

# Library Building Project Update

March 2021



# “Public libraries reflect the highest ideals of the communities they serve.”

(2018 Handbook for Library Trustees of the State of New York)

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We start with this quote not only because it's part of the commitment library trustees make when fulfilling their roles, but because this core belief resonated with us and serves as a touchstone in our decision-making.

Libraries are part of a community's infrastructure that we all invest in - just like schools. Even if you don't use the library, or don't use a particular service of the library, your neighbors do, and the library should be useful and accessible to all of us.

*In an increasingly virtual world, libraries are community assets..they remain a destination that serves many purposes...People and technology meet at the library. (Aspen Institute)*

*There are few other spaces in society where people of all walks of life rub shoulders together. (David Leonard, Director of the Boston Public Library)*

So, our job is to answer the question: What does this community want and need in a library -and- what's the best way for us to deliver it?

# Reflecting our community's ideals

## Build a right-sized library for this community

community input | library needs assessment | data + comparables

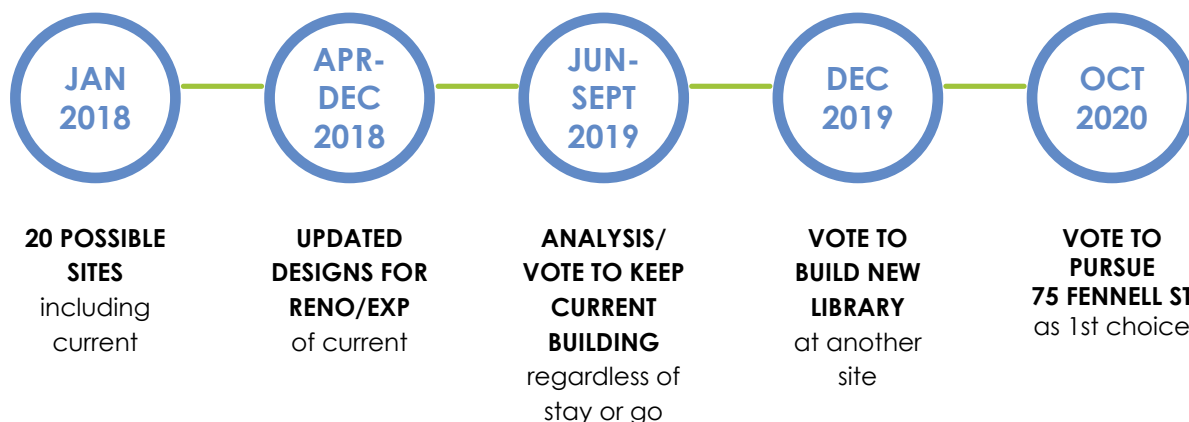
## Bring new life to our current building

preserve ambiance | support downtown | expand gallery

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After many years of analysis and deliberation, we've arrived at this two-part approach to the library's building project that will allow us to honor the ideals of the community and provide the level of service our community expects: ***we can preserve our past, while building our future.***

# Site evaluation: recent history and process



Building on information and analysis going back to the early 1950's, more recently in the early 2000's and through to 2017 with the Bookends project, library records document the need for more and more flexible space. This timeline illustrates the board's work to assess options to address this need.

**JAN 2018:** The board started fresh by looking at new site options AND asking experienced library architects, Paul Mays and Lisa Hayes, to create new designs for the current building maximizing the site.

**APR-DEC 2018:** New designs and cost estimates were completed. This renovated and expanded version of the current site was used by the site committee during its evaluation process.

**JUN-SEPT 2019:** While the site committee continued its work, we also explored ways for the library to maintain ownership of the current building if we did choose to move to another site. Extensive financial analyses, strategic planning for the Barrow Gallery and discussions with potential tenants occurred. After additional research to ensure that this path was truly financially sound and obtaining a memorandum of agreement with a potential tenant, the board voted in September 2019 to keep the building, regardless of the library's ultimate home.

