BOULDER PUBLIC LIBRARY

Community Needs Assessment

BOULDER
PUBLIC LIBRARY

MARGARET SULLIVAN STUDIO

Table of Contents

Cover Photo: Boulder - Pearl
Street Fountain by Lazaros Simeon

FINAL DRAFT

"Life isn't about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself."

- George Bernard Shaw

Introduction

In Spring 2016, Margaret Sullivan Studio (MSS) was hired to engage in a community needs assessment for the Boulder Public Library. This first step in the master planning process was to create a foundation for the Boulder Public Library's future. The library's goals for this project were to generate a "Vision for the Future" of the Boulder Public Library and the flexible framework for that vision to be realized.

The following document represents the results of this initial two-month, highly collaborative and participatory process that MSS believes is the first relevant community needs assessment for the Boulder Public Library to continue to be a dynamic, active and critical institution in serving not only real community needs, but also its aspirations; nurturing both the individual and the community and for the library to be integral to the lives of ALL persons in the community it serves.

This document is intended to be the foundation for the Boulder Public Library Master Plan update, which will address the functional objectives more comprehensively. In fact, this community needs assessment process has uncovered an additional goal for future phases of the master planning process.

The REAL opportunity and the collective aspiration of those involved in this assessment is that this initial foundational work will enable an iterative, creative Boulder Public Library Master Plan update that is aligned with the spirit of Boulder, intentionally designed to inspire, galvanize, and create community.

The purpose of this document is to create a framework for the Boulder Public Library that:

1. Summarizes the Boulder community's goals, needs and aspirations to inform the Boulder Public Library Master Plan.
2. Defines the relevancy of the Boulder Public Library for the community being served.
3. Discovers opportunities to amplify existing assets.
4. Results in a strategy and customized "road map" for future phases of the master planning process.

And that responds to specific functional objectives of the master planning process:

1. To develop big picture, strategic goals for the next 5-10 years.
2. To define Boulder Public Library's core services and articulate how these meet community expectations of library services.
3. To develop a methodology (a set of tools) to evaluate and prioritize current, future and proposed programs and services.
4. To develop a system-wide strategy for the Main Library and the branches.
5. To develop a facilities plan for expansion, growth, location and types of services and programs offered at the Main Library and the branches.
6. To address the service model and the financial model to support strategic goals.

Executive Summary

Catalyst for Change: The 21st Century Vision of the Public Library

"All libraries and museums - and the people they serve - stand to benefit from becoming more intentional and purposeful about accommodating the lifelong learning needs of people in the 21st century and doing this work collaboratively in alignment of community needs."

This statement hails from a 2009 report[1] from the Institute of Museum and Library Services which served as a wakeup call for the library profession about the importance of aligning library services to learning and educational opportunities to community needs. It told us "what" libraries should be doing.
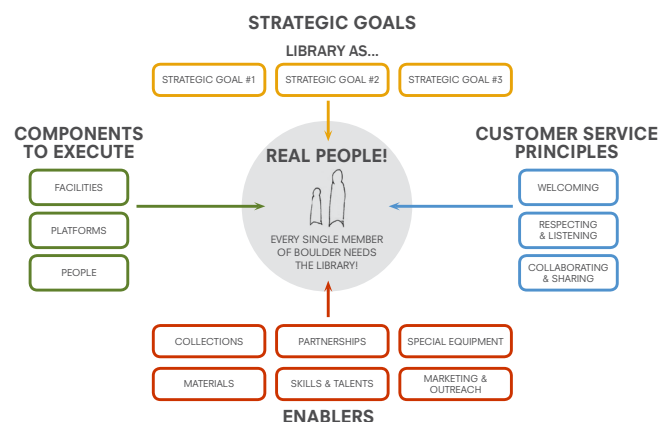
Six years later, the Aspen Institute in its report "Rising to the Challenge: Re-envisioning Public Libraries"[2] re-framed this discussion as a call for libraries to work more intentionally to level the playing field so that anyone can enter the knowledge economy. It challenges today's libraries to understand that "lifelong learning must be abundant and people need skills as knowledge creators, not simply information consumers." The Aspen Institute report helped to articulate the "Why" of this new reality.

Public librarians throughout the country recognize that they are not only providing different services to their customers, but customer's needs and expectations are also changing, forcing the library's physical spaces to support a variety of activities and programs unimagined even ten years ago. As a result, librarians must be intentional about creating a design methodology to create 21st century libraries that not only advance the library but more importantly, advance the community.

The Changing Definition of the Public Library

"The time has come for a new Vision of Public Libraries in the United States. Communities need public libraries - more people are visiting them and using their services, materials and programs than ever before - but communities' needs continue to change."[3]

In order to maintain relevancy, public libraries nationwide must be nimble, flexible and adaptable to respond to the needs and aspirations of the communities being served. The challenge with conventional community needs assessments of the past has been that the start point has been based on the traditional definition of the Public Library.

1. https://www.imls.gov/assets/1/AssetManager/21stCenturySkills.pdf 2. http://csreports.aspeninstitute.org/documents/AspenLibrariesReport.pdf
3. *Rising to the Challenge: Re-Envisioning Public Libraries* (Aspen Institute,2014) iv 4. http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/library

li·brar·y
/ˈlīˌbrerē, ˈlīb(ə)rē/

1. a place in which literary, musical, artistic, or reference materials (as books, manuscripts, recordings, or films) are kept for use but not for sale.

2. a collection of literary or reference materials[4]

As a result, the outcome of a community needs assessment is framed within that constrained definition and will result in recommendations that are "more of the same" or a revised recipe of the conventional tools of service.

The other challenge is that for too long public libraries and library consultants have been reliant on national standards and data for both references and comparisons, which do not acknowledge the unique needs and aspirations of any specific community and therefore do not result in the identification of unique opportunities for those libraries. Uncovering these unique opportunities requires intentionality and a commitment to discovery, listening, collaboration, creativity, and imagination and will result in generating the framework for relevancy that is critical to the survival of the public library.

