

# **Josephine Community Library District Facilities Master Plan (Phase 1 Report)**

*Prepared by Penny Hummel Consulting  
June 18, 2018 (revised January 30, 2019)*

## **Executive Summary**

After functioning as a nonprofit organization for a decade, the Josephine County library system is now benefitting from the passage of a library district in 2018. Recognizing that the library needs appropriate space—for collections, for people, for programming and for functional operations, the Josephine Community Library District (JCLD) and its support organization, the Josephine County Library Foundation, have established facilities improvement as a top priority. Since serious deficiencies in three of the four Josephine County library facilities compromise the quality and level of service that can be provided, improving the library's facilities is critical to the success of the library system in the future.

Prepared by Penny Hummel Consulting, this Phase 1 report provides a service evaluation of the four Josephine County libraries, as well as a set of recommendations to improve each of them. The goal is to provide a foundation to support the work of the architectural firm chosen for Phase 2 of the process, which will include evaluating the structural needs of existing facilities, estimating costs of renovation or replacement, and assisting in site selection where appropriate.

A summary of the recommendations for each of the four Josephine County libraries is below.

### **Grants Pass Library**

- Replace the existing library with an estimated 36,909 square foot new facility (location to be determined). A detailed program for this new library is included in this report.
- Analyze current use of the Grants Pass collection, with the goal of maximizing return on shelf space.

### **Illinois Valley Library**

- Explore the viability and cost of expanding/renovating the library, with the goal of adding a meeting room and improving the computer/media room.
- Analyze current use of the Illinois Valley collection, with the goal of reducing its overall size to free up space.

- Evaluate the library's mechanical systems (plumbing, lighting, heating and cooling) and roof to identify and prioritize repairs and improvements.
- Evaluate the library's existing safety and security systems and make needed improvements.
- Improve the library's Internet bandwidth and reliability.
- Update furniture and fixtures as is appropriate to the building's mid-century look and feel and explore the viability of minor renovations.

### **Williams Library**

- Replace the existing library with new facility of approximately 5,569 square feet at the current location. A detailed program for this new library is included in this report.
- Analyze current use of the Williams collection, with the goal of maximizing return on shelf space.

### **Wolf Creek Library**

- Analyze current use of the Wolf Creek collection, with the goal of focusing the collection on high-interest materials.
- Evaluate the library's mechanical systems (plumbing, lighting, heating and cooling) and roof to determine if there are maintenance issues that need to be addressed.
- Evaluate the library's existing safety and security systems and make needed improvements.
- Improve the library's Internet bandwidth and reliability, potentially partnering with other community organizations to reduce costs.
- Update furniture and fixtures as is appropriate or a priority for the library system.

## Methodology

In January 2018, the Josephine County Library Foundation issued a Scope of Work for Phase I of a Library Facilities Master Plan. The foundation and library selected a proposal from Penny Hummel Consulting for this project, which included the participation of library facilities consultant Penny Hummel and library IT consultant Lance Murty. On March 20, Hummel and Murty met with the library's Facilities Oversight Task Force to discuss initial priorities for the facilities plan. The following themes emerged from this discussion:

- Addressing the outdated and inadequate features of each facility;
- Expanding designated areas and opportunities for programming;
- Increasing opportunities for patrons to gather, study and learn;
- Enhancing volunteer and staff efficiency and effectiveness by improving work areas.

During this March 20 – 21 visit, Hummel and Murty also toured the four facilities and observed operations. Penny Hummel conducted focus groups with library staff from all four libraries, library district and foundation board members and Lance Murty met with the library's IT contractor and library staff. The consultants also facilitated a discussion at a public meeting at the Grants Pass library on March 21. Penny Hummel returned April 25 – 26 to conduct a focus group with library volunteers, facilitate public discussions at the Williams and Illinois Valley libraries, and meet with Cindy Low, a representative of the Grants Pass Friends of the Library. Data from these sessions has informed the evaluation and recommendations below. Notes from these sessions, as well as the results of surveys conducted by JCLD youth services librarian Susan Davis with teens and parents/guardians, are included in the appendix.

Penny Hummel also reviewed a variety of information about the library and its operations, including circulation data, usage statistics and demographic information. Basing this work on best practices in planning public library facilities, she then developed recommendations for each of the four Josephine County libraries and developed a library program incorporating these elements for the two facilities where a new facility is recommended (Grants Pass and Williams). These draft recommendations were presented to Facilities Oversight Task Force on May 29 for their input and additional revisions were subsequently solicited from the library's staff and stakeholders. Lance Murty also developed a written set of recommendations deriving from his assessment of the library's system's IT needs. This report is included in the appendix, and its findings are incorporated into the general recommendations of this report.

## Community Information

According to the U.S. Census, the estimated population of Josephine County as of July 2017 is 86,352. It is noteworthy in several ways:

- 26.6% of Josephine County’s residents are estimated to be ages 65 and over, compared to 17.2% in Oregon overall (Source: Population Resource Center, Portland State University)
- Only 17.3% of Josephine County residents have a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared to 31.4% in Oregon and 30.3% in the U.S. (Source: U.S. Census).
- 7.3% of Josephine County residents are Hispanic or Latino, lower than Oregon overall (12.8%) or the U.S. (17.8%) (Source: U.S. Census).

Other U.S. Census data reveals the economic challenges faced by Josephine County residents. At \$37,867, the 2012-16 median household income is lower than that estimated for Oregon (\$53,270) or the U.S. (\$55,322). 18% of county residents (and 20.4% of Grants Pass residents) are estimated to be living in poverty, a higher percentage than Oregon (13.3%) or the U.S. (12.7%). And, although Josephine County has a lower percentage of children aged 0 – 17 than in Oregon (18.7% vs. 21%, according to the Population Resource Center at Portland State University), they are disproportionately affected by socioeconomic factors.

- Over one-third (34.4%) of children are estimated to live in poverty, compared to 20.3% in Oregon. (Source: Children First for Oregon).
- 66.9% of students qualify for free and reduced lunches compared to 49.3% in Oregon. (Source: Children First for Oregon).
- 9% of students in Josephine County are homeless, compared to 3.9% in Oregon overall. (Source: Children First of Oregon).

In this context, Josephine County’s four public libraries function as essential informational and cultural hubs, providing vital services to the county’s high proportion of seniors, as well as needy families and their children.

