

Hales Corners Library (Hales Corners, Wisconsin)

Facility Study – Summary Report

February 2, 2018

Himmel & Wilson, Library Consultants

PROJECT INCLUDED

- Review of background statistical data for Hales Corners and other public libraries in Milwaukee County
- Review of background demographic data
- Staff focus groups
- Staff interviews
- Focus Groups with the public (5 sessions – 40 attendees)
- Web Survey – 217 responses
- Paper Survey – 31 responses
- Three meetings with the Library Board

BASIC FACTS

- The Hales Corners Library is established under Chapter 43 of Wisconsin State Statutes as a “municipal” library and serves a population of approximately 7,700
- Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) municipal population projections show modest population growth. DOA projects the Village population to be 8,170 (an increase of fewer than 500 people) by the year 2040.
- The Hales Corners Library’s primary service population is somewhat older, more highly educated, and more affluent than national norms.
- Participation in the Milwaukee County Federated Library System means that residents of Hales Corners have legal access to all other public libraries in Milwaukee County. Residents of Hales Corners make use of several other public library facilities including Franklin, Greenfield, Greendale, Milwaukee, Wauwatosa, and West Allis as well additional libraries in Waukesha County. In some cases, these libraries are in closer proximity to the homes of Hales Corners’ residents than to the Hales Corners Library itself.
- The Hales Corners Library occupies approximately 7,500 square feet (SF) of space on the main floor of a 13,500 SF building that also houses community health services and a local historical society. Not included in the 7,500 SF reported as library space are the 1,500 SF Hunt Room and mechanical and storage space that is primarily used for library purposes.

- The library facility's size translates into approximately 0.96 SF per capita. While there is no national or Wisconsin square feet per capita standard for public library buildings, minimum standards promulgated by other states in recent decades have ranged between 0.5 SF/capita (West Virginia) and 1.0 SF/capita (Delaware). "Rules of thumb" applied by library planners as minimums generally increased (from about 0.75 SF per capita to about 1.25 SF per capita between the 1980s and early 2000s) as more computer workstations and additional formats of materials such as audio books and videotapes/DVDs were added. In recent years, library space planning ratios have started to decline slightly as use of handheld devices on library Wi-Fi networks has started to supplant the use of wired computer workstations and as estimates of the space needed for physical media items (DVDs, Books on CD, etc.) has started to fall. This has been balanced somewhat by an increase in the provision of public meeting spaces (group study rooms, conference rooms, etc.). The Hales Corners Library's ratio between population and library square footage is in the middle ground among libraries in Milwaukee County if individual Milwaukee Public Library branches are excluded. Overall, square footage per capita of public libraries in Milwaukee County (excluding the Milwaukee Public Library and its branches) is 1.12 SF/capita.
- The Hales Corners Library utilizes space on two separate levels in spite of the fact that the building lacks an elevator. Although at grade access is available on both levels, the connection between the library proper on the upper level and the meeting room facility on the lower level is lost.
- The Hales Corners facility houses a collection of materials that was reported to consist of more than 50,000 (51,859 in 2016, which is the most recent year for which certified comparative data is available for all Milwaukee County Public libraries). Again, there is no specific national or Wisconsin standard for volumes per capita; however, a standard of 3 volumes per capita has been promulgated by a number of states and is often employed as a rule of thumb by library planners. The Hales Corners' volumes per capita ratio is approximately 6.70. This places the library among the highest of Milwaukee County libraries on this measure (Cudahy, Shorewood and St. Francis are the only three Milwaukee County public libraries with higher volumes per capita ratios).

Hales Corners Library Community Demographics

	2000 U.S. Census	2010 U.S. Census	2011 - 2015 American Community Survey (ACS)	2016 U.S. Census Estimate	Percentage Under 5 Years of Age (2011 - 2015 ACS)	Percentage 65 Years of Age and Over (2011 - 2015 ACS)	Median Age (2011 - 2015 ACS)	Median Household Income (2011 - 2015 ACS)	Mean Household Income (2011 - 2015 ACS)	Percentage Bachelor's Degree or Higher Age 25 and Over (2011 - 2015 ACS)
Hales Corners	7,765	7,692	7,756	7,674	5.8%	17.3%	46.3	\$69,086	\$89,849	38.9%
United States	281,421,906	308,745,538	316,515,021	323,127,513	6.3%	14.1%	37.6	\$53,889	\$75,558	18.5%

