

KEY LEADER INTERVIEWS A Summary

During the week of September 9, 2002, the principal consultant for the Master Plan study team met with and interviewed 19 persons from throughout Louisville; persons identified as key leaders in the community. What follows is a summary of those interviews. For a complete list of those interviewed please see the appendices.

Question 1 In your opinion, what do you believe to be the general ***cultural*** and ***educational*** needs of Louisville?

Response First let's think about the ***educational*** needs.

While Louisville has a low level of educational attainment, according to the Brookings report¹, it has shown marked improvement over the last 10 years. The public will realize the increased improvement when the full census data is released and publicized.

Louisville was below the national average, but is now above. In Louisville the High School diploma/equivalent rose [over the last 10 years] from 74.1 percent to 81.8 percent; the national average is 80.4 percent. Simultaneously, the percentage of college undergraduates living in Louisville increased from 19.3 percent to 24.8 percent; the national average is 24.4 percent.

We could do a better job if the public library could do more than its present funding allows it to do.
William E. Summers, IV
Vice President, Greater Louisville, Inc.

The need remains to continue to stress the importance of staying in school until the high school/GED diploma is achieved. Educational achievement often solves so many related problems that Louisville and all cities and towns face -- there are too many children who cannot read.

¹ *BEYOND: A Competitive Vision for the Regional City of Louisville.* The Brookings Institution Center on Urban & Metropolitan Policy. c2002.

This leads to other problems, such as a high dropout rate, difficulty in finding a good job, and a loss of desire for lifelong learning.

There is a lot to do at all levels. Citizens need to understand the value of more education. It is hard to direct expectations for children if caregivers do not have high expectations. All institutions need to work together to raise the level of literacy across the city. The greatest need is to prepare young people for the future -- a fast-moving, technology-based society.

The Library can help Louisville achieve its educational goals. The Library can help overcome the work readiness gap and the achievement gaps in public schools throughout the community. "We could do a better job if the public library could do more than its present funding allows it to do."²

The business community works on large-scale economic development. The Library, on the other hand, as a neighborhood asset, can help neighborhoods work on small-scale quality of life. Part of the Library's capacity is to help persons who, although they may have low levels of educational attainment, are quite capable, with the right training, of helping bring about the kind of climate that favors strong economic growth and strong growth in quality of life criteria. The Library is doing an excellent thing by opening its facilities for GED classes/training.

The Board of KentuckinaWorks has established three goals. All are related to education:

- Raise the educational attainment level throughout Louisville.
- Create a responsive workforce system.
- Aim for achieving quantum change in educational results.

Now let's think about Louisville's **cultural** needs.

There is a very strong network of art and local attractions here. The Art and Cultural Attractions Council has been quite instrumental in this. The Library is a valued participant. However, Louisville is not as well served as it should be; Nashville is an example of a city that is better served. "The major challenge we face is how to make this a learning community. Being a learning community has economic ramifications, of course."³ The Library plays a big role. It can enrich most of the city's resources for all people, especially for children and young people.

Culturally, there is both high quality and diverse opportunities. Louisville can improve its outreach by bringing more activities and events to those who are underserved. Louisville prides itself on its support for the arts and humanities. That could be equated to the old bottles of milk, where the cream was a top.

² Summers, William E., IV, Executive Vice President, Public Policy/Human Resources, Greater Louisville, Inc.

³ Morrin, Peter, Director, The Speed Art Museum.

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Peter Morrin, Director, The Speed Art Museum

But the broader communities, especially the children, are not being reached as they could -- and should. The gap between those who have the opportunity to use and enjoy cultural institutions and those who do not needs to be bridged. There are young people whose families have the resources to supplement their education, but many families do not have the resources.

Louisville is a very old city with different cultures. The African American Heritage Center and the Western Branch Library are and will be the primary institutions regarding the African American experience and culture in Louisville. There should be a strong partnership between the Heritage Center and the Western Library.

My experience with lifelong learning is that those 'things' brought to our attention are most likely to be lasting.