## Overview of Library System

Having survived a significant amount of change in the last decade, Josephine County’s public libraries have evolved into a unique institution that’s unlike any other library system in Oregon. Originally operating as the four parts of a county system, the libraries in Grants Pass, Cave Junction, Williams and Wolf Creek closed in 2007 due to a precipitous drop in county funding. Committed to restoring public library service, community members raised funds and trained volunteers to reopen the libraries, forming the nonprofit Josephine Community Libraries, Inc. From 2009 – 2017, the Josephine County library system survived with donations, fundraising and thousands of donated volunteer hours each year.

In 2017, voters approved a library district serving 39,000 residents in the noncontiguous areas surrounding the four libraries. In this new context, those residing in areas of the county that are not in the library district can purchase a library card for a fee; property owners outside the district can also voluntarily add their property to the district map. The new library district began operations in January 2018. With stable public funding now established, the fundraising

work originally undertaken by the nonprofit JCLI has been assumed by the Josephine County Library Foundation, which has established improving facilities as a top priority. The library system's extensive mobilization of volunteers continues to be its most distinctive feature. In FY 16-17, 326 community members contributed 25,257 hours of volunteer time to staff circulation and help desks, shelf books, process new materials and perform other vital functions—almost 500 hours a week.

As of July 2017, the four Josephine County libraries offer a collection of 160,539 items, including books, DVDs, audio books, music CDs and periodicals. In addition to the print/physical collection, JCLD patrons also have access to a digital collection (including e-books, online resources and downloadable media) totaling 65,428 items.

In 2016 – 17, JCLD had 36,184 active cardholders and circulation totaled 280,174. With the advent of the library district this year, it is expected that some of these measurements (such as number of cardholders) will change, as not all Josephine County residents live within the district and are eligible for a free card. However, given that district funding is supporting significantly increased open hours at each location, it is likely that circulation and number of visits to the library will increase to some extent.

In 2016 – 17, the four libraries in the system welcomed 126,252 visitors—almost 2,500 visits a week in total. These facilities vary in terms of vintage, size, condition and form of ownership. Each one serves a unique community within Josephine County, a situation reinforced by their geographic distance from each other, which ranges from 18 miles (Grants Pass and Wolf Creek) to 51 miles (Illinois Valley and Wolf Creek). These four communities, which include the two incorporated cities in Josephine County (Grants Pass and Cave Junction) as well as two unincorporated areas (Wolf Creek and Williams) embody the rural/small town nature of Josephine County.

## **Grants Pass Library: Needs Assessment**

### **General Description**

Located at 200 NW C Street in Grants Pass, the 15,470 square foot Grants Pass library was originally built in 1959 and features a children's area renovated in 2016. Owned by the county, the facility is currently leased to the library district. This building serves as the system's central library, housing administrative staff for the whole county system.

Prior to this spring, the Grants Pass library was open 24 hours a week, but the passage of the library district last year supported a significant increase in hours. Currently, the library is open 40 hours a week, from 10 am to 7 pm on Tuesday and Thursday, from 10 am – 6 pm on Wednesday and Friday, and from 10 am to 4 pm Saturdays.

In 2016-17, 203,396 items circulated from this library and the number of annual visits was 92,316, or almost 1,800 visitors a week. The bulk of the library system's 300 + volunteers work

at the Grants Pass library, staffing various desks, assisting with processing new materials, shelving and supporting programming and other special projects.

The Grants Pass library serves 37,779 residents of the City of Grants Pass as well as an unidentified number of patrons from the surrounding unincorporated areas. Since the number of unincorporated users isn't identified, this study utilizes the population of Grants Pass to assess the library's current facilities-related services on a per capita basis, with the understanding that measurements indicating a deficiency in current services are even more acute than the numbers suggest, because the population being served goes beyond the city limits.

The unique nature of the Grants Pass library is apparent at the main entrance. Immediately, visitors experience a team of volunteers running the front end of the library's key circulation functions. At one desk, a volunteer signs up new cardholders; at another, volunteers check in materials checking materials in, and at a third desk, volunteers check out materials. Other volunteers can be observed staffing the information desk, assisting in the children's library or shelving. As one of them said, accurately describing the general vibe of the library on a typical day: "There's a warmth. It's us." The library places a high premium on facilitating successful volunteer involvement and paid staff are trained to be proactive in ensuring that volunteers feel supported in the invaluable work that they do.

The liveliness of the entry area, however, also translates into increased noise, which can be challenging for library patrons looking for a more peaceful library experience. In general, the aging facility, which hasn't been comprehensively renovated since it opened in 1959, is worn out, crowded and inefficient.

## **Collections**

According to a collection snapshot taken in the spring of 2018, the Grants Pass library currently holds approximately 101,000 items, including books, DVDs, CDs, books on CD, periodicals and special collections. Reflecting the relatively small materials budget that the library could afford in the last years of county support and in its decade as a nonprofit, many items in the collection are old and worn. In recent years, library staff have been working to weed the collection, and in the years to come they expect to utilize an improved collections budget to replace older materials and fill gaps. The library plans to eliminate its collection of VHS movies and books on cassette in the near future.

Overall, shelving at the Grants Pass library is packed and shelving in the adult fiction and nonfiction areas is particularly full, with 88" stacks each incorporating 6 -7 shelves of books. Recently, shelving that was obscuring windows was removed to improve access to natural light in the adult fiction area. To house the collection, the library utilizes the bottom shelf of the book stacks, which is generally not considered a best practice as the bottom shelf is difficult for patrons to see and access. In addition, high shelving creates accessibility issues for older or disabled patrons (or volunteers) who have difficulty reaching the top shelf from a stool. In

some cases (such as DVDs) collection items spill from one room into another due to limited space.

### **Computers and Technology**

The library offers 23 computers for public use, including online catalogs, public internet access computers, a children's learning station and laptops. Patron workstations in the primary computer area are cramped and would benefit from a larger footprint. In 2016-17, the library recorded 13,400 individual Internet sessions on library computers and an additional 25,866 sessions by patrons utilizing Wi-Fi on their own devices, or over 755 sessions a week, an indication that internet access is a very valued and highly used service. To support the public's use of technology, library volunteers staff a technology desk.

