list of ten current library services (including a category for "other"). Customers were asked to select their top five items and rank them sequentially, with one (1) being their most important choice. Second, there was a small section for written comments. Customers were asked what they would most like to see changed or improved at the library. Well over half of the individuals who wrote comments in this section chose to reiterate their first choice from the preceding section. The third form of input was a simple ranking of overall Library service. Customers were asked to select between excellent, above average, average, below average, and poor.

The final report used for this study was an additional needs assessment. This second survey was conducted early in 2002 in an effort to contact all special interest groups and populations within the Visalia service area. An additional 150 Visalia residents were surveyed at locations throughout the community. The basis for the information gathered was the previously mentioned 1999 study. The customers in this new study were tracked in terms of organizational affiliation, special needs, age, and ethnic group.

Survey locations included shopping areas, downtown, the local adult school, our library site, a health clinic, beauty and barbershops, and grocery stores. Those surveyed were spoken to in person or by telephone. There were some groups questioned, but most were one-on-one interviews.

ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

Four component pieces were used to collect public and staff input for this needs assessment of the Visalia Branch library. Each report was prepared independently over a period of four years, by different individuals, and for differing purposes. Each of these three reports is reproduced as appendices to this needs assessment. The input from these studies was then combined with appropriate demographic and statistical data to complete the present needs assessment. The outline of this document was designed to closely follow the elements delineated in Appendix 3 of Section 20440 of Title 5 of the Library Bond Act.

First, in the summer of 1999 a Library Planning Committee—composed of local citizens and the County Librarian—prepared a needs assessment for the Visalia Library Project. Using the Planning for Results Model, this committee prepared a list of community needs. Through a roundtable discussion, each need was addressed. The committee then ranked each need. In the end, the group specified the top three needs for the community of Visalia in relation to library service. The committee then identified goals for each of the three designated needs.

Second, in January of 2000, members of the library staff prepared a Master Plan Building Program for the Visalia Library. This report was prepared as a guideline for architects to develop proposals for expansion and renovation on the current library site. Portions of this study included general functionality and specific concerns, including such items as children's services, entrance access, study areas, and computer access. No conclusions were drawn from this study, but the material on functionality and space usage are valuable components.

Third, as part of a study session for the Tulare County Board of Supervisors in March of 2001, the library conducted a customer service survey. The study session was designed to present the board with information regarding the needs that could be addressed by passage of a countywide sales tax initiative. The customer survey was conducted over a five-week period in early 2001. It was designed to address all levels of customer service. Feedback was solicited on several levels including limited demographics, public perceptions regarding library needs (books, hours, computers, space, programs, etc.), and evaluation of service performance. The Visalia portion of the survey generated responses from more than 660 customers. The most significant limitation of this survey was the fact that it was only conducted among library users.

Fourth, an additional needs assessment was conducted early in 2002 in an effort to contact all special interest groups and populations within the Visalia service area. An additional 150 individuals were surveyed. The basis for the information gathered was the previously mentioned 1999 study. The customers in this new study were tracked in terms of organizational affiliation, special needs, age, and ethnic group.

The procedures used in each of these four reports is described below.

METHODS USED TO ELICIT INPUT

The first report was the 1999 Needs Assessment for Visalia Library Project. For this assessment, a Library Planning Committee was organized. This focus group was composed of twenty local citizens from Visalia and the County Librarian. Using the Planning for Results Model, this committee prepared a list of community needs. Through a roundtable discussion, each need was addressed. The committee then ranked each need, focusing on the top three needs for the community of Visalia in relation to library service. The group then identified specific goals for each of the three designated needs.

The second report was also a focus group but composed of library staff. This study from January of 2000 was the first step toward creating a Master Plan Building Program for the Visalia Library. This report was prepared as a guideline for architects to develop proposals for expansion and renovation on the current library site. Portions of this study included general functionality and specific concerns, including such items as children's services, entrance access, study areas, and computer access.

The third and fourth documents were both surveys. One was a customer survey of library users. The second was a broader-based community effort. The methodology of each is listed in detail below.

2001 CUSTOMER SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The two surveys employed in this report were conducted using different procedures. The 2001 customer survey was completed in-house and was designed

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to sample library customers only. The 2002 needs assessment was designed to reach a broader spectrum of Visalia residents.

The 2001 customer survey was conducted in fifteen branch libraries and the two bookmobiles between Tuesday, 2 January and Friday, 9 February of 2001.¹ The form was a single sided questionnaire on a standard 8.5 by 11-inch sheet of paper. The intent was to distribute to adult² library customers a simple form that would provide library staff with feedback regarding service priorities.

Designed to require only checkmarks and a numeric ranking of services, the survey asked for minimal statistical information, identifying only sex and age group.³ Customers were also asked to mark which library they used and their community of residence (if different). Customers were also asked to rank the importance of selected library services and to rate their overall satisfaction with the library.

We recognize that this is not a scientific sampling of Tulare County residents. However, we received 985 completed surveys from thirteen branch libraries and the bookmobiles.⁴ These 985 surveys represent 2.4 percent of the Library's 40,745 registered adult users.⁵ This does represent a significant statistical sample of our registered customers. At the same time, we also recognize that this survey largely represents our regular users.⁶ Consequently, the results were invariably favorable, as most individuals that might have a negative opinion of the Library are infrequent users at best. The Visalia sample represented 661 of the 985 surveys. The statistics used in this needs assessment have been taken from the Visalia sample only.

The survey was designed to allow customers three simple forms of input regarding library service and needs. The first was a list of ten current library services (including a category for "other" services). Customers were asked to select their

¹ The survey was not conducted in the Farmersville volunteer library because Library staff does not operate the facility.

² The survey was designed to solicit responses only from library users that had reached voting age. However, anyone interested in participating in the survey was welcome. A survey of young adults will also be conducted this spring in coordination with a grant received by the San Joaquin Valley Library System to improve young adult services.

³ The age groups were broken into four blocks: 18-30, 30-45, 45-60, and 60+.

⁴ There were no surveys collected from Terra Bella or Alpaugh. In addition, there was a very limited response from the bookmobiles, Earlimart, Ivanhoe, Pixley, and Tipton.

⁵ We recognize that some of the completed surveys have come from users that do not hold library cards. There were also a limited number of surveys filled out by non-residents. The 40,745 was our adult customer base as of 1 February 2001.

⁶ Regular users would normally be defined as those individuals who visit the Library at least monthly.

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top five items and rank them sequentially, with one (1) being their most important choice. These services appeared on the survey as follows:

- MORE BOOKS
- COMPUTER TRAINING
- MORE COMPUTERS
- MORE ONLINE COMPUTER RESOURCES
- MORE OPEN HOURS
- MORE PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN
- MORE PROGRAMS FOR ADULTS
- MORE SPACE (TABLES & SEATING)
- MORE VIDEOCASSETTES, CDs & BOOKS ON TAPE
- OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)

Most customers filled out this portion of the questionnaire as it had been designed, but there were a percentage of individuals who marked this section differently. Every effort was made to reflect the customer's personal choices, and staff was especially careful not to impose priorities where they were not indicated by the individual. The following list describes the most common problems encountered and how they were tabulated:

- Some customers continued to rank beyond the first five service groups. Only the top five choices were recorded for the survey. Including additional rankings beyond the first five would have given some customer surveys greater weight than others.
- When a customer marked fewer than five items, only those specified by the individual were added to the survey totals.
- If a customer elected not to mark any of the items in this section, they were recorded as having not specified a preference.
- A few customers used checkmarks instead of ranking the items. If only a single box was checked, it was counted as the customer's first priority. If two or more boxes were checked, the survey was recorded as not specified, unless the customer wrote a comment that allowed staff to determine a first priority.
- Other customers ranked every item in this section as a one, two, three, four or five. This frequently led to multiple ones, twos, and so forth. These forms were also recorded as having not specified a preference unless there was a

single choice for number one. Where possible, results were tabulated until the first multiple ranking occurred.

The second section for customer input was a small area for written comments. Customers were asked what they would most like to see changed or improved at the library. Well over half of the individuals who wrote comments in this section chose to reiterate their first choice from the preceding section.

The third form of input was a simple ranking of overall Library service. Customers were asked to select between EXCELLENT, ABOVE AVERAGE, AVERAGE, BELOW AVERAGE, and POOR. While the results of this section were gratifying to staff, they were of less significance than the other two areas. We expected that the majority of the people filling out this survey would think well of the library and that proved to be the case. This section was included on the form primarily because it seemed to be expected in a survey of this type and allowed customers a chance to make a final judgment. Interestingly, some customers attempted to differentiate between the staff and library service (as defined by hours, books, etc.).

2002 NEEDS ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

To be certain that ethnic and special interest groups were represented in this report, a new survey sample was taken of 150 Visalia residents at locations throughout the community, including the shopping areas, the downtown area, the local adult school, our library site, a health clinic, beauty and barbershops, and grocery stores. Those surveyed were spoken to in person or by telephone. There were some groups questioned, but most were one-on-one interviews.

The 2002 Customer Expectation Needs Assessment was based upon the 1999 Community Needs Assessment, which identified three top needs. Those identified needs were:

- Literacy
- Business/Career
- Family Support

A questionnaire was designed to give respondents the fullest opportunity to provide thoughtful and complete answers. The surveyor wrote the answers in the same grammar and content as the responder provided. No attempt was made to

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coerce or lead responses from those queried. The Introduction to each person surveyed included the following statement:

Tulare County Public Library is continually searching for ways to better serve the Visalia community, as well as other communities served throughout the County by the County Library Branches. We are currently focusing on community needs in Visalia, and expectations of customers and potential customers. Would you please answer a few questions? Your name will not be included in the summary, so feel free to express your opinion.

Data was quantified from the solicited responses and an informal analysis prepared.

**VISALIA LIBRARY REMODEL AND EXPANSION
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COMMUNITY ANALYSIS EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There are two governing bodies with agencies that directly impact the Tulare County Library, the City of Visalia and Tulare County. The primary governmental agency that will impact the planning of the facility is the County of Tulare. The main county departments that are involved are the Board of Supervisors, County Counsel, the Resource Management Agency, and the County Administrative Office.

As the governing body of Tulare County the Board of Supervisors is responsible for signing the grant application. They hold fiduciary responsibility for the building project and ultimately determine the level of matching funds that are available for the program. They have the ultimate approval of all building plans. The Board is the administrative board to the Tulare County Library and is the body that appoints the County Librarian to his/her position.

The City of Visalia plays an important role in the planning of the facility. The city has pledged \$500,000 towards the project. There is a Historical Advisory Committee that works with architects and builders to keep the integrity of Historic Visalia intact. The city will be deeding to the County certain properties that are adjacent to the Old Visalia Library.

The initial concept of preserving the Old Visalia Library and expanding the service area of the Visalia Branch arose out of conversations with Visalia Heritage, Inc. and the Visalia/Tulare County Library Foundation. The City Manager, Steve Salomon is a member of the foundation and had important input as to the scope of the project that the city would approve and support monetarily.

The primary educational agency for elementary and secondary education in Visalia is the Visalia Unified School District. The district boundaries incorporate 214 square miles and serve a population base of over 135,000. This area very closely approximates the service area of the Visalia Branch Library. Visalia Unified administers twenty-one elementary schools, four middle schools, three comprehensive high schools, a continuation high school, an adult school, a newcomer language school, a school that serves orthopedic handicapped students, and two charter schools. A fourth high school is completing construction and will open for enrollment in the fall of 2002. Their present enrollment exceeds 32,000 students pre-K to adult. The district employs over 2,000 certificated and classified staff.