**DEC 2019:** During a board meeting in which each trustee candidly shared what facts were key to their personal decision-making, the board reached the unanimous decision to build a new library on another site.

**OCT 2020:** Through the spring and summer of 2020, 3 sites rose to the top of our list. Further vetting of those sites was slowed by the pandemic, but by the fall, 2 sites remained. In October the site committee recommended pursuing 75 Fennell St. as our first choice. The board voted to proceed with exploring acquisition of this site from the property's owner, the Town of Skaneateles.

# Site evaluation: criteria-driven process

LIBRARY SITE EVALUATION CRITERIA	POSSIBLE SCORE
The current building/site and all potential new sites were evaluated by the following criteria:	
<b>NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT</b>	<b>70</b>
Synergies with other cultural, civic, retail and residential neighbors:	35
Zoning and type of use (civic) consistent with other surrounding uses (civic, educational)	—
Mutually-beneficial occupancies (ex. Farmer's Market with cooking classes with cookbook/food collection)	—
Shared destination (sustainable strategy wherein people can park in one place and access multiple locations)	—
Central location within service area (both by population and geography)	20
Traffic and safety considerations	15
<b>SITE CONSIDERATIONS</b>	<b>60</b>
Initial building size: supports a building of 14,000 to 16,000 sf with accompanying parking, storm water retention, etc.	30
Desirable shape: shape of site is uniform/doesn't force odd or expensive building and related systems location/design	15
Future expansion	5
Ease of construction: size and location of site allow for reasonably affordable and easy construction, including parking and	5
Likelihood of hazardous materials contamination	5
<b>ACCESSIBILITY</b>	<b>44</b>
Car access/on-site parking	15
Easy drop off/delivery: for system deliveries, vendors and patrons	10
Pedestrian access	12
On-site drive thru book return: either into building or drop box	5
Off-site parking	2
<b>CHARACTER/AMENITIES/OTHER</b>	<b>26</b>
Usable outdoor space: comfortable space for individual and program use, including noise level	15
Views and natural areas	11
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>200</b>

All possible sites - including the current building - were evaluated using the same criteria.

A consistent and thorough process was used to evaluate all possible sites. Criteria were developed based on community input, library needs assessment and libraries in comparable communities. This scoring tool was used to evaluate and rank each site.

# Site evaluation: criteria

## DESIGN

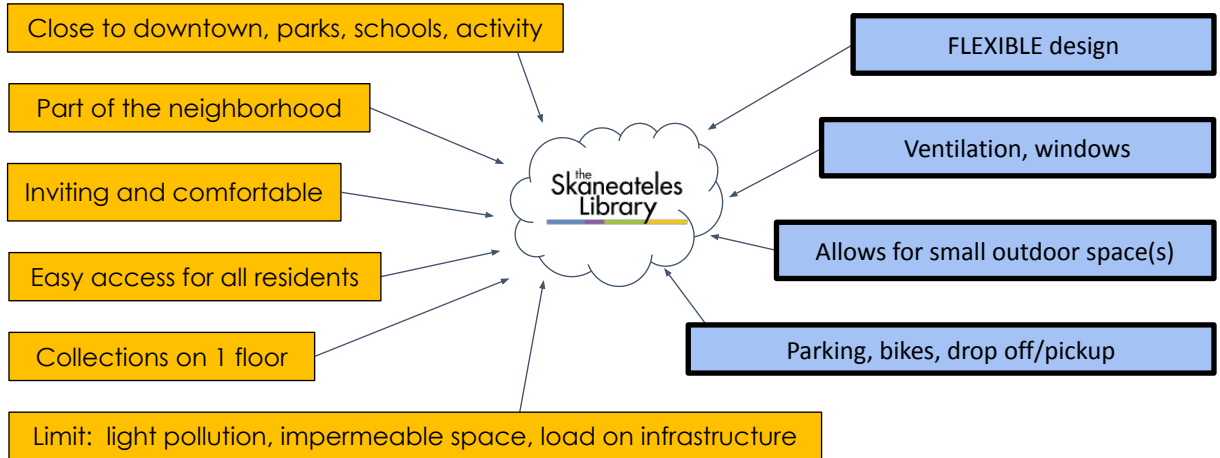
- Flexible for the future
- Inviting and comfortable
- Accessible for all
- Collections on single floor
- Limited environmental impact