Joseph T. Tolan, President
Metro United Way

Good experiences can be a way to build a foundation for art and culture for the general population. The experiences need to be intentional, not passive. "My experience with lifelong learning is that those 'things' brought to our attention are most likely to be lasting."⁴ An example, the Gutenberg Bible exhibition and lectures, came last year at the downtown Library. That event also allowed people to experience a facility as a community facility, not just as a library with books and computers.

Expose children to art, beginning at elementary school level; better students will result. Architecture can assist. Look at Milwaukee and its new art museum. Kentucky nurtures its writers. There is a strong sense of self-identity here. A new Library could have poetry centers, local authors, etc. The issue is whether the Library and the Library Commission can do something that brings national recognition, which goes over the top. Something symbolic is of enormous importance.

There is a need to strive to create understanding of Louisville's diverse cultures. There is something new to be learned all the time about this broad community. The Heritage Festival, when it was in operation, was most helpful. There needs to be parity in the cultural and educational opportunities for all persons.

⁴ Tolan, Joseph T. President, Metro United Way.

The Library offers a great opportunity to lift up different aspects of culture. There is a need for both the dollars and the resources to make this happen.

Benjamin K. Richmond
President & CEO
Louisville Urban League

The Library's two cores are education and culture. "The Library offers a great opportunity to lift up different aspects of culture. There is a need for both the dollars and the resources to make this happen."⁵

Question 2 In your opinion, what should the priorities of the Louisville Free Public Library be over the next three to five years?

Response Key leaders identified three primary issues: **technology**, **funding**, and **governance and community involvement**. In addition, three more frequently mentioned priorities included **service for children**, **accessibility**, and **programming and exhibits**.

Interviewed leaders also identified **facilities**, **reading**, and **awareness of the library as a community asset**.

Many of the key leaders first stated that enhanced computer **technology** should be the number one priority of the Library. More access to computers will be a benefit and a draw. The technology side of the Library is good, relative to the dollars available. However, it could be better, i.e. more research available on the Library's website.

Technology is a vital service to teens and children and to those who either do not have a personal computer at home or need to use Library research resources but do not have a laptop.

In serving young people, the Library should step forward with increased efforts to help them become more technologically savvy so that they are prepared for the workplace of tomorrow. In serving clients who may or may not have a personal computer, it was pointed out that it is costly to remain current; many with computers at home are not really current.

There were several specific ideas presented on how to enhance technology. These included teaching and training the older population in computer basics, coupled with the improvement of overall computer accessibility, that is, more information available from the Library's computer network. Improved customer service must accompany technology improvements.

⁵ Richmond, Benjamin K. President & CEO, Louisville Urban League

*The Library has never had adequate **funding** in the 20 years I have lived here. A lot of citizens do not know about the inadequacy of the funding. This issue needs to be resolved once and for all.*

Cynthia L. Read, Director
Kentucky Institute for Family Literacy

The Library should be part of the team to help people become computer literate. However, there is a need to eliminate two common excuses of failure: That a person cannot get on the Internet due to lack of Internet availability, and that a person cannot do the needed research unless Internet accessibility is available. The answer to the first excuse is to increase Internet availability; the answer to the second is to teach persons how to do research without Internet.

There were also questions raised about the Library and the investment in technology. For instance, the computers in the Library are great and pull a large number of people to the Library, but they also take up a lot of space. There are also, of course, children without computers at home. However, to what degree is the provision of such a responsibility of the public library?

*Staying alive with the merged
government.*

Rebecca Jackson
Jefferson County Judge/Executive

With regard to **funding**, it will be difficult to fully realize its potential without a higher level of resources; a revenue stream needs to be found. "The Library has never had adequate **funding** in the 20 years I have lived here. A lot of citizens do not know about the inadequacy of the funding. This issue needs to be resolved once and for all."⁶

A tax base does not need to be large, but must move out of control by others in order to do long-range planning. The Library should not have to face the stress of living budget year to budget year. That is no way to build and maintain a quality Library. The present system has restricted what the Library can do and what the Library can become.

