Branch Proposals
In response to Hester St Branch Facilities & Operations Plan

Prepared by Branch Libraries Administration
5/10/2019
1. What in the report do you agree with?

**Arnett Branch:**
- Unbreakable glass patricians/walls should be placed between the children and teen areas and between the adult fiction and teen areas.
- The seven foot tall display cylinder by the teen reference desk should be removed.
- Arnett’s Safe to be Smart position should be changed to full-time.

**Charlotte Branch:**
**Spatial utilization:** We agree that given our small space, optimum effective utilization is desirable. But because we have no room to play with, professional expertise will probably be required. They were correct in pointing out that a 2-story library is difficult to manage well given our relatively thin staffing.

**Improve wayfinding and signage:** We felt that this was a very relevant and needed suggestion. We are deficient in effective signage.

**Procure and install flexible furniture:** We agree with this suggestion. We would have done this already if there were funds available for furniture purchases.

**ADA Parking:** A good suggestion, but given the physical limitations of our parking lot, an impractical (impossible?) one.

**Quiet reading nooks and work pods:** We like these ideas if space can be found for them.

**Redesign Floor Plan:** We acknowledge the need for best utilization of space. Given our small size and how fully the space is already being used, changes are difficult. Any significant move in a cramped space sets in motion other moves and shifts, and unintended consequences are to be expected. This is not something we can do informally except in relatively small ways. Redesigning the floor plan in the way they suggest is not really such a small project, and we feel that really good redesign will require some consultation with experts. The suggested floor plans in the Hester Street document seem to imply reducing the number of stacks and thus, the collection size. This implies a change of service and mission that might not be welcome by patrons. Before changing our service plan in big ways we’d want careful internal consideration and input from the patrons. Changing a service model is a fine thing if warranted, but it needs to be approached with full awareness.

**Video Monitors Between Floors:** This is a great idea, and has been discussed before within RPL and also with Superintendent McIntyre of City Security. We have numerous blind spots on all three floors, and video cams would be a big help in monitoring them.

**Frederick Douglass Community Library:**
- We “attract patrons of various income levels and ages”
- High door count, especially considering our size
- We’ve created and maintain excellent partnerships in the community (School #12, Douglass R-Center, Rochester Childfirst Network)
- Our circulation has done very well – we had an increase in circulation of 15% in January 2019 alone.
- We would appreciate having flexible furniture and a partition between the J/YA area and the Adult area.
Lincoln Branch:
Many of the points in the initial report from Hester Street we agree with and would like to see implemented at Lincoln. The library is absolutely a highly used space for programming, gathering for the community and as a vital information resource. However, the building conditions are relatively rundown and dark (the dark ceiling color creates a more closed in feeling than we would like), the layout of the building does not match or maximize the use of it by the community and the current layout does provide problems with line of sight throughout the space that are a significant security concern, particularly in the use of the bathrooms. Furthermore, the lack of visible signage inside the building as well as outside the building make it difficult for patrons to either find the space, know the library is here or be fully aware of the resources that are offered here.

Lyell Branch:
What’s Working
The building is in good condition. There are a few cosmetic things that would change its appearance such as internal painting, replacing carpet and tiles. There are a few spider vein cracks in the wall that go up towards the seams of some of the corners.

Lyell has had after hours accessible community space to fit the needs of community organization. There are not too many spaces in the Lyell-Otis area that are open to the public after hours. The community garden is a great asset, but we do not have anyone to tend to it at the moment, so it is underutilized.

Quick Wins
Youth Ambassadors & Library Recruiters: We think it’s ideal to have community buy in, especially from our youth. Encouraging our youth to be ambassadors ensures that our library is full of new and fresh ideas; it embraces the current community’s culture, and ensures that we are meeting their needs because they are present.

Walking Bus: This idea will increase school, daycare and recreation center involvement for programs and increase library card applicants.

Fostering Partnerships with Local Businesses and Service Providers: We have companies in the area such as Dunkin Donuts, which could possibly provide summer reading incentives and prizes for us. Save A-lot may be able to assist with our free produce distribution by providing perishable or nonperishable items. We also have Markson’s Furniture; they may be able to assist with summer reading incentives and allow discounts on furniture purchases or rentals. These are just to name a few.

Co-Working Spaces
We love the idea of co-working spaces. Agencies like Digital Literacy Volunteers are priceless in our library. They provide services to the community in areas which we lack. Helping someone one on one is very time consuming and they swoop right in to support. We could imagine other agencies co working with us in the future such as, temporary staffing agencies, Department of Social Services or Social workers/Caseworkers in general.

Procure and Install Flexible furnishing:
This would definitely change the appearance of Lyell. The needs of our patrons are constantly changing. Having the ability to install flexible furnishing would allow for the library space to be used for programming in addition to the community space. Sometimes patrons become comfortable and don’t want to move from their space. Allowing them to become comfortable in the space may engage them more.
**Small Moves**

**Off Site Children’s Programming:**
This could definitely be fostered and fulfilled by committing to more outreach opportunities. We have relationships with schools, recreations centers and local community organization.

**Technology Rentals:** Renting devices and exposing this community to new technology could be very useful for our community. Statistically our patrons have a high poverty rate and the means to access something like Wi-Fi is limited. We are not certain if borrowing vs. renting is ideal.

**Flexible Furnishings:** Could increase how we utilize the small library space. It could decrease the chance of work related injury, as well as the amount of staff time utilized to set up for events and programs.

**Redesign Entrance to Meeting Room:** There is low visibility to the community room entrance. It’s difficult to monitor. Redesigning the entrance could be beneficial as well as safer for patron use.

**Electrical Outlets & Charging station:** There is limited access to the electrical outlets because they are on the exterior walls of the library. Our seating arrangements are not always close to the walls or outlets. Currently we have a charging station but it doesn't allow multiple patrons to use it while in close proximity. If patrons do not have a charging cable, they often go without the ability to charge their devices.

**Safe Routes to the Library**- The neighborhood is challenging to walk through because there is a high percentage of prostitution and drug use. Families need to feel safe allowing their kids to walk to the library.

**Large Moves**

**Lease out & Relocate**- Lyell Branch is located just past the main hub of the Lyell-Otis Area. We are closer to the industrial side and we often go overlooked. Our building is small so it blends in with the landscaping. Relocating closer to the hub of Lyell Avenue may be beneficial. If we are closer to the schools or recreation centers, it may increase patron use of the library.

**Lease out & Go Mobile**- Hester Street had also suggested a satellite location. Although we are on Lyell we are not in the hub of the community. We are often passed by due to our location. There have been many occasions where patrons have said they can’t find us or have passed right by us.

**Maplewood Community Library:**
The staff at the Maplewood Library agrees that there needs to be either an expansion or a new building. At Maplewood it is necessary to think differently about the way we position our programming within the full spectrum of our work with children and teens. We have to because we are so busy. We have the largest door count, the largest number of programs, and largest number of attendees at programs in the Rochester Public Library system. Programming for children, teens, and adults has limited space. Furthermore, it is not an adequate space to provide homework assistance or tutoring space for students. With the large number of patrons, programs, and needs we have outgrown the current size of the building. There is limited parking which can discourage patrons from coming into the building. Basically, Maplewood has outgrown its space and cannot accommodate the community as best as we should be able to.

We agree that we need permanent full-time staff, especially in New American and children services. Permanent full-time staff would allow for greater flexibility of outreach and consistent staffing. A full-
time children’s librarian provides consistent programming, support for children and families in the neighborhood and the stability that the children of Maplewood need.

As long as there is part-time staffing of librarians, Maplewood will continue to lose librarians to full-time job opportunities and limit the applications for those willing to apply because it’s only part-time.

A computer aide would be beneficial because Maplewood has one of the highest computer usages in the Rochester Public Library System. Providing computer skills is fine, but when someone needs help because they have an interview in an hour, they can’t wait for the next class. Staff members are often busy and can’t provide the instruction that patrons need as they are providing services at the circulation desk or reference desk. These staffing shortages make it difficult to serve all patrons.

**Monroe Branch:**
High circulation – loyal patrons – well-loved building.

**Sully Branch:**
We currently offer many programs (as noted in the “What’s working” section). We are interested in new program ideas to better serve the needs patrons of all ages. We will continue to listen to patron requests in this area.

**Host system-wide outreach events.**
The job fair that was at this location was very popular. We look into hosting more job fairs, even if they are on a smaller scale.

**Relocate library signage from Webster Ave to awning of primary library entrance.**
We have placed RPL signs in the windows. We should add EXIT ONLY signs on the Webster Ave doors, and bigger signs that tell people how to enter the building. We like the idea of moving the SULLY LIBRARY sign from the Webster Ave entrance to the parking lot entrance.

**Create quiet reading pods to re-allocate space, serve as an acoustic buffer, and to diversify the types of library spaces offered.**
Have movable walls in YA section that can be used to create programming space when needed. This will provide an acoustic buffer when needed, and public library space when not needed.