Hales Corners Library
Service/Facility Measures

Community	Service Population	Collection Size	Volumes per Capita	Facility Size in Square Feet	Square Feet per Capita	Volumes per Square Foot	Circulation	Turnover Rate
Brown Deer	12,325	77,431	6.45	15,000	1.22	5.30	174,470	2.20
Cudahy	18,241	133,817	7.80	30,000	1.64	4.74	290,353	2.04
Franklin	35,746	129,063	3.74	40,000	1.12	3.34	439,962	3.29
Greendale	14,144	64,880	3.18	13,600	0.96	4.67	212,610	3.35
Greenfield	36,452	97,359	2.82	36,000	0.99	2.86	266,075	2.59
Hales Corners	7,739	51,859	6.70	7,438	0.96	6.97	126,377	2.44
Milwaukee	595,599	2,323,777	3.90	457,919	0.77	5.07	2,412,781	1.04
North Shore	25,347	80,563	3.18	16,160	0.64	4.99	248,853	3.09
Oak Creek	35,213	81,832	2.32	41,847	1.19	1.96	288,866	3.53
Shorewood	13,153	96,482	7.34	21,000	1.60	4.59	320,337	3.32
South Milwaukee	21,081	103,581	4.91	27,482	1.30	3.77	158,265	1.53
St. Francis	9,458	65,729	6.95	26,648	2.82	2.47	127,551	1.94
Wauwatosa	47,228	210,444	4.46	52,000	1.10	4.05	770,631	3.66
West Allis	63,923	231,533	3.62	47,000	0.74	4.93	620,055	2.68
Whitefish Bay	14,236	83,321	5.85	24,000	1.69	3.47	326,304	3.92

FINDINGS:

Survey Summary

A web-based survey was conducted between May 17 and June 12, 2017. An abbreviated paper version of the survey was also available for those preferring to respond offline.

A total of 248 survey responses were received. Of these, 217 were submitted online and 31 responses were received to the slightly shorter paper version of the survey that contained a subset of the questions asked in the web version of the survey. More than eighty-five percent (86.64%) of survey respondents indicated that they had visited the Hales Corners Library during the preceding six-month period of time.

Because participation in the survey was voluntary and open to all, responses are skewed toward those in the community who are inclined to be interested in the library. The sample must be considered as a self-selected sample and, therefore, results should not be generalized to the entire population; however, the number of responses received can be considered as generally reflective of real, valid opinions (especially from individuals in the community who already use the library).

Over more than a decade, Himmel & Wilson has used a standard question with libraries throughout the United States (with nearly 100 public libraries) to test the overall strength of community feelings toward their libraries. Survey takers have been asked to complete the phrase “The library is…” with one of six responses:

- essential to the quality of life in my community
- very important to the quality of life in my community
- important to the quality of life in my community
- neither important nor unimportant to the quality of life in my community
- not very important to the quality of life in my community
- not at all important to the quality of life in my community

As is typical in other communities, the public is generally supportive of libraries. A scientifically valid national survey conducted by the Pew Research organization in 2013 found that 90% of Americans ages 16 and older said that the closing of their local public library would have an impact on their community, with 63% saying it would have a “major” impact. Asked about the personal impact of a public library closing, two-thirds (67%) of Americans said it would affect them and their families, including 29% who said it would have a major impact.

Although the Pew survey asked the question in a slightly different way, the Hales Corners survey and the Pew survey generally show that people value their public libraries. Almost eighty-five percent (84.26%) of respondents to the Hales Corners survey said that the public library was either essential or very important to the quality of life in the community. Adding the “important to the quality of life” response takes the total to over ninety-five percent (96.76%). Of Hales Corners survey respondents, only

six individuals said the library was neither important nor unimportant and only one person opined that the library was not very important. No one offered that the library was “not at all important to quality of life.” An interesting point of reference is that a survey conducted in November 2017 for the North Shore Library in Glendale using an identical question yielded a combined response (essential and very important) of 84.7% compared to Hales Corners’ 84.26%. The difference between the two libraries is not statistically significant.

While one must remember that responses heavily reflect individuals with an interest in the library, the Pew study and scientifically valid mail surveys conducted by Himmel & Wilson in the past show that people continue to place a high value on their public libraries. A comparison of Hales Corners responses to other communities that Himmel & Wilson has conducted recently shows a solid, but moderate level of support. The lowest percentage of the combined “essential to the quality of life” and “very important to the quality of life” that Himmel & Wilson has seen in recent years was 58.1%. The highest combined percentage was 94.3%. Hales Corners’ 84.26% reflects solid, but moderate support.

One somewhat unique factor that comes into play with the Hales Corners Library is the fact that membership in the Milwaukee County Federated Library System enables the public to use multiple other public libraries in the area without charge. A very large percentage of Hales Corners residents take advantage of this privilege. More than half (54.35%) of those responding to the survey said that they use another library or libraries in the area. Almost a quarter (23.88%) of these respondents cited the Franklin Library as the other library they used. An additional 7.46% said they used both the Hales Corners and Greenfield libraries and another 7.46% said they use Hales Corners, Franklin AND Greenfield. Other libraries mentioned include Brookfield, Milwaukee, Muskego, New Berlin, Wauwatosa, and West Allis. Responses to other survey questions including “What is the main reason or reasons that you use other libraries in the area?” show that some of Hales Corners overall moderate level of support is probably due to the fact that people compare the Hales Corners Library to newer facilities. Almost a third (32.3%) of those who said that they use other libraries indicated “a newer or nicer facility” was a primary reason for their decision. The newer/nicer facility response outweighed all other factors. The next highest ranked factor (16.9%) was that other libraries offer “more seating options” such as quiet study space, comfortable seating and group study spaces.” The only other factor breaking through into double digits at 10.80% was that the other library was “closer to home.”