Visalia Unified provides some level of library service in each school. Only the three High Schools have certificated school librarians. The junior high schools have full time paid employees working in the school libraries but they do not have their certificates. Each elementary school has some level of a paid employee and may also have some volunteers who keep the library open additional hours. The Visalia Branch provides extensive support for the homework efforts of the students attending Visalia Unified School District schools. This support is not only is the provision of books, magazines, and reference staff help, but is also in the form of internet access and access to electronic data bases as provided by our public access computers. The use of the Visalia Branch is heavy enough that the school district provides staff to operate a homework center out of the branch.

There are a number of private schools within the Visalia Library service area. These schools are St. Paul's School, Galen College of Medical and Dental Assistants, Golden State Business College, Central Valley Christian School, George McCann Memorial Catholic School, Venice Hill School, and Visalia Christian Academy. All of these schools have small libraries or

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collections of books that they make available to their students. The only one of these institutions with a certificated librarian is Central Valley Christian School.

College of the Sequoias is a large community college that is very well established in Visalia. Though they have a nice library facility that serves a vast majority of their students we do help their students on a daily basis with various research needs. We have a good working relationship with COS and are working toward shared resources.

Many community organizations are served by the library or are closely associated with various library programs and activities. Visalia Heritage, Inc. is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of Visalia's historic architecture and neighborhoods. They are also interested in local history and the preservation of historical information and have published books on the history of Visalia. Their service needs revolve around our continued efforts to gather and preserve historical information and photographs.

The Tulare County Library Literacy Program coordinates heavily with the Adult Community School, which has a long-standing literacy program. The two-entity train together, refer customers to each other, refer potential tutors to each other, and conduct joint meetings and planning sessions. The Adult Community School has been referring their students, both literacy and non-literacy, to the Visalia Branch for years for informational services.

Because Tulare County has one of the highest unemployment rates in the United States, Visalia and other Tulare County communities have numerous agencies, such as EDD, CSET, and WID, that work on job development and training within Visalia. The Visalia Chamber of Commerce has shown interest in combining their business collection with the Visalia Library Branch business collection. The idea is to coordinate our efforts in providing business information and in creating training opportunities for the local business community. At this time we are under-serving the members of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. The creation of a special Business Section at the Visalia Library will be of use to members this group. It will give us the opportunity to partner with the Chamber in providing information, training, and possibly literacy services to Chamber members.

The 2000 census reports the population of Visalia at 91,565. This population figure represents an accelerated growth rate of 84 percent over the previous two decades. In 1980, the census reported a population of 49,729. Current city projections show an estimate that the Visalia population will reach 165,000 by the year 2020. The ethnic structure of Visalia is primarily white and Hispanic, with the most significant growth coming in the Hispanic community.

The median age of the Visalia population is 31.7 years, with 62,950 individuals over the age of eighteen. Of the population over the age of sixteen, 63.8 percent are in the workforce. The total employed in Visalia was 38,401. According to the census, 3,498 individuals were without work, making the unemployment rate 5.3 percent. The median household income is \$41,349, and the median family income is \$45,830. The median property value for a home in Visalia is \$115,300. All of these numbers are significantly below comparable state and national figures. The per capita income for Visalia is \$18,422. The census reported that 2,979 families were below the defined poverty line. This represents 12.9 percent of the population. Among the Visalia population over twenty-five years of age, 76.4 percent has at least a high school diploma or some form of college education. However, 11.2 percent of the population have less than a ninth grade education and the majority of this population group is functionally illiterate.

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

There are two governing bodies with agencies that directly impact the Tulare County Library. First this study will examine Tulare County agencies. That will be followed by an examination of agencies belonging to the City of Visalia.

TULARE COUNTY

The primary governmental agency that will have an influence on the planning of the facility is the County of Tulare. The main county departments that are involved are the Board of Supervisors, County Counsel, the Resource Management Agency, and the County Administrative Office. Other County agencies such as Purchasing and the County Auditor will also ultimately be involved but most of this coordination will take place through the Deputy County Administrative Officer as described below.

Board of Supervisors: As the governing body of Tulare County the Board of Supervisors is responsible for signing the grant application. They hold fiduciary responsibility for the building project and ultimately determine the level of matching funds that are available for the program. They have the ultimate approval of all building plans. At the time of this writing the Board has approved the library's request to proceed with the planning of the facility by hiring an architect to do the necessary work as required by the grant. The Board is the administrative board to the Tulare County Library and is the body that appoints the County Librarian to his/her position. The current Chair of the Board is Steve Worthley.

County Counsel: Being the legal advisors of the County of Tulare the Tulare County Counsel must review all documents to ensure that the County or any County agencies involved in the project meet the letter of the law. For example they looked at and approved the agenda item asking the Board of Supervisors to accept the CEQA report. Different attorneys within County Counsel hold different responsibilities for reviewing documents depending on the nature of the document. In the case of the library the main contact at County Counsel is Teresa Saucedo, though she is not necessarily the attorney that will work with the individual documents.

Resource Management Agency: The Resource Management Agency is a large department within the Tulare County government that handles, amongst other things, planning, facilities management, grounds, custodial services, and property management. They will be involved in the planning process in many ways. They are the department that will: arrange for the energy audit and give us cost estimates for certain operational costs of the expanded facility such as custodial services and building maintenance. They may also advise us as to certain costs such as roof repair and HVAC replacement. Some of the building issues that one would traditionally expect from a planning department and facilities management are not germane to this building project because it will be handled by the Deputy County Administrator who is in charge of building projects. The key individual at the Resources Management Agency that we will be working with is the Facilities Manager Lloyd Finley.

County Administrative Office: This is the county department that has the largest roll in the planning of the building project. One of the Deputy County Administrative Officers is in charge of coordinating all building projects for the County of Tulare. She is responsible for working with architects, builders, contractors, construction managers, auditors, etc. In essence this individual, Kristin Bennett, coordinates the entire project including being the overseer of the actual construction process. In addition, Kristin is also the County Administrators Officer assigned Budget Analyst to the Library.

CITY OF VISALIA

The City of Visalia plays an important role in the planning of the facility.

Monetary: The city has pledged \$500,000 towards the project. The money will be coming to the County over 3-4 years. The individual who will coordinate the payments is Bob Nance who is the Economic and Redevelopment Manager.

Planning - Historical: The city has a planning ordinance that the old Visalia Library Building falls under. There is a Historical Advisory Committee that works with architects and builders to keep the integrity of Historic Visalia in tact. The Visalia Planning Department also consults with Visalia Heritage, Inc. on such issues. Visalia Heritage, Inc. is one of the primary community movers behind our building project and donated money for an initial study. County Library Staff will first be working with the Deputy City Manager as the initial step to work through

the process of getting approval from the Historical Advisory Committee and through the Planning Department.

Parking: Parking issues will be brokered through Bob Nance, Economic and Redevelopment Manager.

Property Ownership: The city will be deeding to the County certain properties that are adjacent to the Old Visalia Library. Phyllis Coring who is a Special Projects Manager for the City of Visalia will coordinate this.

Initial Concept Approval: The initial concept of preserving the Old Visalia Library and expanding the service area of the Visalia Branch arose out of conversations with Visalia Heritage, Inc. and the Visalia/Tulare County Library Foundation. The City Manager, Steve Salomon is a member of the foundation and had important input as to the scope of the project that the city would approve and support monetarily.

SCHOOL AGENCIES

The only public school district in the Visalia service area is Visalia Unified. The report on Visalia Unified will be followed by information on Visalia's private schools. This section concludes with a report on the local community college.

VISALIA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

The primary educational agency for elementary and secondary education in Visalia is the Visalia Unified School District. The earliest elements of Visalia Unified were established in 1885. It is the oldest school district in Tulare County. The district estimates that their boundaries incorporate 214 square miles and that they serve a population base of over 135,000. This area very closely approximates the service area of the Visalia Branch Library. Visalia Unified administers twenty-one elementary schools, four middle schools, three comprehensive high schools, a continuation high school, an adult school, a newcomer language school, a school that serves orthopedic handicapped students, and two charter schools. A fourth high school is completing construction and will open for enrollment in the fall of 2002. Their present enrollment exceeds 32,000 students pre-K to adult. The district employs over 2,000 certificated and classified staff.

Visalia Unified provides some level of library service in each school. Only the three High Schools have certificated school librarians. The junior high schools have full time paid employees working in the school libraries but they do not have their certificates. Each elementary school has some level of a paid employee and may also have some volunteers who keep the library open additional hours. In recent years the school library collections have grown in quality because of special state appropriations for school library collections. While this has been wonderful the school libraries are still woefully out of date. The current state budget will effectively cut school library book money by at least 50%.

The district operates the Visalia Learning Center, which is run by a librarian who holds an MLS. Within the district, this individual is the "certificated librarian" for each of the elementary schools and the junior high schools. The Learning Center supplements school library collections as well as classroom collections with a holding of books and materials numbering 58,000. The collection is primarily at the K-6 level and contains a small professional collection that is available to school library staff.

The Visalia Branch provides extensive support for the homework efforts of the students attending Visalia Unified School District schools. This support is not only is the provision of books, magazines, and reference staff help, but is also in the form of internet access and access to electronic data bases as provided by our public access computers. The use of the Visalia Branch is heavy enough that the school district provides staff to operate a homework center out of the branch. Two years ago the district decided to operate the homework center out of a school that was in close proximity to the library. This effort failed due to lack of use, and requests by students to have the homework center return to the Visalia Library.

PRIVATE SCHOOLS

There are a number of private schools within the Visalia Library service area. These schools are St. Paul's School, Galen College of Medical and Dental Assistants, Golden State Business College, Central Valley Christian School, George McCann Memorial Catholic School, Venice Hill School, and Visalia Christian Academy. All of these schools have small libraries or collections of books that they make available to their students. The only one of these institutions with a certificated librarian is Central Valley Christian School. Central Valley Christian School has an excellent library, and they do a very good job of serving their students. We do help their students for homework support, but not at the same level as the other private schools.

The level of help we give students from these private schools varies, with the least amount of help going toward the Galen College of Medical and Dental Assistants and the Golden State Business College. We help these students primarily with our Reference collection, online periodicals and Internet access.

COLLEGE OF THE SEQUOIAS

College of the Sequoias is a large community college that is very well established in Visalia. Though they have a nice library facility that serves a vast majority of their students we do help their students on a daily basis with various research needs. We have a good working relationship with COS and are working toward shared resources.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

The following community organizations are served by library or are closely associated with various library programs and activities.

Visalia Heritage, Inc.: Visalia Heritage, Inc. is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of Visalia's historic architecture and neighborhoods. They are also interested in local history and the preservation of historical information and have published books on the history of Visalia. Their service needs revolve around our continued efforts to gather and preserve historical information and photographs. The building project will bring a level of attention to the library that will enable us to further our efforts in gathering, digitizing, and indexing historically significant photographs as well as gathering local family histories. All of the information gathered will be available to the members of Visalia Heritage, Inc. in helping to meet their research needs. In addition, the building project will allow us to work toward a second phase in our building program that will ultimately lead to increasing the amount of space utilized by our History Room.

Adult Community School: The Tulare County Library Literacy Program coordinates heavily with the Adult Community School, which has a long-standing literacy program. The two-entity train together, refer customers to each other, refer potential tutors to each other, and conduct joint meetings and planning sessions. The Adult Community School has been referring their students, both literacy and non-literacy, to the Visalia Branch for years for informational services. The building project, by giving the Literacy Center an office in the library, will make access to the Literacy Center easier for both learners and tutors. In addition, due to the office area being in the library instead of outside of the library, it will give the customers and the tutors a more direct and visible link to all library service programs.

