

Background:

An expanded, downtown library was established as a critical priority by the Crozet master planning process. Based on their input into the master planning process, citizens strongly preferred to place the new library in the heart of downtown to provide a focal point for community activity and expanded opportunities for economic vitality for existing and new downtown businesses.

As have been demonstrated in other communities, today's public libraries are more than technology centers, book repositories, quiet reading spaces, coffee shops or busy community centers, they also generate significant dollars for their local economies. The specific benefits expected from a downtown library in Crozet are 1) reduced car trips, 2) integrated (not segregated) development, 3) the neighborhood model form of development, 4) create more opportunity for community interaction, 5) generate more customers for nearby local businesses, and 6) promote pedestrian safety and access.

As part of the initial phase of the project, 13 sites were identified and evaluated on a number of criteria. Those criteria included the strong community preferences established by the master plan; operational requirements specified by the Jefferson-Madison Library Director, Crozet Library Branch Manager, and JMR Library Board; objective evaluations conducted by independent consultants regarding transportation impacts and economic opportunities; and successful best practices for library projects in other communities.

Current Status of the Library Project:

Currently the project is being envisioned as two-story building with ample, dedicated library user parking – some recent examples of downtown libraries include Hopewell, VA; Princeton, NJ; Frostburg, MD and Rockville, MD. To see background on the Rockville library project, visit <http://www.rockvillemd.gov/towncenter/library.htm>.

Next Steps:

With the help of the JMR Library Board, the County is investigating the financial feasibility of the most viable sites and will next hold a community forum to share findings of the preliminary feasibility study as well as discuss the options and benefits of each site.

Highlights

Citizen input into the Master Plan called for a downtown library

Downtown libraries are focal points for activity and economic vitality

13 potential Crozet sites have been evaluated by independent consultants

The most viable sites are being examined for financial feasibility

Citizens will be engaged in critical elements of the library project as it moves forward

Community Involvement Opportunities:

Because of the critical nature of the library as a community focal point and activity center, citizens need to be engaged in the project to ensure its success. There is currently a Building Advisory Committee composed of 35 community members that is working closely with county staff to identify the most important elements of the building design. There will be a number of opportunities for citizen involvement as the project progresses, including:

- Input on building features, amenities and programming needs
- Creating local business partnerships to support library activities
- Fundraising and volunteer support such as creating a Friends of the Library program

Who to Contact:

The Albemarle County staff contact for the library project is Susan Stimart, Business Development Facilitator, who can be reached at (434)296-5832 or by email at sstimart@albemarle.org.



Hopewell, VA



Frostburg, MD