**Rearrange shared bathroom and lobby space.**
Yes, how? We agree the shared bathroom and lobby space should be rearranged, but we do not know how. If this space is going to be rearranged, the department of recreation should be involved as it is their space too.

**Off hours community space use**
The rec center has off hours community space. We may be interested in hosting some after-hours programs if we could get the staff coverage. We have collaborated with the rec center to have programs during after-hours times, such as “Family Science Day”, “Family Craft Night”, and Family Arts Day”. The big issue with those programs is staffing.

**Tech rentals: computers, equipment, etc.**
If our community wants this, we would be interested in trying this on a limited basis, and possibly for in library only rentals only. Children should only be allowed to check out technology with written parental permission.
**Phillis Wheatley Community Library:**

**Group work spaces, flexible furnishings and quiet reading nooks and pods**
We agree that we might need some sort of barrier to control noise and also to break up space in the meeting room. Something light, flexible and portable would be ideal.

**Event visibility and outreach**
We agree that we need more marketing. This library is not well known and many people come in and say they didn’t know this library existed. Possible ways to get the library better known in Rochester might be:
- A Phillis Wheatley statue, like the Frederick Douglass statues
- Live Phillis Wheatley impersonator events
- Ads or banners advertising the library at sporting events and on/in other public venues in Rochester
- Clothing with individual branch libraries on it for sale. Ex. Baseball shirt
- Branch t-shirts for staff

**Winton Branch:**

**Cultivate Friends Group**
We thought a friends group might be a good idea, but we are unsure of what a friends group would do. We wouldn’t want to jeopardize fundraising by FFRPL by having the group raise any funds. We don’t really have a lot of volunteer opportunities; we do have someone who comes to plant our flowers each year. Our patrons are vocal; when we had Advocacy post cards, most patrons we asked were happy to complete one. When the branch was in danger of being closed, many people came to our defense by writing letters and making phone calls. We would want to have a really clear idea of what the group would do before we started advocating for the formation of such a group.

**Open up floor space**
We have already begun this process in the children’s area. We had quite a long discussion about floor space and branch layout, which will be addressed later in this proposal. See Quick Fixes and What we may be able to do right now section.

**New furnishings – ceiling, wall, floor**
Hester Street may think of this subject as a “small move,” however unless we do major shopping at garage sales, this seems overwhelming in price. Of course we need new furnishings; our building was erected in 1966 and much of our furniture is hand-me-downs from Central and other branches. It was beat before it ever got here.

**Acoustic finishes**
Agreed! The walls are like paper throughout the library. When people are in the community room, the children’s room, or working on the computers their conversation can be heard in the office area. If people are working in the back work room and listening to music, it can be heard in the staff area as well as in the children’s room. Sound proofing would be good!

**Quiet reading nooks and work pods**
Everyone agrees that having quiet spaces in this library is a good idea. Some issues that might affect this are that the walls are so thin it is loud in here, we do have a lack of space, and we worry about being able to see people. One idea that came up in our conversations was that we could use the Atlantic Avenue entrance as a small study room. That entrance does not get much use, and it is clearly visible from the Circulation Desk. We wondered if having two entrances has to do with fire code. We would need to investigate this if we decided to move on it.
Flexible furnishings for large group events
We are aware that large events are difficult to offer at this branch; our meeting room is so very small. We would need to do some investigation as to what kind of furniture would be sturdy enough to withstand the usage it would get and still be flexible enough to fit our need. It certainly would be nice to be able to push all the tables, chairs, and shelving units to one side and have space enough to do awesome things. We had some other ideas that will be addressed a bit later. See Quick Fixes and What we may be able to do right now section.

Event visibility
We have been working on this. When I came to Winton, they were not adding program information to various community websites and calendars. We have assigned one of the clerks to add our information to multiple community calendars. We have also proactively started an email distribution list, where we send our monthly program brochure. Jeanne is working on trying to put program and service notification on PowerPoint, which we hope to project on the screen above our Circulation Desk. Another way we have approached this problem is that the librarians are using Facebook more actively. We are still fine-tuning our publicity, and I hope to create a procedure manual for programs so that we are all taking similar steps with our programming.

2. What do you disagree with? Why?

Arnett Branch:
Arnett disagreed with the quiet pods and reading nooks because we like clear lines of sight to ensure our patrons are safe. Also, adding skylight would be a big move, not a small move, and it would likely result in roof leaks.

Charlotte Branch:
The Hester Street document began with a “Context” section that gave neighborhood demographics. I think that the neighborhood demographics for Charlotte are a little old at this point. I assume they’re drawn from census information. I believe our neighborhood is significantly more diverse than the demographics show. We’ll see if my hunch is right when the next census gets tabulated. We found a few things odd about the “Context” paragraph. It states that we primarily serve adults 60 years of age and older. While retirees are an important patron group for us, they only constitute 20% of Charlotte’s population and library card holders. We provide a range of services to patrons of all ages. They also said that a lack of seating deters those with limited mobility. I would concur that a lack of space/seating is one of our disadvantages, but I don’t see that it impacts those with limited mobility in particular. In fact, folks with mobility issues sometimes say they prefer our library to larger ones because our small size makes it easier for them to use.

Needs Improvement section:
Program attendance: Program attendance was higher in 2013-2014, even though we do more programming now. This puzzled our group and there was no obvious cause we could discover. On reflection, I would point out that we lost a children’s librarian at that time. She had worked at Charlotte for 3 years and over time developed a repertoire of programs that worked for her and her patron base. When she left, that expertise and patron loyalty had to gradually be rebuilt. Possibly more important, several years ago the City changed Britton Road’s on-street parking from 2-sided to one-sided, significantly reducing the amount of on-street parking spaces near the library. Given our small parking lot, we felt the effect immediately. I noticed at that time that the door count dropped a moderate amount, and it has never returned to quite the same level as before the change.

Door Count: In addition to the above discussion, I would just point out that a drop in door count reflects a larger societal trend that goes beyond our particular facility. People are using brick and mortar services
less because they have an abundance of online/digital options. This is a broad societal trend that is goes beyond our branch. It is affecting libraries generally, as well as retail outlets, banks, etc….

**Priority Quick Wins and Small Moves:**
Increase online magazine and journal subscriptions: We found this suggestion puzzling. We don’t manage the online subscriptions at the branch level, nor do we perceive this to be something that’s in great demand by our local patrons. We feel this suggestion is irrelevant to Charlotte’s planning.

Create technology petting zoo: We have had new tech programs when there were collections rotating from Central, but we don’t see Charlotte dedicating materials money to this. Kim also pointed out that libraries have learned these tech petting zoos need to be staffed. There is a high rate of breakage when patrons are left to play with the devices without guidance and supervision. Tech petting zoos make nice program offerings, but the planning and purchasing belong farther up the administrative ladder.

Install book dispensing machines: Another puzzling suggestion. Is Hester Street suggesting that we should be devoting large portions of our materials budget to buying multiple copies of a relatively few blockbuster titles? Do we have a space in the building that could effectively be available 24 hours a day to house a dispensing machine? Or would the machines be located at a grocery store or other off-site venue? Again, this seems like something that would be a larger RPL program. If there’s a need we’d be happy to participate, but we can’t effectively fund and manage it at our branch level.

ADA access/ramps and handrails: Since the parking lot entrance is already accessible, we took this suggestion to mean that the front entrance should be redesigned for improved accessibility. We did not find this persuasive. First, it would not be a small move, but would require quite a large outlay of resources and significantly alter the building’s appearance. Second, since the entrance most likely to be used by people with disabilities is already accessible, we didn’t see the need.

**Workout-While -You-Read Equipment:** A very odd suggestion, and to our knowledge no patron has ever requested such a thing. How would the machines be maintained and sanitized? Would we offer towels (or showers)? Wouldn’t the noise be a problem? Where would we find floor space for them? There’s an inexpensive Planet Fitness gym not 2 miles away from the library.

**Large Moves and Existing Conditions**
This section of the Hester Street analysis discusses options for moving the location of the library. They state that the branch is “significantly underutilized” though we’re not entirely sure what they mean. They seem to imply that the meeting room is wasted space, though we don’t concur. That space is an essential part of our service model. Without it we couldn’t accommodate community meetings and services, nor would we have a space for adult programming. Their analysis proposes several options that include renting out space in the building or moving. Some of that (like renting out space) is not really in our pay grade. So basically for our discussion it came down to whether or not Charlotte Branch would be benefitted by moving to a new space. Though this is one of the biggest proposals in the Hester Street plan, it was the one to which we were able to devote the least discussion, as discussion of the other sections had been so lively and extensive.