Many of the Adult Community Schools students use our current career and job informational services. The new facility will allow us to further develop our services by giving us space to create an actual Career and Job Center. The center will have computers dedicated to job searching and career information, will have increased numbers of materials for reference purposes as well as circulation purposes, and will have a high profile.

Other job training related agencies: Because Tulare County has one of the highest unemployment rates in the United States, Visalia and other Tulare County communities have numerous agencies, such as EDD, CSET, and WID, that work on job development and training within Visalia. Their customers will all benefit through our new Career and Job Center in the same manner as the students who attend the Adult Community School.

Boys and Girls Club of Visalia: The Boys and Girls Club of Visalia are partnering with the Tulare County Literacy Program to bring services to the parents of students who are at risk when it comes to literacy skills. The building project, by giving the Literacy Center an office in the library, will make access to the Literacy Center easier for both learners and tutors. In addition, due to the office area being in the library instead of outside of the library, it will give the customers and the tutors a more direct and visible link to all library services and programs. The new Children's library will also be more attractive and will induce use amongst the children whose parents are participating in the program. The new Literacy Center's proximity to the Children's Library will make use by the children attractive and easy.

Tulare County Historical Society: The Tulare County Historical Society is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of Tulare County history including Visalia. Their service needs revolve around our continued efforts to gather and preserve historical information and photographs. The building project will bring a level of attention to the library that will enable us to further our efforts in gathering, digitizing, and indexing historically significant photographs as well as gathering local family histories. All of the information gathered will be available to the members of Visalia Heritage, Inc. in helping to meet their research needs.

Tulare County Museum: The museum and the library are jointly working on identifying and preserving historical photographs. The building project ultimately gives us additional room for historic document storage.

Visalia Chamber of Commerce: The Visalia Chamber of Commerce has shown interest in combining their business collection with the Visalia Library Branch business collection once we have enough space to create a special section. The section will include computers, videos, books, and other materials. The idea is to coordinate our efforts in providing business information and in creating training opportunities for the local business community. The Chamber is less than .5 miles away from the library

Hispanic Chamber of Commerce: The Hispanic Chamber of Commerce is just down the street from the library. At this time we are under-serving the members of this organization. The creation of a special Business Section at the Visalia Library will be of use to members of the Hispanic Chamber. In addition it will give us the opportunity to partner with the Chamber in providing much needed information, training, and possibly literacy services to Chamber members.

DEMOGRAPHY

Current demographic information is largely based on the most recent U.S. Census. Other sources of information have also provided some valuable information. Most growth comparisons have been based on the 1980 U.S. Census. The most problematical numbers are those relating to projections, as the only available numbers came from the City of Visalia 2020 Land Use Plan.

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

According to the 2000 United States Census, the population of Visalia was 91,565.⁷ Proportionately, there was a slightly higher female population, with approximately 44,000 men and a little over 47,000 women. By age, the largest single demographic was the population between 35 and 44, which represented almost fifteen percent of the population. Almost one third of the residents are minors, with more than 31,000 residents being under the age of twenty.

This 2000 population figure represents an accelerated growth rate of 84 percent over the previous two decades. In 1980, the U.S. Census reported a population of 49,729.⁸ Current city projections show a slightly lower growth rate of 80 percent over the next two decades, but they estimate that the Visalia population will reach 165,000 by the year 2020.⁹

The ethnic composition of Visalia is primarily white and Hispanic. According to the census, there are 63,654 white residents (69.5 percent). The census reports the Hispanic population at 32,619, which represents 35.6 percent of the population. Since the two population groups combined exceed the total population of Visalia, it is safe to assume that many individuals considered themselves to be of mixed ethnic heritage when reporting their household. The growth of the Hispanic population has been one of the most significant changes in the community of Visalia since 1980. According to the 1980 census, there were 9,538 individuals of Hispanic origin in the community. This represented 19.1 percent of the total population. The present percentage of 35.6 demonstrates a significant growth in

⁷ Source: 2000 U.S. Census. Most of the census numbers reported in this section come from Table DP-1, Profile of General Demographic Characteristics 2000 for the City of Visalia. Other census figures come from Tables DP-2, DP-3, and DP-4. Any other sources used will be noted separately.

⁸ Source: 1980 United States Census.

⁹ Source: City of Visalia 2020 Land Use Plan.

this population group. The Visalia percentage is now higher than the state average in which the Hispanic percentage of the population is 32.4. It is also significantly higher than the national 12.5 percent.

Other ethnic groups within the Visalia population included African American (1.9 percent), American Indian (1.3 percent), and Asian (5.1 percent). The proportionate levels of most of these groups among the population remained essentially unchanged over the past two decades. For example, in 1980, the African Americans were 1.1 percent of the population and American Indians were 0.8 percent. Only the Asian community demonstrated any meaningful growth, increasing from 1.3 percent to 5.1 percent. The African American population is significantly below the state average of 6.7 percent.

DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

Scores from the 2001 California Academic Performance Index (API) for public schools in Visalia library service area varied greatly. Among the twenty elementary schools for the Visalia Unified School District (VUSD) the base scores ranged from a low of 397 to a high of 793. Ten of the twenty schools had a negative number for growth over the previous year. Perhaps most telling was the number of schools that received a one or two as a decile rank statewide. Eight of the twenty schools were ranked in either the bottom ten- percent statewide or in the bottom twenty- percent. Two of the schools closest to the library, Highland and Washington scored poorly. Highland was the low base of 397 and ranked in the bottom ten- percent. Washington's base score was 515, but still ranked in the bottom twenty- percent.

Both the four middle schools and the three high schools fared better in their scores. The Divisadero Middle School had a base of 578 and a decile rank of three. Green Acres Middle School had a base of 621 and a decile rank of four. La Joya Middle School had a base of 619 and a decile rank of four. Valley Oak Middle School had a base of 616 and a decile rank of four. Golden West High had a base of 599 and a decile rank of four. Mt. Whitney High School had a base of 641 and a decile rank of six. Redwood High had a base of 604 and a decile rank of four.

Clearly, Visalia schools currently perform below statewide averages, as only one of the seven middle and high schools ranked within the top forty percent of schools statewide. Test scores from the local schools demonstrate that there is an ongoing need for library resources within the community.

The median age of the Visalia population is 31.7 years, with 62,950 individuals over the age of eighteen. The population of Visalia is slightly younger than the national median of 35.3 years. As was noted above, the largest single demographic group was the adults between 35 and 44 years of age, which represented almost fifteen percent of the population. Almost one third of the residents are minors, with more than 31,000 residents being under the age of twenty.

Of the population over the age of sixteen, 63.8 percent are in the workforce. The total employed in Visalia was 38,401. Within this workforce, 34.1 percent described themselves as management or professionals. The second largest group was sales and office workers at 26.2 percent. Those employed in service occupations composed 17.2 percent, and those involved in production or transportation comprised 11.9 percent. The two smallest components of the workforce were construction and maintenance (7.5 percent) and agriculture (3.1 percent).

According to the census, 3,498 individuals were without work, making the unemployment rate 5.3 percent. The national unemployment rate was 5.4 percent.

The median household income is \$41,349, and the median family income is \$45,830. This figure is somewhat higher than the California median income of \$39,565, but it is below the national median family income of \$49,600. The median property value for a home in Visalia is \$115,300. The per capita income for Visalia is \$18,422, compared to the national average of \$21,690.

The census reported that 2,979 families were below the defined poverty line. This represents 12.9 percent of the population. This figure is very close to the national average of 12.5 percent. In a 1999 study by Children Now entitled, “How Our Youngest Children Are Faring” it was reported that one in three children in Visalia live in poverty. While not painting quite as grim a figure. The census did report that almost twenty-five percent of the families with children under the age of five were below the poverty line.

Among the Visalia population over twenty-five years of age, 22.6 percent are high school graduates and 12.6 percent have bachelor’s degrees. Statewide, only 20.1 percent of adults are high school graduates, but the national average is 28.6 percent. In total 76.4 percent of the adult population has at least a high school diploma or some form of college education. However, 11.2 percent of the

population have less than a ninth grade education and the majority of this population group is functionally illiterate.

Accurately determining the literacy rate for Visalia or Tulare County is difficult. In a report prepared by the Visalia Adult School in 1999, forty-one percent of the Tulare County population is functionally illiterate. Comparable national figures from the National Institute for Literacy are approximately twenty-two percent.¹⁰ As noted above, the census reports 11.2 percent of the Visalia population as having less than a ninth grade education. This is very close to the state average of 11.5 percent, but significantly higher than the national average of 7.5 percent. The ongoing activities of both the Tulare County Library Literacy Program and the literacy program administered by the Visalia Adult School indicates the strong need not only in Visalia, but countywide.

¹⁰ Source: National Institute for Literacy (www.nifl.gov).

VISALIA LIBRARY REMODEL AND EXPANSION
COMMUNITY LIBRARY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

ANALYSIS OF
COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS

Visalia is the county seat of Tulare County. With a population of just under 92,000 Visalia is also the largest community in Tulare County, being more than twice the size of any other city in the county. A rapid growth rate of over eighty- percent throughout the last two decades has led to many changes in the community.

Visalia is a very conservative community. During the civil war union troops were sent to Visalia to protect the mail routes. This was done because Visalia was deemed to be sympathetic to the cause of the Southern States. While the city has certainly grown, this conservative atmosphere still exists. Self-determination still receives high marks, and individuals are expected to be responsible for their own well being. While few residents in Visalia consider themselves agricultural workers, the conservative nature of our surrounding agricultural community still impacts the city.

Visalia is very sports minded. Soccer is very prevalent with the youth in general, and specifically with our large Hispanic population. Softball is abundant, and there are constant complaints about the need for more softball fields. The *Visalia Oaks* minor league baseball team calls Visalia its home. Visalia hosts an international bike race every spring. High school sports are important to our residents, with extensive coverage in the local paper. Organized youth baseball is also healthy, with many service clubs in the area taking a hand at keeping the leagues well funded.

Cultural events abound in Visalia. Many of the local restaurants provide live music on the weekends and during the summer. There are six venues in Downtown Visalia alone that offer live entertainment including plays, symphonic performances, nationally recognized headliners, and musicals. The College of the Sequoias provides the community with plays, music, poetry recitals, and lectures. In addition, the Visalia Convention Center is located in the downtown community, serving as a focal point for many community activities in addition to drawing visitors to Visalia.

Children are very important to the residents of Visalia. The City of Visalia, YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, churches, and the library all have programs designed to help the youth in our community. Art activities and lessons are offered through the City, schools, and private businesses.

Religion seems to be very important in Visalia. Churches are thriving as is evidenced by the number of new large churches that have been built.

Visalia has a plethora of service organizations. Rotary is especially strong in Visalia. These organizations make a big difference in our community. While they help a wide range of non-profit organizations bring services to the community; they tend to concentrate at helping children. These organizations have also been very supportive of the library over the years, and promise to be even more supportive as the fundraising campaign for our building project gets underway.

The preservation of history is very important to Visalia. There is a well-organized historical tour to the city, which includes the historic Maddox House on the library block, the current home of our literacy program. Visalia has a historical district that the library is located in. There is a city ordinance that protects the historical district by placing restrictions on remodeling and new construction. One of the primary concerns of this ordinance is the preservation of the original appearance of historical structures. The preservation of history in Visalia includes the preservation of the native oak trees that are abundant in the city.