Anyone who has worked in the library industry for the past 20 years knows that the definition of the public library is changing due to a variety of catalysts, including the changing needs, demands and expectations of customers, the expansive tools the public library utilizes to provide services, the increase in active and engaging public programs, a political and economic climate that has forced a new dialogue about the relevancy of libraries, and library leadership that believes in the library's role

to foster human capital in the community. In the past 10 years, responding to these changes and demonstrating Boulder Public Library's relevancy to the community has been challenging due to the fact that the community has continued to embrace the old definition of the public library. At times, this has resulted in decreased public trust and diminished morale among the staff.

Yet, arguably in addition to responding to significant changes and the growing need to articulate relevancy, one of the biggest positive outcomes of the pressures of the past 10 years is that libraries are realizing the potential of partnerships and amplifying existing community resources. When the community partnership is designed to be focused on the success of the individuals with a user-centric lens, true impact and relevancy is achieved. Through improved dialogue with community members and engaging in new partnerships, the Boulder Public Library has begun to help the community redefine its own public library and has begun to flourish as a result.

Even in the context of this new definition and the new opportunities of service, the goals of the community needs assessment are still the same:

1. To identify needs and aspirations in the community

2. To align (library) resources with those needs and aspirations

In order for us to be effective with the process, we must frame the process strategically around the "new" definition of the public library for context and then around the new definition, specifically "The Vision" of the Boulder Public Library.

Library as Community Anchor

New Definition of the 21st Century Public Library
The 21st century public library is an integral part of a healthy and thriving community ecosystem or network. It is critical to advancing the whole community by nurturing the social, economic and educational well-being of the individual members it serves. Every step taken towards fulfilling a community's vision for its library contributes to this social, economic and educational well-being. The more the Boulder Public Library can work in partnership to enable amplification of this network, the stronger, more relevant and more critical it will be to serving the Boulder community.

The public library is a network in and of itself: a collection of people, places and technologies that serve to advance the community.

Seeds Library Cafe, Boulder Public Library

The Building(s) can be both hyper-local with unique services and programs customized for parts of the community and it can be a destination capitalizing on those unique qualities to draw customers from an entire system and even the region. The buildings should be designed for the activities and programs being offered and be based upon the vision for what the facility can be and do for the community it serves.

The Staff represents the "Library Brand" while providing services at a library site or by providing services off-site. Staff may be active in traditional and non-traditional forms of outreach for the communities they serve, including attending community neighborhood gatherings, both political and recreational, participating in school functions and celebrations or simply representing the "Library Brand" at unexpected encounters with community members. Increasingly, librarians are invited or volunteer to sit on boards and leadership groups with agencies their libraries are in partnership with (e.g. The United Way or local arts organizations) re-enforcing strategic goals and providing opportunities for the public library to impact how community organizations develop strategies to serve community needs. Not only does the library offer an important "boots on the ground" point of view to these organizations, their involvement enables the library to be more effective in developing and executing strategic services.

The Virtual Library extends the "Library Brand" across digital platforms. Increasingly, libraries are utilizing their websites and digital catalogs to extend library services. Examples include the New York Public Library's Digital Labs, which is comprised of an interdisciplinary team innovating and experimenting with digitization, outreach and interactivity to generate a new and optimized definition of the library's virtual capabilities. The Digital Public Library of America Project is another example of innovations in digitization to maximize the Public Library's Digital

presence with an aim to "expand this crucial realm of openly available materials and make those riches more easily discovered and more widely usable and used," seeking "to multiply openly accessible materials to strengthen the public option that libraries represent in their communities."[1]

The more virtual the library can become, the more staff is freed from taking care of objects. More information disseminated digitally increases the staff's ability to serve real community needs. For far too long librarians were caretakers of "things" at the expense of being caretakers of our communities. The true impact, when technology is leveraged, is that it enables optimization of the library network locally, regionally and nationally. The stronger the network, the more libraries and their staffs are able to provide relevant services and resources to their communities in all forms: people, places and platforms.

The Community "Owns" The Public Library

Michael Kimmelman, architecture critic of the New York Times has written extensively about the value of the public library for a healthy community. In a recent article he states "the physical fabric of the city – its parks and plazas, its open spaces, libraries, transit network and streetscape, all contribute to equity and social mobility."[2] Kimmelman, as well as urban planners such as Jahn Gehl, makes the case for public libraries being part of a network of public spaces that contribute to the social good. This re-enforces the library's value as a true community asset and amplifies the library network.

The interest is advancing what distinguishes the 21st century public library within the public realm landscape while also adopting the approach to library design gleaned from recent successes in public place-making principles. How will the public library distinguish itself in the public realm landscape?

Side by Side Dance Company at Boulder Public Library

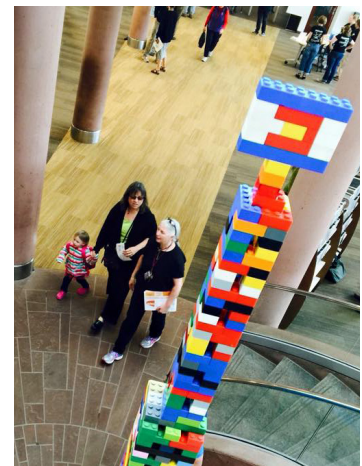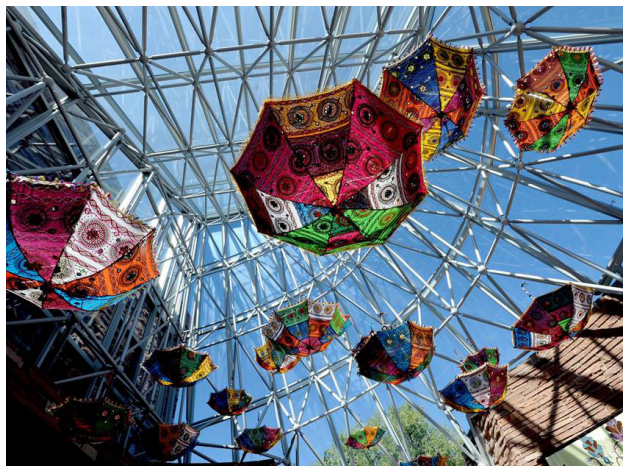*Lego Building at Boulder Public Library*

Through the concept of community ownership. A sense of ownership in the context of community advancement indicates that there is purpose and meaning in the library experience for the individual and purpose and meaning in the library experience for the collective.