Concerning the twin issues of **governance and community involvement**, the priorities of the Library over the next few years will be to form a foundation of citizen groups with matching political skills that can assist as Louisville begins to change. The new **governance** structure that will come into being in very early 2003 was often mentioned. It will be most important that the Library find a place for itself

⁶ Read, Cynthia L. Director, Kentucky Institute for Family Literacy, and Chair, Kentucky Community and Technical College System Board.

in the merged government. How it defines itself will also be most important. As one leader stated: "Staying alive with the merged government"⁷ will need to be a major priority. The importance of the Library will depend upon how the new government responds to the needs of the Library; the actions taken by the new government will do much to impact the Library's vitality.

As for **community involvement**, the Library should help develop a connected learning community. It should form partnerships in many ways, including small ways. The Library should continue to be open to being partners with different agencies, e.g. Baby-Go-Round. As one example, the Library provides books for the waiting room, and replenishes those that are lost. There should be a strong partnership between the Library and public schools. It is not clear that the schools truly understand the role of the Library and the support the Library can provide.

The Library is currently a great resource for neighborhood meetings and meeting rooms. This service, however, could be enhanced. There should be more "issues" partnerships between the Library and other community organizations like the education forum co-sponsored by the Library and the League of Women Voters. "The Library certainly adds the identifiable quality of life factors to any neighborhood."⁸ Neighborhoods can help the Library, and the Library can help the neighborhoods.

The Library certainly adds the identifiable quality of life factors to any neighborhood.

Doug Lowry
Louisville Coalition of Neighborhoods

The Library needs to stay on the community involvement path it is now on. It can help preserve the cultural landscape. The Library is the institution that can and should represent ideas and public discussion. It represents the "free" aspect inasmuch as there are no fees associated with using the Library.

Accessibility as a priority means doing a better job of extending hours of service. There is a need for more regular hours, which should include longer hours. Branch library hours should be extended beyond the recent increase.

It was further stated that the Library should increase accessibility for everyone who needs access to technology, including classes. Knowing how to use technology is empowering. This should happen in every single neighborhood. The Library is central to lifelong learning. It is the place to go to broaden horizons.

⁷ Jackson, Rebecca, Jefferson County Judge/Executive.

⁸ Lowry, Doug. Louisville Coalition of Neighborhoods.

Creative and innovative **programming and exhibits** that demonstrates that the Library is more than a place to store books should also be a priority over the next three to five years. The Library should provide opportunities for networking, programs on the humanities, and neighborhood centers. This type of approach will broaden support for the needed financing. The special exhibits and programs now offered at the Main Library should be continued -- and they should be offered at the branch libraries.

In the minds of some of the leaders, the Library's priorities should be **service for children** who have no other access to appropriate reading material. This includes physical access and transportation access. There is a need for better access to computers for children.

In addition, the Library should focus on school readiness for young children. The bookmobile is viewed as a great service, providing access for those who will never go to buildings. It can help children break down barriers that now exist as far as going to buildings. Some who think the Library should prioritize service for children also think the Library should become better poised to serve older adults.

The last three priority groupings addressed by the key leaders included **awareness of the Library as a community asset, facilities, and reading.**

Now, the Library needs to increase the **awareness of the Library as a community asset** by striving to make people aware of how it can be of value to all and by how, more specifically, it can have a positive impact on the amenities of life for parents and their children. There is a need for more public relations now, which will lead to more awareness of the Library and its services. Finding ways to reach that part of the community that never darken the doors of the Library, like those who cannot read or dropouts, should be a goal of the Library.

As for **facilities**, in the last strategic plan attention was given to improving service in the county. There were no libraries in the county at that time. With the merged government it will become clearer that there are not enough libraries in (what will be) the "old county." More services are needed for those areas.

I like recreational reading. I am not sure the Library is doing as much to promote this as it could.

Jim Jenkins, Mayor
City of Shively

Last, but by no means least, **reading** was suggested as a priority over the next three to five years. To quote one leader: "I like recreational reading. I am not sure the Library is doing as much to promote this as it could."⁹

That leader is onto something: There is a danger of people not enjoying the act of reading. Therefore, the Library should be supportive of all literacy programs. The Library is already an integral partner in the effort to raise the educational attainment levels via such programs as the Summer Reading Program and families reading together. But the Library can always do more in the areas of literacy and recreational reading.