## LOCATION

- Walkable
- Close to downtown
- Usable outdoor space
- Space for parking, dropoff/pickup
- Part of the neighborhood
- Accessible for all 9000 residents

Some of the key features we looked for in a library site and what design elements are needed.

# Build for the future: key criteria



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Some design elements, like a drive-up window for pick-ups, would have been a “nice to have” feature that likely would not have made the final cut before the pandemic.

COVID drove home the importance of existing criteria (outlined in bold) like building environment issues, the need for ventilation, operable windows, flexibility/repurposing, technology access for all and other types of accessibility.

# Our community wants spaces like these

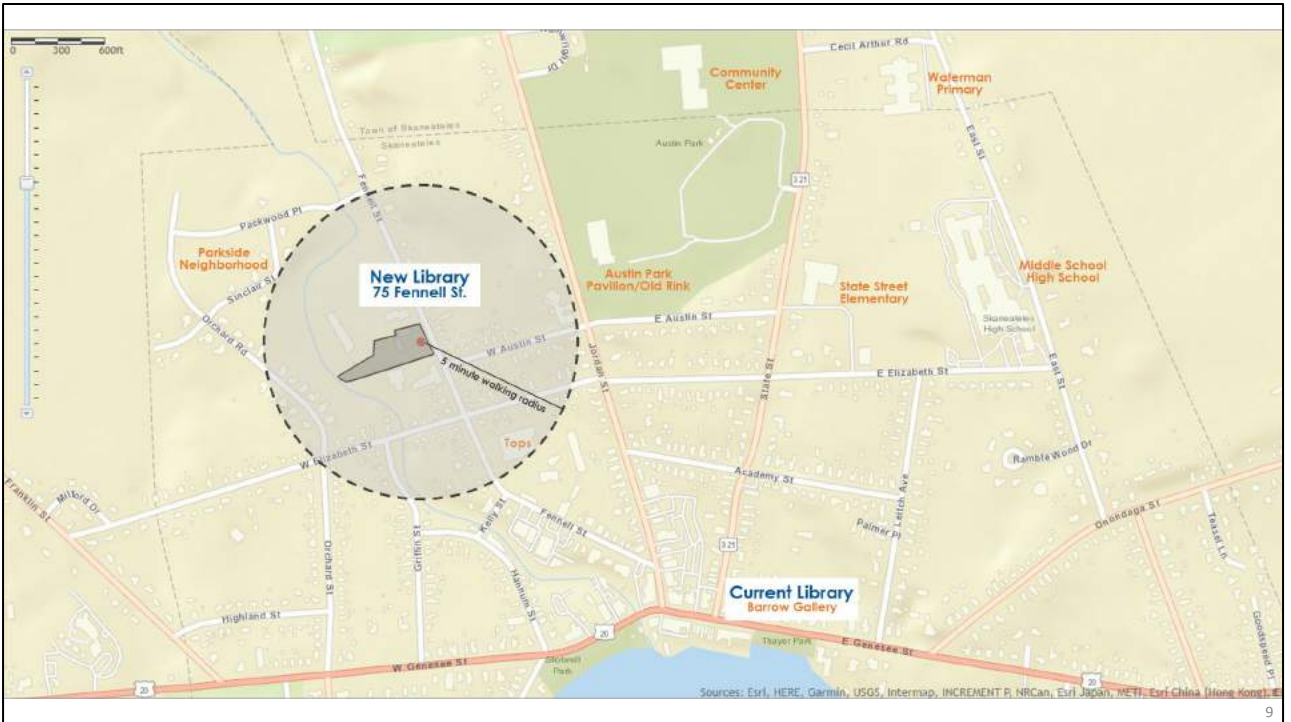


Cozy, practical, flexible, welcoming for all ages and walks of life. Our goal is to design a new library that **we can all love as much as we do our current building.**

We'll include small tutoring/meeting areas for students and gig workers, spaces for children and families, comfortable and accessible spaces for everyone (including those 55 and over, which is our largest demographic). We've included several more slides with inspirational pictures in the appendix.