In 2014, a study released by the United Kingdom's Department for Culture, Media and Sport suggested that the library experience makes people feel as good as receiving raise ($2,284 per year to be exact). "Free," "ownership," "interaction" and "participation" are all experiential characteristics to this positive association. The role of the public library, despite contemporary competition with for-profit commercial institutions, embodies a privileged status in its "for the good of all" value and brand promise.

The "Library Brand" is public trust and although the library can't be all things to all people, everything it does must advance the community.

In the book *Happy City,* author Charles Montgomery states, "No matter how much we cherish privacy and solitude, strong, positive relationships are the foundation of happiness. The city is ultimately a shared project, a place where we can fashion a common good we cannot build alone."[3]

The city (as community) is a shared project. The public library, as a key component of community advancement, is both a critical component of this network and a critical platform.

Left: Children's Area, Middle: Jaipur Literature Festival, Right: Grand Re-Opening of BPL

1. https://dp.la/info/ 2. http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/22/arts/design/challenging-mayor-de-blasio-over-times-square-plazas.html?_r=0 3. Charles Montgomery, Happy City: Transforming Our Lives Through Urban Design (Farrar, Straus and Giroux; November 2013)

Methodology

For the first step of the assessment MSS analyzed a set of planning documents and websites and evaluated critical findings. The primary purpose of the analysis was not necessarily for this research to inform the final answers and recommendations of the community needs assessment, but rather, it was used to inform relevant questions for the second phase of research of the two-month project: the analysis of anecdotal information from interviews with key stakeholders, community leaders and the subsequent workshops with staff.

The public library is an important civic institution and plays a foundational role in creating livable communities. The premise upon which this assessment was developed was that libraries are in the business of advancing communities. In order to create a clear vision for the library, we don't begin the conversation by asking questions like "What do you want your library to offer?" or "How big do you think your library should be?" Rather, we start with broader questions, such as "What are your community's aspirations?" "What are its assets?" "What are its deficiencies?" "What do your community members need most?" and most importantly, "What kind of community do you want to be?"

Through engaging in a series of iterative conversations, the community's unique vision for its library begins to take shape and is representative of the unique character, needs and aspirations of that community. By acknowledging these factors as the library service model evolves and changes organically, its inherent design becomes more community-based and less institution-based.

The methodology utilized for this part of the assessment was a highly collaborative process, engaging a variety of participants including library staff, library commissioners and community leaders in interviews and interactive dialogue to envision a future for the Boulder community and the Boulder Public Library.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Alicia Gibb, Boulder Public Library Commission
Brian Coppam, Boulder County Farmers Market
Chris Barge, Boulder Community Foundation
Chris Macy, The Riverside
Isabel McDevitt, Bridge House
Garett Brownlee Platz, I Have A Dream Foundation
Jane Brautigam, Boulder City Manager
Joni Teter, Boulder Public Library Commission
Juana Gomez, Boulder Public Library Commission
Karen Rahn, City of Boulder Human Services
Mara Mintzer, Growing Up Boulder
Mary Young, Boulder City Council
Paul Sutter, Boulder Public Library Commission
Sean Maher, Downtown Boulder, Inc.
Sharon King, Small Business Development Center
Tim O'Shea, Boulder Public Library Commission

LIBRARY AND CITY STAFF

Aimee Schumm, eServices Manager
Antonia Gaona, Public Services Manager
Casey Earp, Assistant City Manager
David Farnan, Library and Arts Director
Devin Billingsley, Senior Budget Analyst
Eileen McCluskey, Principal Librarian
Erica Segraves, Youth Services Manager
Hillary Dodge, Meadows Branch Manager
Jamie Kopke, Programs, Events and Outreach Manager
Jennifer Phares, Deputy Library Director
Laura Hankins, Collection Development Manager
Matt Chasansky, Manager, Office of Arts and Culture

Workshop #2 With Boulder Public Library Staff

Results

The following is a summary of what MSS believes are the important take-aways from the analysis, interviews and the staff workshops.

The Vision for the Future of Boulder Public Library

Library Commission and staff participants in the assessment were asked to write their "Vision for the Future" of the Boulder Public Library. The importance of this was that while they know the role of the library is changing, they are still experiencing a time when that definition isn't consistent among communities, staff and customers. This exercise is the first step to articulate an aspiration for the future, but also to develop common language, definitions and roles for what the Boulder Public Library will (uniquely) become. The vision statements included two key statements and a number of common themes.

Key Statements

The Boulder Public Library should be one of the best public libraries in America.

We aspire for the Boulder Public Library to be a national leader and a model for innovation and experimentation and an example for others who are in the process of inventing what the public library can be.

The Boulder Public Library fiercely guards its public mission and defends the library as a civic space and institution that serves the entire community.

Being a national model cannot come at the expense of serving the entire community, rather it must come precisely in the ways we do so. That doesn't simply mean asking people what they want and giving it to them, though that is critical; it also means giving the public an expansive and imaginative sense of what the library can be. It means challenging the public with visions and challenging them to create their own visions. It means creating a public culture within the library that is creative and ambitious, yet also respectful of the core missions of the library. It means that the library should be a place where people constantly have to examine what it means to be a member of the public and to ask what public institutions can and should do for people.

Key Themes

For all of the responses, certain key themes began to emerge for the vision of the future of the public library, outlined below. And although the question was asked both in the context of the broad definition of the future of the public library, the answers align with Boulder's spirit and character.

The public library of the future will be:
1. An active community convener.

2. An intentional platform for partnerships.

3. A creative catalyst for activity, curiosity, creativity, imagination and innovation.

4. A flexible infrastructure, both in service model and physical space to respond to ever-evolving and changing needs and aspirations of the community.

5. A vehicle for enlightenment and enrichment.

6. An institution aligned with the overall goals of the City of Boulder, including the City of Boulder Values and Sustainability Framework.

7. A forum for community members to find refuge, respite, safety and time and space for individualism (the right of the individual to freedom and self-realization) and to flourish.