Question 3 What about the longer term, the next five to 10 years?

Response The responses from the key leaders regarding priorities five to 10 years into the future again focused on **technology, accessibility, facilities, community involvement,** and **funding**. In addition, the role the Library can play in improving **quality of life** for all residents was also emphasized.

The priorities over the next five to ten years should not result in that much change from those of the preceding five years (2003 - 2008). Education and literacy must be a goal for everyone. Literacy should continue to be a priority, as should school readiness. The Library always has a role to play in those two areas. The Library is an integral component of our democracy, the place where you can find information – which is power.

The Library needs to make people aware of how it can be of value to all. For example, the Library can have a positive impact on the **quality of life** for parents and their children. But many citizens do not view the Library that way. Every neighborhood has a different culture and history. The Library should both reflect the culture and history and create programs to help users know about and understand their culture and history. The Library can bring people together.

When the Library first started in a significant way with computers it was under funded in comparison with its peers, but still did a good job of moving into **technology**. Now, however, for people who have grown up with technology, it will be second nature to them. They will not be satisfied with what the Library now has in terms of hardware, software, and customer service. There will continue to be a need to increase the availability of computers and training.

Over the next five to 10 years the Library should continue with technology improvements, increase access to its website. Access is now "pretty" good, but there is a need for access to more books and other items. There should be remote access to information without the limitations that now exist. Options need to be provided that allow a user to choose to pay \$3.00 for the Library to send the user a book or magazine the user

⁹ Jenkins, Jim. Mayor, City of Shively.

wants to read electronically. Or, the user can get a print on paper copy at no cost if time is not critical.

Availability and **accessibility** in easy reach should continue to be a priority. The Library is the central place for information. Louisville is now, as is the world, a knowledge-based economy. Information is the key.

The Library must be able to adapt to change. It has to be able to change, as needs change, making sure it is capable of responding to the changing learning habits of the young – indeed – of people in general.

There is a need to maintain the decentralized system of libraries. The branch library **facilities** should be properly located and accessible for all economic classes. Branch libraries need to be more than repositories for books.

More space in the branch libraries is needed, whether via additional leased space or the building of new libraries. It should be noted that the maintenance and upkeep of owned buildings could have a negative impact on the annual operating budget of the Library.

The Library should keep strengthening the collections of library materials, including the branch library collections, while recognizing that space is a problem.

Louisville has a need for a state-of-the-art research facility that would include getting all Library collections (not only those of the public Library but of all libraries) online. The downtown Main Library needs more “presence.” It should be such a place that when a relative comes to spend a week, the downtown Library would be a must see during the week. Currently it is not such a place.

The Library can also be the 'convener of cultural dialogue,' a place where groups can meet, where people can learn, where they can become involved in the community, where the time and talent of people in general can be put to good use.

Virginia K. Judd
The Humana Foundation

Community involvement needs to increase so that the Library becomes a community center. Lifelong learning should be at the fore. It should be a technology center. It should also be an adjunct to educational endeavors.

The Library can also be the 'convener of cultural dialogue,' a place where groups can meet, where people can learn, where they can become

involved in the community, where the time and talent of people in general can be put to good use.

Choose a general direction in concrete terms, constantly building on the role of the Library as communicator. The Library is doing a very good job now. There is more interest in the Library than ever before within the community. A real partnership spirit has developed within the community, a spirit that is a valuable form of leadership.

If the **funding** is secure, thus ensuring the ability to upgrade technology that is accessible for everyone, then the public Library can become a true cultural center. There is a need to invest more in the “fun of reading.” A decision has to be made by the community to put dollars into the Library. The dollars have to be available.

Question 4 The Louisville Free Public Library is quite deficient – according to the standards of the Commonwealth – in terms of both library materials and library space. If the deficiencies are not corrected there is a probably loss of state aid. Do you believe the general public would be supportive of a plan to address these problems?

Response For the Library to get its own tax base it will take a campaign that is tied to educational attainment issues and economic development. Just providing more books will not do the job. There are now too many other places that a person can get the books he/she wishes to read: church libraries, school libraries, bookstores, online merchants. In the minds of citizens, increasing taxes for more books is not a priority.