**Frederick Douglass Community Library:**
- We’re already providing several of the services Hester Street is suggesting as Priority Quick Wins and Small Moves, including holding pop-up events and story times and doing our best to maximize use of the shared programming space.
- We cannot store a book bike because there is simply no room for any of the components. The bike would need to be stored in the bike rack outside all year, where it would be vulnerable to theft and weather damage. The container unit would not fit in any storage area, maintenance
South Ave traffic patterns can be dangerous, and many of the events where we might consider featuring a book bike would require a staff member to walk the book bike up to the programming space because the incline of the sidewalk is significant. There are several book bikes available for us to borrow; there is no need for this level of expenditure for equipment that cannot be utilized at this location.

- There is no room for a self-checkout terminal. Installing one would likely require us to send furniture or even shelving units to surplus, and we need tables, chairs, and bookshelves to remain in use.

- We very strongly disagree with the Large Move suggestion of converting the branch to a location that only serves children and teens. As Hester Street themselves point out, we attract patrons of various income levels and ages. This is supported by the breakdown of our circulation by media code: 66% of the items we circulate are adult materials, while children’s and teen materials combined only account for 34% of our circulation.

- Adults utilize and rely on our branch, so why is Hester Street suggesting that we exclude a sizable portion of our neighborhood and user base? When the number one patron request per Hester Street is more adult programming, how does a conversion to youth services only meet community needs?

- A conversion to serving a smaller portion of the community will likely have a long-term negative effect on our key performance indicators and does not fit into the City’s initiatives or support the Mayor’s vision. Meeting the goals in Vision 2025, the Rochester 2034 Comprehensive Plan, ROC the Riverway, and the City’s Values and Guiding Principles (Personal Integrity, Accountability, Customer Focus, Collaboration, and a “Can-Do” Attitude) necessitate us providing access to information, materials, and equipment to patrons of all ages.

- The conversion to youth services only directly contradicts RPL’s Mission, Vision, and Values, all three Priority statements, and our internal Brand Platform in the 2016 – 2020 Strategic Plan.

Lincoln Branch:
There are not many points within the Hester Street report that we fully disagreed with, the majority of the points we would like to criticize are more a reflection of not recognizing the significance of certain points which will be addressed later on in this report. However, we did disagree with the recommendation from the report the need to increase the amount of programming partnerships or outside partnerships. The branch currently has many ongoing and successful partnerships including the Joseph Ave Arts and Cultural Council, multiple visits from individual area schools and childcare centers on a monthly basis, daily tutor meetings in the building, weekly use of meeting space for clients from organizations such as Fidelis Care, mother support groups, peer counselors for addiction, daily digital literacy assistance and many more. We are always welcoming new partnerships and collaborations in the building, however, there certainly is not a lack of that currently here. As branch manager, I would like to possibly see a partnership grow where individuals needing social service assistance would be able to schedule appointments with representatives in the library, however we have yet to find an organization willing or able to partner on such a venture.

Lyell Branch:
There isn’t too much that we disagree with. Hester Street recommended that we have extended work hours but the demand is not obvious. Library traffic tends to slow down at 6pm. So as of April 29th the library’s hour have changed to 6pm close daily. From what we know, no one has complained. Patrons are still adjusting to our hours and have come after 6 on Monday or not until noon on Monday and Tuesday. We will honor the groups that meet once a month for neighborhood associations meetings, but it is not necessary to stay open every Monday until that time.
Maplewood Community Library:
Maplewood disagrees that the English classes should be moved to a satellite location. We want New Americans to become part of the larger library community. Continuing to hold classes at the Maplewood Library encourages New Americans to use other services that their family could benefit from. Moving classes will further isolate a group that is already facing challenges of a new country and culture. We want to be a welcoming place for New Americans and their family. New Americans can go to class, bring their children for homework help, and youth activities.

Separating the population would affect the door count, programming attendance, and programs. There are other organizations where New Americans are served separately and there is no reason to replicate. Maplewood collaborates with many of these groups and provides outreach to these organizations. Maplewood has taken on the role of a library as a “place” that enables access to information, regardless of the format. For New Americans, we are offering computers and other resources that New Americans require, as well resources for job seekers. It has become increasingly important to all of our patrons seeking employment as technology became more vital to the job search process.

There is no room for quiet reading nooks and work pods. We would love to have another meeting room but with the current building we don’t think work pods and quiet reading nooks would be the best use of space.

Having a garden with outdoor furniture has safety concerns and would likely be vandalized. Often there is evidence of partying on the front steps during the weekend and outdoor furniture would make it more comfortable to stay.

Monroe Branch:
In the report, it noted some small moves which are NOT small; namely, move the teen space and add a community room.

Sully Branch:
Rearrange entry sequence from car to door
Once the rec center is open, would it be possible to unlock outside library entrance on Webster Ave? Having the door unlocked was identified as a very real safety issue by the rec center, so this should be brought up at a safety meeting. If this door will be opened to the public again, automatic door openers should be added to the door for people with mobility issues.

Quiet reading nooks and work pods
We would like to avoid “hidey holes”. We want more open sight lines. This is a safety issue, especially since we have so many unattended children in the library.

Convert rotunda into a double-height interactive story room space that kids can traverse vertically.
We would like to see a story time room that is more interactive; however, instead of a vertical move, we would like to see more technology in that space. Having a few TVs on the wall would give us more opportunity for gaming programs. Installing a sound system would add to the gaming, movie, and music program experience. Curtains would allow us to block out light when needed. The film on the windows does not give us control over the amount of light when needed. We would like a remodel of the room with an exciting theme, such as forest, jungle, under water, or universe theme, to make it more magical.

Phillis Wheatley Community Library:
Biggest Patron complaint
We feel our biggest patron complaint is that there is no rear entrance to the building from the parking lot. We have had patrons tell us that they specifically do not come to this library in the winter months due to
We have asked every year through the Capitol Improvement process for a rear entrance but it is not a priority for the City. We would like to explore a cost effective way to create a rear entrance perhaps identifying grant funds.

**Promote the Community Room**
Our community room is booked 80-95% of the month. We use outlook calendar to book the room. All librarians and clerks have access to this calendar.

**Expanding Books by Bike**
We need staff who can ride the bike to expand services. We welcome sharing our bike with other branches or town libraries.

**Wheatley struggles to attract patrons from the Corn Hill Area**
We have a very good relationship with our neighbors in Corn Hill. They are very generous in approving grant applications submitted through the Corn Hill Neighbors Association. We are invited to participate in the Corn Hill events like the festival and Clarissa St Reunion. Although they might not need our services to the extent that our PLEX neighbors do, our Corn Hill neighbors appreciate having a library in their neighborhood and they support us.

**Winton Branch:**
**Implement Walking Library Bus**
As we understand this idea, two staff members or volunteers would go to an area school as school is dismissed and walk a group of students to the library; they would be picked up by their parents before the library closed. While this sounds like a solid idea, the staff time needed for this might be exorbitant. It does not seem like a good use of time to walk ten minutes to get to the school, wait for the children to gather, and then walk back to the library with a group of children. The trip back to the library would take exponentially longer with a larger group. We also wondered about who would be responsible if there were an accident or if someone got lost on the way. We thought the idea was interesting, but dismissed it out of hand.

**Book ATM**
As we understand it, a book ATM would be a machine that would be outside the library that had books in it that people could borrow when the library was not open. We found a lot of problems with this recommendation. How would people know what books were available in the book ATM? It would be frustrating for patrons to come to use it, only to find that the book they wanted was not available through the ATM. Since we keep the parking lot gate locked when we are not open, where would people park when they wanted to use the ATM? We thought a better idea would be to hire additional staff and keep the library open longer hours so our material would be available, along with help finding things. Our signature is great customer service; let us serve our customers!

3. **What would you do differently?**

**Arnett Branch:**
Nothing. Although Arnett disagrees with some of Hester St.’s conclusions, they conducted a good study.

**Charlotte Branch:**
Staff mentioned that the Hester people weren't here long enough to get a "feel" for the branch, and so some of their observations were not really apropos. If they could have visited several times or observed for a more extended period they might have been more on target. We mostly do not like their proposal to
combine children's and teen services on the same floor. We lack the staff to pull that off, and we believe the loss of space in the children's room and close proximity to teen behaviors would distress a lot of people, while moving teen services upstairs would please a much smaller group of patrons. If a portion of the upstairs had to be used for something other than children's, quiet study space for patrons, tutors, etc., would be a more manageable option.

**Frederick Douglass Community Library:**
- We need to refine and increase our marketing for open hours, programming, specialized collections, and library features such as renewals online or over the phone
- We want to start using a shared Outlook calendar to better schedule use of the meeting room
- Use the Graphics department and Canva to create vibrant, dynamic signage and fun social media posts
- Develop improved branch-specific talking points that can be used during patron discussions and in marketing materials
- Obtain more patron feedback in a variety of ways: Facebook survey, paper survey, Post-It notes on a flip chart, suggestion cards, etc.