Reading Area in Boulder Public Library

OPPORTUNITIES

Participants revealed a sophisticated understanding of the most progressive definition of public library service currently and a consistent aspirational vision for its future. As a result, MSS believes that the Boulder Public Library is well positioned to be a national leader. Specifically, we believe that there is potential for the Boulder Public Library to be a new model of a participatory library providing an intentional forum for democracy to flourish, and will be the critical and relevant "umbrella" to create and cultivate a positive, constructive forum for educating, enriching and creating community.

HOW

In the vision work, "how" the Boulder Public Library can achieve this vision was also addressed. Participants acknowledged that tools and strategies will need to expand to include:

1. Articulating concrete goals, tactics and outcomes required for taking on a new service or new service model

2. Utilizing partnerships strategically and clearly defining roles and contributions to be made by partnering organizations and the library

3. Developing "lean systems" in materials and collections management and bringing in outside experts (potentially not in the library field) to assist

4. Embracing skills and talents of employees, volunteers and individuals to include non-MLS staff to ensure that the customers receive the most optimum experience

5. Creating a culture of empowerment for all employees

Most critically, the infrastructure of the Boulder Public Library must be adaptable, nimble, flexible, iterative with inherent and internal systems for on-going evaluation of programs, services and customer needs.

To become these beloved centers, libraries must create new systems for gaining continual community feedback; value will come from being responsive to ever-changing community needs. As many spaces for public convening disappear, the libraries can emerge as a neutral place for the community to come together to contemplate, discuss and solve complex issues. The tools in which to achieve this will vary and constantly change.

One current example of a service addressing community interest and need is a makerspace - offering skill-based learning and access to equipment. This platform is a current solution for many societal interests including the expansion of a sharing economy, craft revival, sustainability and more. The makerspace is relevant because it provides opportunities for both personal development and communal problem solving. Whether this solution will be relevant in 10 years remains unknown.

As a next step, it will be important to work closely with the community to identify interests and verify needs. Rather than applying solutions (like a makerspace, a tool library or a culinary kitchen) haphazardly or in reaction to other libraries doing so, it will be important to inventory the current organizations and services available in Boulder and where new opportunities and needs may still arise that are specific to our local community.
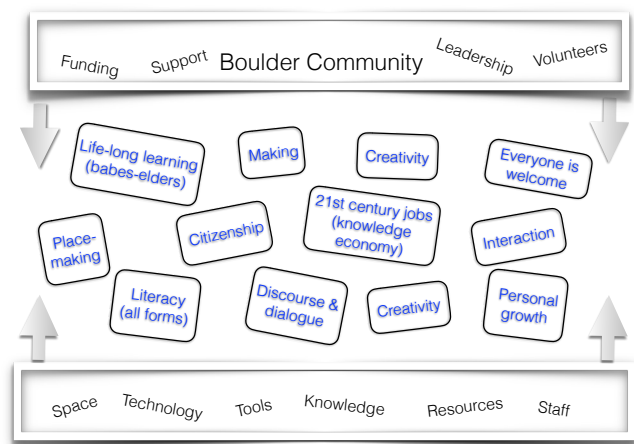
BPL = Platform for Community

Illustration by Joni Teter, Library Commissioner, Boulder Public Library

"The library will be the primary place in the community for open, informed learning as well as a unique place for children and families."

●

"The library should be the place where we can have safe/difficult conversations with our community. A place people trust and place that provides space for creativity of all kinds."

●

"The library is a vibrant center for personal and community knowledge sharing."

●

"The library can become the preeminent venue in Boulder to make connections. Connections to information, other people, one-self (self-exploration), local government and the business community."

●

"The library can be a forum for social change, educational reform and creative pursuits."

●

"For many years, libraries were houses for books. Books are where people get immersed, find surprise, intrigue and the unexpected. Books are still that, but the library has grown beyond paper. The future of the library itself is to be that: where a community is immersed, finds surprise, intrigue and experiences the unexpected."

Analysis

Community Analysis

When serving a community, the library must establish an internal system to constantly evaluate the evolving demographic patterns and to identify what this means for the library's responsive approach to service.

The current population is a well-educated, well-resourced and family-centric community with a high percentage of families and college students. City of Boulder community members generally rank higher than average in all areas of civic health measures. Community members enjoy a high quality of life with access to resources that communities often rely on their libraries to provide. Specifically, 97% of households have access to broadband Internet service. Yet, there are also specific challenges in the demographics as identified below.

CRITICAL ISSUES

- The Latino population (Spanish-speaking households) is increasing in Boulder with evidence to support that these families are experiencing a growing achievement gap in education and workforce opportunities.

  1. Latino youth constitute a higher percentage of free and reduced price lunch in public schools (need to cite statistic)

  2. Boulder has the highest negative divide in Colorado between Latino high school graduates and non-Latino high school graduates (need to cite statistic)

- The homeless population is characterized as both the "Boulder" homeless and a transient homeless population, creating a unique set of stresses to the homeless service organizations for both the City agencies and non-profits.

- Minority populations constitute less than 13% of the population (8% Latino; 2% Asian; 1% African American)

- Even with the increased affluence, the City of Boulder has children (0 to 5 years of age) that are under-resourced and not equally prepared for kindergarten.

- The affordable housing "problem" generated by land use policies continues to be a challenge for the community. Specifically:

  1. Challenges the ability for young adults and the "creative class" to establish viable livelihoods in the City.

  2. Middle class professionals, including Boulder's "intellectual capital" (i.e. college professors) are not able to live in the City where they work.

- Boulder will be experiencing an aging population growth over the next 10 years.

Public libraries nationwide are acknowledging that they serve a variety of customer types, identified for example, as "core customers:" customers using library services regularly, customers that don't use library services but would benefit to enable access to education, social services and workforce development that would improve their station in life, and customers that aren't necessarily need-based, but the library would like to provide services they would enjoy to expand the library's relevancy to the entire community. To ensure relevancy in the 21st century, each public library system, and this is true for the Boulder Public Library, will need to develop:

1. A definition of broad customer types based on the above general categories
2. A strategy for aligning resources, including articulating an intentional approach to customer service, programs and services development, partnership amplification and alignment, marketing, outreach and communications plans and staff skills and talents development.