### **Seating and Meeting Room Space**

Currently, the library offers approximately 105 patron seats, or 2.8 seats per 1,000 people. This amount of seating is low in comparison with current best practice for a library of its type, which recommends 4 – 6 seats/1,000 people. In addition, much of the library's seating is not the right type of seating. For example, the primary seating in the adult fiction/nonfiction area is at 70" round tables that seat 5 people, an inefficient use of space as library patrons tend to avoid sharing tables. Too few of the library's seating options are adjacent to a power source, which hinders patrons who need to plug in laptops, phones or tablets. Several years ago, the library added a handful of built-in desks with a power source, which have been popular.

### **Programming and Event Space**

With respect to meeting room space, the only space the library currently features is the Ben Bones Room, which seats 60 auditorium style and approximately 20 conference style. However, since this room doubles as the sales area for the Friends of the Library, the two functions often collide with each other. The library also utilizes the main reading area in adult fiction/nonfiction for public events. Although this area can accommodate 80 people, it too is problematic as setting it up for a meeting involves moving numerous cumbersome and heavy 70" circular tables.

The lack of meeting room space in the Grants Pass library limits the library's current ability to offer programming for all ages. Nonetheless, in 2016-17, the library offered 360 programs (primarily storytimes) that attracted 8,983 attendees, a 27.5% increase in participation over the previous year. Additional meeting room space is needed, not only for library programming, but for use by community groups and the library's ongoing community partners (such as early literacy providers). The library currently offers no small enclosed quiet study rooms, which are also desirable.

## Designated Program Areas

**Children's Library.** As noted earlier, the children's area was renovated in 2016 and been a success in general, both operationally and aesthetically. (The library plans to take the new shelving in that area to the new library.) However, the library's limited programming space directly impacts services for this age group. During the school year, the library offers six storytimes a week for pre-K children of various ages, plus additional programming such as the K-9 program, which gives children the opportunity to read to service dogs. Storytimes and other programming are divided between three places: the Ben Bones Room, the seating area next to the entry way, and a small open area adjacent to the picture books.

While the library makes do with what it has, a dedicated storytime/class visits area would be a much-needed improvement. Storytime needs to occur in an area where the public isn't browsing the collection (or the Friends store) to improve the experience of patrons engaged in either activity. In addition, community partners who use the library's space to offer storytimes (such as the Southern Oregon Educational Service District, which offers an autism storytime with trained professional educators) should be offering these programs in a space that better supports families with special needs.

**Young Adult Library.** Consistent with the general desire of teens to avoid proximity to the children's collection, the young adult library is adjacent to the computer/adult nonfiction area of the library. However, it is hard to find, cramped, and lacking in teen friendly décor.

**Friends of the Library.** The work of the Friends can be found in several spaces throughout the library. A shelf/display of used books for sale is featured next to the circulation desk, while the full FOL used book store fills the perimeter of the Ben Bones Room and is operated on the honor system. In addition, the Friends utilize a small room in the administrative area to store and sort book donations.

**Bathrooms.** Limited to two individual bathrooms for the public and one bathroom in the break room, the facility's bathrooms are seriously inadequate. Staff report that the bathroom line is sometimes so long that they decamp to the nearby courthouse to use their facilities.

## Staff and Volunteer Areas

As is common with older libraries that have not been renovated to reflect the times, the staff areas of the Grants Pass library incorporate a hodgepodge of existing furniture in spaces that in some cases were not originally designed to house their current functions. Most areas are cramped and uninviting and there is an overall lack of storage. Given the large number of volunteers who keep the library going each day, the staff/volunteer lounge, an area with no natural light, is inadequate with respect to lockers and space for rest/relaxation.

Volunteers expressed some concern about the library from a safety perspective, both in terms of earthquake and fire readiness but also with respect to disruptive library users. They would also like the library to have additional parking capacity.

The large main service desk reflects the “fortress” philosophy no longer considered best practice for service desks in public libraries, and the workflow in the circulation area could be improved. Currently materials waiting to be shelved are lined up on book carts in a public hall because there is no other place to put them.

Judging from the level of community involvement it engenders, the Grants Pass library is obviously well used and beloved by community members. However, it is challenging for patrons, volunteers and staff to navigate and has many structural issues, including an aged infrastructure and a dysfunctional HVAC system. One volunteer summed up the consensus of library stakeholders by saying “It’s not worth renovating.”

## Illinois Valley Library: Needs Assessment

### General Description

Located at 209 West Palmer in the city of Cave Junction, the 4,264 square foot Illinois Valley branch library is owned by the library district. Originally built in 1959, this facility was expanded in 1976 and features a children’s area renovated in 2017.

Prior to this spring, the Illinois Valley library was open 13 hours a week, but the passage of the library district last year supported a significant increase in hours. Currently, the library is open 25 hours a week, on Wednesdays from 11 am to 6 pm and on Thursday, Friday and Saturdays from 11 am to 5 pm.

In 2016-17, 30,675 items circulated from this library and the number of annual visits was 24,598, or an average of 473 visitors a week.

Built in the same year as the Grants Pass library, this much smaller facility has retained the integrity of its original mid-century design and is beloved for its natural wood ceiling and original globe light fixtures. The Illinois Valley library also features a garden designed and maintained by community members. This library has been particularly strong in building and maintaining strong connections to the local community, to the extent that its branch manager (the one paid staff member at this facility) provides customer service training throughout the library system.

Despite its mid-century charm, the Illinois Valley facility is deficient on multiple levels, many of them resulting from deferred maintenance. The roof leaks and reportedly needs repair. The plumbing doesn’t support access to hot water and may be compromised by root invasion. The HVAC system is inadequate in managing cold, heat and humidity. The vintage globe fixtures provide inadequate light, causing at least one patron to use a flashlight to peruse the shelves.

## **Collections**

According to a collection snapshot taken in the spring of 2018, the Illinois Valley library currently holds approximately 30,530 items, including books, DVDs, CDs, books on CD, periodicals. Reflecting the relatively small materials budget experienced by the library in the last years of county support and in its decade as a nonprofit, many items in the collection are old and worn.

Overall, shelving at the Illinois Valley library is packed and shelving in the adult fiction and nonfiction areas is particularly full, with 88" stacks each incorporating 6 -7 shelves of books. To house the collection, the library utilizes the bottom shelf of the book stacks, which is generally not considered a best practice as the bottom shelf is difficult for patrons to see and access. In addition, high shelving creates accessibility issues for older or disabled patrons (or volunteers) who have difficulty reaching the top shelf from a stool.