**Lincoln Branch:**
There are several items on the original report that we would choose to do differently.

In the Hester Street report there was a barrier in place separating the adult section with the rest of the youth areas; however we would recommend installing an additional separation between the children’s area and the teen area, preferably with low bookcases similar to what is in place currently or a plexiglass separation. While we want to keep the teen and children’s area together in the same general space, we want to make sure that there is some separation as conversations between teens are not necessarily appropriate for children.

We agree with moving the children’s area adjacent to the Toy Library to increase traffic between the two, however we suggest removing the walls separating the Toy Library from the rest of the building and combining the two spaces into one department. Most significantly, by combining the two separate spaces in to one, we will have enough staffing to safely allow patrons to access the resources within the Toy Library during all of the open hours of the library. Currently, with the Toy Library being in a completely separate, unseen space we are not able to do this.

We also recommend taking down the wall that separates the larger meeting room in the existing layout to create a story time space in the new children’s area.

Again, while we do agree with placing the different departments in the layout proposed by Hester Street, we also recognize the need to keep meeting room space available for the teens. Currently there is a meeting room off of the side of the current teen area that is heavily used by the teens for school work, programs and a gathering space. We suggest instead of building out a reading pod for the teens in that area, to build out a meeting room space for them to continue using. Furthermore, both the Safe to be Smart and Teen Librarian both recommend the addition of an additional, small digital content creation space similar to the imagineYOU space at Central. We have many teens that are incredibly talented and interested in digital creation that we believe would greatly appreciate and take advantage of resources such as those. Furthermore there are multiple organizations that the library currently has strong relationships with such as the Joseph Ave Arts and Cultural Council, the Avenue D recreation center and the Avenue Theater down the road that would allow us to maximize this resource in a high poverty community where many of the youth may not have access to similar resources.
The suggested plan from Hester Street kept the existing circulation desk in the same location; we recommend moving the circulation desk to the front of the building next to the entrance, facing out in to the building. This would allow those at the circulation desk to have a clearer view of the entire building (the current desk location means that staff cannot see much of the teen area to the left of the desk, as well as not being able to have clear line of sight to the bathrooms). Moving the circulation desk would allow staff to have a better view of the whole building for better security, would place staff directly across from the bathrooms which is currently one of the largest challenges for safety within the building as they are frequently used by drug users out of sight of the staff and would allow staff to immediately greet and interact with patrons when they first enter the building. This would also place circulation staff directly next to the adult area and allow staff to keep a closer eye on the adults in the computer/collection area. We would recommend using the space where the current circulation desk is to create two or three small meeting rooms, potentially with movable walls to allow small groups to meet for tutoring, one-on-one meetings, or larger gatherings as needed.

Although the Hester Street report did touch on the challenges faced by staff with the misuse of the bathrooms, we would suggest taking it a step further to create an ADA compliant family bathroom for individuals to use as well. While we are taking every measure possible to cut down on the misuse of the bathrooms, unfortunately due to the environment that the library exists in, we are not able to entirely solve problems from drug use. There have been multiple instances of the bathrooms being misused or trashed without staff being aware for significant amounts of time and we do not want families or small children to walk in to a bathroom that has evidence of drug use in it. Having an additional bathroom specifically for family use would allow us to have a facility that is ADA compliant as well as a safe space for families to use.

The Hester Street report recommended installing skylights in several spots to brighten up the library. While we wholeheartedly agree with brightening up the space, we would instead suggest painting the ceiling of the building a light grey or other light color. As a branch we all agreed that the funds that could be used for skylights would be more beneficial if used towards items such as moving the circulation desk, creating adequate meeting room space for the teens in the new teen area and creating a combined space for the Toy Library and children’s center.

**Lyell Branch:**
If we could, we would change our parking situation. At this time parking is very limited. There is an additional lot that is close to us but we do not own it. This causes confusion because if anything happens in that lot the library is not responsible.

**Rethink Shelving:** In addition to purchasing flexible furnishings, we need to increase library floor space. The shelving in the adult area is high and causes low visibility. We have installed some mirror fixtures in the rear corner, but having the setup is not ideal. There are times that patrons do not have adequate seating. Shelving that goes up right on the exterior walls in our library is ideal. This will free up floor space allowing our patron more seating and table space. This goes for the children’s room as well. We have a “U” shaped shelving unit in the middle of the floor which causes visibility issues and it also encouraging children to run around the perimeter.
The fax machine and copier area also have low visibility and when staff have to assist the circulation desk often goes unattended.

As of now we only offer one unisex bathroom to the patrons in the library area. This is a disadvantage to our patrons. I believe that we should at least be able to offer two restrooms. The other bathroom is located in the community room. It is convenient for programs, but it has no visibility when the community room is not staffed.
Maplewood Community Library:
- We need to create better signage in the library to make the building more user-friendly.
- Advertise events and basic resources that the library offers for patrons such as online holds and special collections.
- Obtain more patron feedback through comment cards, suggestion boxes, paper survey, holding small group meetings of patrons, and brief surveys.

Monroe Branch:
I definitely think they should have spent more time at Monroe. While I don’t know how much time they spent at the other branches, they should have come back a number of times to talk with other staff, see the work flow as well as the patron flow. Actually talking with patrons during their visits would have been very helpful.

Sully Branch:
If the question is what things would I do differently from how they are being done now, I would say that we should look into additional non-traditional items to loan. While traditional library items, such as books and movies are important, I would like circulate some non-traditional items. For example, we purchased some sewing machines to circulate at Sully. They have not arrived yet, but they are on the way. The Hester St report does suggest circulating technology as an idea. This is an option, but circulating household items would also benefit our community.

I would allow for some more flexibility in what staff can do, so staff can share their unique strengths to help meet patron needs. For example, letting a clerk who has knowledge in Manga and Anime, help with planning and running an Anime/Manga program. While staff must do what they have been hired to do, allowing them to use any special talents they have in different ways would not only increase morale, it would bring even more unique and novel programs to the libraries.

Extending hours in the evening on certain days would also allow us to open us some of our space to more of the community.

If the question is what would I do differently from what is spelled out in this report, I would say no to the quiet reading nooks and work pods. Instead, I would like to enclose the adult area to provide a quiet space. I would also want the adult area to have comfortable furniture for them to sit and read, as not all adults want to come into the library for computers.

While we need more space in the library, and adding up is probably the only way we would find that space, we do not want a second floor to be added to the story time room. Adding a “double height interactive story time room space” would be fun, but we would rather the space be upgraded and remodeled to turn it into more of a magical and usable space for people of all ages. Adding curtains or blinds to adjust the light (and heat) levels in the room, adding additional outlets, and technology would also be beneficial.

Phillis Wheatley Community Library:
I would have used different methods to find out what the people in the community really want. I don’t think the surveys taken within the library nor the people who were picked for the forum were reflective of the actual community members and library users.

Winton Branch:
We started our discussion with how the library should be redesigned to accommodate these people by moving the entrance to the library to the north side, where the parking lot is. We would probably not want
people entering the library through the children’s room, so we would have to gut the building and start over. As long as our building is gutted, other changes we would like to make include:

- An open view of most of the inside of the building at the entrance
- Easy access near the door (prime real estate) to the most popular elements of the collection: DVDs, new books, and audio books
- Low(er) shelving units; this should open the building up
- Walls painted all the same color for uniformity
- More private spaces
- Bump out the back to enlarge our usable space
- A (much) larger community room that could be partitioned to create two smaller rooms
- Drive up window
- Café with music/Mobile Starbucks
- Reimagine our community notice board. We have too much on it right now, and things stay up for too long, which means that no one really looks at it.
- New carpeting, walls, and insulation
- Air filtration system and/or aromatherapy
- Reimagine Teen space
- Pods for computer use for adults that will group the computers together
- Provide a docking/charging station
- Hester Street did note that the number one Patron Request was to extend our hours. We are ready, willing, and crying to do this! We asked in our budget request to open the library for more hours – longer hours on Saturdays and at least one more evening.
- Hester Street’s number one Patron Complaint was that we have a limited collection. We also asked for a bump in collection funding for next year.