In acknowledging that public libraries, with limited resources, cannot be all things to all people, public libraries recognize that they must tailor their services to address local customers and local community challenges and that this definition, to be truly iterative, will be refined at each phase of the master planning process and on-going.[1]

Best practices for 21st century library services will demonstrate a balance between serving the core customer and those customers in the community needing services for overall health and well-being in order for a community to advance. The most effective 21st century public library services will combine best practices from retail and impactful practices of other successful non-profit and philanthropic services.

On the basis of the demographic analysis of this report and on the vision of the future of the public library, we believe that the Boulder Public Library is well positioned to advance its service to core customers as well as to strategically address the identified areas that are critical challenges. Specifically:

1. To expand services to the Latino community by developing strategic outreach to bi-cultural alignment to introduce them to library services by "meeting them in their world."
2. To work with the homeless services to develop creative and innovative strategies for impactful outcomes.
3. To "own" the 0 to 5 years of age, preschool "education" and develop strategic partnerships to ensure all youth in Boulder are prepared for kindergarten.
4. To "own" the third place for the community and specifically create programs and services for everyone in the community to come together for common interests and programs.

One of the aspects that this report does not include is an analysis of the demographics of specific neighborhoods within Boulder, especially as related to the current and potential future library locations and how the needs of the neighborhood populations will impact current and future services. This includes specific locations of facilities, size and "type" of library (pop up, storefront, etc.). MSS recommends that the next phase of the master planning work includes a study of key demographic shifts anticipated and if any of the proposed zoning and policy changes, in housing for example, will impact library services.

1. https://www.imls.gov/assets/1/AssetManager/21stCenturySkills.pdf

Tools: Needs Survey

I see someone in the community who needs...

Cultural exposure • Opportunities • Language skills • Help navigating the US • Free entertainment • Mentoring • A space and an audience • Community building • Connection to other families and institutions • Resources • Encounters with people outside their circle • Alternate perspectives • A place to go

I see someone in the community who aspires to...

Spread their word • Enrich themselves • Learn more about Boulder • Raise their families • Reach their potential • Make a home • Become a citizen • Have a future • Make a legacy • Participate through donations • Be enlightened • Find their unique voice

This is how the community can provide that experience...

Open access • Accept different viewpoints • Greater inclusion • Connections between different organizations • Facilitate encounters • Keys to crack the code

This is how the library can provide that experience...

Inspiration, creativity, openness to possibilities • Free spaces • Dynamic sharing platforms • Safe, friendly, welcoming spaces • Citizenship classes • Language resources • Gathering spaces • Opportunities to lead, find, design, and participate • Place free of judgment • Strong set of core values

This is how I can assist...

Empathy and openness • Facilitating connections • Being welcoming and knowledgeable • Sharing information • Communicating with communities about offerings • Being flexible to adapt • Excellent customer service • Being willing to take risk

Tools: Directed Storytelling

One of the tools that MSS utilized to obtain more information on the community is Directed Storytelling. The staff interviewed several users of the library in order to record their experience of using the library. The following interview was recorded by Aimee Schumm and Antonia Gaona.

RUBY @ REYNOLDS LIBRARY

A 35-45-something mom of two boys ages 4 and 6. Her family moved to the Boulder area from New Jersey.

1. How often do you use the library?
3-4 times per week depending on what is going on. Sometimes we go to the main library before the market on Saturday. Depends on the programming. We know all the staff at this library.

2. What are the top three reasons you come to the library?
Mainly for the books. We don't want to purchase so we check them out for free. Events—Lego, yoga, pigs, special events. Used to come to story time, but because I work, we don't come to story time as much. GRB is the only library location to offer afternoon story times! Most after-school programs at other locations cater to older kids. I appreciate the regularity of GRB's Wednesday/Thursday afternoon programs for younger kids.

3. Describe your last visit to this library?
Usually we ride our bikes down. I LOVE the staff at the desk: Stella, Linda or Hannah. I always try to talk to the staff even if I don't know who they are. Welcoming environment. I know the programming staff the best. My last visit was impromptu following a BBQ in the neighborhood. Talked to Hannah about the summer reading booklets coming in. Boys played on the computer while I roamed around and picked up a few things. Checked out material—self-check works really well—boys love putting the books in and checking them out. Receipt isn't necessary.

Even if the self-check is being used, I can go up to staff to check out material. Doesn't take too long. I mentioned a research question she had for Stella the visit prior. Stella found the information and emailed me the information before I even got home—I was impressed with the level of customer service.

I like the downstairs meeting room because the kids can be loud and not disrupt other patrons. At Meadows, you need to be a little quieter—no yelling. When we ride our bikes, we park at the bottom and come in through those doors. Accessing the meeting room can be difficult—need to go outside to get into the space with strollers.

The pig and zoo programs made an impression on me! Kids' space is close to the front, with separate story time/play. I like the design of this library—it's quite good!

4. Tell us about the last time you came to the library for a Children's Program?
Pig program. I went to the library to buy the pig video so my kids can check it out (rather than purchasing it myself). Room was packed. We needed to come 15-20 minutes ahead of time to get a seat. Programs are always very well done. Sometimes Linda gives me a sneak preview of what is coming, which I love. I like it more than the main library because the branch is more cozy and personable.

5. What would have made your visit better, easier, or more enjoyable?

This is a really well-run library—they do a good job. I would love to always see my favorite staff at the front when they come in.*laughs*. I love that the new picture books are in a separate area for scanning. I'm picky about the books she selects - my boys have poor eyesight so I look for books that are not overly visually stimulating. Magic School Bus, though informative, is too visually stimulating. I really like the staff picks and themed books and grab "foodie" books for my husband. Meeting room could be bigger. My kids get a marble when they attend a program. But the bigger room comes with the downside of more people. Other customers say that the meeting room was too warm. It doesn't bother me. Sometimes the sound doesn't work in the meeting room, but it doesn't bother me.

6. Additional Feedback:

- Miss Hannah came to my son's school. He saw her and they were able to communicate outside of the library. This encounter really made an impression on my son. Seeing the librarians out in the community is wonderful.