A campaign is needed. If presented as a need that will benefit the greater good, the campaign will succeed. For the campaign to succeed, the community will need to properly educated.

The demographics of the neighborhoods need to be understood, the best possible job with present funding needs to be demonstrated.
Brian K. Newman, Fern Creek Chamber of Commerce and Business Association

In many ways the public library is as important as K-12, but people need to be made aware of its importance. Louisville either has to spend to educate and inform, or re-prioritize. A case must be made. "The demographics of the neighborhoods need to be understood, the best possible job with present funding needs to be demonstrated."¹⁰

¹⁰ Newman, Brian K. Fern Creek Chamber of Commerce and Business Association.

Upkeep (maintenance) of the branch library buildings is also important. In the past, when budgets have been reduced, maintenance has suffered, which has turned people away. A poorly maintained building is an unpleasant environment.

Continuing with the question, key leaders indicated a successful effort will require a combination of providing good service every day along with a campaign. A campaign in and of itself will not do the job.

The Library must continue the effective programming it started two to three years ago. What is done in the branch libraries is really important. All of the focus cannot be on the downtown library. A big selling job will be needed, like any political campaign.

The Library is really a community resource. The sense of “necessity” is stronger if it is in partnership with other organizations. *Success By Six* is an example of effective partnering. It involves the public, private, and non-public sectors. It addresses the needs of pre-school age children. It is a needed program because early brain development is so important. Studies show that a young child spends more time in day care than in grades K-8. The Library needs to continue to look for those kinds of opportunities.

The responses of the key leaders also addressed the Library's place in the soon to be installed "merged government" and the feasibility (need in the minds of some) for the Library to have its own tax base.

Merged government passed as a result of the Mayor and every living former Mayor and the County Judge and every living former County Judge uniting. Key business leaders spoke strongly about the importance for the city and themselves. Plus, a lot of community people were supportive. That kind of effort will be needed for the Library. Getting additional dollars for the Library will be harder than the passing of the merged government initiative because the people will be asked to pay for it via added taxes. It may be a three to four year process before the merged government will be ready to turn its attention to the needs of the Library. There are now more needs than there are dollars to pay for them. Louisville's tax base is low compared to other cities of similar size.

People in general do not think of the Library as being part of government. It is, of course, but most do not think of it that way. The challenges Louisville faces as a community is finding ways to increase citizen engagement in and with their community.

There is also a need for a Library Board that is in charge of its own destiny. Now, there is a very paralyzed structure. The Board must have oversight and responsibility for Library financing.

Question 5 The Main Library is comprised of two buildings joined together, in a manner of speaking, at the “hip.” The South Building will be 100 years

old in four years; the North Building was opened in 1969. In the opinion of the consultants, the complex is now much smaller than is needed, is not very functional, especially when it comes to technology, and is incapable of being expanded in a manner that would address long-term space needs. One solution is a totally new building. A second option is to renovate and expand the existing complex. A third option that has been explored is to renovate the South Building, remove the North Building, and build a new addition to the South Building. What are your thoughts about how to best expand the Main Library for Louisville?

Response The key leaders were, for the most part, supportive of the need for an expanded Main Library for Louisville. There were several different scenarios mentioned. The leaders were also of the opinion, in most instances, that the public would be supportive of a plan to provide more Main Library space. The community would rally behind a plan if it responds to the needs of community, especially if the structure is a focused community place. It was also pointed out that the Library is landlocked at its present location and that parking is an issue.

The community must be convinced that the Main Library is something more than just a bigger branch library. There has to be a special reason to make the trip from the suburbs to downtown to a main library. It will be a hard sell.

The incoming Mayor and Council are pledged to revitalize downtown. This will cost millions upon millions of dollars. Thus, the Main Library needs to be in the central core of the city. Everyone needs to know where the “heart” of the city is – and it is downtown.

Downtown is coming back to life. One of the groups returning to the center city are older persons, those who no longer want to drive to the things they want to do. They want to be able to walk to restaurants, plays, concerts, and the library. They also want to be closer to health care facilities.