Visalia takes great pride in a thriving downtown area. Local business owners, service providers, service clubs, and the City of Visalia work together to make sure that the services offered in the downtown area are viable. They also work to maintain the natural charm of the downtown area.

The Chamber of Commerce estimates that the population of Visalia doubles most days because of the number of non-residents who come into the city. This is due to many factors. Visalia has the most shopping opportunities in Tulare County, including two malls. Downtown Visalia is a delightful thriving area that entices the public with its fine choice of restaurants, shops, and theaters. Being the County Seat most of the employees that work for Tulare County work in Visalia. Most county services are performed in Visalia, bringing into the city the many residents of Tulare County who utilize these services. Visalia is home to high tech businesses, manufactures, and agricultural support businesses.

VISALIA LIBRARY REMODEL AND EXPANSION
COMMUNITY LIBRARY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

ANALYSIS OF
LIBRARY SERVICE

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LIBRARY SERVICE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Community surveys and focus groups brought forth a plethora of community needs. While the library cannot mitigate many of these needs the following is an analysis of those needs to which we can respond as the providers of public library services in Visalia.

Computer and Internet access is needed for those in the community who are on the wrong side of the digital divide. While many students have access to computers during the school hours this access is limited by time available and the small number of public access units. Computer needs are not limited to any age specific group. Both young and old in Visalia need to have computer access made available to them. Needs differ somewhat within the demographic differences of individual library users. Properly trained staff, who can mitigate computer requests and problems, are essential to providing computer services to meet the varying needs. A continual evaluation of the Internet, and what it has to offer all groups, must take place along with the necessary refresher training needed for the continual providence of fresh and relevant services to the community.

PC training needs was another issue stressed. The range of identified training needs was very wide. The community also requires classes in Spanish and in English. Types of classes that need to be offered include: introduction to computers, how to use a mouse, beginning and intermediate research techniques, resume preparation, beginning and intermediate word processing, beginning and intermediate spreadsheet, and beginning and intermediate data base.

Young adults need to have a space in the library of their own. The current space for young adults is at the back of the Children's Area and is inadequate. In addition, part of the impetus from the community was to take the Young Adult Area out of the Children's Room as a means to give the younger children a safer environment. The space needs to be away from the Children's Area but easily accessible to that section. Young adults will need to use the Children's Collection on occasion and many young adults come to the library with their younger siblings and need to have easy and immediate access to the Children's Area. The area needs to be near other services that young adults find desirable and necessary.

Young adults need certain considerations when it comes to the provision of library materials. They need a great deal of circulating and reference materials available to them that will help them with their specific homework assignments at a level that they can both understand and enjoy. Non Fiction books that are of general interest to young adults are needed to help them quench their everyday thirst for knowledge on hot topics. Young adults also need fiction books that are written for their age level to keep them interested in reading and to help them relate to others who face similar young adult life challenges.

The children of Visalia need a library space that they can call their own. The designated area needs to be larger than the current area so that the number of books, computers, and audiovisual materials can increase. An increased number of attractive materials need to be made available to the children and be displayed in attractive furniture. The children need a place that is colorful, warm, and inviting. A place that they know is specially there for them where they can feel secure and welcome and safe.

The children need to feel safe by having a place that is away from Adult Services because some of our adult customers are scary and worrisome to the children. Separate

VISALIA LIBRARY REMODEL AND EXPANSION – Page 35
COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

bathrooms must be available to the children so that they can feel safe and comfortable using the facilities without being exposed to the often times harsh reality of adult public bathroom use.

Children need a place where they can be freely express themselves during story time and other programs. The idea behind Children's programming is to get the children to use the library, and more importantly, to inspire them to read or to want to become readers. Allowing the children to either participate directly in the program or to respond to programming prompts most effectively accomplishes this.

Children need reading areas that are warm, attractive, and comfortable for pleasure reading. There needs to be more than one reading area so that the youngest children and the older children will have their own special areas that they can feel comfortable in. They also need areas where they can work on their homework comfortably. The children need a wider collection of pleasure reading materials on different levels. They also need books that will support their homework efforts.

The adults in our community need ready information on careers, jobs, career development, job training, etc. This information needs to be displayed in a prominent place that is visible. The information needs to be plentiful and on various levels of understanding in both English and Spanish. Job and Career information needs to cover, at the bare minimum, job retraining, training opportunities, basic career information, trade school information, a referral element, resume creation, Internet links, and interview strategies. The adults in our community also need more information on business. This information needs to be displayed in a prominent place that is visible. The information needs to be plentiful and on various levels of understanding in both English and Spanish. The area needs to be adjacent to the reference desk so that easy help may be obtained through contact initiated by either staff or the library user. Information in this regard also needs to be available on our web page.

Adults need areas to work in that are relative quiet. This requires that Adults need to be able to use the library without being disturbed by children's programs. It also means that adults need to have a reading and studying area away from the section of the library that is usually used for community dialog.

The Spanish Language Section needs to be more visible. It needs to be not only visible but also prominent. The section needs to be large enough to handle more materials. The area also needs to be more inviting, providing usable table seating as well as comfortable chairs for casual use. It needs to be within easy sight of the Reference desk, yet distinctively separate. The Spanish materials section needs both appropriate furniture and signage that takes the needs of Hispanic culture into consideration.

Hispanic users who speak predominantly Spanish need to be made comfortable and feel welcome in the library. They need more indication that there are a healthy number of staff members who are fluent in Spanish and are available to help them. They need to know that the library welcomes them and are working within their portion of the community to garner information that will help serve them better.

The Visalia community needs to know about our literacy services. Adults need to know what literacy services are available to them and of the opportunity to become an adult literacy tutor. Literacy Services need to be more visible to the general public.

The Literacy Program needs more space for teaching and training. They need to be located in the library proper so that tutors and learners have better and more fluid use to teaching areas and so that they can feel more welcome and comfortable when they have to come to the library for other purposes.

ANALYSIS OF LIBRARY SERVICE

The Community surveys and focus groups that we conducted brought forth a plethora of community needs as put forth by the participants in the assessments. While the library cannot mitigate many of these needs the following is an analysis of those needs to which we can respond as the providers of public library services in Visalia.

COMPUTER ACCESS

Computer and Internet access is needed for those in the community who are on the wrong side of the digital divide. While many students have access to computers during the school hours this access is limited by time available and the small number of public access units. As the world is moving toward the provision of critical information on the Internet and as the business world is increasingly using the Internet as an everyday and crucial communication device, it is of the utmost importance that those who do not have computers readily available to them, outside of school and the workplace, or who only have computers with debilitatingly slow speeds and capabilities have free computer access within the community. For community computer access to be viable it needs to be flexible, fluid, reliable and available for significant periods of time.

Computer needs are not limited to any age specific group. Both young and old in Visalia need to have computer access made available to them. Needs differ somewhat within the demographic differences of individual library users. Properly trained staff, who can mitigate computer requests and problems, are essential to providing computer services to meet the varying needs. A continual evaluation of the Internet, and what it has to offer all groups, must take place along with the necessary refresher training needed for the continual provision of fresh and relevant services to the community.

Training needs was an issue stressed in the need assessments. The range of identified training needs was very wide. The community needs classes in Spanish and in English. Types of classes that need to be offered include: introduction to computers, how to use a mouse, beginning and intermediate research techniques, resume preparation, beginning and intermediate word processing, beginning and intermediate spreadsheet, and beginning and intermediate data base. The community has need for classes designed for certain age groups such as the elderly

and our young users as well as classes designed for families. Training classes need to take place during all public service hours because of the varying needs of the community. Our senior population likes to take classes in the morning because they tend to coordinate their days based around activities at the senior center. Young mothers often like early afternoons to accommodate nap times and childcare. Students need after school hours use times. Most working people require time at night after work. Families often need nighttime classes.

The computer needs of our community are so vast that we need two computer rooms in order to provide the services demanded. One computer room needs to be devoted to open public access only. The second computer room needs to be used for training purposes.

YOUNG ADULT SERVICES

The needs of young adults came up in a few ways during our assessment.

Young adults need to have a space in the library of their own. The current space for young adults is at the back of the Children's Area and is inadequate. In addition, part of the impetuous from the community was to take the Young Adult Area out of the Children's Room as a means to give the younger children a safer environment.

Young adults need a space that they can call their own that is attractive to that age group and that provide them with a comfortable place to do what they do at the library. The space needs to be away from the Children's Area but easily accessible to that section. Young adults will need to use the Children's Collection on occasion and many young adults come to the library with their younger siblings and need to have easy and immediate access to the Children's Area. The area needs to be near other services that young adults find desirable and necessary. The area should be distinct in furnishings so that it attracts that age level. Line-of-sight with one or two public service desks or staffing areas is necessary to maintain crowd control and to give the young adults a feeling of security.

Young Adult Programming is also important. A number of programs each year need to be designed for young adults. Young adults in the community need some kind of forum or means to communicate to the library what kind of programming they would like to see. Such programs are necessary to attract young adults to the

library to help them become dedicated to life long learning, and to give them a chance to learn the many advantages of using a public library.

Young adults need certain considerations when it comes to the provision of library materials. They need a great deal of circulating and reference materials available to them that will help them with their specific homework assignments at a level that they can both understand and enjoy. Non Fiction books that are of general interest to young adults are needed to help them quench their everyday thirst for knowledge on hot topics. Young adults also need fiction books that are written for their age level to keep them interested in reading and to help them relate to others who face similar young adult life challenges.

CHILDREN'S SERVICE

The children of Visalia need a library space that they can call their own. The designated area needs to be larger than the current area so that the number of books, computers, and audiovisual materials can increase. An increased number of attractive materials need to be made available to the children and be displayed in attractive furniture. The children need a place that is colorful, warm, and inviting. A place that they know is specially there for them where they can feel secure and welcome and safe.

The children need to feel safe by having a place that is away from Adult Services because some of our adult customers are scary and worrisome to the children. Separate bathrooms must be available to the children so that they can feel safe and comfortable using the facilities without being exposed to the often times harsh reality of adult public bathroom use.

Children need a place where they can be freely express themselves during story time and other programs. The idea behind Children's programming is to get the children to use the library, and more importantly, to inspire them to read or to want to become readers. Allowing the children to either participate directly in the program or to respond to programming prompts most effectively accomplishes this. This means that, at times, the children will be producing rather loud noises. Such activities need to take place in an atmosphere where the individual conducting the program does not have to worry about adults complaining about the noise level. It is only in this uninhibited atmosphere that most children's programming can be most effective. The programming place needs to be spacious so those children can move freely and not physically bump into each other

inadvertently. The programming space also needs to be conducive to those times that the story or program sessions are quiet and calming. Both types of programming must be available to meet the needs of all children.

Additional programs are needed on the preschool story level and at the K - 6 level. Programs are needed at night, on weekdays, and on the weekends so that children can be brought to the library by their parents.

Children need reading areas that are warm, attractive, and comfortable for pleasure reading. There needs to be more than one reading area so that the youngest children and the older children will have their own special areas that they can feel comfortable in. They also need areas where they can work on their homework comfortably.

The children need a wider collection of pleasure reading materials on different levels. They also need books that will support their homework efforts. These materials need to be on different grade levels, and on different reading levels, so that children can find what they need in a successful manner. In addition, the children need homework assistance provided by the school district in a visible section of the library that is within the children's area.