## **Computers and Technology**

The library offers 10 computers for public use, including one online catalog. Apart from the library's computers, the library in 2016-17 recorded 4,030 sessions by patrons utilizing Wi-Fi on their own devices. Unfortunately, internet use at Illinois Valley is hindered by unreliable and insufficient (DSL) internet service to the area. As a comparison, the Williams library, which is open fewer hours but can access a fiber optic internet connection, logged 1,500 more Wi-Fi sessions during the same time period.

The computer/media room is deficient in numerous ways. Patron computer workstations are cramped and offer limited privacy, and the room itself is dark and chilly.

## **Seating and Meeting Room Space**

Currently, the library offers approximately 46 patron seats, many of which date back to the early 1960s. While the number is adequate, in some cases its deployment is not ideal. For example, some of the tables seat four people which offers less flexibility in layout and patron use. Overstuffed lounge seating does not maximize use of scarce space. The library is very limited in the number of outlets provided in the public areas (and indeed throughout the building), which hinders patrons who need to plug in laptops, phones or tablets.

The library has no meeting room, which severely limits the amount of public programming it can offer beyond storytimes in the children's area. To facilitate a community gathering, tables and chairs are reconfigured in the media/ computer room, which is cold, dark, and lacks outlets and a built-in projector and screen. In 2016-17, the library offered 125 programs, of which 123 were for children, 0 were for teens and 2 were for adults. These attracted 1,381 attendees, a 39% increase in participation over the previous year. The library currently offers no small enclosed quiet study rooms, which would be ideal for patrons wishing for quiet space.

## Designated Program Areas

**Children's Area.** As noted earlier, the children's area was renovated in 2017 and is a wonderful asset to the library, incorporating lively original art and extensive natural light. (However, like the adult section, it is perhaps overfilled with library books and other materials.) During the school year, the library offers two storytimes a week (plus an additional monthly event) as well as weekly gatherings for homeschooling families.

**Young Adult Area.** With limited space to work with, library staff have carved out a small seating/gathering area for young adults that is adjacent to the YA collection. This is reported to be a success.

**Friends of the Library.** The Friends operate a used bookstore on the honor system in a small room off the computer/media room, as well as a book cart at the front of the library.

**Bathrooms.** The library features two small bathrooms; one is ADA accessible, one is not.

## Staff and Volunteer Areas

Run by one paid staff member and 22 – 25 volunteers a week, the Illinois Valley library features one cramped service desk for all public functions, which is staffed by two people at a time. The high center shelving in the adult fiction/nonfiction area creates poor sightlines.

As is common with older libraries that have not been renovated, the staff/volunteer areas of the Illinois Valley library incorporate a hodgepodge of existing furniture in spaces that in some cases were not originally designed to house their current functions. There is insufficient storage and these areas, including the staff/ volunteer break room, are cramped and uninviting.

Security is also a serious issue. Given its isolated location, the Illinois Valley branch is vulnerable to uninvited guests. In 2016, vandals broke into the library and created extensive damage; other lesser incidents have also occurred. After people were discovered to be camping and building fires behind the library, a fence was added to reduce access.

In summary, this is a beloved library and community center despite its many limitations. Community members find it warm and welcoming; as one shared, "I've never wanted to hang out at a library before."

## Williams Library: Needs Assessment

### General Description

Located next to Williams Elementary School at 20695 Williams Highway in the unincorporated area of Williams, the Williams library was created in 1977 from a used manufactured home. The building is owned by the library district but the land that houses it is leased from the Three

Rivers School District, which operates Williams Elementary School nearby. The library also features a community garden.

Prior to this spring, the Williams library was open 12 hours a week, but the passage of the library district last year supported a significant increase in hours. Currently, the library is open 20 hours a week, from 1 pm to 6 pm on Tuesdays, Wednesday and Saturdays from 1 – 6 pm and on Fridays from 11 am to 4 pm.

In 2016-17, 10,175 items circulated from this library and the number of annual visits was 4,182, or just over 80 visitors a week. It is overseen by one branch manager with the help of volunteers.

At 864 square feet, the Williams library is by far the smallest facility in the library system, lacking even a bathroom. Nonetheless, patrons appreciate the opportunities that the library provides them to interact with neighbors and as one said, they consider the library “a huge part of the community.”

### **Collections**

According to a collection snapshot taken in the spring of 2018, the Williams library currently holds approximately 9,015 items, including books, DVDs, CDs, books on CD and periodicals. Reflecting the relatively small materials budget experienced by the library in the last years of county support and in its decade as a nonprofit, many items in the collection are old and worn.

Overall, shelving at the Williams library is packed and shelving in the adult fiction and nonfiction areas is particularly full, with 88” stacks each incorporating 6 -7 shelves of books. To house the collection, the library utilizes the bottom shelf of the book stacks, which is generally not considered a best practice as the bottom shelf is difficult for patrons to see and access. In addition, high shelving creates accessibility issues for older or disabled patrons (or volunteers) who have difficulty reaching the top shelf from a stool.

### **Service Areas**

**Computers and Technology.** The library offers five computers for public use, including one online catalog. Apart from use of the library’s computers, the library in 2016-17 recorded 5,532 sessions by patrons utilizing Wi-Fi on their own devices, or over 106 sessions a week.

**Seating.** The current library is primarily a set of book/material stacks with a limited amount of seating patron seats: four toddler seats at a round table, four seats at a four-person table, and two seats within the stacks. Places for patrons to plug in laptops, phones or tables are extremely limited.

**Meeting rooms.** The library has no meeting room, which severely limits the amount of public programming it can offer beyond storytimes in the children’s area. To facilitate a community

gathering, the toddler table near the picture books is moved and chairs (stored in an outside shed) are utilized. In 2016-17, the library offered 34 programs, of which 32 were for children (including one storytime a week), 0 were for teens and 2 were for adults. These attracted 99 attendees.

**Youth areas.** As mentioned earlier, the limited space in the Williams library is largely used to shelf books and other circulating materials. Apart from the small toddler table, there is no children’s area, and the young adult area is limited to the collection.

**Friends of the Library.** The Friends of the Williams library offer used books for sale on a book cart at the front of the library.