We love this 2107 quote by nationally-renowned architect Margaret Sullivan: *The entire library should be a place where learning, creating, working and sharing ... happen in every nook and cranny.*





75 Fennell Street is within the village and close to the commercial district (including Tops, the Post Office and pharmacies), Austin Park and the schools. Locating the library on the Fennell Street corridor makes it walkable from downtown and from many places in the village.

The site is big enough to include dedicated parking for library users. Remember, 72% of school district residents who support the library through an annual tax levy live outside the village.



75 Fennell Street is close to residential and commercial neighborhoods, as well as civic spaces.

The site is 2.14 acres and zoned for commercial use. We plan to beautify the site with green space and are excited by the potential of a nature walk to the creek, a bridge to the growing Parkside neighborhood and a short path to the Gateway apartments.

# Financials: new library construction costs

**WHEN?**



3 to 5 years

**HOW  
MUCH?**



Estimated cost \$10 million

- Private donations and grants
- Area wide capital campaign

Consider phased construction  
Develop fundraising partnerships (e.g., CNY Community Foundation)

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We expect that the total project - land purchase, building design, fundraising and construction - will take *at least* 3 to 5 years at the earliest. It may take longer, depending on how each of these phases progresses.

Construction cost estimates for a new library are about \$10 million dollars. That number comes from general design ideas used to help the board imagine how a new space might function and how much it would cost to build and operate. That number will change as we design a building for this site, which may differ from previous ideas based on community feedback. Costs in this range have been reviewed with some members of the community who have experience with large construction projects and with large fundraising efforts. Initial assessments indicates that it is realistic and viable.

Funds to build a new library will need to be raised from private donations and grants. The annual tax levy provided by school district residents will not be used for construction; its purpose is to support library operations.

# Financials: new library operating costs

Designing for operating efficiency (energy use, line of sight, maintenance, flexibility) supports sustainability.

Maintain staffing levels  Increased costs: Insurance  
Janitorial  
Utilities

Overall, we expect a 10-20% increase in our operating budget from moving to a larger space.

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As a service organization, the library's biggest expense is personnel: the people who staff the building for 63 hours/7 days a week, buy and process collection materials, provide programs and tech help and generally make the library the wonderful resource it is!

Even though a new building could be 2.5 to 3 times larger than our current space, we won't need more people to staff the library due to flexible and efficient design. Because things like insurance costs and cleaning costs are based on square footage, we do expect those expenses to increase. We also expect increased technology and utility costs, although we're investigating sustainable technologies that will be better for the environment and our operating budget over the long term.

If the library is able to purchase 75 Fennell Street, we'll develop site and building design that will allow us to create more detailed cost estimates. Based on projections so far, we're expecting an increase of 10-20% in our annual operating budget due to moving to new digs.

**We are also exploring ways to increase income, both from 49 Genesee Street and a new facility, to help offset increases in operational expenses.**

# Preserving the past at 49 E. Genesee Street

- Preserve and showcase period architecture and art
- Barrow and Chamber of Commerce as potential co-occupants
- Financially self-sustaining
- Use by the library and other community organizations



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Our current site is a downtown landmark loved and appreciated by all. The unique architecture of 49 E. Genesee Street makes it a showpiece to preserve, while at the same time allowing for ancillary library uses.

Maintaining a home for the Barrow, helping our fellow nonprofits to thrive and sustaining an active downtown with our neighboring businesses is an equally-important part of this project.

Will it be a lot of work? Absolutely! But we think it's worth it and are planning accordingly.

