

Amesbury Public Library Unveils Conditions Assessment and Facilities Master Plan to Guide and Prioritize Maintenance Needs and Enhance Community Access

AMESBURY, MA – November 20, 2024 – The Amesbury Public Library is excited to announce the release of its comprehensive Conditions Assessment and Facilities Master Plan (FMP), a blueprint for the Library's future. The Library Board of Trustees put out an RFQ to start addressing long-standing facility issues and through that process contracted Bruner/Cott Architects. As part of this project, a strategic group was formed composed of Library staff, Library Board members, and community experts. The plan, which has been months in the making, is the first step to improve accessibility, stabilize the building, and preserve historical features.

The Amesbury Public Library (APL) was designed by Penn Varney and constructed in 1900 of brick and stone, in the Romanesque Revival style. The 11,000-square-foot building has had one major interior renovation since its construction in 1900. A National Register nomination application is currently being prepared by Heritage Consulting Group.

The Library leadership, in coordination with the Department of Public Works, determined that a comprehensive assessment was warranted to understand the challenges and opportunities in the existing public library building and create a roadmap for facility management moving forward to ensure our building remains a safe, accessible, and inspiring space for all patrons.

In 2019, the Library Board of Trustees Preservation Subcommittee began to understand the overarching preservation and conservation concerns of the historic building, and concluded, in consultation with Amesbury Historical Commission, that efforts needed to begin in earnest to ensure historically significant features of the original building weren't compromised or lost forever. Additionally, ongoing day-to-day programmatic and operational challenges identified by Library staff during their work, combined with a comprehensive strategic planning process completed in 2022, established that community needs cannot be met in the current facility as it is configured today.

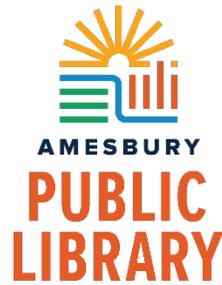
Roughly 35,000 people visit the Library each year, and about 5,300 residents have an active library card.

The FMP provides an in-depth conditions assessment and outlines a detailed approach to addressing the Library's immediate, short-term, and long-term building needs; improving accessibility; expanding services; and creating a more welcoming environment for all visitors while ensuring preservation of this historical building. The plan includes a framework for prioritizing necessary updates, as well as several potential options for future visioning.

Key elements of the plan include:

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- A **Conditions Assessment** covering architecture, code, accessibility, and other key building elements that must be addressed for the Library's future.
- A section looking at the **Library as a Community Asset** to help envision a future for Amesbury's library, based on interviews with community members, Library staff, and City officials
- A **Future Strategies** section evaluating the current and future needs of a growing community, with concept floor plans for four potential options for future expansion to improve accessibility and add programming and community space.
- A **Prioritized Treatment Plan** outlining the high-priority needs of the building, broken down into four categories: ASAP, immediate, short-term, and long-term.

"In my time as Director, accessibility and building maintenance have been a priority. Working in this building every day I see the challenges both for the public and the staff. The FMP provides us with a practical path forward to alleviate these challenges," said **Aimie Westphal, Director of the Amesbury Public Library**. "I am passionate about maintaining this beautiful historic building and making it possible for truly all to enjoy. We have a lot of work to do, but we are on the road and excited about the future."

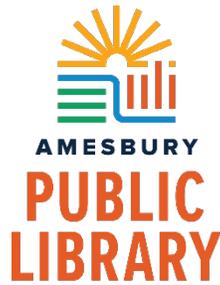
The development of the FMP involved extensive community input. Bruner/Cott solicited feedback from Library staff, City officials, and citizens. A vision session was held for the strategic group on May 15, 2024. A public forum was held on June 18, 2024, and 51 people attended. A passive survey was made available to youth 0-18 in the Library June-July 2024 where participants were encouraged to draw their ideal library.

"As an architect and Amesbury resident for the past 15 years, I have wanted to become involved in the preservation of our Library," said **Rachel Harris**, who participated on the strategic group that assisted with the FMP process. "From helping to creating the request, to interviewing architecture firms, and finally participating with Bruner/Cott as they developed the Facilities Master Plan, I've had a wonderful experience working with many members of the Library staff and Board of Trustees. I think the Facilities Master Plan is a thorough and vital document that will carry the Library forward, in the immediate future, in the years to come as needed for both future planning and preservation, and as a snapshot of the Library's history."

"As a member of the initial selection committee for the study, I'm encouraged by the deliberate and thorough effort of Library staff and Board of Trustees in completing this Facilities Master Plan and Conditions Assessment," said **Nicholas Cracknell, Director of the Amesbury Office of Community and Economic Development**. "The report identifies immediate, mid-, and long-term goals to stabilize this treasured community asset in a financially prudent way. Bruner/Cott Architects has laid out a realistic and achievable plan that couples efforts to both stabilize and modernize this historic structure with prioritizing accessibility into and around the building. The Public Library is one of our key anchors in downtown Amesbury, and we are excited to continue

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to work with the Library Board to ensure our Public Library and its surrounding context continues as a thriving community resource for years to come.”

Amesbury residents are invited to view the Facilities Master Plan on the Amesbury Public Library’s at <https://amesburylibrary.org/fmp>.

“The Amesbury Public Library is one of our public buildings that is most often visited by members of the community,” said **Mayor Cassandra Gove**. “Having a comprehensive assessment and plan for ensuring continued stewardship of this historic building in a way that meets the community’s needs is long overdue. I want to thank the Trustees for taking this important step forward and sharing our vision of a Library that is accessible to all. I look forward to working with all stakeholders as we advance with investments to the building.”

“On behalf of the Amesbury Public Library Board of Trustees, I am pleased to have completed this step in the APL’s Conditions Assessment and the development of the Facilities Master Plan,” added **Jessica Ducrow, Chair of the Amesbury Public Library Board of Trustees**. “As stewards of the building, it is crucial to have a realistic plan to address the impacts of long-deferred maintenance and envision our beloved Library as a vibrant community center that is utilized and accessible to all that wish to enter.”

The Amesbury Public Library encourages all community members to stay informed about the progress of the Facilities Master Plan through its website and social media channels. For more information, please visit www.amesburylibrary.org, contact the Library at (978) 388-8148, or email the Library Board of Trustees at librarytrustees@amesburyma.gov.

About Amesbury Public Library

The Amesbury Public Library, under the authority of its Board of Trustees, provides safe space for lifelong exploration and learning, public understanding, freedom of expression, experiencing beauty, and wonder through the best possible resources, facilities, and services for our community.

Media Contacts:

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