**Restrooms.** As mentioned earlier, the most distinguishing feature of the Williams library is not what it has but what it doesn’t have: running water and a bathroom. Instead, staff, volunteers and patrons utilize a portable toilet adjacent to the building and a large bottle of hand sanitizer when they return. The inadequacy of this situation with respect to quality customer service, adequate support of staff and volunteers, convenience and sanitation is self-explanatory.

**Service Desk/Staff Area.** The Williams library features one crowded service desk for all functions. The staff area, including a desk for the branch manager and counter, is directly behind the service desk in full view of the public. As mentioned earlier, the library utilizes a small shed outside of the building for needed storage.

In summary, although this is a library that’s valued a great deal by the community it serves, the facility has many more liabilities than assets. As a member of a library stakeholder group said, “There is no question that the Williams library is anything but a scraper.” Given the scarcity of land in the Williams area that is appropriately zoned for a library, and its current desirable location in the heart of Williams, the library district considers its best option to be to rebuild the library at the current location. As the owner of the land beneath the library, the Three Rivers School District is supportive of this option, so discussions are underway to develop a new library in the current location.

## Wolf Creek Library: Needs Assessment

### General Description

Located next to the Sunny Wolf Charter School at 102 Ruth Avenue in the unincorporated area of Wolf Creek, the 2,594 square foot Wolf Creek library opened in 2002. Owned by the Josephine County Library Foundation, the facility is leased to the library district. The area surrounding the library is one of three areas in Josephine County designated by the Oregon Department of Human Services as a “high poverty hotspot”, i.e., with a poverty rate of 20% of more. (The other two are in Grants Pass.)

Prior to this spring, the Wolf Creek library was open 7 hours a week, but the passage of the library district last year supported a significant increase in hours. Currently, the library is open 15 hours a week, from 1 pm to 6 pm on Wednesday and Saturday and from 11 am to 4 pm on Friday.

In 2016-17, 7,522 items circulated from this library and the number of annual visits was 5,156, or just over 99 visitors a week. Circulation drops significantly in the summer months when the Sunny Wolf Charter School is closed. Three classes from the elementary school visit each week. This library is overseen by one branch manager with assistance from volunteers.

## **Collections**

According to a collection snapshot taken in the spring of 2018, the Wolf Creek library currently holds approximately 12,134 items, including books, DVDs, CDs, books on CD and periodicals. Reflecting the relatively small materials budget experienced by the library in the last years of county support and in its decade as a nonprofit, many items in the collection are old and worn.

Overall, shelving at the Wolf Creek library is full, with some stacks incorporating 6 - 7 shelves of books. To house the collection, the library utilizes the bottom shelf of the book stacks, which is generally not considered a best practice as the bottom shelf is difficult for patrons to see and access. In addition, high shelving creates accessibility issues for older or disabled patrons (or volunteers) who have difficulty reaching the top shelf from a stool.

## **Service Areas**

**Computers and Technology.** The library offers 7 computers for public use and has one catalog station. Like the Illinois Valley facility, the Wolf Creek branch lacks access to fiber optic Internet access and is dependent upon an unreliable DSL connection.

**Seating and Meeting Room Space.** Currently, the Wolf Creek library offers approximately 20 patron seats. The library has a meeting room (accessible when the library is closed) that seats 20. In 2016-17, the library offered 48 programs (including class visits from Sunny Wolf Charter School), all of which were for children. Attendance was 2,774. Storytimes are offered once a month, and every Wednesday, the library's meeting room serves as an emergency food box site, with free food shared by the Josephine County Food Bank. Apart from the food bank, the meeting room is not regularly used by other community organizations.

**Youth Areas.** The library has a seating and play area adjacent to the collection for younger children; service to teenagers is primarily limited to the YA collection.

**Friends of the Library.** The Friends of the Library sell donated books on a book cart in the building's lobby.

**Restrooms.** The library offers multi-stall male and female restrooms that are accessible when the library is closed but the meeting room is being used.

**Service Desk/Staff Area.** The Wolf Creek library features one service desk for all functions. The staff work area is in a room directly behind the service desk.

Like the Illinois Valley branch, the Wolf Creek branch has experienced vandalism in recent years. An increase in visits due to partnerships such as the weekly free food box distribution program has also led to an increase in disruptive behavior. A review of the facility’s security systems, therefore, is in order.

The Wolf Creek facility appears to be in good condition and no information about structural issues or ongoing facilities-related problems emerged from the initial data gathering process. Largely dating from when the library opened in 2002, its furniture and fixtures at the Wolf Creek branch are reasonably consistent but could be updated if that was a library district priority.

**Comparative Use and Common Issues for All Facilities**

Before considering recommendations for each of the four facilities, it is worthwhile to look at them comparatively. As the chart below indicates, use of the libraries does not entirely correlate to facility size, and facility size does not entirely correlate with size of collection.

	All four libraries	Grants Pass	Illinois Valley	Williams	Wolf Creek
Square feet	23,192	15,470	4,264	864	2,594
Visitors, FY 16 – 17	126,252	92,316	24,598	4,182	5,156
Circulation, FY 16 – 17	251,768	203,396	30,675	10,175	7,522
Items in physical collection (Spring, 2018)	152,504	100,825	30,530	9,015	12,134
Turnover (circulation divided by items in collection, or “how hard the collection is working”)	1.65	2	1	1.1	.62
Annual circulation per square foot	10.8	13.1	7.2	11.8	2.9
Annual visitors per square foot	5.44	5.97	5.77	4.84	1.99

Of specific interest is the comparison of the Wolf Creek and Williams branches. Although the Wolf Creek branch is equal in size to three Williams buildings, the Williams collection is 75% the size of what Wolf Creek offers. However, Wolf Creek circulation is 25% lower and its number of annual visitors is only 23% higher (largely due to three weekly class visits from the elementary school next door).

Of course, there are probable reasons behind some of these statistics. As noted earlier, the Wolf Creek library serves an area with a higher poverty level, which may impact community usage. The Williams library is open more hours than Wolf Creek, which undoubtedly has a positive impact on usage. Also, due to its postage-stamp size, it makes sense that the Williams library has much higher annual circulation and annual visitors per square foot than does Wolf Creek. However, the most interesting comparison between the two is the turnover rate (circulation divided by holdings), which shows the degree to which a collection is actually being used/checked out. (The higher the number, the better the use of the collection.) With a 1.1 turnover rate, Williams is comparable to Illinois Valley (at 1.0) but almost double the turnover rate of Wolf Creek (.62). What this suggests, overall, is the potential desirability of looking closer (by type of material, audience age, etc.) at circulation rates at each library so that the collection for each of them is carefully calibrated to maximize potential use.