ADULT SERVICES

The adults in our community need information readily available to them on careers, jobs, career development, job training, etc. This information needs to be displayed in a prominent place that is visible. The information needs to be plentiful and on various levels of understanding in both English and Spanish. Job and Career information needs to cover, at the bare minimum, job retraining, training opportunities, basic career information, trade school information, a referral element, resume creation, Internet links, and interview strategies. The area needs to be adjacent to the reference desk so that easy help may be obtained through contact initiated by either staff or the library user. Information in this regard also needs to be available on our web page.

The adults in our community need information readily available to them on business. This information needs to be displayed in a prominent place that is visible. The information needs to be plentiful and on various levels of understanding in both English and Spanish. The business information needs to cover all aspects of running a business such as financing, accounting, hiring,

supervision, creation of business plans, referrals to state and federal agencies, home businesses, web based business, etc. The area needs to be adjacent to the reference desk so that easy help may be obtained through contact initiated by either staff or the library user. Information in this regard also needs to be available on our web page.

Adults need areas to work in that are relative quiet. This requires that Adults need to be able to use the library without being disturbed by children's programs. It also means that adults need to have a reading and studying area away from the section of the library that is usually used for community dialog.

Adults need higher quality access to the book collection. The adults need a larger selection of talking books, DVDs, videotapes, large-type books, and Spanish books. More space is needed so that the non-fiction collection can be marketed more effectively. The fiction collection is broken into genres but they are running into each other, more distinct breaks in the collection are needed. The paperback collection does not always accentuate the fiction collection - they need to blend together better.

HISPANIC POPULATION NEEDS

The Spanish Language Section needs to be more visible. It needs to be not only visible but also prominent. The section needs to be large enough to handle more materials. The area also needs to be more inviting, providing usable table seating as well as comfortable chairs for casual use. It needs to be within easy sight of the Reference desk, yet distinctively separate. The Spanish materials section needs both appropriate furniture and signage that takes the needs of Hispanic culture into consideration.

Spanish users in the community need marketing materials designed to inform them of community resources and other available services at the library. Such information also has to be distributed in places within the community where they will be the most effective.

Hispanic users who speak predominantly Spanish need to be made comfortable and feel welcome in the library. They need more indication that there are a healthy number of staff members who are fluent in Spanish and are available to help them. They need to know that the library welcomes them and are working within their portion of the community to garner information that will help serve them better.

ADDITIONAL LIBRARY NEEDS

The Visalia community needs to know about our literacy services. Adults need to know what literacy services are available to them and of the opportunity to become an adult literacy tutor. The Literacy center needs to be more visible to the general public.

Library staff needs to become more familiar with our literacy service and more naturally supportive of it. This awareness needs to lead them to converse with the public in an information manner so that knowledge of the services is spread verbally. Staff needs to do a better job of promoting the literacy center and be visibly supportive of the program. Tutors and literacy students need to be recognized by library staff so that the library can better acquaint them with library services.

The Literacy Program needs more space for teaching and training. They need to be located in the library proper so that tutors and learners have better and more fluid use to teaching areas and so that they can feel more welcome and comfortable when they have to come to the library for other purposes. Communication between the library and the literacy service needs to be easier and more readily available. Literacy services staff needs to interact more on a daily basis with library staff.

**VISALIA LIBRARY REMODEL AND EXPANSION
COMMUNITY LIBRARY NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

**SERVICE LIMITATIONS OF
EXISTING LIBRARY FACILITY**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF SERVICE LIMITATIONS

The current service limitations of the Visalia Branch are all based on the fact that the current facility is too small. It could be argued that part of the problem stems from the lack of flexibility. We need to provide workspace that is close enough to public desk areas for easy access and for immediate response to public needs. In addition, one could argue that line-of-sight is not adequate due to the design of the building in relation to the public entrances. While the last two arguments are valid there is nothing that can be done to correct these problems without the provision of additional space.

There are numerous service delivery problems we face due to the inadequacies of the building. Our collection size is limited to the current shelving we possess. While the above is a problem for the entire collection we are especially concerned with our Spanish collection. We do not have enough space and are unable to create new specialized service areas for which the community is calling. The Children's area is way too small. We are unable to freely hold the number of programs we need to service the community because of the noise issue. There is a small problem of the program noise level in the Children's Area disturbing other children who are using the library but not attending the program. The current Children's Area is adjacent to the adult collection with nothing separating the two except for open book stacks. The problem of child safety and comfort is also true with our current restroom situation. The Young Adult Area in the current facility is located in the back corner of the Children's Area. We do not currently have enough space to hold both computer classes while giving the public access to a computer lab. Our Literacy Program is physically located in a building that is on the same block as the Visalia Branch but is not in the building. Line-of-sight is very inadequate in the current library.

Based on the existing limitations, library staff has evaluated the six areas of need that have surfaced during this study. The current building does not have enough shelving space for us to increase the size of the collection, does not allow us start new collections, and does not allow us to dedicate adequate special areas of space for special collections such as the Spanish collection. Our new building space is already defined for us because of the nature of the project being one that connects two existing buildings.

As stated earlier the City of Visalia will only support an expansion project to the extent of saving the old Visalia City Library Building and enclosing the courtyard. They of course will support the remodeling of the current building but will not support, at this time, any other additions to the current building. The building project will allow us to create new collections as indicated; allow us to create a more prominent, larger, and welcoming space for our Spanish Collection, and increase all other collection areas by 20%.

On most days we have adequate seating in regard to sheer numbers. During the school year there are times when all available seating is occupied. We currently have some relaxed seating areas for adults, young adults, and juveniles. Our seating problems, aside from sometimes not having enough, revolve around location. Seating in the Children's Area and Young Adult Area are immediately adjacent to each other. This causes "turf" problems as well as creating an atmosphere that is intimidating to many children and uncomfortable for many young adults. The building project will allow us to increase the raw number of seating for adults, young adults, and children. In addition, it will separate the seating for young adults and children which will give them the comfort zone required to make their library visit successful.

VISALIA LIBRARY REMODEL AND EXPANSION – Page 44
COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Staff offices and workstations are crowded. The situation is not critical but we are crowded and problems do persist. We need more space in our workroom for general operations. We are evaluating our workflow in the technical processing area in an attempt to use our space more wisely, in addition to streamlining the operation. The staff team working on this project feels that we can utilize our space a little better, but that it will not solve the long-range problem.

Visual supervision is a problem. It is a problem in relation to the supervision of staff as well as a problem with the supervision of public desks. Sorting shelves breaks up our Staff Work Area, making the visual supervision of half of the Library Assistants very difficult. The sorting shelves could be moved, but the only possible space for them is even further away from our public service desks and would cause more immediate service delay problems. The Staff Work Area also houses the offices of all of our reference librarians. Both the Library Assistants and the Reference Staff have no direct site to their respective public service desks. The situation is even worse for the Children's staff who are a good 60 additional feet away from the Juvenile Service Desk. Not only is there a line-of-sight problem but there is the problem of not being able easily ascertain when to respond to public demand for additional staff assistance.

The building project will fix these problems. Two of the librarians, including the Head of Reference, will have direct line-of-sight to the Reference Desk and the Circulation Desk. The Head of the Circulation Department will have an office directly in back of the Circulation Desk with immediate access to said desk. The sorting shelves and work area of the Library Assistant IIs will also be immediately in back of the Circulation Desk through an open area going out to the desk area. The Children's Librarian and Children's Staff Office will have a direct line-of-sight to the Children's Desk and into the area of the library where the pre-schoolers through second graders will most likely congregate.

We do not currently have enough space to hold both computer classes while giving the public access to a computer lab. When we hold classes we have to shut down the public computer lab. Both of these services are in high demand with requests from the public for more of both. While we are solving this problem, to some extent, by taking away staff office area to create a small training lab, there are still some problems. The first problem is that this move further limits our staff work areas and storage capabilities. The second problem is that the class size will be cramped, uncomfortable, and hold too few computers. Third, the Public Computer Lab has no line-of-sight with other service areas. Fourth, the current Public Computer Lab is not easily visible to library users. In addition, the lab needs to be more prominent in the library for marketing purposes and to make it more accessible to the public. The building project cures all of these problems by making available space for a new, visible computer lab that will be in line-of-sight of at least two other public service desks

Our current Meeting Room is adequate for our needs and the needs of the community. However, there is a small problem that the building project will alleviate. Currently, the Homework Center, provided through the Visalia Unified School District, operates in our Meeting Room. This is at a time that occasionally interrupts long standing regularly scheduled meetings. We move the Homework Center, during these times, into the staff lounge until the meetings have been conducted. The building project will allow us to move the Homework Center to a different area and solve the seasonal meeting room scheduling conflicts. We see no other changes necessary or imminent at this time.

CURRENT SERVICE LIMITATIONS

The inadequacies of the present Visalia branch, in regard to limiting our ability to provide proper public service, all deal with the fact that the current facility is too small. It could be argued that part of the problem stems from the lack of flexibility. We need to provide workspace that is close enough to public desk areas for easy access and for immediate response to public needs. In addition, one could argue that line-of-sight is not adequate due to the design of the building in relation to the public entrances. While the last two arguments are valid, there is nothing that can be done to correct these problems without the provision of additional space. This is dictated by the nature of the building; how it is located on the lot in relation to public access from both the east and the west, current parking conditions, and truck delivery realities. When it is all said and done the bottom line, in all regards, is that we do not have enough space.

There are numerous service delivery problems we face due to the inadequacies of the building. Some of the more pressing limitations are detailed below.

- **Our collection size is limited to the current shelving we possess.** We need additional space for the purpose of being able to broaden our collection while being able to keep the number of duplicate copies we have for popular fiction titles, homework support, and other popular everyday life need titles dealing with topics such as prenatal care. Our building project will allow us to expand our collection size, in the coming years by 20 %.
- **While the above is a problem for the entire collection, we are especially concerned with our Spanish Collection.** The Spanish issue is not only the inadequacy of the size of the collection but, perhaps more importantly, our inability to provide a properly prominent Spanish Area that is welcoming, comfortable, large enough, non-threatening, and desirable for our Spanish speaking community. Our building project will give us the space to not only build the Spanish collection but to create a special place that meets the needs as listed above.
- **We do not have enough space and are unable to create new specialized service areas for which the community is calling.** Specifically, a Career/Job Area and a Business Area. We out and out do not have room in the 1976 building. Our project will give us the space to create these two new areas and place them in a spot that gives the users easy access to the Reference Desk.

- **The Children's Area is way too small.** Not only do we not have enough space for book growth, but also the programming space is too small to comfortably hold the number of children who attend some of the programs. Our building program fixes these space issues.
- **We are unable to freely hold the number of programs we need to service the community because of the noise issue.** The current Children's Area is adjacent to the Adult Area. The programs create too much noise and we receive constant complaints and loose adult users when the programs begin. We have had to balance the number of programs we hold because of this fact. The building project will create a Children's Area that is separated from the Adult Area by a lobby. The programming area for the children will be located in an area that is separated out, by some form, within the Children's Area. The noise level will no longer be an issue.
- **There is a small problem of the program noise level in the Children's Area disturbing other children who are using the library but not attending the program.** This will be largely mitigated because the design of the Children's Area will allow us to hold programs in a space that is physically isolated, in one way or another, from the rest of the Children's Service Area and will therefore restrain much of the noise from leaking into the outer service areas.
- **The current Children's Area is adjacent to the Adult Collection with nothing separating the two except for open book stacks.** Visalia is a city of close to 92,000 residents. The population of Visalia is said to double daily due to people coming into town to work, shop, and conduct business. Visalia therefore has some big city problems including the problem of keeping children safe from predators and potential predators. This issue can only be solved in Visalia by the creation of a Children's Section that is separate enough from the Adult Section that adults will not casually and naturally wonder into said section. Given our present building site, this can only be taken care of by a building program that creates such an area for the children.
- **The problem of child safety and comfort is also true with our current restroom situation.** The only restrooms that are available to the children are also the restrooms that the adults use. The Visalia Branch has some of the same problems that large city libraries have with their bathrooms. Unpleasant things tend to take place in public bathrooms. Our building project fixes this problem by the construction of kid sized restroom facilities attached to the Children's wing.