- I frequent the website and get the newsletter about programs. The library website and calendar are ALWAYS up on my computer.

- I have no issues with parking at any of the locations

7. Suggestions for Improvement/Negative Experiences

- Tumble books - frustrating to log in. I don't use Tumble books as often anymore. Even though I don't download any electronic material, I'm still aware of what was available from Hoopla, Overdrive, and eBrary.

- My husband and I downloaded a movie to watch, but we weren't impressed with the selection.

- Kids Computers: Often times, there are already kids on the computers when we arrive and they monopolize and don't share. I turn this into a life lesson for my boys. I suggest adding additional computers or a second set of headphones for dual use.

- Printing can be frustrating. I attempted to print something from home, but I left frustrated without my print because I didn't know how to retrieve the print from the PC. I walked out without it because I didn't know what to do and I didn't have time to ask a staff member.

- I would love to be able to email GRB staff directly. I couldn't find information on the website on a snowy day to find out if a certain program was still happening.

- It'd be great to have a business card with a phone number / email address for the branch so that I can contact the branch directly!

Strategic Plans Analysis

The City of Boulder and associated organizations over the past 10 years have engaged in a tremendous amount of work to articulate master and strategic plans for the community. Reports studied are comprehensive in their assessment and aspirational in their goals. What is unclear is how these organizations are executing, implementing and measuring achievement.

MSS also identified specific areas that will need further definition and dialogue with entities that represent these areas of service for the Boulder Public Library to optimize its vision, as well as to enable the City's goals:

1. The Master Plan for Boulder's Civic Area

2. The role and direction of arts and culture in Boulder

3. Meaningful partnerships with the Department of Education

4. The on-going challenge of affordable housing and population diversity

Boulder Public Library's greatest opportunity is to align with the organizations and be a strategic partner. The Boulder Public Library must be more than an iterative partner in executing, educating and providing outreach, but also must be the forum for facilitating community dialogue and discourse. The areas where we see the most opportunity are to align its strategic goals with:

1. City of Boulder goals and values

2. The Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan 2015 Major Update and the City's Sustainability Framework
   Safe Community, Healthy and Socially Thriving Community, Livable Community, Accessible and Connected Community, Environmentally Sustainable Community, Economically Vital Community, Good Governance

3. The Community Foundation, Boulder County, 2015-2018 Strategic Plan,

4. Supporting economic development with the City of Boulder's Economic Development Strategy, 2013

MSS believes that the Boulder Public Library can provide an active and engaging environment (both physical and virtual) for positive, constructive dialogue, becoming a national model for creating a constructive democratic society defined by genuine community ownership.

Rendering of Proposed Civic Area Redevelopment
Boulder, Colorado

Interviews with Community Leaders

One of the most insightful activities in the assessment was meeting with 16 community leaders, including library commissioners, civic leaders, non-profit and partnering organization leaders. These conversations provided MSS with meaningful anecdotal information and genuine clarity about Boulder's needs, aspirations and challenges, as well as providing specific recommendations on how the library can address them. We recommend that the Library continue the conversation with this fantastic group of leaders, all of whom understand the value of the Boulder Public Library and will be a supportive "de facto" advisory group as the master planning process continues.

We prompted conversation by asking specific questions:

- *What is YOUR Boulder?*

- *What do you enjoy most about the Community?*

- *What would you change? What change would have the greatest impact?*

- *What do we need to know about this community that no one else will tell us?*

- *What keeps you up at night?*

- *If the Boulder Public Library could help you and your organization achieve its goals, what support would you envision?*

- *What are the unique qualities and assets of this community?*

Addressing "real" community needs in a "high-level context" addressing the human condition; responses were both qualitative and concrete and were as varied as the responses on the following page.

Responses

Boulder needs a 'happy place!' • We need to listen to each other. • Boulder is abut creativity and activity; the Boulder Public Library should also exhibit those qualities as soon as you walk in! • How about sponsoring a technology zone co-working/incubator space in the library? • Something that provides a specific container and scope, something that allows free reign within that scope. • The Library can provide messy freedom! • Please speak to the community that is the neediest as this process continues. • Our Latino community may be skeptical to come to the Library; you may need to reach out to them differently to provide desperately needed library services!

About Boulder

The City of Boulder is an active, creative, innovative and proud community and citizens enjoy a wonderful quality of life. Citizens also exhibit a strong sense of "pride of place" and we encourage the Boulder Public Library to continue to create programs and activities that reflect and amplify the "Boulder Brand!"

The Boulder Brand

Connected City!

Knowledge City!

Tech & Start Ups!

Athletic City!

Food City!

Civic Engagement

Open Space!

Creative City!

The Boulder Public Library Today

The Boulder Public Library has been enjoying a renaissance over the past few years with a positive shift in public perception, relevancy and use, as well as a positive shift in staff morale. All traditional indicators for use (library visits, program participation, materials circulation, etc.) are continuing to grow.

The following is a list of recent successes, partnerships and service initiatives exemplifying the positive, customer service, vision-driven services provided by the Boulder Public Library:

Service model:
1. Boulder Public Library staff has developed a customer service philosophy and service model and undergone a staffing reorganization with a specific focus on improving the customer experience.

2. The Boulder Public Library is amplifying strategic partnerships to address strategic goals especially related to early childhood development.

3. The co-location of the Small Business Development Center creates a positive and accessible presence of the organization, highlighting the library's role in providing support for small business development: a natural fit.

4. The Seeds Library Café partnership with the Boulder County Farmers Market is one of the most successful nationally to provide food service and to promote local small business development.

Facilities:
1. The recent renovations of the Main Library and the Meadows Branch Library have infused the Boulder Public Library with a spirit of creative activity, where the "Library Brand" and spirit align with place and presence.

2. The NoBo Corner Library, although TINY, is bustling with activity and despite its minute size, offers mighty services!

3. The Seeds Library Cafe on the bridge at the Main Library is a community hub bringing the community together in new ways.

4. The BLDG 61 Makerspace in the north building of the Main Library is extremely successful with more demand for programs and use than staffing and operating hours are currently able to provide given current resources.