While the four library facilities differ in many ways, they are similar in the high density of materials that they have on the floor for patron check out and use: Currently, all four libraries feature:

- High (88") shelving – featuring 6 – 9 full shelves (depending upon the collection area).
- Materials on the bottom shelf, which is not considered a best practice. Such materials are not only harder for patrons to access, they also tend to be shelved with their spines horizontal to the floor, which damages them.
- Bookshelves filled to the maximum space (vs. 3/4 full, which is best practice for ease of shelving as well as providing a space to merchandize books on each shelf)
- Magazine shelving and other special collection shelving at the stack ends, which add to the overall visual clutter.

Added together, these factors create an environment in each Josephine County public library that is quite dense with books and other materials, but relatively sparse in seating, displays and other potential features for patrons to enjoy. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it has become a truism to say that public libraries have evolved from being just book warehouses to community centers—but to move away from feeling like a book warehouse, public libraries need to think differently about their collections and to focus on *usage* rather than *storage*. In this paradigm, shelf space is precious and must be earned by demonstrated community interest, and ongoing analysis of circulation patterns needs to become a regular part of collection management.

It is typical (and understandable) for libraries with limited resources to be less aggressive in weeding their collections, and to hold onto materials that are in poor condition, out of date or that rarely circulate. Now that the library system is in a better position than it has been in the last decade to replace such materials, **this report recommends that ongoing collection analysis (and subsequent recalibration via materials selection and weeding) be made a top priority, as it will be critical in successfully revitalizing all four Josephine County library facilities.** For different reasons, this is true for each branch of the system:

- Although a new Grants Pass library could theoretically be built to any size, the cost of new construction makes it imperative that space is not built to house materials that do not earn their shelf space through sufficient community use;
- Given that the opportunity to expand the footprint of the Illinois Valley library is limited by the available surrounding land (and the likelihood that such an expansion would focus on adding meeting room space), any interior design changes in the adult and teen areas will require a reduction in overall collection size;
- The Williams library is impacted by both factors mentioned for Grants Pass and Illinois Valley (cost of new construction as well as a limited amount of land), allowing for only a small increase in collection size and creating the imperative to be quite intentional in terms of what is offered there.
- The one library out of the four that does not need extensive change, and is not undersized to meet the needs of its community, is the Wolf Creek branch. However, since it is underused in relationship to the other four facilities, a careful examination of circulation data, with subsequent potential reshaping of the collection could improve its overall usage.

### **General Philosophy of Service**

The Josephine Community Library District should provide residents with services that meet and anticipate their needs, in comfortable facilities that facilitate the delivery of its highest priority services, which have been defined as:

1. Maintain and circulate a curated and balanced collection of catalogued books and other materials selected for a wide range of interests for adults, youth and children in the community.
2. Provide a pleasant experience and convenient space for library users, with trained volunteers and professional staff available for guidance in the acquisition of information.
3. Provide access to the Internet and a variety of digital media with subsequent digital skills training.
4. Provide special programming to encourage children's literacy.
5. Provide adult and teen programs that encourage lifelong learning.

A successful public library today plays multiple roles in the life of the community it serves. First, it provides access to the world of learning, knowledge and human creativity. Access to books and the printed word for all age groups continues to be the primary service expectation of many residents and remains a basic library function. As a corollary, library service to children introduces families to the joy of reading and establishes a foundation for a lifetime of reading. This role has expanded in recent years to include access to creative and informative works in many formats, including digital media and electronic content. Libraries have also become a primary public gateway to online information, offering free access to the Internet, wireless

access and providing guidance in navigating and assessing the wealth of material available through these resources.

Even as the library’s role as a resource for virtual information and literature continues to grow, its traditional role as a community destination and gathering place is also evolving and expanding. The public library now serves as the community’s principal place for solitary reading and study as well as a venue for collaboration and group interaction. Book discussion groups, teen tech nights and family literacy evenings are a few examples of the multitude of educational and social community events that draw significant participation. The library facility can and should offer residents a safe, and comfortable place to be. This can be a sanctuary for solitary reflection, a quiet workspace in which to complete a school assignment or a social space for connecting with peers.

To perform these roles, the library needs appropriate space – for collections, for people, for programming and for functional operations. Unfortunately, serious deficiencies in three of the four Josephine County library facilities compromise the quality and level of service that can be provided. The next section of this report details recommended changes for each location to address this gap. For the two libraries where full replacement is anticipated (Grants Pass and Williams) a detailed program has been developed. For the two libraries with varying degrees of updating/renovation (Illinois Valley and Wolf Creek), a more general set of recommendations is provided.

**Grants Pass Library: Recommendations**

**General Space Recommendations**

As described above, the Grants Pass library needs to be comprehensively expanded and improved. Given that the library district does not own this facility as well as the building’s lack of features that would be worth preserving (such as might be found in a historically significant building), there is broad consensus that the solution is to build a new library.

The recommended estimated size of the new library—36,909 square feet—is the sum of the square footage required to fulfill all the programmatic functions expressed by library staff and stakeholders. It is consistent with a very rough estimate derived from multiplying the size of the population to be served 20 years from now (2038) by an estimate of needed square footage per capita.

	<b>2018</b>	<b>2038</b>
<b>Population of Grants Pass</b>	37,779*	47,389**
<b>Best practice: .6 - .8 + sf/capita***</b>	15,470 (.4 sf/capita)	28,433 – 37,911 (.6 - .8 sf/capita)
<b>Recommended estimated size of new Grants Pass library</b>		36,909 square feet

\*US Census estimate as of 2016. Does not include unincorporated areas served by the Grants Pass library.  
 \*\*Assumes current county growth rate (1.2%) estimated by PSU’s Population Research Center will continue for 20 years.  
 \*\*\*Best practice recommendations based on work of library facilities planner Kathryn Page.