- **The Young Adult Area in the current facility is located in the back corner of the Children's Area.** It is the only space we have available that also has some line-of-sight to staffing areas. This space is inadequate for the young adults because it is very small and is located in the "little kids" area. Young adults deserve and need a place away from the Children's Area if they are going to feel welcome and comfortable. The area is currently used sparingly because of its location. It also causes the problem of having those young adults who do use the area being intimidating factors to the younger children. The current area is away from other service areas that young adults use such as the adult reference desk and the computer room. All of these problems will be fixed by the building project which gives us increased space for a Young Adult Area that is physically apart from the Children's Area. The space needs to be close to both the adult service area and the children's area.
- **We do not currently have enough space to hold both computer classes while giving the public access to a computer lab.** When we hold classes we have to shut down the public computer lab. These services are in high demand with requests from the public for more of both. While we are solving this problem to some extent, by taking away staff office area to create a small training lab, there are still some problems. The first problem is that this move further limits our staff work areas and storage capabilities. The second problem is that the class size will be cramped, uncomfortable, and hold too few computers. Thirdly, the public computer lab has no line-of-sight with other service areas. Fourthly, the current public computer lab is not easily visible to library users. It needs to be more prominent in the library for marketing purposes and to make it more accessible to the public. The building project cures all of these problems by making available space for a new, visible computer lab that will be in line-of-sight of at least two other public service desks. This will allow us to have a separate training lab and will reinstate needed office and storage space.
- **Our Literacy Program is physically located in a building that is on the same block as the Visalia Branch but is not in the library.** This causes a number of problems not the least of which is a mental separation between the two staffs. This separation means that staff does not do the job they should do in promoting literacy services and in referring individuals to the literacy program. In addition, literacy tutors and learners often times do not have to come into the library for tutoring purposes. This disconnects the library from literacy services, which is not positive from a public relations standpoint, or from the standpoint of the learners and tutors being exposed to

the life enhancement services the public library provides. The current Literacy Service area is also too small. The project will bring the Literacy Office into the public library. This will encourage the staffs to get to know each other better and to become comfortable with promoting literacy services and making referrals. In addition, tutors and learners will have to come into the library so that they will be exposed to library services. The entrance to the literacy offices will be separate from the public library portals to allow literacy center users the ability to have expanded hours of service during those hours when the library is not open to the public.

- **Line-of-sight is very inadequate in the current library.** There is next to no line-of-sight between the Adult Reference Desk and the Circulation Desk. The line-of-sight between the Circulation Desk and the Children's Desk is fairly decent. There is no line-of-sight between the Reference Desk and the Children's Desk. There is no line-of-sight from the Public Computer Room to any service desks. This situation makes our ability to manage the library and to provide high quality public services very difficult. With the building project we will be able to create a situation where all public service areas have line-of-sight with the Circulation Desk. The Public Computer Room will also have direct line-of-sight to the Reference Desk. This will give us more control, provide a safer atmosphere for our customers, and allow us to improve the quality of our service.

EXISTING AND ANTICIPATED NEEDS

Based on the existing limitations, library staff has evaluated the six areas of need that have surfaced during this study.

LIBRARY COLLECTIONS

The current building does not have enough shelving space for us to increase the size of the collection, does not allow us to start new collections, and does not allow us to dedicate adequate space for special collections.

The City of Visalia will only support an expansion project to the extent of saving the old Visalia City Library Building and enclosing the courtyard. The city is also prepared to support the remodeling of the current 1976 building, but city officials are not willing to support, at this time, any other additions to the current building.

This building project will allow us to create the new business and careers collections described above. The library will also gain sufficient space to create a more prominent, larger, and welcoming space for our Spanish Collection. We anticipate that we will be able to increase all other collection areas by 20%. With the Children's Collection being increased by.

READER'S SEATING

The library generally has adequate seating for the number of individuals entering the building. During the school year there are times when all available seating is taken. In addition to table seating, there are currently relaxed seating areas for adults, and juveniles. Our seating problems revolve around location. Seating in the Children's Area and Young Adult Area are immediately adjacent to each other. This causes "turf" problems as well as creating an atmosphere that is intimidating to many children and uncomfortable for many young adults.

The building project will allow us to increase the raw number of seating for adults, young adults, and children. In addition, it will separate the seating for young adults and children which will give them the comfort zone required to make their library visit successful.

STAFF OFFICES, WORKSTATIONS AND VISUAL SUPERVISION

Staff offices and workstations are crowded. The situation is not critical but we are crowded and problems do persist.

We need more space in our workroom for general operations. We are evaluating our workflow in the technical processing area in an attempt to use our space more wisely in addition to streamlining the operation. The staff team working on this project feels that we can utilize our space a little better, but that it will not solve the long-range problem.

We also have the problem of supervisors having offices and workspace areas that are not confidential. This is not a huge problem but it does pose difficulties when certain supervisors counsel their employees or work on confidential planning and budget-related matters.

Visual supervision is a problem. It is a problem in relation to the supervision of staff as well as a problem with the supervision of public desks. Our Staff Work Area is broken up by sorting shelves making the visual supervision of half of the Library Assistants very difficult. The sorting shelves could be moved but the only possible space for them is even further away from our public service desks and would cause more immediate service delay problems. The Staff Work Area also houses the offices of all of our reference librarians. Both the Library Assistants and the Reference Staff have no direct site to their respective public service desks. The situation is even worse for the Children's Staff who are a good 60 additional feet away from the juvenile service desk. Not only is there a line-of-sight problem but there is the problem of not being able easily ascertain when to respond to public demand for additional staff assistance. And when response is required the help is not immediate because of the distance from the work area to the service desks.

The building project will fix these problems. Two of the librarians, including the Head of Reference, will have direct line-of-sight to the Reference Desk and the Circulation Desk. The Head of the Circulation Department will have an office directly in back of the Circulation Desk with immediate access to said desk. The sorting shelves and work area of the Library Assistant IIs will also be immediately in back of the Circulation Desk through an open area going out to the desk area. The Children's Librarian and Children's Staff Office will have a direct line-of-sight to the Children's Desk and into the area of the library where the pre-schoolers through second graders will most likely congregate. Increased office space will

allow us more room and to shift furnishings and work areas so that the Library Assistant IIs will have more direct site supervision when working on most of their tasks.

TECHNOLOGY

We do not currently have enough space to hold both computer classes while giving the public access to a computer lab. When we hold classes we have to shut down the Public Computer Lab. Both of these services are in high demand with requests from the public for more of both. While we are solving this problem to some extent, by taking away staff office area to create a small training lab, there are still some problems. The first problem is that this move further limits our staff work areas and storage capabilities. The second problem is that the class size will be cramped and uncomfortable and hold too few computers. Third, the Public Computer Lab has no line-of-sight with other service areas. Fourth, the current Public Computer Lab is not easily visible to library users. In addition, the lab needs to be more prominent in the library for marketing purposes and to make it more accessible to the public.

The building project cures all of these problems by making available space for a new, visible computer lab that will be in line-of-sight of at least two other public service desks. This will allow us to have a separate training lab and will reinstate much needed office and storage space. Our wiring is adequate and the number of public OPAC and other Internet stations is very good. However, in the near future we will need additional computers. With the completion of the building project we plan to increase the number of computers in the Children's Department, Adult Department, and Young Adult Department as well as provide computers in the Career/Job and Business Areas that we will be creating.

MEETING ROOM

Our current Meeting Room is adequate for our needs and the needs of the community. However, there is a small problem that the building project will alleviate. Currently, the Homework Center, provided through the Visalia Unified School District, operates in our Meeting Room. This is at a time that occasionally interrupts long standing regularly scheduled meetings. We move the Homework Center, during these times, into the Staff Lounge until the meetings have been conducted. The building project will allow us to move the Homework Center to a

different area and solve the seasonal meeting room scheduling conflicts. We see no other changes necessary or imminent at this time.

HOMEWORK CENTER

Currently, the Homework Center, provided through the Visalia Unified School District, operates in our Meeting Room. While not specifically a library service, the cooperation of the Visalia Unified School District is welcome, and the Library would like to be able to enhance this service through use of an improved space.

The Meeting Room is upstairs away from the Children's Department and out of site of the public. Because it is not visible it is not used as much as it could be. It is inconvenient for students, receiving help in the center, to go downstairs to retrieve library materials to aid them in their homework sessions. There is also the problem of conflicting schedules as mentioned in the paragraph above. The building project would correct these problems by giving space to the homework center in a room that is in the old library building and that therefore opens into the Children's Department.

**VISALIA LIBRARY REMODEL AND EXPANSION
COMMUNITY LIBRARY NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

**PHYSICAL LIMITATIONS OF
EXISTING LIBRARY FACILITY**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - PHYSICAL LIMITATIONS

Two buildings are involved in this proposed remodel and expansion. The first is the 1936 Visalia City Library. The second is the 1976 Visalia City / Tulare County Library building. The 1976 building was erected adjacent to the 1936 city library. The two buildings share the same city block, with the 1976 building being located directly north of the 1936 building. These buildings are in close proximity to one another, sharing a common covered courtyard that was designed to physically link the two structures. From 1976 to 2001 the old city library served as storage for the County Library. It is no longer usable as such because of the need to mitigate mold and other hazardous materials.

The 1936 city library operated in its present location for a period of forty years, undergoing at least two different expansions. This building would be completely renovated primarily for children's services, the literacy program and storage. Total area of the old city library is 9,800 square feet. It is proposed that 8,000 square feet of that total be integrated into public service areas.

The concrete and masonry walls appear to be in good repair, with no apparent sign of settlement. The roof will need to be replaced, with plywood sheathing added to act as a roof diaphragm to improve lateral force. The floor over the basement area will require strengthening with new beams and columns. The walls may need some additional bracing.

The HVAC units were neither adequate nor up to code. A complete replacement of the system has been recommended. The lighting fixtures are at least thirty years old and inefficient. The fixtures should be replaced with more efficient systems.

Health and safety are both serious issues with the 1936 building. Tulare County has completed three different studies of this building regarding hazardous materials, specifically, mold, asbestos and lead paint. The mold contamination is primarily confined to the books and shelving. However, there is some airborne mold, and moving the books could greatly increase the airborne levels. Staff is limited to five-minute incursions into the building, and no materials are to be removed. Professional mold remediation is required. Both asbestos and lead paint was found in various parts of the building and will require mitigation.

There is no access to the 1936 building for the disabled. This must be addressed in any remodel plans.

Acoustics in the 1936 building are good, as all of the ceilings except the cupola are moderate in height, varying from ten to fifteen feet, even where there are exposed beams. The beams also help muffle sound, and acoustical tile will do much to limit sound in the 1936 structure.