Young professionals also want to live and work downtown. These are often enterprising people who use the library for their research as they try to develop new products or services in their “spare” time away from their jobs.

There should be a new Main Library. It might be on the same site (give the 1906 Building to Spaulding University, or Spaulding might be in a position to buy it in a year or two), could be closer to the University of Louisville, or perhaps along the riverfront. There could be a very exciting; dramatic type of building built above the roadway/other developments that would stretch along the waterfront.

However, there were also expressions that there are a lot of people who never go downtown. Perhaps Louisville could have “sub-main libraries,” one in east and one in south. That is where growth is taking place. The idea is to take some of the pressure off the downtown library by renovating the present building and constructing the “sub-main” buildings.

"There should be a new Main Library. It might be on the same site (give the 1906 Building to Spaulding University, or Spaulding might be in a position to buy it in a year or two), could be closer to the University of Louisville, or perhaps along the riverfront. There could be a very exciting; dramatic type of building built above the roadway/other developments that would stretch along the waterfront."¹¹ The community might perceive the South Building becoming a part of the University as a real asset for the community.

What to do with the 1906 South Building generated some thoughts. There is a perceived responsibility to maintain what those in the past struggled so hard to achieve with that building. The building is, in the eyes of some, inspirational. Since the public library is often thought of in historic terms, then a plan that would renovate the old (South) building and have a “historic looking” new addition would probably be best received. And, while the opinion was expressed that preservation forces have diminished over recent years, there would be great resistance to tearing down the old building.

With regard to the 1969 North Building if it is necessary to tear it down, then tear it down and put a bigger and better building in its place. The North Building, for some, has always felt different, not having the "right flow." People will buy it if sold correctly. If the present Main Library complex cannot be "fixed," then an all-new Main Library should be built on an accessible location. To have a real downtown presence the Main Library needs to be within an area bounded by Broadway, Main, 1st, and 6th streets. Now, it is a block off that, which is not bad – but not as good as being within those boundaries.

Other comments regarding Louisville and its Main Library included:

The Main Library can do and be something that no amount of branch libraries can do or be. The quantum change we are seeking is not possible without a first rate Main Library.

Michael B. Grittonn
Interim Executive Director, KentuckianaWorks

¹¹ Armstrong, David L. Mayor, City of Louisville.

- Perhaps put the Main Library in a renovated existing historic building downtown, or an all-new structure along the riverfront
- The Main Library must be more of a community place, and place for meetings, etc. A remodeled library could mean an all-new building. That needs to be studied. A new building might be more cost effective
- Cannot move the Main Library to suburbs
- Government has a history of not planning and building far enough into the future. Any Library building project should build for 25 years from now, not five years. Build a 10-story library building, with some of the floors not in use until they are needed. Long-term, this would be a more cost-effective way to address space needs.
- Downtown is the location. And, build parking.

In summary, it was the opinion of the most of the key leaders that Louisville needs a Main Library building that inspires one to learn, like the Boston Public Library and its great reading room, Bates Hall. A world-class city needs world class institutions. Louisville should strive for the best Library system in the world, and it can have such a Library system if the resources are provided. "The Main Library can do and be something that no amount of branch libraries can do or be. The quantum change we are seeking is not possible without a first rate Main Library."¹²

Question 6 There are now 16 branch libraries in Louisville. The space deficiency we mentioned earlier applies to the branch libraries. If more books and other services are added to the branch libraries there will need to be a combination of new buildings as well as renovation/expansion of existing facilities. Many of the buildings, new or renovated/expanded, will need to be larger than what now exists. The branch libraries, wherever they are located, could be planned as community or neighborhood anchors, defining communities and neighborhoods, supporting activities in the communities and neighborhoods they serve. What are your thoughts about branch libraries for Louisville?

Response Unlike the Main Library, there was less consensus expressed by the key leaders on the matter of the need for additional branch libraries. Like the Main Library and the other issues that will -- in all likelihood -- require additional tax monies, it was the general opinion of those interviewed that it will be an uphill battle for additional taxes. Portions of the community would support a branch library improvement program. Louisville is a diverse community with diverse needs. There are not enough resources to do all that needs to be done. Therefore, Louisville has to grow a generation of children who look at the public library as a pleasant place to be.