4. What did Hester Street miss?

**Arnett Branch:**
They missed safety and security concerns.

**Charlotte Branch:**
Hester Street failed to get a real understanding of the Charlotte patron base. They indicated our primary user group was the over-60-years-of-age demographic. While they are important to us, we actually have a much more complex patron population. We have a big mix of ethnicities; we have well-off people from near the lake, and folks from the low-income housing units; we have folks who's families have been in Charlotte for generations, and young people of all ethnicities who have moved to Charlotte to buy their first house; we have older patrons looking for recreational reading, job seekers looking for assistance with applications and resumes, new parents looking for early literacy enrichment, etc.... They also failed to understand the extent to which this neighborhood still sees itself as a separate community, a little removed from the city. Essentially, Charlotte residents (including some of the most influential) see Charlotte as a small town that somehow got annexed to Rochester. This makes them both proud of their heritage and contentious when they feel change is being forced on them by the City without their consent. I don't think Hester Street fully realized how important community input will be to get buy-in to any significant changes to library service. We didn't see a lot of discussion about how shabby and out-of-date our building is. So while they suggest redesigning the space, without improving electrics and bringing in some less distressed fixtures and furnishings, a redesign will be somewhat limited in effectiveness.
**Frederick Douglass Community Library:**
- Our programming attendance and offerings are consistently in the top five of all RPL branches, but Hester Street indicated that we have low program attendance. Reviewing our KPIs for programs and program attendance will quickly show their view of our statistics is incorrect: YTD for December 2018 shows attendance of over 12,000 patrons at our programs, which is an increase of 38% over attendance in 2017.
- Our program attendance total for 2018 was higher than Charlotte, Lyell, Monroe, Wheatley, and Winton.
- They missed the positive, neighborhood feeling of the branch – we strive to meet the needs of our community.

**Lincoln Branch:**
One of the most significant items that did not show up in the Hester Street report is the challenge with parking. We have the main parking lot in the front of the building with 11 spaces and the side lot with an additional 12 spaces. However, the lot on Ave D is also used by the staff working in the UPK facility, Peter Castle, in the back of the building. When the UPL is in session, this means that the majority of the spots in the Ave D lot are unavailable to library staff or patrons to use. Furthermore, there is a lack of on-street parking for patrons or staff to use to access the library. Many times this means that often there is not just a lack of safe parking but any parking for patrons and staff to use. This creates a significant barrier for individuals to visit the library. We would suggest looking in to see if any of the adjacent space to the existing Ave D lot could be purchased to expand the parking lot there.

The front entrance and doors currently do not have an automatic door option. We have many elderly patrons as well as families with small children, strollers or other carriers. Updating the existing entrance to have a handicap accessible door would be a much needed addition.

There is currently a significant lack of off-desk space for staff to do work as well as significant wasted space that is just used as overflow for clutter. Currently, almost all of the processing that the clerical staff work on is done at the circulation desk. While our staff is fantastic and does a good job of trying to do both at the same time, it is not a functional system. It leads to processing taking much longer than needed as staff are constantly stopped in the middle of tasks to work with patrons and patrons express frustration when staff are focused on processing and unable to immediately assist them. Furthermore, this set up creates an additional mental stress for staff as they get very little time to decompress away from the public. Finally, having both circulation and processing spaces shared leads to mess, disorganization and confusion with materials that need mending, materials that are coming in to be returned occasionally being mixed in with materials that are currently in process. We would suggest taking down the wall between the existing stacks/storage space behind the branch manager’s office and the storage room that currently holds the servers to create an expanded space for staff to work on processing and handling of items.

Finally, while the Hester Street report did mention a need for increased wayfinding and signage, it did not mention the impact the exterior of the building has on the community being aware of the library itself. Currently, the brick exterior of the building blends in with the surrounding structures and the lettering on the outside of the building that says ‘Lincoln Library’ blends in with the brick exterior. The result of this is that many individuals are unaware that the building is a library or drive past the building multiple times when trying to find it. We suggest painting the exterior that faces Joseph Avenue a lighter color, perhaps a light grey, created a much larger lettered sign on the exterior in a contrasting color that is visible to patrons with the name of the library and adding signage on the Avenue D side of the building with the name of the library as well so that the building and the library’s existence is much more noticeable.
**Lyell Branch:**
Hester Street missed that the design of the staff area needs improvement. The circulation desk does not have any barriers and the manager’s office is too conveniently located up front. There are a variety of blind spots that need to be reassessed to ensure safety.

**Maplewood Community Library:**
Hester Street suggested more programming for recent immigrants. Maplewood already offers English classes and citizenship classes. There are English classes Monday through Friday 11:30 a.m.-1p.m., Thursday 5 p.m.-7 p.m. and Saturday 10 a.m.-noon. There are also citizenship classes which are held on Monday and Wednesday from 5 p.m.-6:30 p.m. Some of the organizations we currently collaborate with are Mary’s Place, Catholic Family Services, United Nations Association of Rochester, Rochester Refugee Resettlement Services, Wachuku Foundation and OACES. Other organizations and schools we work with are SUNY Geneseo, St. John Fisher, Maplewood Neighborhood Association, Maplewood YMCA, and Aquinas Institute.

**Monroe Branch:**
In their assessment, they said we were situated in "a relatively low need neighborhood". This assessment is simply wrong. We also serve the 14620 area which is medium to low income. Our patrons range from higher income levels all the way down to people who live in rooms or on the street. They failed to spend enough time understanding the diversity of our community.

**Sully Branch:**
Hester Street did not address the inability of us to adequately meet the patrons’ need of having a place to plug their devices in. We also have limited locations to plug our computers in. We have few outlets in the wall, there are some outlets in the floor, but they are not easily accessible, and are tripping hazards.

During the school day, parking is an issue for staff and patrons. This is even more of an issue around dismissal time, when the parking lot is not able to be entered or exited due to bus traffic. There are also not enough spots in the parking lot, and the spots that are there are very narrow and difficult to enter or exit without hitting a neighboring car.

The Sully Branch has a close relationship with the rec center, and we are able to do so much more because of our close proximity to the rec center. The down side to this, is many children think we are the rec center. While the signage issue was addressed by Hester Street, having our own separate entrance was not.

Hester St missed the staff request of having a window, or windows that can open to the outside.

**Phillis Wheatley Community Library:**
Hester Street missed the opportunity to suggest new, different and cutting edge services that would benefit the community.

**Winton Branch:**
In order to get into the library from the parking lot, it is necessary to walk all the way around the building. This is a big problem for people with disabilities as well as parents with young children.
5. How will you use the Hester Street plan to develop your strategic goals for the next two years?

Arnett Branch:
We will use the report as a resource to cite when trying to secure the funds to:
- Install unbreakable glass patricians/walls between the children and teen areas and between the adult fiction and teen areas.
- Remove the seven foot tall display cylinder by the teen reference desk
- Increase Safe to Be Smart position to full time
- Retain a suitable amount of computers

Charlotte Branch:
While some of the suggestions were things we can actually attempt as strategic goals, a lot of their stuff will require administrative approval (i.e. funding!) to accomplish. We can't really attempt a lot of things without monetary resources being allocated from downtown. So we'll work on signage, maybe getting some more flexible furniture, using our book sale money, figure out a way to get some outside advertising, take a look at open hours (again)...but going much beyond that will require special funds or approval of some CIP projects.

Frederick Douglass Community Library:
Looking at the positives Hester St highlights in the report, we need to focus on:
- Continuing to attract patrons across income levels and age groups
- Boosting our already high door count through programming and partnerships
- Nurturing our current community partnerships
- Expanding community partnerships with Highland Hospital and the Highland Park Association
- Evaluating our budget distribution to ensure strategic materials purchasing
- Maintaining circulation increases
- Increasing pop-up events and story times
- Implementing fun marketing ideas with a clear, consistent message
- Streamlining use of the shared programming space by implementing a shared Outlook calendar
- Using our pre-existing outreach kit to distribute RPL information at a variety of events

Lincoln Branch:
The report from Hester Street will help us to focus our strategic goals to strengthen our engagement with the community, offer engaging and fun educational programs for the community, develop a safe and welcoming facility for patrons as well as continuing to invest in our staff and organize the current workflows to most efficiently meet patrons needs. The report specifically focuses on:

- Priority 1a: Combining the Toy Library and children’s department will allow us to expand the Toy Library hours to match the open hours of the library as well as combined staff resources from both departments will allow us to develop even more community contacts as well as community outreach opportunities. This will also allow us to expand the existing connections with homeschool and home child care groups in the county.

  The new layout, addition of family bathroom, increased parking and ADA compliant and handicap accessible entrances will also allow for a safer environment for families for families and other patrons visiting the library which will encourage more patrons to visit and use the library.

- Priority 1b: Along with working with LAS to implement the planned update to public access PCs, the addition of a digital content creation space for teens in the new proposed teen area will
provide a technologically driven educational and engaging space for the youth in the area to use. It will also provide an opportunity for the library to use to develop new partnerships with area organizations such as the Avenue Theater and Avenue D Recreation Center.

- Priority 1c: The proposed painting and new signage on the exterior of the building will create an immediate increased presence within the immediate community and increase our street visibility significantly. Currently, our street visibility is poor to the point of individuals driving past the building multiple times when coming for a visit.

- Priority 3a: The proposed new layout for the location of the circulation desk as well as adequate staff space to process incoming materials will work towards supporting the current needs of our staff to properly serve the public with face-to-face interactions as well as providing them the necessary space to efficiently process materials and ensure that they are available to the public in a timely manner.