5. The Canyon Gallery in the north building of the Main Library is active and vibrant with creative shows, constantly infusing the library with a spirit of creativity.

BLDG61 Makerspace

Jaipur Literature Festival, Boulder Public Library, 2015

Canyon Gallery at Boulder Public Library

Events:

1. The initial Jaipur Literature Festival in 2015 was a tremendous success and plans are underway for the second festival to be held at the Main Library in the fall of 2016.

2. In partnership with the Egyptian Study Society, the Boulder Public Library presented an Egyptology Festival with symposia, exhibits, and family programs.

More importantly, it is the qualitative assets that the Boulder Public Library offers, especially in its humanity, and in particular, the staff's relationships with customers that are the most important assets in providing genuine community support, stability and the nurturing required to flourish and for genuine community advancement.

These qualities include:

- Providing empathy
- Promoting human and social capital
- Offering positive experiences
- Providing time for exploration, serendipitous discovery and reflection
- Providing free public space
- Providing access to resources
- Enabling partnerships

Lastly, key partnerships with local organizations have provided Boulder with valuable resources to support programs that would not have been otherwise possible.
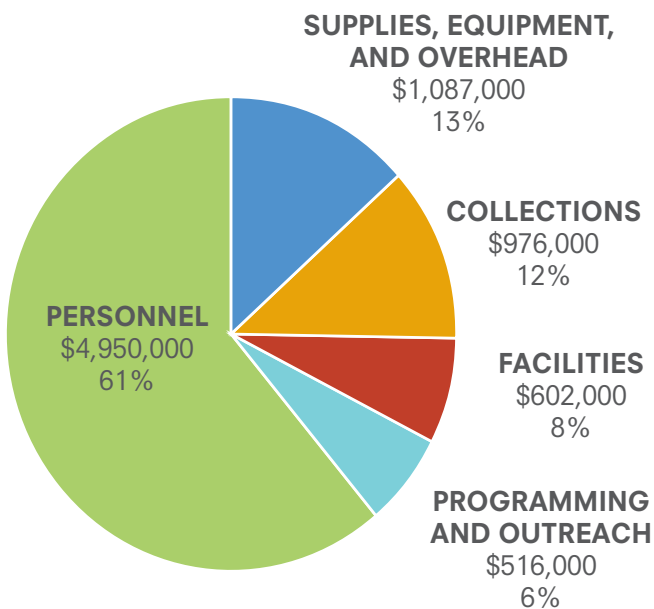
Partners:

- Seeds Café - Boulder County Farmers Market
- Boulder Small Business Development Center
- Intercambio Uniting Communities
- Eco-Cycle, Inc.

Library Funding in 2015

THE FOLLOWING IS THE CURRENT ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES FOR THE BOULDER PUBLIC LIBRARY.

BOULDER PUBLIC LIBRARY USES
$8,131,000

SUPPLIES, EQUIPMENT, AND OVERHEAD
$1,087,000
13%

COLLECTIONS
$976,000
12%

PERSONNEL
$4,950,000
61%

FACILITIES
$602,000
8%

PROGRAMMING AND OUTREACH
$516,000
6%

BOULDER PUBLIC LIBRARY FUNDING SOURCES
$8,217,000

PROPERTY TAX
$862,000
11%

LIBRARY REVENUES
$321,000
4%

BOULDER LIBRARY FOUNDATION
$448,000
5%

SALES & USE TAX
$6,586,000
80%
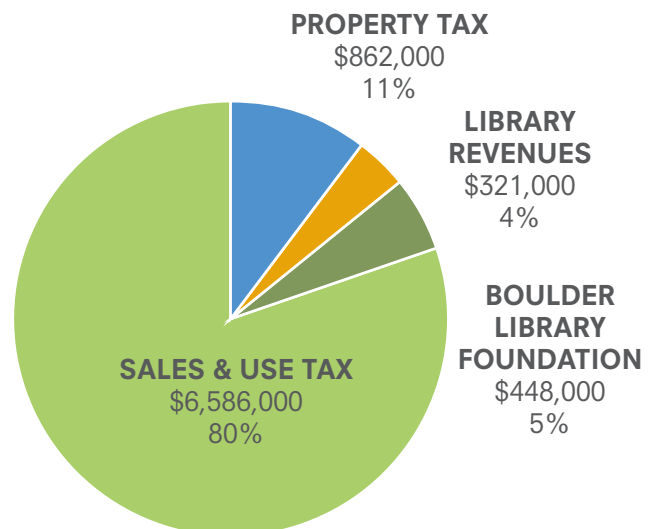
Library as Community Heart

WE ENVISION THAT THE LIBRARY WILL PLAY A RELEVANT ROLE IN THE DAILY LIFE OF THE CITIZENS OF BOULDER.

CIVIC DEVELOPMENT!

Open Space!

FIDOS!

A place for all to be heard!

Plan Boulder!

Farmer's Market!

Boulder Chamber!

Boulder's Needs

It was not the goal of this assessment to provide the conventional recommendations. For example, that the Boulder Public Library will need more of the same set of services that the 20th century library offered. The goal is to identify the REAL needs in the community, to be candid and honest and open about what those needs are in order for the Boulder Public Library to support and advance the community as a whole and provide a set of services that will generate positive and lasting impact.

The true role of the public library as an instrument of community advancement is to provide the support system for community health and well-being by addressing the needs of individuals. MSS encourages Boulder's civic leaders to work toward this in a collaboration with the Boulder Public Library that is inherently innovative, creative and inventive.

Boulder's Needs

The following lists were generated from the analysis of the planning documents and websites (See the Appendix for the complete list), the interviews with community leaders, and workshops with city and library staff members.

BOULDER IS A COMMUNITY WHO NEEDS...

