

It's really happening. Really.

Submitted by Margaret Jakubcin, NOLS Library Director

There is a lot to update the Friends on about the Sequim Future Library project! Read on for a recap of the community-based planning process, and an overview of the conceptual design for the new library and the new FOSL spaces.

Project Background: Both the community and the Friends have been waiting a long time for the chance to turn the dream of a bigger, better Sequim Branch Library into a reality. A project of this scope requires a lot of planning, and broad community support. It may not have always been apparent, but NOLS has been working toward a solution to this challenging problem for many years. Here's some of the critical groundwork that took time to put in place, but laid a strong foundation for a successful Sequim Branch project:

- With the Levy Lid Lift in 2010, NOLS stabilized funding for operations, resulting in expanded hours, collection, and services, and also demonstrating the Library's track record for election-promise follow-through.
- With the help of generous funding from FOSL, the Library greatly expanded programming and event offerings, bringing more people into the library, and improving public awareness and positive regard for the Sequim Branch. FOSL also contributed to a number of critical projects that have made it possible for NOLS to continue providing great service in an inadequate and undersized building. FOSL contributed \$130,000 toward the 2009 "facelift" remodel of the branch, which helped bridge the gap until a longer term solution could be achieved. (If you've forgotten the sad state of the library prior the 2009 facelift, just check out the Past/Present/Future picture below). In addition to cosmetic enhancements, the 2009 project also included important infrastructure improvements, such as getting the Library off an old septic system and hooked up to City sewer service. FOSL has also contributed generously to other mechanisms that have helped the library cope with the undersized facility, such as construction of the outdoor stage (and support for the summer porta-potties), which improved the library's ability to share fabulous cultural and recreation opportunities with far larger crowds than the existing library meeting room can accommodate.
- During the last 2-3 years NOLS has engaged the community to develop a shared Future Library vision, and to develop a viable conceptual plan and solid project cost estimates. All that information was then assembled in the forms necessary to ultimately (and finally!) provide the community with the opportunity to weigh in on funding a larger library in Sequim. This long effort included a number of public discussions and community taskforce activities, architectural planning and cost estimating, decisions and resolutions by both the NOLS Board and the City of Sequim, and (hopefully completed by the time you read this) a final action by the Board of County Commissioners that officially places the propositions on the November 2018 ballot.

It's been a long time coming, but it's really happening!

Building Plans: I hope you've had a chance to look at the floorplans and architectural depictions of the proposed Future Library, and are as excited as we are about how these plans reflect the community vision. If you haven't seen them yet, there are copies available in the Sequim Branch, and on the library website at www.nols.org/sequimfuturelibrary/ (click on "Design"). The conceptual plan for the Future Library includes most of the attributes requested by the community, such as:

- Space for expanded collections and computers, with many more seats and workspaces
- 2 large, flexible-use community meeting rooms, which can be further expanded for very large events
- 4 study/small conference rooms
- Special, designated spaces for children, tweens, and teens, including a smaller activity room to support storytimes, Maker/STEM activities, and other programming for youth
- A separate, enclosed reading room for quiet study and reading
- Technology upgrades
- ADA improvements
- Outdoor views and access/connection to the outdoors
- More parking
- Designed with functional flexibility, to support multiple uses and future changes

What's in the plans for FOSL? The Friends of Sequim Library is a critically important partner to the Sequim Library and to NOLS, and so we took FOSL's needs into account throughout the preliminary design process. As you know, last winter Library staff met several times with a group of FOSL volunteers, to discuss how best to incorporate FOSL space into the Future Library plans. The final conceptual design for Sequim's Future Library includes **two different options** to support future FOSL activities:

- Space allocation for future construction of a large 1500 sq. ft. free-standing FOSL building on the east end of the parking lot
- and**
- Allocation of approximately 400 sq. ft. of dedicated space for FOSL operations within the library, plus extensive access to other flexible-use library spaces, which can be utilized by FOSL for various activities.