Following are a few general observations of the survey results.

- The survey reveals a public that is generally satisfied with its library and the services offered.
- There is little or no evidence that the public wants or would support a new free-standing library.
- Overall, survey responses suggest a desire for a better, albeit, quite traditional library.

- Heavy usage of other area libraries reveals some of the shortcomings of the existing library including the fact that the building is showing its age, is perceived to have less than adequate space for children’s services, lacks adequate seating options, lacks elevator access to the main meeting facility, and lacks a variety of community meeting space options such as group study space and tutoring space.
- There is some desire to better utilize outdoor spaces for library purposes. Ideas include an outdoor seating area/café, greater transparency of the building on the prairie side of the facility to allow view of the prairie from the main reading room and views into the exterior of the library from the road.

Focus Group Summary

Five public focus groups were conducted in April 2017. A total of 40 individuals attended the sessions. Several of the sessions concentrated on gaining insights from specific segments of the community (businesses, teens, senior citizens). The other sessions were composed of general library users.

For the most part, input from focus group participants was similar to the responses received through the surveys. There was general satisfaction with the library and its services and little indication that there was a desire for or willingness to support a new free-standing facility or a considerable expansion. Like survey respondents, focus group participants felt that adding an elevator was essential. However, unlike survey respondents, the focus group participants showed greater interest in a modest expansion of the building that would enable the library to play a more prominent role as a center of community life. Like survey respondents, focus group participants wanted additional seating and meeting spaces. However, a good number of individuals also expressed interest in the library providing creative spaces that the community could use. In particular, a “maker space” area appropriate for pursuing arts, crafts, and cultural activities was described.

The focus groups also underscored the library’s role as a center of community life in a more forceful way. Participants felt that the library’s location adjacent to the park was underutilized and that the potential for pushing the library beyond its walls had great merit.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Remain in the existing facility.
- Reconsider the earlier space needs calculations that based expansion of the library on a service population of 17,966. (Himmel & Wilson believes that using this design population ignores the fact that there are so many other library options available to residents of the area and the fact that many Hales Corners residents avail themselves of these options.) This calculation resulted in a total space need of 31,650 SF. Himmel & Wilson believes that a library to serve the Hales Corners community would **IDEALLY** be approximately 21,000 Gross Square Feet in size. The consultants believe that a majority of priority needs expressed by the public could be met with approximately 17,000 GSF of library space.
- Consider a modest addition (4,000 – 5,000 SF) to the existing facility that would add transparency to the building on the prairie side of the building, add an elevator and, add functional space.
- Include a “creative maker space” as part of the addition.
- Consider a modest down-sizing of the library’s collections to bring the total collections to approximately 6 volumes per SF of the expanded library space.
- Create new adult seating areas that take advantage of the new areas with the best natural light.
- Create a significantly enlarged, children’s services area adequate to house all children’s collections and services.
- Create a significantly larger, more defined space for resources and services (including seating) for teens.
- Reconfigure all staff work spaces with an emphasis on improved workflows.
- Reconfigure the entry sequence to place the circulation desk in closer proximity to the entrance.
- Consider the provision of some amenities common in bookstores and some libraries (e.g., the availability of coffee).

COST IMPLICATIONS:

Himmel & Wilson developed several cost scenarios. Although Himmel & Wilson does not believe that the taxpayers would support a new 21,000 GSF facility, the consultants developed costs for this scenario for comparative purposes. The consultants also have provided cost estimates for an IDEAL scenario totaling 21,000 GSF by adding 9,100 GSF to the building and renovating most of the existing space in the building. Two more modest scenarios are also offered. One is an ENHANCED/ IMPROVED facility that adds 4,700 GSF and utilizes the former TV studio as a new library creative space. The second ENHANCED/ IMPROVED scenario assumes that the Historical Society and the Health Department would be relocated and that these spaces would be used for library purposes. This scenario would add 3,325 GSF in addition to renovations.

An estimated cost range is provided for each scenario. These ranges are based on applying the following:

Two-stop hydraulic elevator - \$95,000 - \$135,000

New Construction - \$300 - \$350 per SF

Extensive Renovation - \$150 - \$190 per SF

Moderate Renovation - \$100 - \$150 per SF

Minor Renovation - \$65 - \$100 per SF

A separate cost document provides greater detail regarding which existing areas would be renovated to an extensive, moderate, or minor degree.

New Facility - \$6,300,000 - \$7,350,000

IDEAL Expansion/ Renovation (Using TV Studio) - \$3,970,000 - \$4,913,500

ENHANCED/ IMPROVED (Using TV Studio) - \$2,650,000 - \$3,373,500

ENHANCED/ IMPROVED (Using TV Studio, Historical, and Health) - \$2,428,750 - \$3,134,500

FINAL IMPORTANT PIECE OF INFORMATION:

In the professional opinion of the consultants, there will be an ongoing demand for physical printed books. Print materials continue to capture approximately 70% of the total market for book-length materials. (E-book usage has plateaued at slightly less than 30% and most recent figures show e-books actually losing market share to print materials).