The 1976 library is 31,600 square feet, with a public service area of 18,800 square feet. The current physical condition of the 1976 library building is good. The building consists of a one story main library and a two-story office wing. The building is a combination of tilt-up concrete and concrete block walls. The building has a steel-framed concrete floor and a wood framed roof. The building is in good repair, and the structural engineer reports that the building is safe to receive minor remodeling.

The 1976 building has an inefficient HVAC system that provides inadequate zone coverage for large portions of the building. Lighting is also an issue, but Tulare County has begun replacing older ballasts with more energy efficient models.

VISALIA LIBRARY REMODEL AND EXPANSION – Page 55
COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Handicapped access needs improvement. Wheelchairs can enter the building and navigate the book stack areas, but the public bathrooms are not ADA compliant. Any remodel or expansion will need to provide improved access, including the remodel or construction of new bathrooms. There are no known safety issues with the 1976 building at this time.

Acoustics in the 1976 building are poor. The central floor of the library is a large rectangle and has a twenty-foot ceiling with limited acoustical tile. Noise, especially from the Children's Area, reverberates throughout the facility.

Shelf space has become limited in the 1976 building. The facility has reached a maximum capacity for shelving without seriously limiting the available floor space for seating and programs.

There are some specific limitations that cannot be accommodated with the available space. Three particular areas of concern are children's services, young adult services, and business and careers. The present Children's Area is 3,200 square feet and too small for the number of children served in the community. Summer reading programs and special performances are cramped. Reorganization is not practical, as the adult book stacks confine the area. The Young Adult Area is too small and located in a corner adjacent to the children's service area. The teens to be located in a separate area away from the children. One of the important targets of the needs assessment was the expansion of business and careers resources. Improving these collections is important to the library, but additional space is required in the reference area for expansion.

The present 1976 facility maintains four public service desks, but has limited visual connectivity between them. There is adequate line-of-sight between the children's desk and the circulation desk, but there is limited visibility between the reference desk and circulation. The computer lab has no visibility to any of the other service desks. At the same time, customer visibility is also limited. The Computer Lab is not readily visible and requires staff intervention and direction. The Children's Area is also not readily visible to customers entering the building.

Because of the extended nature of the four public service desks, staff efficiency is not always optimized. In particular, the staff working circulation does not have adequate egress to books waiting to be shelved. The computer lab staff desk is also isolated from the work areas.

Important considerations in any remodeling project would require better line-of-sight between the public service desks, with the central focus of visibility being circulation. Improved access to staff areas, especially at circulation, would increase efficiency and productivity. Relocation of all four-service areas would be ideal.

The library site is located within the downtown historic district of Visalia. It is located within short proximity of major north/south and east/west thoroughfares. Public transportation is good, with the city transfer points to most bus lines less than three blocks from the library. There is extensive street-side parking, as well as handicapped parking. This has been the traditional library site for sixty-six years, and is identified as such in the community.

Access to the Visalia Library is provided from both the east and west sides of the block. Access for all patrons is through a courtyard that connects the 1936 and 1976 buildings. Maintaining these dual approaches is essential. Most public transit access is located on the east side of the block. Most of the parking and bicycle access is available on the west side of the block. It is important to sustain access from both sides of the property in any remodel plan.

The ADA survey for this application notes some minor alterations that will be required to improve site access. Most of these changes involve improved sidewalk cuts at corners and driveways. The report also notes the need for additional handicapped parking.

OVERVIEW

Two buildings are involved in this proposed remodel and expansion. The first is the 1936 Visalia City Library. The second is the 1976 Visalia City / Tulare County Library building. When the 1976 building was opened, the Visalia City Library was merged with the Tulare County Library, and the new facility became both the Visalia Branch Library and the headquarters operation for the Tulare County system. Ownership of the 1936 library building was also transferred from the city to the county at that time.

The 1976 building was erected adjacent to the 1936 city library. The two buildings share the same city block, with the 1976 building being located directly north of the 1936 building. The two buildings are in close proximity to one another, sharing a common covered courtyard that was designed to physically link the two structures. From 1976 to 2001 the old city library served as storage for the County Library. It is no longer usable as such because of the need to mitigate mold and other hazardous materials.

The current condition of each building is described below.

1936 BUILDING

The 1936 city library operated in its present location for a period of forty years, undergoing at least two different expansions. It is a mission style structure, with a central cupola and four wings. It is a single story with the wings extending from the cupola in a cross shape. The structure has concrete and masonry walls and a wood framed tile roof. One wing has a basement area. This basement will not be utilized by the library because of accessibility issues.

This building would be completely renovated primarily for children's services, the literacy program and storage. Total area of the old city library is 9,800 square feet. It is proposed that 8,000 square feet of that total be integrated into public service areas.

STRUCTURAL

The following is a summation of the findings of the structural engineer who examined the 1936 building for this application:

The concrete and masonry walls appear to be in good repair, with no apparent sign of settlement. The roof will need to be replaced, with plywood sheathing added to act as a roof diaphragm to improve lateral force. The floor over the basement area will require strengthening with new beams and columns. The walls may need some additional bracing.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

The energy audit of the 1936 building reported that the HVAC units were neither adequate nor up to code. It recommends complete replacement of the system. The same report states that all of the lighting fixtures are at least thirty years old and inefficient. The report recommends cleaning the fixtures, replacing the ballasts, and using more efficient lamps.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Health and safety are both serious issues with the 1936 building. Tulare County has completed three different studies of this building regarding hazardous

materials. Two documents relate to mold. The third relates to asbestos and lead paint.

The two mold studies indicate that there is some mold contamination in the building. The contamination is primarily confined to the books and shelving. However, there is some airborne mold, and moving the books could greatly increase the airborne levels. Staff are limited to five-minute incursions into the building, and no materials are to be removed.

The report recommends only professional mold remediation as a solution to the problem.

The third report was a study for asbestos and lead paint. Both substances were found in various parts of the building and will require mitigation.

DISABLED ACCESS

There is no access to the 1936 building for the disabled. There are ramps approaching both the north and southeast doors, but both ramps are too steep to meet the requirements of the ADA.

Items needing attention according to the ADA study completed for this application include: bathrooms, lights, power outlets, light switches, ramps, handrails, signage, and the old main entrance (force and size).

ACOUSTICS

Acoustics in the 1936 building are good, as all of the ceilings except the cupola are moderate in height, varying from ten to fifteen feet, even where there are exposed beams. The beams also help muffle sound, and acoustical tile will do much to limit sound in the 1936 structure.

SPACE FLEXIBILITY/EXPANDABILITY

The 1936 building represents 9,800 square feet of usable space that will greatly improve library flexibility and expandability. The central rotunda provides easy access to all four wings of the building.

FUNCTIONAL SPATIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Because this building has not been used for public service since 1976, the functional relationships are not significant to this report. The use of this space will be completely redeveloped if this project receives funding.

SITE

The library site is located within the downtown historic district of Visalia. It is located within short proximity of major north/south and east/west thoroughfares. Public transportation is good, with the city transfer points to most bus lines less than three blocks from the library. There is extensive street-side parking, as well as handicapped parking. This has been the traditional library site for sixty-six years, and is identified as such in the community.

Access to the Visalia Library is currently provided from both the east and west sides of the library block. Access for all patrons is through the courtyard that connects the 1936 and 1976 buildings. Maintaining these dual approaches is essential. Most public transit access is located on the east side of the block. Most of the parking and bicycle access is available on the west side of the block. It became important to sustain access from both sides of the property in any remodel plan.

The ADA survey for this application, notes some minor alterations that will be required to improve site access. Most of these changes involve improved sidewalk cuts at corners and driveways. The report also notes the need for additional handicapped parking.

1976 BUILDING

The 1976 library is 31,600 square feet, with a public service area of 18,800 square feet. The current physical condition of the 1976 library building is good. New carpet and some additional cosmetic changes have been recent improvements that have helped to alleviate some of our crowding and visibility issues. The existing 1976 library is a flexible and functional facility that can no longer meet the needs of the Visalia population.

STRUCTURAL

The 1976 library consists of a one story main library and a two-story office wing. The building is a combination of tilt-up concrete and concrete block walls. The building has a steel-framed concrete floor and a wood framed roof. The building is in good repair, and the structural engineer reports that the building is safe to receive minor remodeling.

ENERGEY CONSERVATION

The 1976 building has an inefficient HVAC system that provides inadequate zone coverage for large portions of the building. Lighting is also an issue, but Tulare County has begun replacing older ballasts with more energy efficient models.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Tulare County maintains a countywide safety policy, which includes departmental safety officers. The library safety officer performs regular inspections of the building, promptly reporting safety issues and needed repairs. There are no known safety issues with the 1976 building at this time.

DISABLED ACCESS

Handicapped access needs improvement. Wheelchairs can enter the building and navigate the book stack areas, but the public bathrooms are not ADA compliant. The library also needs improved interior signage for Braille users. Any remodel or

expansion will need to provide improved access, including the remodel of existing bathrooms or the construction of new bathrooms.

ACOUSTICS

Acoustics in the 1976 building are poor. The central floor of the library is a large rectangle and has a twenty-foot ceiling with limited acoustical tile. Noise, especially from the Children's Area, reverberates throughout the facility.

SPACE FLEXIBILITY/EXPANDABILITY

Shelf space has become limited in the 1976 building. The facility has reached a maximum capacity for shelving without seriously limiting the available floor space for seating and programs.

There are some specific limitations that cannot be accommodated with the available space. Three particular areas of concern are children's services, young adult services, and business and careers. The present Children's Area is 3,200 square feet and too small for the number of children served in the community. In particular, summer reading programs and special performances are cramped. Unfortunately, the Children's Area is located in a corner of the library where reorganization is not practical, as the area is confined by the adult book stacks. The Young Adult Area is only 300 square feet and located in a corner adjacent to the Children's Service Area. The teens need more room. They also need to be located in a separate area away from the children. One of the important targets of the needs assessment was the expansion of business and careers resources. Improving these collections is important to the library, but additional space is required in the reference area for this expansion.

FUNCTIONAL SPATIAL RELATIONSHIPS

The present 1976 facility maintains four public service desks, but has limited visual connectivity between them. There is adequate line-of-sight between the Children's Desk and the Circulation Desk, but there is limited visibility between the Reference Desk and circulation. The Computer Lab has no visibility to any of the other service desks. At the same time, customer visibility is also limited. The Computer Lab is not readily visible and requires staff intervention and direction. The Children's Area is also not readily visible to customers entering the building.

Because of the extended nature of the four public service desks, staff efficiency is not always optimized. In particular, the staff working the circulation desk does not have adequate egress to the books waiting to be shelved. The computer lab staff desk is also isolated from the work areas.

Important considerations in any remodeling project would require better line-of-sight between the public service desks, with the central focus of visibility being circulation. Improved access to staff areas, especially at circulation, would increase efficiency and productivity. Relocation of all four-service areas would be ideal.

SITE

The library site is located within the downtown historic district of Visalia. It is located within short proximity of major north/south and east/west thoroughfares. Public transportation is good, with the city transfer points to most bus lines less than three blocks from the library. There is extensive street-side parking, as well as handicapped parking. This has been the traditional library site for sixty-six years, and is identified as such in the community.

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**VISALIA LIBRARY REMODEL AND EXPANSION
COMMUNITY LIBRARY NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

SPACE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

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PLANNING AND RATIONALE

Because the nature of this remodel project had staff dealing with a fixed square footage from the beginning, many of the space calculations were made based on what is possible. Therefore, many of the numbers prepared in this portion of the study are not optimum, but they are intended to be realistic based on existing conditions. It was our intent to optimize the available space.