As a result of discussions with the FOSL group, it became clear that it would simply not be possible for NOLS to fully meet FOSL's desires within the building footprint. While it is good planning, given the importance of FOSL contributions to the Sequim Branch, for the Library to make reasonable provision for Friends' space within the library proper, meeting the space requirements proposed by FOSL raised some challenging site, size, and cost issues, to which there is, sadly, no easy fix. Here's a brief look at those challenges:

- FOSL requested 1500 sq. ft. of dedicated space in the new building. If this space was allocated for FOSL use within the library footprint, some other library space allocation would need to be decreased. For comparative perspective, here's the square footages allocated for a few key library spaces: the entire children's department (1,376); the combined computer/quiet reading/study room areas (1,488); both large meeting rooms combined (1,646); the staff workspace that supports all library operations, including IT/mechanical, facilities, and storage (1,370).
- For additional cost perspective, if it were feasible to allocate 1500 sq. ft. within the library for dedicated FOSL use, the estimated construction cost for that space would be approximately \$684,000. Even at FOSL's current, absolutely amazing, 2018 donation level of \$27,000/year, \$684,000 is still a big figure, one that, theoretically speaking, represents more than 25 years of potential FOSL donations.

Following initial conversations about FOSL space in the library, and how it might function, FOSL planners expressed a preference for continuing to conduct Friends operations in a separate free-standing building. NOLS therefore had the architects situate the new library on the site in such a way that sufficient space is allowed on the east end of the property to accommodate FOSL's vision of a large free-standing building for book sale activities. There are many details about this option that have not yet been explored or discussed, but generally speaking the location would accommodate a building up to 1500 sq. ft. in size, with 24/7 access, easy drive up delivery access, and convenient parking for book sale volunteers and customers. Also, since the architectural requirements for a book sorting/sales space are different from those of a public library, costs per square foot for constructing a freestanding FOSL space would likely be lower than costs per square foot for FOSL space within the Library. There is however, a serious cost consideration to this option. Public funding (either from NOLS' reserves or public bonds) cannot be utilized to fund a freestanding building, the sole purpose of which is to house the operations of an independent nonprofit organization, even one that is dedicated to supporting the Library. This restriction does not in any way reflect the value NOLS places on FOSL contributions and support, it is merely one of the realities of being a public agency and a responsible steward of public funds.

Recognizing the potential challenges to realizing the preferred FOSL option of a 1500 sq. ft. free-standing building, NOLS felt that responsible and forward thinking planning required that the Library also make provision within the library building to support Friends' fundraising operations, even if that option is not currently the preferred choice for the FOSL group. Here's a brief description of the FOSL spaces that have been included inside the library in the conceptual plans.

- A Friends workroom is located on the east side of the building, adjacent to, but separate from, the staff workspace. An exterior door allows 24/7 access to the room and the location has easy drive up delivery access. The FOSL room is also immediately adjacent to the book drop room, which can be designed to receive book donations as well as library returns. This "behind-the-scenes" space is approximately 200 sq. ft., and space usage can be optimized through various fixtures and equipment commonly used by

libraries, such as: compact shelving to optimize storage; modular, versatile work tables and shelves for sorting/display; book trucks to minimize heavy lifting and hauling; and/or rolling shelves to support movement of materials into public spaces throughout the library for ongoing or periodic sales. A large rollup door from the FOSL workroom to the exterior provides easy and immediate access to bring rolling sales shelves out into a covered patio area near the main entry for really big sales.

- The conceptual design also includes about 150 linear feet of prime book sale/display space in the main lobby/entrance area available for use by FOSL. Since these are conceptual layouts, they can, following funding approval, be further refined. For instance, the open shelving in the lobby might conceivably be reconfigured in final design as a sales “store” of some type.
- In keeping with the essential design goals for the entire building, the FOSL spaces within the library proper are conceptually designed to be as flexible as possible. Should FOSL ultimately decide they prefer not to utilize some or all of the space provided in the conceptual design plans, that space can readily be reallocated and used to directly support library operations or public service, rather than Friends fundraising activities.

Both the configurations described above are used effectively by Friends of the Library groups around the country to conduct the fundraising activities that provide such an important supplement to public funding for library services. Happily, the design for the new Sequim Branch will accommodate either operational model. NOLS has been reinventing library service in Clallam County for over a decade, and we well understand that change is difficult. Even good and long wished for change, such as a beautiful, big, modern library, to serve the community well into the future, is difficult. Change is also exciting. NOLS looks forward to working collaboratively with the Friends of Sequim Library to help envision, design, and implement the operational approach to book sales and other Friends-sponsored events that will work best for everyone in the Future Library.

I would be happy to sit down with any Friend individually, or to meet with any group of FOSL members, to chat about the proposed library plans. You can reach me at Director@nols.org or 360-417-8500 x7714.



Sequim Branch Library before & after the 2009 facelift –
Architectural perspective of Future Library lobby, with FOSL sales shelving.