# Current building: near term

accessible | functional | beautiful



LIBRARY ENTRANCE



BARROW ENTRANCE

**MORE TO COME!**

New lighting  
Chimney  
restoration

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The library will still use this building for the next 3 to 5 years and beyond even if in a reduced capacity. Now that our path has been decided, we can make smart improvements to benefit library users now and continue to preserve this landmark building for the community.

State library construction grants can fund a large portion of these improvements. Last year we submitted a \$98,000 project to the state, which was recently awarded. The grant will cover 75% of cost to replace the library steps and ramp, install new interior lighting and restore the building's 3 chimneys. The library has been building a capital reserve from investment income to fund this work and more.

The Barrow is currently raising funds to improve its entrance so visitors can enter the Gallery directly.

We have researched several options, including costs, on how to best make the second floor more accessible, supported by architectural and structural engineering assessments on the building's condition.

# Current building: long term

financially self-sustaining | preserve architecture



CHAMBER WELCOME + OFFICE



EXPANDED BARROW



LIBRARY USED BOOK SALES

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Since our December 2019 decision to build a new library at another site, we've been busy planning how to best repurpose our current building after the library moves to a new home. The board created a committee to focus on this portion of the project. They developed criteria to guide their work and are researching the implications of all possible uses. We are truly excited about these serious possibilities, which are better suited for this beautiful building and will maintain or increase foot traffic to the downtown area.

The library could use most of the main area for year-round used book sales, maintaining the current character and feel right down to the wingback chairs by the fireplace.

The Creamery is interested in partnering to sell items.

## INTERESTED PARTIES:

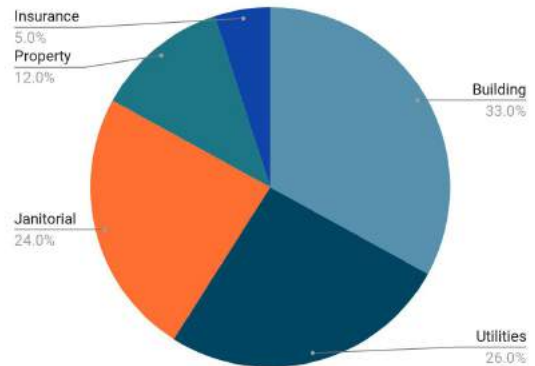
- The Chamber could have retail and visitor space in the Sphinx and offices upstairs.
- The Barrow Gallery could expand into some of the downstairs for storage, work space and display space in a way that reuses period bookshelves and allows line of sight to key artwork. The Gallery is also in dire need of additional space to better fulfill its mission and become more economically viable.

# Financials: current building reuse

Estimated annual carrying costs: \$37,000

Estimated annual Income sources:

- Rent: \$20,000
- Others: \$3,000
- Library merch & used book sales: \$24,000+



Building condition: 2015 assessment  
Capital: 2018 Investment withdrawal policy and grants

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The library is in sound financial condition thanks to public funding, a prudent investment withdrawal policy, grants and careful management. The plan to keep ownership of the building and repurpose it for other uses must be financially solid and self-sustaining. A large part of evaluating this idea involved detailed research and analysis of expenses and revenue. We're continuing that research, and it remains favorable.

This pie chart shows carrying costs based on a 4-year average of utilities, janitorial services and property maintenance. Building maintenance is estimated at higher than average; it varies annually, but can be planned. Insurance is based on additional square footage in the library's policy.

Used book sale income is conservatively based on other libraries that run similar stand-alone, volunteer-run stores (the closest example is the Cazenovia Book Barn). Increasing our ability to sell used books in a downtown location will benefit the library; based on the experience of other libraries, we anticipate little to no impact on our annual sale.