- Priority 3b: By working to brighten the interior of the building itself, it will create a more welcoming environment for patrons to visit, as well as making signage more visible and making materials more accessible for patrons visiting the library.

**Lyell Branch:**

**Increasing Door Count/Increase Program Count**

- Create cultural, social, and educational programming that is relevant to our community’s needs.
- Create recurring programs that are scheduled as monthly or weekly event.
- Work more closely with Graphics department to create visually pleasing signage for our new and most successful programs.
- Consistently advertise Lyell branch programs through social media networks, in addition to community newsletters and platforms.
- Increase Storytime attendance by inviting large groups to visit the library for field trips and library experiences.
- Invite organizations in to use our community room space.

**Community Garden**

- Implement strategies and techniques to keep the garden an asset of the Lyell Branch Library.
- Seek student volunteers or families willing to contribute time, materials, or education.

**Create Co-working spaces**

- Bring in other organizations to meet the needs of our patrons.
- Partner with other organization to find out what their missions are and collaborate to meet both of our needs.

**Increase computer use**

- Be prompt and consistent to assess all computer errors and report them to LAS.
- Encourage patrons to use their own library cards, so that statistics are properly recorded.

**Outreach/Community Events**

- Be more visible.
- Attend functions that are happening in and around the community.
- Strengthen partnership with local organizations such as LONA (Lyell Ave Business Association), Cameron Ministries, and Rochester City Schools.
Increase Circulation

- Consistently weed so that our collections are always current and relevant.
- Create displays that are relevant to current trends, subjects in the news, and popular culture.
- Host a book sale quarterly to decrease overcrowding of book shelves
- Increase library card registration by engaging with patrons to ensure they fully understand how their library card works. This includes renewing card accounts and updating record information.

Maplewood Community Library:
Maplewood will continue providing educational and life-long learning opportunities for children, teens, and adults. We will continue our current programming but will examine ways to better promote the programs. The English classes will be rebranded to English as a New Language (ENL) instead of ESOL (English Speakers of Other Languages). The focus will be on tutoring instead of a standard classroom setting for ENL classes. Evaluate budget distributions to strategically purchase materials.

Monroe Branch:
We will be incorporating some of their ideas as we move forward. For example, they suggested we hold pop-up library events and story times. We will be expanding on this idea to work with the "YMCA" to set up a library presence there. I'm in the process of setting up a meeting with the Director about this.

Their suggestions have also made us think about redesigning the teen space to make it more appealing and user friendly. A simple change like better signage will help.

Their ideas about a gathering space made us realize that we can think differently about how we can meet the needs of various groups in our area. For example, allowing us to offer 4 extra “community hours” would help to address this need.

We will be working to expand both the number and the kinds of programs we will be doing. I will be meeting with the other two librarians to discuss various outreach projects as well.

Sully Branch:
While developing strategic goals for the Sully Branch, patron and community needs will be the most important thing for me to focus on. I will give careful consideration to the patron request, needs improvement, and comment sections.

Phillis Wheatley Community Library:
The majority of the suggestions and ideas that came from the branch retreat fit nicely into strategic goal categories for 2019/2020. I will use what we agree with in the plan and other input from patrons to shape our strategic goals for the future.

Winton Branch:
One of the things that Hester Street recommends is to open our floor space. By creating a media area, and moving the computers to a pod, this will serve to open the floor space.

We will also use the recommendation to work on increasing our event visibility by the creation of a program procedure whereby each person who puts on programs will follow the same procedure, which will include writing a press release for our clerk to push to different media outlets.
6. What were some of the specific implementation suggestions from staff members discussed at the retreat?

Arnett Branch:
The number of computers at Arnett should remain the same or be increased.

Charlotte Branch:
- The staff discussed ways to improve statistics. One suggestion was automatic renewal of materials – i.e., when a patron’s materials came due, they would get one automatic renewal on the items. This would reduce fine liability, and (we believe) the automatic renewals would count as circulation, upping the statistic.
- It was mentioned at the retreat that some 60% of Central’s materials have never circulated. Why not develop sets of Central materials that go out to the branches as rotating temporary collections? This has the potential to increase variety, interest, and circulation in the branches and increase utilization of the materials Central has purchased.
- We need easier purchasing mechanisms for program supplies. Make-it-and-take-it programs get good responses, but getting the materials for them is increasingly difficult. How can we improve this? Also, the system for getting the Wegmans card for program supplies is not user-friendly. That trip downtown just to pick up and return the card is actually very difficult for branch staff. Why can’t we get and return the card via interoffice delivery?
- Staff suggested we look into getting some outdoor display equipment to advertise library programs. A sign board would advertise library offerings to passersby and drivers, and as a secondary benefit would connect the inside of the library with the outside a bit. We reflected on how monumental and fortress-like the Charlotte library building can appear.
- Kim brought up the notion of not only planning programs for kids, but planning some offerings for the moms, dads and grandparents who bring the kids to the library. They are an underserved part of the patron base and there might be some potential gains here.
- Hoopla was mentioned. It’s a very good resource, but only allows 7 circs a month. Can RPL buy a plan that permits more monthly circulations per patron?
- Can we get a phone charging station? That would be welcomed by patrons.
- When we used to have a continuous book sale, it would draw some people in on a regular basis. Is there any way we can go back to a continuous book sale?
- It was suggested that new adults might be a more fruitful patron group to cultivate. We seem to get more of them.
- Can we bank on our history and make Charlotte Branch a local history destination, with a museum in the basement? Some staff said this had been attempted many years ago without success. In sufficient interest was shown by patrons.

Frederick Douglass Community Library:
- Increase library card sign-ups
  - Talk up library cards at school visits and hand out application packets to teachers
  - Promote incentives for signing up for library cards at Douglass
- More outreach visits
  - Use outreach kit and hand out program flyers and small incentive items
  - Increase the number of locations we’re visiting in our service area
- Larger programs
  - RIT Anime Club cooperative event
  - K-pop night
  - Book sale during the Lilac Festival
- Services Spotlight
○ Utilize social media and internal advertising to alert patrons to library services in a fun and informative way

**Lincoln Branch:**
As a team we easily covered 2-3 sheets of notes in discussing changes we would like to see, we very quickly agreed on the top 5 priorities for Lincoln as a result of our discussions:

- Moving the Circulation desk to the front of the building closer to the entrance
- Shifting the children’s section to where the current teen section is and combine with toy library, the current teen section to where the adult section is and the current adult section to where the children’s section is
- Creating a meeting room space for teens in the new teen area
- Increased parking for increased safety as well as to allow more patrons to access the libraries services
- Increasing signage and painting on the exterior of the building to make the library more visible to patrons and individuals driving by

**Lyell Branch:**
We specifically have made a tremendous effort increase library card use and Library card registration. We have placed signage on the circulation desk that explains that we welcome them to a guest pass but we encourage the use of their library card. We have seen a significant decline in distributing guest passes.

**Maplewood Community Library:**
Staff spoke about increased library card sign-ups instead of just handing over a guest pass. Library card sign-ups can encourage more circulation and find patrons who have cards but cannot use them due to fines. Maplewood can then work with the patrons with blocked cards on getting their card into good standing. Clearing these cards allows for the opportunity that more items may circulate.

To make Maplewood a more welcoming we want to paint the whole interior library especially patron bathrooms, staff areas, and the staff bathroom. Getting rid of the carpet was another suggestion because of the high traffic and large number of youth.

**Monroe Branch:**
We propose redesigning the entire teen area.

- Move the table, add more comfortable seating and add cushions on the benches.
- Move the librarian’s desk and install new circular shelving to the area. This would allow us to remove a taller shelving unit and open up that space.
- Move collections around to enhance their visibility; for example, manga books, graphic novels and BOCDs.
- Improve the signage to make the collections more obvious to patrons.

New design will not bring in the teens. Therefore, we propose increasing our work in the following areas:

- Work with area teachers and the “Y” to enlist teens that would be interested in making suggestions for this space. Possibly start a Teen Advisory Board and a teen Blog post.
- Conduct a contest for a design of a mural in this area.
- Continue to work on fostering better community connections with the area schools, Hillside, Center for Youth and Teen City at the “Y”. How can we better serve this population?
- Possible program ideas: Poetry slam, display art work, special time for video games, computer coding classes (Rebecca is already working on this program) We will continue to brainstorm ideas.
Expand the usage and function of the children’s room:
- Have some different open hours from the adult floor that cater to families with young children. This would require us to put locks on two doors leading into the children’s room and adding signage to the elevator. I would defer to maintenance to see if there are any problems doing this.
- Continue to build a greater relationship with schools #23, #35 & #1 and Daycare facilities. Offer classes at the library such as library skills; computer coding classes; cursive writing classes and programs linked to a specific part of the curriculum with books and activities. (Margaret already has a great working relationship with the PreK class at school #23 and is expanding her outreach to Daycare facilities.)
- Institute new ideas to utilize this beautiful space – Allow parents to hold birthday parties. (We are in the process of writing up a proposal that would allow us to offer 2 birthday parties per month.)