It is important to note that despite the high level of detail in the Grants Pass library program, the recommended square footage is still an estimate that may significantly change when land is identified, the cost of construction is determined, and the components of the program are translated into an actual layout by the library's selected architect.

## **Collections**

The community needs access to a well-balanced collection in both print and digital media formats. Adequate shelving capacity is needed to support a truly balanced physical collection, so that materials can be shelved and displayed for convenient browsing. Shelving capacity needs to allow shelves to be kept 20% to 25% clear, so that there is readily available shelving space for incoming materials. The various collections of the library need to be shelved in appropriate locations within the overall space, clearly identified and easily found, and at heights appropriate to their target audiences. If they are utilized, the bottom shelves on most shelving units should be angled to allow browsers to easily view book spines.

Currently, while public interest in downloadable books and media continues to be strong, there is increasing evidence that use of digital media is complementing, not replacing, the use of physical resources. Therefore, most public libraries currently plan their future collections assuming future use of both types of resources. Since the Josephine Community Library District expects that its print/physical collection will not grow significantly in the future, this plan assumes a 10% increase in the new facility. To maintain desirable sightlines and aesthetics, this plan recommends a maximum shelf height of 66" for interior of the library and 45" shelving for picture books and other materials for young children.

## **Computers and Technology**

The library's Internet access and early literacy computers are in constant use. While patrons increasingly are bringing in their own devices (laptops, tablets and smartphones) for library use, for many others, library computers are their only way to access the Internet for research, job seeking, and connecting with friends and family.

More are needed to meet public demand and to enable the library to offer this service more effectively. This plan recommends 40 public access computers, including sit-down workstations with Internet access or laptops, online catalogs, and early literacy stations. To accommodate personal devices, the new library should include access to power at every seating area.

## **Seating and Meeting Room Space**

In a library facility, it is as important to provide space for people to use the building, as it is to provide space to house and display the collection. The Grants Pass Library needs to provide seating in a variety of formats: at study tables and lounge chairs, parent/child seats, casual seating for teens, and acoustically shielded study seating. Teens particularly need a designated area with age appropriate furniture. The design of the space should not only send a message

that they are welcome at the library but should also create a buffer, both physical and psychological, between this gregarious age group and other library visitors.

The children's area should offer distinct seating areas for individual school aged children who need to do homework or quietly read. The preschool/family area needs chair seating for toddlers and their parents or caregivers as well as floor space for story times. Adults need both table seating and lounge chairs for quiet reading of books and periodicals as well as concentrated work at a laptop. All seats should be adjacent to electrical power, with outlets located safely out of circulation paths.

Overall, an increase of desk and lounge seating is recommended to allow the library to offer appropriate work/study, collaboration and reading space for the community. 190 seats are recommended (an increase of 85 seats). This seating is divided between lounge chairs and 1, 2 and 4 person tables.

One 15-seat meeting room and one 8-seat meeting room will offer the capacity to host smaller events. Group study capacity is also significantly expanded. The plan includes one 4-seat study rooms as well as three 2-seat study/tutoring rooms.

### **Programming and Event Space**

Programs and events are a basic library service that complements the collection, attracts new users and provides the community with needed information on many topics. Dedicated space within the library is needed to provide an appropriate, accessible venue for these events, with seating to accommodate different groups of people. The primary programming space needs to be flexible and multipurpose, with a flat floor, stacking chairs, media projection equipment, adjustable lighting, access to a kitchen, and table and chair storage.

Given that the library's existing programming space is inadequate to meet current demand, this study recommends a significant expansion of programming capacity. A dividable 200-seat meeting room, with an adjacent new kitchen, will offer the ability to host two 100-person events.

The program also includes programming spaces designated for services to children and youth, including a 30 seat storytime/class visit area and a flexible Teen Collaborative Space that offers 16 seats at 4 tables.

### **Service Delivery**

Desks and work stations appropriate to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, sited in appropriate proximity to each other and to the daily work of assisting library users, will enhance volunteer and staff capacity to provide excellent customer service.

As it does in the current facility, the library district plans to continue to utilize community volunteers to fulfill many of its core customer service functions, including circulation and information desk support. The district also does not anticipate staffing increases in the future. Given these factors, there is a great need to make all circulation, reference and back of the library functions as efficient as possible. To achieve this, all existing service desks are retained and improved and several new ones (including teen services and technology desks) are added.

The plan also includes expanded public bathrooms (including a family bathroom in the children’s area), two staff restrooms and an expanded staff lounge area with seating and a kitchenette.

### Friends of the Library

The Grants Pass Library program includes improved space for all activities conducted by the Friends of the Library, including a dedicated retail space (with a desk for volunteer staffing), and work space for processing donations and storage.

### Bookmobile

Although the library district currently does not operate a bookmobile, there is recognition that this would potentially be a welcome addition to its service model due to the many remote areas within Josephine County that are far from a branch yet within the district boundaries. For this reason, space for bookmobile operations and garage has been included in the Grants Pass library program.

### Summary of recommendations for new Grants Pass library

	2018	Current best practice	Initial recommendations
<b>Size of physical collection</b>	100,825		111,000 (10% increase)
<b>Public computers</b>	23 computers .6 computers/1000 people	.5 – 1 computers/ 1000 people	40 computers .84 computers/1000 people
<b>Seating</b>	105 (2.8 seats/1000 people)	4 – 6 seats/1000 people	190 (4 seats/1000 people)
<b>Bathrooms</b>	Public: 2 single stall bathrooms  Staff/Volunteers: 1 bathroom		Public: Multiple stall bathroom; family bathroom in children’s area  Staff/Volunteers: 2 bathrooms
<b>Group study/conference space</b>		24 – 48 seats in 3 – 6 rooms	33 seats:  2-seat rooms (3) 4-seat room (1) 8-seat room (1) 15-seat room (1)

<b>Meeting room space</b>	Ben Bones Room (60 people); main library (80 people)	100 – 200 seats	200 seat room, dividable into two 100-seat rooms
<b>Storytime/Class Visits Area</b>		30 – 60 seats (on floor)	30 seats (on floor)
<b>Teen Collaborative Space</b>			16 seats at four tables

**Illinois Valley Library: Recommendations**

As noted earlier, Illinois Valley branch is a well-loved community institution with numerous deficiencies. The good news is that these deficiencies can be systematically addressed. Below are initial recommendations to achieve this goal.