How do you determine the need? As long as current users

¹² Gritton, Michael B. Interim Executive Director, KentuckianaWorks.

are satisfied it will be difficult to motivate them differently.

Sherman Kline, City Councilperson
City of Jeffersontown

There will be support for branch library improvements. However, there is always a small faction that is against progress. They can be loud, and people will listen to them.

One leader asked: "How do you determine the need? As long as current users are satisfied it will be difficult to motivate them differently."¹³ Louisville has historically been unwilling to raise taxes for the Library or to get the governing bodies to allocate enough funds to the Library. A referendum is a hard road.

There was one among the key leaders who favor smaller libraries rather than fewer larger ones because of transportation issues. The fastest growing segment of population in Louisville is 85+. The age group 65+ is right behind it. These persons, coupled with the very young and those who cannot afford to drive, need and deserve access to the Library just as others do. Therefore, Louisville needs to think about how the Library can best serve those without personal transportation. Libraries should therefore be located along transit routes. Transportation is a key issue. Public transportation accessibility is important.

Re-visit where the libraries are located. In order to garner public support, the libraries have to be visible and accessible. We need to study the changing patterns of our community. The branch libraries need to be located where they are accessible by mass transit. Neighborhoods need libraries.

Dolores Delahanty, "B" District Commissioner
Jefferson County

"Re-visit where the libraries are located. In order to garner public support, the libraries have to be visible and accessible. We need to study the changing patterns of our community. The branch libraries need to be located where they are accessible by mass transit. Neighborhoods need libraries."¹⁴ Every neighborhood needs a library building, not in shopping centers as part of a shopping complex. People want to be proud of their library and that cannot happen in a shopping center.

The branch libraries must be for the neighborhoods; neighborhoods could revolve around branch libraries, bringing about a sense of place. "We do

¹³ Kline, Sherman. City Councilman, City of Jeffersontown.

¹⁴ Delahanty, Dolores. "B" District Commissioner, Jefferson County.

better when we have places that feel like villages. The public library is a very important part of such a fabric.”¹⁵

Those leaders favoring branch library improvements indicated that such improvements are needed first, before the Main Library issue is addressed. Library service, on a per capita basis, is less in the county than the city. It was thought that the eastern part of the county is probably more poorly served because there has been greater growth there.

We do better when we have places that feel like villages. The public library is a very important part of such a fabric.

Nathalie Andrews,
Executive Director,
Portland Museum

The new branch libraries should not all be alike, no “cookie cutter” approach. Branch libraries should respond to the needs of the community where they are located. Different communities go about learning differently. “I believe a better feeling results if the branch libraries are independent, free-standing buildings rather than being part of a larger complex, such as a shopping center.”¹⁶

I believe a better feeling results if the branch libraries are independent, freestanding buildings rather than being part of a larger complex, such as a shopping center.

Martin L. Bell, Deputy to Superintendent
Jefferson County Public Schools

Not everyone agrees that freestanding buildings are best. Standalone buildings take up green space. It may be better to have branch libraries in strip shopping centers and malls. When the County Clerk offices were located in strip shopping centers they were used more than those in government center facilities. People want to be able to combine errands when they are out and about.

The leaders who question the need for more branch libraries were not questioning the need for improved library service. Rather, there may not be a need for 16 (or more) branch libraries. Perhaps there are other ways to dispense information. More access to more databases rather

¹⁵ Andrews, Nathalie. Executive Director, Portland Museum.

¹⁶ Bell, Martin L. Deputy to Superintendent, Community Development and Government Relations, Jefferson County Public Schools.

than more books may be a better approach. In addition, for the future there will likely be a greater need for non-traditional types of branch libraries. But, since Louisville does have aging communities they may be best served with traditional libraries. And, to supplement the branch libraries, there should be a strong outreach program, including bookmobile service that reaches into the heart of neighborhoods.

People from all over the area use the Library here (St. Matthews-Eline), and the staff does an excellent job of providing service. We need a regional library.

