Master Facility Plan

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Adopted by the Meridian Library District Board of Trustees May 20, 2015

Cherry Lane Library
1326 W Cherry Lane
Meridian, ID 83642

Silverstone Branch Library
3531 E Overland
Meridian, ID 83642
INTRODUCTION

Meridian is in the midst of explosive growth, and Meridian Library District faces the challenge of expanding to meet the needs of the growing community. Currently Meridian Library District is composed of a single main library (27,760 sq ft) on Cherry Lane, Silverstone Branch Library (4,500 sq ft) and the Annex for overflow back-office work (1,884 sq ft). A bookmobile operates like a mobile library, performs outreach to the community and is kept at the Cherry Lane location. The combined square footage of MLD facilities is 34,144 square feet. As of the 2013 Census data, the library’s service population was 86,203 (expected to continue to rise) which results in a figure of .40 square feet per capita. An industry standard for libraries is 1 sq ft per capita. We are at 60% below industry standard. The current library facilities are operating at or beyond capacity with no room for continued growth. Building on the momentum of new administrative leadership, a new strategic plan and expanded relationships with the community, MLD engaged a committee of thoughtful community members to assist in developing this plan to set forth the strategy and priorities for future library buildings and locations.

This plan is the result of months of research and discussions to determine the best course of action for the library to maximize impact and exposure while being realistic about the funding and operational challenges that expanding the District brings. We owe many thanks to the citizens who served on the committee for their time and expertise on this project.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. **Executive Summary**..........................page 3  
2. **About Meridian Library**.......................page 7  
   a. History  
   b. Facts and Figures  
   c. Library Use in 2014  
   d. Funding  
3. **Overview of Meridian**........................page 9  
   a. Demographics  
   b. Forecasting  
4. **Overview of Libraries**.......................page 13  
   a. Impact  
   b. Physical Space Trends  
   c. Service Trends  
5. **How Meridian Library Compares**.............page 15  
6. **Competition and Strengths**.....................page 17  
7. **Space Needs**................................page 18  
8. **Recommendations**..............................page 20  
9. **Timeline**....................................page 23  
10. **Cost Estimates Using Models**.................page 24  
11. **Fiscal Projections**............................page 26  
12. **Additional References**.......................page 29
1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From its formation in 1924, the Meridian Library District has honored its commitment to serve the literary and intellectual curiosities of our community. In its infancy, the library operated as a volunteer-driven passion project until 1974 when a choice had to be made. The library could either continue to operate as an unofficial community resource fighting a losing battle to meet the ever-growing demand of its users, or the residents of Meridian could choose to make a commitment to the future of its library. The people chose to invest and voted to form the Meridian Library District. Twenty years later, the growing area faced the same choice once again. Faced with an overcrowded space and too few materials and resources to equitably serve the community, Meridian voted in 1995 to pass a bond to build a new library building on Cherry Lane. Now just over twenty years later, Meridian once again must make a choice.

Facing unprecedented growth over the last two decades, library services are stretched beyond capacity. Despite adding a small branch at Silverstone and innovations such outreach services and digital materials, the library can’t keep up with Meridian’s expanding population. Once again, our community faces two options: continue its current course with the understanding that our newest populations will not have adequate library services; or we can choose to make an investment that will serve our entire community for the foreseeable future.

The Role of Your Public Library

Public libraries are anchors in their communities serving a broad constituency with traditional, modern and innovative services that reflect the changing needs of their diverse populations. Meridian Library District is in the midst of a sea change, moving quickly to modernize the library while holding fast to the traditions and values of a public library, and continuing to find ways to deliver them in new, modern ways.

Nicole’s storytimes always draw large crowds to the Silverstone branch library.
As the Library Stands Now
Meridian Library District performs well statistically in Idaho, and was recognized for its high-quality library services by winning the Idaho Public Library of the Year Award (2014). As a city, Meridian has changed quickly in the last decade and continues to face the challenges of a fast-growing, suburban city.

Meridian Library is well below the national standard in square footage of fixed locations per capita, and the recommendations in this report, if assumed, would bring the library closer to the benchmark. Currently operating at and beyond capacity, the library cannot meet the current demand; even with expanded outreach services, MLD cannot meet the continued growth without increasing the number of fixed service points in Meridian. As the city population increases, so too does the traffic, and as a result, convenience has become a major priority to library constituents. Residents living less than 3 miles away report a reason they don’t use the library as it is “too far away” and “out of the way in my daily routines.”\(^1\)

The Cherry Lane library had outgrown library services in 2009 and the District purchased an additional facility to house the technical services. The Cherry Lane library was built for a city of 40,000 residents and a staff of seven employees. The District currently has sixty-seven employees, many now working in improperly ventilated closets or having no work-space at all at both locations and serves more than 86,000 residents. In 2014 the number of public computer terminals was expanded, yet still the library has waiting lists for computers most weekdays. The lack of a program room at the Silverstone branch results in upwards of 50 individuals attending storytime in the library facility, disrupting others’ use of the library. The program rooms at the Cherry Lane library are in use so often they are generally unavailable to the public as a meeting room space. Staff do a tremendous job making the challenges of their work invisible to the greater public so many of these functional issues are not generally known in the community.