**Analyze current use of the Illinois Valley collection, with the goal of reducing its overall size to free up space and potentially lower shelving in the adult fiction/nonfiction area.**

Although all four libraries feature high shelves full of materials, the situation is most extreme at the Illinois Valley branch, which was described by one library district staff member as “hobbit-like” in reference to the adult fiction/nonfiction area. This area is so full of so many things that, apart from replacing furniture and fixtures, it is difficult to imagine the possibility of more significant improvements. Therefore, carefully evaluating what needs to be in that space should be a priority. Ideally, the shelves in the center of the room would be lowered to 66”, which would improve aesthetics and sightlines—but, of course, reducing the shelving capacity means the collection has to become smaller.

The recently renovated children’s area functions well, with the caveat that it would still be desirable in that area to have fewer materials in the collection and more room to merchandise them (i.e., have shelving with space on the end for face out materials).

**Evaluate the library’s mechanical systems (plumbing, lighting, heating and cooling) and roof to identify and prioritize repairs and improvements.**

With multiple concerns raised about the physical infrastructure of the building, a thorough evaluation is much needed.

**Evaluate the library’s existing safety and security systems and make needed improvements.**

With its history of vandalism and unwanted visitors, the facility needs to have the best security possible for the protection of staff, volunteers and library users and the building itself.

**Improve the library’s Internet bandwidth and reliability, potentially partnering with other community organizations to reduce costs.**

### **Explore the viability and cost of expanding/renovating the library.**

The library's windowless computer/media room, which was added when the library was expanded in the 1970s, has little to recommend it. Since it is adjacent to the library's unused back yard, it would ideally be replaced and expanded to accommodate an improved computer area (with less cramped and more private space for users), better shelving of the media collection, a meeting room (community members expressed interest in one with 25 – 35-person capacity) and if possible, a small study room or two.

The possibility of expanding the library should be explored by the architects selected to implement Phase 2 of the facilities planning process.

### **Update furniture and fixtures as is appropriate to the building's mid-century look and feel and explore the viability of minor renovations.**

Apart from the recommendations listed above, the library's furniture and some of its fixtures could use a refresh. Staff and volunteers would benefit from a more efficient service desk and a staff/volunteer area that is not a mishmash of available desks, tables, etc. but that includes workspaces designed for it.

## **Williams Library Recommendations**

As noted in the evaluation above, the Williams facility has few assets save the community's fondness for the services it offers, and needs to be replaced with a newer and larger building. Given the scarcity of land in the Williams area that is appropriately zoned for a library, and its current desirable location in the heart of Williams, the library district considers its best option to be to rebuild the library at the current location. As the owner of the land beneath the library, the Three Rivers School District is supportive of this option.

The program originally developed for a new Williams Library during the Phase 1 process was 2,791 square feet, which was smaller than desirable due to the limited capacity thought to be possible at that time. Since then, the available square footage has increased, resulting in a larger 5,569 square foot plan for a new Williams Library, which will provide ample seating, meeting room space, and sit down computers.

### **Collections**

The current Williams library features high (88") shelving that is filled to the brim with books, DVDs, books on CD and other materials. To maintain desirable sightlines and aesthetics, this plan recommends a maximum shelf height of 66" for interior of the library and 45" shelving for picture books and other materials for young children. Shelving is calculated on the assumption that shelves are 20% to 25% clear, so that there is readily available shelving space for incoming materials and room to merchandise the collection. (To maximize space, unlike the Grants Pass program, the Williams program assumes books will be shelved on the lowest shelf.) This plan

assumes a 10% increase in the overall size of the Williams collection. As noted above, the limited increase in collection capacity creates an imperative for the library district to be mindful about the materials that are housed in the Williams facility to ensure that all items are earning their shelf space through community use.

### **Computers and Technology**

The library's Internet access and early literacy computers are in constant use. While patrons increasingly are bringing in their own devices (laptops, tablets and smartphones) for library use, for many others, library computers are their only way to access the Internet for research, job seeking, and connecting with friends and family. This program includes 4 online catalogs, 11 public computers (including an early learning station) with additional laptops for library in-house use. To accommodate personal devices, the new library should include access to power at every seating area.

### **Seating and Programming Areas**

The program for the new Williams library includes 61 seats, a significant increase over the 10 seats currently offered. This seating is divided between lounge chairs and 1, 2 and 4 person tables. The program also includes a 30 seat meeting room and a 4 person private study room.

The program includes an enclosed Family Space for young children and their caregivers, as well as a discrete area for teen collections and seating. Materials and computers for school aged children are part of the "open library" main room that also holds the adult collection and general computer area.

### **Other Areas**

The program includes a streamlined public services desk, a work station for the branch manager plus two additional work stations for staff or volunteers and a small work area (including a kitchenette) for volunteers and staff. The Friends of the Library will continue to have the ability to sell used books via a book cart.

Bathrooms for staff, volunteer and patron use are included in the building's gross square footage.

## Wolf Creek Library: Recommendations

As noted earlier, the Wolf Creek library is paradoxically in the best condition of any library in the system, but is also the least used. While it is the lowest priority of all four branches in terms of facility needs, there are several ways to improve its use and physical appearance.

**Analyze current use of the Wolf Creek collection, with the goal of potentially reducing its overall size and focusing the collection on high-interest materials.**

While this report does not recommend replacing the main (high) shelving in the Wolf Creek library, taking a systematic look at what's in the collection will support several objectives, including increasing circulation at this branch, reducing visual clutter and increasing the ability to merchandise materials.

**Evaluate the library's mechanical systems (plumbing, lighting, heating and cooling) and roof to determine if there are maintenance issues that need to be addressed.**

Although no structural issues were brought up in relationship to the Wolf Creek branch, review of the building should be part of Phase 2 of the facilities planning project.

**Evaluate the library's existing safety and security systems and make needed improvements.**

With its history of vandalism and unwanted visitors, the facility needs to have the best security possible for the protection of staff, volunteers and library users and the building itself.

**Improve the library's Internet bandwidth and reliability,** potentially partnering with other community organizations to reduce costs.

**Update furniture and fixtures as is appropriate or a priority for the library system.**

In general, the furniture and finishings of the Wolf Creek library are still working well, although slightly dated due their 15+ year age. Should the library choose to improve the space, updating these features would be an option.