Arthur Draut
Mayor, City of St. Matthews

There were also comments about specific areas of the city and/or existing branch libraries. These included:

- "People from all over the area use the Library here (St. Matthews-Eline), and the staff does an excellent job of providing service. We need a regional library"¹⁷
- Those library buildings in this area (West Louisville) are nice, but they are not user friendly, not very handicap accessible. The buildings were built in a much different time; mobility was different, etc. The existing branch libraries now in the area could be put to other uses.
- There needs to be a first rate branch library in that part of the city, located on West Broadway.
- There is a need for quiet places that the public can enjoy. The Crescent Hill Library has a nice reading room. It could be a model for others.
- Find an area in Shively for a library twice the size of current facility.

Question 7 Are there other matters you would like to express regarding public Library service in Louisville?

Response The responses to the last question primarily focused again on **funding** and **governance**. More than one leader mentioned **community involvement**. There were also many expressions of praise for the Library. It is perceived by most of the leaders as being on the right path.

Improvements should be viewed and approached as meeting a long-term need, as an investment in the community, as an investment in the children of Louisville.

Polly L. Meyer, Administrator
South Jefferson Neighborhood Place

¹⁷ Draut, Arthur. Mayor, City of St. Matthews.

On the matter of **funding**, Louisville needs to find the right way to get the Library the funding it needs. Funding must be put into the political context. Public officials must be shown that it is viable to support the public Library. "Improvements should be viewed and approached as meeting a long-term need, as an investment in the community, as an investment in the children of Louisville."¹⁸ The Library is a community asset; there is no doubt about that. Sell the vision to the people. There is a core of good support, but (so far) not yet 50 percent of the people.

"The Library is burdened by lack of space, books, staff, and low pay for staff."¹⁹ Louisville must put more money into it. It is most important to keep investing in the core city. There is a need for a serious look at a bond issue to do all capital projects. Some of the leaders believe there will be a need for the private sector to assist with improved funding for the Library. There never seems to be, however, a good time for a fund raising campaign.

*The Library is
burdened by lack of
space, books, staff,
and low pay for staff.*

Mason C. Rudd
The Library Foundation

Concerning **governance**, most of the comments revolved around the new merged government. Louisville is entering a very important time with the new merged government. There will be only one citywide elected official. The new government will not succeed if it "Balkanizes;" with trade offs made – you do for me and I will do for you.

Louisville is facing four years of challenges with the new merged government. Support for the libraries must be on the radar screen of the Mayor and the Council members. The Library needs a "champion," an elected official who will take the lead in securing the financing necessary to bring our system to where it should be.

Governance of the Library is not good at this time. It needs a real board. A tax base, such as a library district, would establish such a board.

The key leaders viewed the Library's success with **community involvement** in different ways. The Bingham Fellows program has conducted a series of appreciative interviews. The Library was seldom mentioned, if at all. The Louisville Slugger Museum was often mentioned; the Main Street Arts was mentioned some of the time. The point is that

¹⁸ Meyer, Polly L. Administrator, South Jefferson Neighborhood Place.

¹⁹ Rudd, Mason. Chairman, The Library Foundation.

Library visibility, although improving, is still not as high as it could or should be.

There is still room for the Library to be perceived as a trusted voice in the community. Research is needed. How does the Library compare with other institutions in the community in terms of trust? The Library will have to conduct such research in order to validate what it is doing and is planning to do.²⁰

Having such cultural events as The Gutenberg Press and the Declaration of Independence are real plusses for the community. Using the Library for these types of activities is excellent. They have raised the awareness of the Library in the eyes of the public. The Library is doing an outstanding job with the dollars it has. It should also have more cooperative programs with the park department. Have libraries that are more like the better bookstores, coffee shops, etc.

The Library is doing a great job with what it has to work with now. It is not wasting available resources; it is maximizing what the people get with what they are paying for. With better funding, there is no telling what it could do for the Louisville community. But, it must manifest itself outside its four walls. It has to do more than just selling the Library.

In conclusion, a strong Library system is viewed as being the front door, the gateway, for all to the halls of knowledge.

²⁰ There was a community survey completed last year that indicated that the Louisville Free Public Library was held in high regard by most of those persons who participated in the survey.