- A context in which its members can dialogue with one another, instead of having their differences amplified in separate silos.
- To learn to LISTEN to each other – engaging in conversations in which its members learn to be an active listeners and empathize with others' problems.
- Affordable housing solutions amidst a disappearing middle class.
- To develop leadership in the "next" generation of Boulder community members.
- Improved, productive communication between community members and the city government.
- To learn to slow down in the busyness of its days.
- More spaces for its members to spend time and relax in a family setting.
- Productive spaces for its members experiencing homelessness, near-homelessness and who are mentally ill to spend time during the day.
- Greater outreach to its under-served members. For example, the Spanish-speaking population. (This is achieved by going OUT to where these members work, live, gather. Persons who are members of under-served populations are not often able or comfortable engaging in civic activities or seeking services outside their communities.)

- More rainy day activities in a town dominated by outdoor activity.
- Potentially more mobile library units to support outreach into the community.
- For its members without time or finances to still have the ability to be civically engaged if they choose to, so that everyone's voice can be heard, not just those persons who can afford it.

BOULDER IS A COMMUNITY WHO ASPIRES...

- To thrive with the Boulder "brand:" creativity, activity, innovation and inspiration.
- To get behind a better common purpose instead of public conflict – meaningful dialogue happens with common experiences.
- To be more welcoming – so that people of all ages and backgrounds are able to find their own place in Boulder (e.g. we don't want people to be turned away because they feel uncomfortable being a minority in a majority white community).
- To have a greater art and culture scene; places for people to participate in art, rather than simply observe.
- For improved integration of persons experiencing homelessness into the greater community; the community does not turn a blind eye to the homelessness problem, and persons who are experiencing homelessness have resources to have constructive days.
- For the library and the tech community to intersect in more meaningful and mutually beneficial ways.

- To be culturally competent – so that people feel like they can come here and there is something for them.

- To engage everyone on an equal level. This may be accomplished by inviting unexpected persons to serve in leadership roles and create an attitude of "come and teach us."

- For greater trust and understanding between predominately white and affluent members and the minority or under-served members.

THE BOULDER PUBLIC LIBRARY SUPPORTS COMMUNITY BY...

- Taking greater ownership of city's art and culture scene, providing free exhibit and performance space.

- Being a safe place for persons of all backgrounds, economic situations and needs, where no one is harassed or judged. There is a perception that there are few safe places in the community to communicate on ideas and issues.

- Creating pathways of success for all! For example, providing space for Dialectic Behavior Therapy (community groups that teach constructive skills and mindfulness) for persons experiencing homelessness or who are otherwise in need.

- Being an integration force and equalizer – For example, The University of Colorado, health food stores, The Pearl Street Mall, all cater heavily to persons with means. There is the perception that there are very few places in Boulder where a person can 'be' without being a consumer.

- Acting as a touchpoint and community facilitator – a bridge between the community and the city government. While the library is part of city government, people do not often associate the library with the city.

- By becoming a supportive agent of change, as a neutral space, the library is uniquely positioned to support necessary positive change in Boulder.

- Being a family center. There are few places in Boulder for family-centered activities. Library is one of them!

- Being the center for knowledge and inspiration from young students to teenagers, to college students, to tech start-ups, to moms, and more…. Everyone can be inspired!

- Facilitating a SHARING ECONOMY, in that people are enriched through sharing their own knowledge and experiences with one another.

- Taking ownership of and providing a platform for positive civic engagement.

- Being committed to success and pushing the community towards that goal.

- Being an experimentation factory. There is the perception that people used to be able to come to Boulder and experiment with different jobs, hobbies, etc. but now that is difficult for most people due to financial restraints. How can the library facilitate experimentation so that people can feel free to try different "hats" without significant financial burden?

- Being a center of the community heart. People learn best when having fun! There is an opportunity and interest for community to have fun and engage.

Recommendations and Next Steps for the Boulder Public Library Master Plan Update

Recommended Project Phases

This document represents the completion of Phase 1 of the Boulder Public Library's overall master planning process. The following outlines recommended next steps for Phases 2, 3 and 4.

Phase 2: Educating the community about the contemporary library – Imagine the possibilities! (4-6 months)

- Refine the Boulder's definition of the public library.

- Define library customers - Using Directed Storytelling and other methods, define of broad customer types based upon general characteristics and known habits and interests of current library customers

- Map community assets - Conduct an inventory of the current organizations and services available in Boulder and identify new opportunities and partnerships in the community.

- Inventory core services - Conduct an inventory of the current core services currently offered by the library

- Understand impact of anticipated demographic shifts – conduct a study of proposed zoning and policy changes, in housing for example, that may impact library services.

- Identify specific opportunities for collaboration and partnership - based upon the goals of The Master Plan for Boulder's Civic Area and the Community Cultural Plan

Phase 3: Creative community engagement process (6-9 months)

- Continue the conversation with the community leaders interviewed during the community needs assessment, as a "de facto" advisory group

- Test the "Vision for the Future" of the Boulder Public Library as defined in this assessment

- Answer the questions: How will the Boulder Public Library make a contribution to the community? How will the Boulder Public Library use its platform, its brand, its trust in the community, to improve the community it serves?

- Identify specific community interests and verify needs and priorities. Working in collaboration with key partnerships to design community engagement process around key strategic areas of service.

- Identify options for library to support the community to address the on-going challenge of affordable housing and population diversity

Phase 4: Service and systems refinement (4-6 months)

- Develop strategies for aligning resources to address priorities

    - Programs and services design, implementation and evaluation plan

    - Partnership amplification and alignment plan

    - Marketing, outreach, and communications plan

    - Plan to develop staff skills and talents

- Develop a long-term economic model and short-term budget to implement objectives from plans listed above

- Refine the customer service philosophy and service model

Conclusion and Thank You

We believe that the Boulder Public Library, its leadership and the Library Commissioners have an incredible opportunity to engage in a master planning process that will be the first community engagement process of the 21st century library.

By identifying Boulder's needs and aspirations, leveraging its unique character, and aligning current and future library assets through genuinely engaging the community in REAL conversation, listening, creation and ownership, the Boulder Public Library will create a master plan that will allow it to continue to have significant, positive impact on the entire community.

Ultimately, the goal is to redefine what the public library is for Boulder and for it to become a relevant force in the City's democracy by facilitating and fostering positive, critical community dialogue and providing a platform for engagement and creative content.

We encourage library leadership to continue to imagine the possibilities to be both a national prototype as well as be responsive the local community to create the most impact for its community of users!