The main floor of the 1936 library is roughly 9,400 square feet.¹¹ After calculating unassignable square footage, approximately 8,000 square feet of usable staff and public service space remained. The 1976 building totals 31,600 square feet, which is reduced to 28,800 square feet after unassignable space is removed. Consequently, the 8,000 square feet of usable space in the 1936 library adds twenty-seven percent to the usable building space.¹²

Before applying this percentage increase to any of the programmed areas of the library, the meeting room and unassigned space were removed from the calculations. It was determined that expansion of the existing meeting room was not possible, and relocation of the meeting room would consume too high a percentage of the available space. Unassigned space was not included because, since it was a known quantity, it had already been eliminated prior to the space percentage calculations.

One further constraint was placed upon any space calculations, and that was how interior walls of the 1936 building affected available space. Each of the four wings opens onto the rotunda. This open area is approximately 5,900 square feet. Public support made it essential that this whole area be committed to children's services. This represented an increase in square footage for the children's area of eighty-four percent.

The remaining space in the 1936 building contained four areas of any programmable size. Because of proximity and visibility, two rooms, totaling 1,100 square feet were best designated for the children's office and staff use. The third and fourth rooms were additions to the library and were outside of the primary

¹¹ As has been noted previously, there is a small basement space that will not be used by the library. Access to this area is very limited, and it will only be used for mechanical equipment and additional structural bracing.

¹² None of the expansion space for the lobby and new bathrooms was included in these calculations, since ninety percent or more of that space would be considered unassigned.

load-bearing walls; consequently they could not be opened to the main floor. One area of 850 square feet had an outside entrance. The availability of the independent entrance made it the best area for the relocation of the literacy office. It was determined that this area could be shared between literacy and the homework lab supported by Visalia Unified School District. The remaining room, an area of 700 square feet was designated for badly needed storage.

With all of the space in the 1936 building assigned. The remaining expansion of services needed to be accommodated within the 1976 building. Three areas became reclaimed space. The 600 square feet of the old lobby area, the 500 square feet occupied by the old circulation desk, and the 3,200 square feet previously used by the children's area became available expansion space. This was a total of 4,300 square feet of usable space.

Because of the mechanical overhang, power and cabling in the old circulation desk area, it was possible to create a glassed in computer lab of 365 square feet that matched the overhang. This decision further enclosed the old lobby, making it an ideal area for the young adults. This left the 3,200 square feet from the former children's area to be divided between adult and reference services. This allowed a twenty-eight percent increase for each of these two service areas.

SPACE DEFINITIONS AND CALCULATIONS

This section defines each space as specified for the application. Library collections, seating, technology, staff work areas, special needs, the meeting room and unassignable space will all be discussed. For special needs, this study will talk specifically about the literacy office and library storage. Based on the planning discussed above, the following figures have been determined for the primary programmable areas of the library.

PROGRAM AREA	SQ. FT. SHELVING	SQ. FT. SEATING	TOTAL SQ. FT.
Adult Services	5,000	6,000	11,500
Reference Services	1,500	1,300	3,400
Young Adult Services	50	450	600
Children's Services	2,300	1,600	5,900

Provide a listing of the assignable square footage allocations needed for the proposed project and an analysis of how they were determined for the following categories:

LIBRARY COLLECTIONS

The current library collection is static. This means that it is in a no-growth situation. Visalia building shelving is fixed, and weeding must match acquisition of new materials in order to sustain the collection. This is true in all areas of collection development.

The book budget of the Tulare County Library is limited. Distribution of funds for purchasing is distributed among the fifteen branch libraries based on annual circulation statistics. Reference titles are purchased through the direction of the Librarian III in charge of reference service at the Visalia Branch.

Collection development is centered on current popular titles and homework support. Other areas of focus are current life skills, reference sources, business and careers, and sustaining balance in the non-fiction subject areas.

In the adult and reference service areas, the library's non-fiction collection is catalogued using the Dewey Decimal Classification system. Fiction is alphabetical

by author, with for specialty sub-genres, mystery, science fiction, western, and romance. Generally these materials are shelved at an average of ten titles per linear foot for non-fiction and twelve titles per linear foot for fiction. The reference collection averages out at eight titles per linear foot. Traditionally, thirty percent of the library collection is in circulation at any one time. However, these numbers can vary seasonally. For example, we usually have a much lower percentage in circulation during the Christmas holidays.

The children's collection has a much higher density, with fifteen titles per linear foot in the fiction and non-fiction collections. The picture books have an even higher ratio, close to eighteen books per linear foot. The children's collection also has a slightly higher figure for number of items in circulation, with close to thirty-five percent of all titles in circulation at one time. This goes even higher in specialized areas such as picture books during the summer reading club.

SEATING

Since adult and reference services each received a space gain of approximately twenty-seven percent, the decision was made to increase seating by fifteen percent. The reasoning for this determination was to leave some flexibility within each service area, so as to accommodate growth in either the direction of shelving or seating as it may eventually prove to be necessary.

The sole exception to this calculation was the children's area, where a much higher percentage of increased seating was possible because of the greater increase in space. In the children's area, seating was increased by fifty percent.

The standard round library table with seating for four individuals occupies 25 square feet. When you add fifty-five square feet for ADA access on three sides of a table, the total square footage required for an individual table is 80. This calculates out at 20 square feet per capita for seating. Therefore, seating for forty individuals would require 800 square feet.

TECHNOLOGY

The technology infrastructure for the Visalia building is already existing. We have two routers, one that serves the San Joaquin Valley Library System wide area network, and one that serves the Tulare County local area network. We have multiple hubs attached, three servers (including a public Intranet and the computer

lab), and five networked printers. We currently have twenty-seven staff PCs, with the expectation that this number will increase to more than thirty by the end of 2002 due to connectivity issues.

The proposed building project will add a minimum of five new staff PCs to our existing networks.

The public currently has access to our catalog and the Internet through thirty-eight PCs on the main floor and in the computer lab. With the addition of the new instructional computer lab in 2002 this number will increase to fifty.

The proposed building project would add an additional ten public PCs and six SelfCheck machines connected to the library's automated circulation system.

Despite the changing footprint of personal computers and their constantly reducing size, it seems logical to continue to use a three-foot by three-foot area for monitor, cpu, mouse, and keyboard. An additional comparable space is required for individuals, whether sitting or standing. Therefore, each PC, either staff or public requires eighteen square feet of space. The 105 PCs projected for the completed building project will require 1,890 square feet. The routers, hubs, and servers occupy an additional 200 square feet.

STAFF OFFICES AND WORKSTATIONS

No changes will be made in the operational staffing of the Visalia Branch. Because of public attention regarding the project, additional staff space has been kept to a minimum. Indeed, only those areas that are obviously not conducive to public access were considered for staff use. Consequently, most staff spaces will remain unchanged as a result of this project. There will be some reorganization, including the relocation of the children's service office, but the 1,230 square feet that will be added to staff area will be primarily office space.

MEETING ROOM

The current library meeting room is 900 square feet with an occupancy capacity of thirty-five. This room is on the second floor of the main library. Neither the size nor location of the room is conducive to effective use for programs or public meetings. The meeting room is used almost exclusively for library staff related

activities. Adult programs are always held downstairs, usually after normal operating hours.

Because of the limited nature of the remodeling project for the Visalia Library, no additional meeting room space has been allocated. Expansion of the meeting room in its present location was not possible, and relocation of the meeting room would consume to high a percentage of the available space.

LITERACY OFFICE

The area designated for the literacy office was 850 square feet. This area will provide an outside entrance for literacy customers, through an open courtyard. It will provide office space, storage, and a tutoring area, which can be shared with the homework lab. Great effort will be taken to keeping this area as flexible as possible in order to accommodate the changing needs of the literacy program and its customers.

STORAGE

With the loss of the 1936 building as a storage facility due to hazardous materials, the Tulare County Library is badly in need of storage space for periodicals and branch support. The 700 square foot space designated for storage is not ideal, but it will enable the library to begin rebuilding some of the need materials that were lost through mitigation of mold.

NON-ASSIGNABLE SPACE

No assumptions were made with respect to the percentage of non-assignable square footage for the library remodel project. As with every other component of this project, the non-assignable space is essentially a fixed number. The square footage was calculated by measuring the existing space, and adding the appropriate areas of the proposed new lobby and bathrooms. Based on this, the non-assignable square footage is 9,000 square feet.

VISALIA LIBRARY REMODEL AND EXPANSION
COMMUNITY LIBRARY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

SUMMARY OF GOALS

VISALIA LIBRARY REMODEL AND EXPANSION – Page 71
COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

As was noted in the Introduction, there were some required limitations to this needs assessment. Available space was a controlling factor. The library has acted on those identified needs where space or funding was available. For example, we did not have a Literacy Program at the time the first assessment was held. We have established the program, with state funding, and intensified our Adult Literacy public awareness campaign. The library has improved the quality of our Spanish Collection, made some improvements in giving special space to the users of the Spanish Collection. The library is also in the process of developing a second computer lab for public instruction.

The eight goals listed here can be accomplished through the proposed building project. They are realistic and will enhance library service to the community of Visalia.

- Goal 1:** The library needs to establish a Careers and Job Information Area in the Visalia Branch. This goal comes directly from the initial Community Needs Assessment conducted in 1999. Current space restrictions keep this goal from being accomplished. The completion of the proposed building project will allow for this new service to be implemented.
- Goal 2:** The library needs to establish a viable Business Information Area in the Visalia Branch. This goal also comes directly from the Community Needs Assessment conducted in 1999. As with the Careers and Job Information Area, current space restrictions keep Business Area from being accomplished. These two services would supplement and support one another.
- Goal 3:** The library needs to establish a special children's area to meet the needs of community families. The need for a refurbished and larger children's area was a theme that ran throughout the assessments. This is also meeting a community need that was not identified as belonging specifically to the library. The community is very concerned about the overall educational level and safety of the children. They want safe places for the children to go, and they want improved educational opportunities. The completion of the proposed building project is necessary for the changes identified to take place.

- Goal 4:** The library needs to create a special space for young adults that is distinct from the Children's Area to encourage use of library services by young adults. This area should be designed in such a way as to make them feel more welcome and comfortable. Furthermore, the Young Adult Area needs to be in a location where it does not interfere with the service provided to the younger children. Current space limitations and proper safety and crowd control management factors are not feasible within the confines of our current space.
- Goal 5:** The library needs to enhance the role that Children's Service plays in helping children to become highly literate. The high illiteracy rate in the County was a common concern for both adults and children. The emphasis on children, outside of the school arena, revolved around exposure to books and availability of resources. To this end the library plans to improve children's services and to make our Children's Service area more appealing and secure.
- Goal 6:** The library needs to improve our Computer-training Program and access to our Computer Lab. Access to computers and the availability of computers was a concern identified, especially in the public interest survey. Computer training is a particular concern we see, especially from our more mature adults.
- Goal 7:** The library needs to continue to develop the adult Literacy Program through expanded space and publicity. Input from the 1999 study suggested that we start a literacy program. We also got significant input to improve our current program by enlarging the space made available to the program, and to do a better job at making non-literacy library staff knowledgeable and more supportive of the program.
- Goal 8:** The library needs to improve the service level provided to those who speak Spanish. This need was identified in all of our surveys in one form or the other. A need for more Spanish materials was the most common response, but it was also indicated that some Hispanics do not feel comfortable in the library because they feel that they cannot get help.

VISALIA LIBRARY REMODEL AND EXPANSION
COMMUNITY LIBRARY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

APPENDICIES

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