Refresh the inside of the building:
- Clean and polish the beautiful woodwork
- Replace sections of the carpet on the adult floor
- Strip and polish the floors
- Clean the windows
- Add better signage to collections, etc.

Establish a library presence at the “YMCA”: Allow people to return and check out materials. Have books that cater to physical health plus some other materials such as music and DVDs, fiction and nonfiction. (To Do: I need to meet with Amy at the “Y” to see if they would like us to do this. If they are ok with this, then I need to make sure I have the necessary equipment to do this.) Scheduling of staff and implementation would follow.

Better marketing: When we check out items to our patrons, we give them a bookmark with our hours and suggest ways they can help their neighborhood library. We also ask people to let us know how we can improve. (We just started doing this.) Besides the regular ways we advertise our programs, we will also use local groups more such as UMNA (Upper Monroe Neighborhood Association), Nextdoor etc. The old fashioned way of walking around Monroe Ave. and posting signs is always a good idea.

“Carside Pick-up” service: For patrons who can’t get in to the library to return items. This could be patrons with small children or people that have some physical issue.

Community Room: Instead of enclosing off a space on the adult floor, we propose adding 4 extra “community hours” to the Monroe Branch. With 4 extra hours, we can offer groups time to hold meetings on Tuesday or Thursday evenings from 6-8 p.m. or some variation. We would be able to offer multiple groups access to the space at the same time. (Right now, we have the Upper Monroe Village Task Force meeting here once a month from 6 – 8 p.m. I adjust my schedule so I can attend this meeting. It works out fine.)

New staff positions needed: Full time librarian; Part time computer aid.

Sully Branch:
- Building needs windows that open, we need some fresh air
- We need more outlets in the walls and not in the floor.
- We need our own entrance to the library that can be used when the rec center is closed, or the ability to close off access to the rec center, when they are closed.
- Lower “library parking only” signs so people can see them.
- We would like to avoid small “hidey holes” as this would create a safety issue, and it would cut down on the line of sight. We would like to see the adult area enclosed with glass walls. This
would create a sound buffer and would keep the line of sight open. Removing the line of bookshelves in the back of the children’s area, and having one of the glass walls placed there, would allow care givers working in the adult area see their children. Placing a door in this wall would let care givers enter the children’s area without having to walk the entire length of the library to enter the children’s area. This door should be one way, so children cannot have easy access to the adult area. This door should have an automatic door opener that staff can use to let care givers back in the adult area, so they won’t have to walk the length of the library to return to the adult area.

- Have movable walls in YA section that can be used to create programming space when needed. This will provide an acoustic buffer when needed, and public library space when not needed.
- We would like to have better “NEW MATERIALS” sections with better signage. This is something that can and will be done in house. In the future, if we have more new materials displayed upfront, we may need to relocate the DVD collection.
- We need more support for marketing. If RPL hired a full time marketing professional to work with ALL branches, it would present a common theme across all locations. This would allow for consistent and powerful branding. This person could place programs on the MCLS website, and various platforms.
- We should add more signage inside the building. We have identified an area to add some inside signage and will work with Maintenance and Graphics to get this done.
- Square off children’s area, and enlarge it. We should purchase better shelving that is a little bit taller, but not much taller. Evaluate collection to see areas we can cut down on to gain more space, for example, reduce non-fiction section.
- While not a small move, we would like to see the support beams moved. They are often in the way of things.

**Phillis Wheatley Community Library:**
We talked about adding a makerspace- where it would go and what technology to have. I have visited the "Creation Station" at the Greece Public Library to get ideas. We know that it would take some funds to implement and discussed fundraising ideas, like having a branch specific t-shirt to sell on site. We also talked about starting the makerspace as a pilot program and asking the youth what they would like to have in the space.

A branch specific t-shirt also played into how to market and publicize the library, along with the suggestion of having a "Phillis Wheatley" statue on site. We would also like to start having a Phillis Wheatley Birthday event at the library on Phillis Wheatley's birthday (May 8th).

Purchasing lightweight barriers that could be used to control noise in the main room and in the meeting room could help make the branch not so noisy.

We were told that the book budget could be used for other things besides books. We thought about getting subscriptions to streaming services that we could use for programing.

We asked patrons what they wanted and having drinks and food available was the top pick. We could look into having vending machines at the library and/or what it would take to have a Keurig for patron use.

**Winton Branch:**

**Computers**
One of the issues that we have is that most of our adult computers line the wall that leads to the children’s room. This is troublesome because many of the older teens play games that involve first person shooters, and I often have to ask kids to move to computers that are not in an area where small children are likely to
oversee. If all the computers were in a more central area, it would alleviate these problems. We would love to put the adult/YA computers on pods, which we would put where the DVD collection now stands (see below). This would open the area, and allow better line of vision throughout the library.

**Shelving**
Trying to give prime real estate to the most circulating collections, we would love to be able to move the DVDs, new and audio books to the area next to the door where our community bulletin board is now. After we came back to the branch and measured, we found that there is not anywhere near enough space for this. However, we did come up with a plan B, which has a better chance of working. Please know that I am spatially challenged, so it would be very good to have someone with a better eye to take a look before we start actually moving anything!

We’d like to create alcoves along the wall between the Circulation Desk and the Children’s room for most of the DVD collection. (This is the area where the computers are today.) It would look very much like the shelving in the Children’s Center where the Work With Children Collection is. This would allow for almost all of our DVD Collection. We would add a long, low shelving unit that would define the DVD space, and which would hold the nonfiction DVDs and the TV Series. If this shelving unit were on wheels, we would be able to roll it close to the main DVD collection if we were to have a large, indoor program. (Flexible furniture!)

We would swap the positions of Audio Books and Large Print, which would create a Media area, where DVDs, Audio books, and music all reside in close proximity to one another.

**Programming**
We’d like to provide more social events at the library. We brainstormed some ideas:

- Karaoke night
- Trivia
- Euchre or other card games
- Puzzles (we are already doing this)
- Chess sets out on tables for patron use.
- Once a week we could put out the Keurig some baked goods solicited from local bakeries for people to enjoy. (We could ask four bakeries for once a month donations to keep the price low enough cost for us to provide.)
- Music – maybe student performers would be free?

**Signage**
- Patrons ask where our various collections are. We would hope to get fun and interesting signage designed by Corinne, such as the signs that they have in the Reynolds Media Center and Arts Division downtown. We would hope that these graphic signs would grab people’s attention more than the textural signage that seems to blend into the walls where no one notices.
- We also thought that neon signs in the transom windows might better identify our building and what we are.

**Services**
We talked about some of the services we wish we could provide such as:

- Ability to print from a cell phone
- Faster Internet service; our Internet speed is often so slow that people sometime just give up.
- Credit card reader. With no reader, we have to use a circuitous method to allow people to pay fines with their card.
- Docking/charging station
- Mobile Starbucks or Greenhouse Café could have a satellite office
7. What are the final takeaways?

**Arnett Branch:**
Overall, it was a good study and some, but not all, of the ideas Hester St. supplied should be implemented.

**Charlotte Branch:**
What are the final takeaways? Ultimately, we thought the Hester Street analysis was only partially useful and insightful. It was somewhat shallow and lacked an understanding of RPL realities. It has something to say, but we'll still need thorough internal visioning and discussion to develop a truly appropriate, perceptive and actionable plan for the future.

**Frederick Douglass Community Library:**
- Team Douglass is very proud of the excellent customer service we provide to our neighborhood, the City of Rochester, and Monroe County.
- Our building is clean, our materials are regularly weeded, we purchase according to patron input, and we are maintaining important community partnerships.
- We believe we’re on-brand and consistently cultivate a welcoming and fun atmosphere for patrons of all ages.
- We know who we are and we deliver at all times.

**Lincoln Branch:**
The final takeaway from the Lincoln branch library is the consistency that our staff has in the priorities we all see for the branch. We are all a close family with many ideas and many opinions, however in going through the points listed on the Hester Street report, we all very quickly agreed on main points and priorities we saw for Lincoln. As a team we all agree that increasing the safety of the building for patrons and staff alike is one of our top priorities. We are very happy to say that our library is a heavily used community resource with patrons that will often come in for the first time for a quick visit, but continue coming back often as they form relationships with our staff that last for years.

The Hester Street report offered several useful suggestions that we all agreed would be very beneficial for the community that uses the Lincoln branch and we are excited to move forward to the next step!

**Lyell Branch:**
Our final takeaway is that even though we are small, we are effective in the Lyell Avenue community and we have potential. We have some small quick wins that are achievable. Since January we have made a tremendous effort to clean, declutter and access the resources that we do have. We have made a tremendous effort to connect with the community and access their needs daily.