# Next steps

- 1. Keep communicating the value add to our community**
2. Complete Fennell St. acquisition process, assuming all ok
3. Continue to preserve and prepare 49 E. Genesee St. building
4. Maximize options for community input: committees, design, construction, landscape, etc. → *it's the community's library*
- 5. Raise private and grant funds for a large capital project**

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Communication is a key element of all we are doing, and plan to do. The board of trustees is energized by the value add to the community we all love that this project will bring.

The Fennell St. acquisition process, though not yet completed, is well underway involving extensive analysis, testing, appraisal, environmental condition and impact, legal review and valuation work. The library's board has a capable and experienced leadership team committed to realizing these plans, and we continue to expand community involvement as the project progresses.

In 2020, we added 5 more community members to 3 additional committees, and that number will continue to grow. Let us know if you are interested! Many skills and relevant experience, as well as a great deal of hard work, will be needed.

# How you can help

**During the Public Hearing:** You'll have 60 days to let the town board know whether you support the sale\* of 75 Fennell Street to the library.

The more positive feedback they get, the better!

**Julie Stenger**

Skaneateles Town Clerk

[jstenger@townofskaneateles.com](mailto:jstenger@townofskaneateles.com)

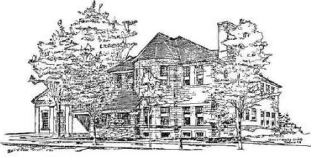
\*Article VIII, § 1 of the State Constitution prohibits counties, cities, towns, villages and school districts from making gifts or loans of "any money or property to or in aid of any individual, or private corporation or association." The library's legal status is that of a private nonprofit.

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If the town and the library can reach a purchase agreement for the property at 75 Fennell Street, the town will hold a public hearing on the proposed sale before making a final decision.

Residents will have 60 days from the time the public hearing is announced to submit comments to the town board in writing (via letter or email) or at the hearing.

# Preserve the past, build the future



→ **PRESERVE** and support our downtown neighbors and community non-profits



→ **BUILD** a new library that's criteria-driven and right-sized for our community

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We hope you are as excited about these plans and how they are progressing as we are!

Our volunteer board of community members (as well as the non-board community members sitting on several committees) are committed to making these dreams a reality. After many years of research, planning and deliberation, as well as much listening and learning, we believe this is the best path forward for both the library as an organization and our community.

**It may be more challenging now and may take longer, but the need for a new library is greater than ever!**

# Questions and Feedback

[feedback@skanlibrary.org](mailto:feedback@skanlibrary.org)



We welcome questions and feedback! The easiest way to let us know your thoughts is to email [feedback@skanlibrary.org](mailto:feedback@skanlibrary.org).

# Appendix

The following 5 slides feature a few more pictures for ideas and inspiration!

***Important reminder:*** Pictures represent the kinds of spaces and how we use them - not design, style, color, etc.

# Our community wants spaces like these



Light & open

Lots of light, lots of seating. Places to gather or sit alone.

Spaces that bring the outside in.

# Our community wants spaces like these



Fun & functional

A circulation desk, computer station and seating. Basic functions in a library shown in creative and unique ways!

# Our community wants spaces like these



Learning for all ages

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Babies and toddlers can grab their own books and read under a tree. Face-out display makes books more appealing and accessible, especially for pre-readers.

Preschoolers have plenty of room to move and places to explore, while school age kids can browse the collection and find quiet spaces to read.

Middle and high schoolers can work in groups or on their own in cozy, comfortable, flexible spaces with easy access to books and technology (and electrical outlets!).



# Our community wants spaces like these



Home away from home

Lots of room to socialize and study surrounded by books!

Note the low shelves and board book cubes in the children's section that put books at kid height, with enough space for little hands to grab them.

# Our community wants spaces like these



Meet, work & study

Comfortable, flexible spaces for small and large gatherings can accommodate local groups as well as library programs.

One out-of-the-box solution to building permanent study rooms are mobile pods; they're soundproof, wired for technology and come in different sizes. The smallest is a phone booth style for 1 person and the largest can seat up to 6. They can also be moved (or added) as space needs change. This pod looks quite modern, but they have a huge range of furniture and finish options.