The fact that we have so many expired cards in this community as well as throughout the library system was astonishing. Since we attended the retreat, we have let the public know those numbers and we have stop offering guest passes so regularly. It is our hope and desire to make our patrons more aware of their library account standing and information.

Lastly we feel that we have some great ideas that we need to work on executing the quick wins and small moves until the Big Wins come.

**Maplewood Community Library:**
The staff at Maplewood wants the library to stay in the current location with a larger parking lot. We feel that being next to Aquinas and as part of this area of the neighborhood are important. Maplewood works in partnership with Aquinas with their students for community service. We want to continue to provide
life-long learning opportunities and continue to be a welcoming space for the community. Staff is proud of the work and services they provide. The Maplewood Community Library is a unique and valuable resource for the community.

**Monroe Branch**
While some of their ideas were helpful, I think their larger ideas were not very practical. It has made us think about how we are doing things and to be open for trying new ideas. We came up with a number of new ideas at that Branch Retreat. We are still brainstorming ideas. However, to be totally honest, I think the library could have done this self-examination in a less costly way.

**Sully Branch:**
This was a great exercise that should be done frequently by staff in every capacity. Everyone has their own vantage point, which means everyone has different realities. While listening to staff, and hearing some of their realities, my eyes have been opened to different possibilities. I can see possibilities for an amazing organization to become even more amazing.

In addition to listening to staff ideas, and in how we can do things differently, I think it would be a good idea to look at policy. Do we have outdated policies that need to be brought into current times? Are some of our policies holding us back from what we need to do? Are we holding ourselves back due to reliance on dated policies and resistance to change?

**Phillis Wheatley Community Library:**
The Hester St. Report helped staff look at the branch in a different way.
We do need to have better marketing and publicity since we all agree that people don't know who we are and what we can do for them.
Staff enjoyed being together with the other branches and hearing what they had to say.

**Winton Branch:**
This experience has given me a much clearer idea of where I want to take the Winton Branch Library. It was valuable in that all staff were able (and willing) to put forth their ideas. We were able to build on each other's ideas and come up with some wonderful ideas that do seem workable and not unreasonable.

I have always been someone who likes to get the staff together to discuss decisions that must be made. It is good to know that administration is behind this philosophy of management. I will be discussing the strategic plan with my staff at our next staff meeting.

8. **Other Thoughts:**

**Charlotte Branch:**
There was some discussion of the hours we’re open. We know several people indicated on the survey they’d like longer open hours in the evening, to better accommodate working folks, but it’s also our observation that people regularly come to the library before opening as well (and we have to turn them away). Which would best serve the most patrons…earlier hours or later hours? We don’t know. Earlier hours would be easier to accommodate at our current staffing levels. Later hours would present greater staffing challenges.

Hester St suggested moving the teen room to the second floor. There was some discussion of this. Kim would regret the loss of floor space in the children’s room but is eager to try to bring more teens into the library and feels a nice space on the 2nd floor might help. I, on the other hand, feel that given our present staffing models, teens are better managed where they are now on the 1st floor. For large parts of the day the 2nd floor is staffed only with pages or literacy aides, and they are not the appropriate staff to manage
the behavior issues that teen service inevitably entails. I feel that if part of the 2nd floor were used for other purposes, a quiet study/reading area or tutoring area might be a better use, given our staffing challenges. We also know that one of the things patrons told us on the survey they like about Charlotte Branch is the large kid-friendly children’s room with plenty of play space. And staff mentioned that some years ago children’s programs were held in the meeting room and were less well-attended than when they are held on the 2nd floor (which is our current model for children’s programming).

It was suggested that teens are not a big user group at Charlotte because during the school year they are adequately provided for by their school libraries, because they attend school away from the neighborhood (and our one local high school, The Leadership Academy, is attended largely by commuters), and because, as for working adults, we have no evening hours to accommodate them.

A few patrons have requested self-checkout machines. Can we get? They would not work for DVDs…our DVD process does not accommodate self-checkout.

The current building is something of a landmark in the neighborhood. Patrons often comment approvingly on the coziness and old-time feel of the building. Charlotte likes its traditions. Physically we’re well integrated into the residential neighborhood. We’re easy to get to and some patrons walk here.

Reasons to move: Hard to manage three floors, inadequate electrics, we lack space for small study rooms, we lack space for collection expansion, and we have very inadequate parking.

The Port has sometimes been mentioned as a good location, but hasn’t the Port found it hard to draw people year-round? Also, the parking lots and other distances are large, making accessibility for older patrons more difficult (plenty of parking, though), and it’s not really in a neighborhood. People already say we’re too far, so the beach would be even more remote. Would moving the library that far away from the center of the residential section incline people to go to Greece or Irondequoit libraries instead, since closeness to their residence would no longer be an advantage? There are neighborhoods down by the beach, so would moving to the Port attract a new patron base? In the abstract it’s a nice location and might have political benefits. Winter’s bad down there…be prepared for very light winter use. Would a commercial building in Charlotte with parking essentially at the door be a better option for a move?

Basically the discussion came down to those who thought the library should remain in the current location (about 2/3 of staff present) and those who thought a move might be advantageous (about 1/3 of present staff). We’re generally wary of the Port as a location because in spite of its theoretical attractions, in practice it has proven to be an unpopular and underused facility. Numerous retail establishments have died a slow painful death there. Who’s to say a library could do any better?

Any move would need community support. Charlotte is somewhat change resistant, and has a core of dedicated activist citizens. Community buy-in for a move would be absolutely essential.

**Sully Branch:**

**Highest program attendance, High reference questions and door count**

Our reference numbers have been going down, but not because we are doing less. We are doing just as much. We discussed reference vs. non reference, and the importance of putting everything into Gimlet. We request administration evaluate how reference vs. non-reference is defined and counted, maybe calling it “patron interactions” instead.

**Co-location with recreation center:** Being attached to the rec center allows us to serve more youth, and gives us more programming opportunities. For example, we have access to a kitchen and gym for some programs.

An additional door in the front of the library would create a security risk. Right now, people have to go
past the rec center desk, and this provides a layer of protection. We would also have to get another security gate.

We need our own entrance to the library that can be used when the rec center is closed, or the ability to close off access to the rec center when they are closed.

Parking is an issue for staff and patrons.

**Winton Branch:**

**Miscellaneous topics that came up in our discussion:**

- Ten branches share one resurfacing machine to repair DVDs and CDs. Would it be possible to buy a second one? We have had as many as 100 items waiting for repair at a time. I’m sure other branches have the same problem!
- Get rid of the parking lot gate. It causes hostility within the community, instead of the goodwill we desperately need and want.
- Our Community Bulletin board is a mess. Undated programs/information stays up there for years. People don’t see it, don’t look at it, but want us to hang up their stuff. Can we get rid of it?

**Where do we go from here?**

Just as I was finishing my presentation of our discussion to the larger group, Patty let us know that someone was interested in buying in our building. She mentioned that our neighbor, the church on Atlantic Avenue just behind the library was for sale, and wondered if we could build a new building in that location. We have given this idea a lot of thought and, paired with the renovations that we would like to see, it would probably be cheaper and more energy efficient to move to a new building.

The entryways into the building have been fixed numerous times, and I just put in another ticket to have Maintenance come and take another look at the Atlantic Avenue door. It seems that the sidewalk just outside the door is heaving, and as it rises, it causes the door to be unable to close properly. Last fall, Dave was here to grind the sidewalk down, and it appears that this will have to be done again in the very near future.

Since I am unsure of a timeline for the possibility of moving to new quarters, I would hope that we could make some of the quick wins I have suggested that would not cost too much money. It may be possible to repurpose current shelving from the DVD collection and move to the wall. It seems to me that moving the DVDs should be a top priority, as the way the shelves are arranged to date makes no sense whatsoever. Perhaps there are pods at a library in the system that are not being used right now.

It is my understanding that money has been put aside to refurbish the children’s room. As excited as I am by the prospect, and as wonderful as that would be, my recommendation would be to save that money and pour it into the new building. It makes little sense to refurbish something that is slated for replacement.

If we build a new building, we would wish that it have space enough that we could offer large programs as well as small ones. It would be good to have a working sink in a program room for messy programs and making things. A linoleum or tile floor would be a boon. There are many other things we would be looking for, but I think that discussion is for a different forum.

In short, my proposal will have to be dependent on many factors, depending on what decisions are made.

- We have a long term plan if we stay in this building, which would be to gut the whole place, move the entrance to the building to the north side where the parking lot is. This would entail rearranging the entire layout of the building.
• We have a long term plan of selling this building, and moving to another building in the neighborhood. This seems like the best option to me.
• We also have a short term plan in place that will make the wait to move to a new building or finding the money to gut the place more palatable by maximizing the space we have until we can make big, sweeping improvements.