The Choice Is Yours
We’re suggesting a modest, conservative approach in making these recommendations for increasing the library’s footprint in Meridian. Fiscal considerations for sustaining operational funding affected the recommendations and timeline. The recommendations take into account the community demographic profile, service priorities and an assessment of library needs. Peer libraries were examined to determine the number of locations and square footage for libraries serving similar populations with similar budgets.

The recommendations in this report are for the library to expand to a total of 5 locations within the next 20 years: one in each corner of the District boundaries and one in the center, keeping the distance between locations to a minimum and providing adequate coverage of the entire district area. Capitalizing on strategic community partnerships will help reduce capital and operating costs.

The recommended expansion is listed below by order of priority:

\(^1\) Patron interviews during the library’s Strategic Planning process, 2014
1. South Meridian East
   The Silverstone branch is conveniently located, but in a retail storefront that is far too small for the current volume of use. It doesn’t offer program or meeting room space and carries a hefty annual lease that is expected to continue to increase as the costs of real estate in Meridian continue to rise. The opportunity to build a permanent branch library in Southeast Meridian should be seized upon. The YMCA and Hillsdale Elementary School joint-use facility at Eagle and Amity would meet the library’s needs to provide increased facility services and through shared costs to build and operate, do so at great cost-savings to the taxpayers in Meridian.

2. North Meridian West
   Housing development continues to grow in North Meridian at rapid pace along the Chinden/Ustick corridor. Securing land on the northwestern boundary of the District in the near future would be wise- before the cost of land is out of reach. Having a branch library in that section would provide convenient access to the current residents as well as future residents housed in the continued construction currently taking place.

3. Central District
   The Cherry Lane Library is centrally located now, and all bond debt incurred to build it is repaid as of summer 2015. The building has challenges: primarily lack of power and data supply to meet modern technology use- too small a space for operations serving a community this size with no room to expand, but it is structurally sound. While the library is centrally located, it is not actually downtown. A main library would ideally be situated in the downtown core and branch libraries would be built in neighborhoods around the district. With current efforts to revitalize downtown Meridian, the library should seek to have a presence in the core that doesn’t duplicate the services provided so nearby on Cherry Lane. This recommendation is two-part: seize an opportunity to add technology services short-term in a satellite location downtown, and continue to explore options to move the main library to the core in the future. Leave the Cherry Lane location as-is, but continue to make small improvements to the buildings to modernize and maximize use.

4. South Meridian West
   Meridian Library District already owns 3.5 acres of land near the Overland and Linder intersection in South Meridian. Failed bond attempts in 2006 and 2007 led to the redirection of the District to open the leased storefront on the east side (Silverstone branch). While this property is currently owned, the District should remain open-minded about a location for a Southwest branch library to ensure the service area is adequately covered without duplication to other locations.

5. North Meridian East
   Development has mostly filled in the North Eastern section of library district boundaries, but an opportunity to have a library in that corner should remain an option. This could come in the form of a small storefront (especially if no- or low-cost lease) or a creative partnership. This recommendation would be ideal to cover all areas of the District and would fill a hole in the Treasure Valley for libraries. The district has lost some land to annexation by the City of Eagle, but has a large number of registered cardholders in the densely populated area.
Map of Meridian Library District boundaries. On the left, the blue dots are current library locations displaying the radius of use based on industry models. The map on the right shows potential locations for expansion over the next 10 years and their use radius.
2. ABOUT MERIDIAN LIBRARY

Mission
The Meridian Library District supports our community by enriching lives, igniting curiosity, and cultivating connections.

2.a History of the Library
Meridian Library District was started by the Occident Club in 1924. The Occident Club was a group of ladies who formed a club for the purpose of starting a library in Meridian. They sponsored the library until 1974 when they decided that it had grown too big for them. They raised money for the library by holding ice cream socials, pie sales and dances.

The people of the Meridian community voted to form a library district on August 27, 1974. At that time, the Occident Club gave their building at Meridian Road and East Idaho Avenue to the new Meridian Library District. That building served the people of Meridian as a library until it was closed on April 30, 2008.

November 7, 1995, the people of the Meridian community voted yes on a bond that would build a new library building. The property at 1326 W. Cherry Lane was chosen because it is exactly in the middle of the district. There was a farm house, barn and pasture here when it was purchased. The property wasn’t for sale, but the owner, Anna Koskella, was willing to sell because it would become the library.

Construction of the building took one year. For the first time, the Library offered Internet to the people. When the Library opened on May 27, 1997, there were 35,000 books and cassettes in the collections. Today, there are 170,000 books, CDs and DVDs in the collection and another 10,000 titles in growing digital collections. When the Library opened in 1997, there were seven employees and two story hours per week. Today, there are sixty-seven employees and more than forty programs per week for people of all ages. When the Library opened in 1997, there were about 500 people coming each day. Today there are about 1,500 people visiting a Meridian Library location each day.

For the convenience of library patrons who live south of the Interstate, Meridian Library District opened a full-service storefront branch library in the Silverstone office complex at 3531 E. Overland Road on March 2, 2009. The library also has a Bookmobile that travels seven days a week to various locations throughout the Meridian Library District.

The Library is constantly changing the types of things offered for checkout to respond to modern information and entertainment needs. Today, you can borrow an eBook with the tap of a finger on your smartphone. You can learn about programming robots by borrowing a Make It Take It Kit. You can read about Samantha while cuddling the doll during your two-week loan period for the American Girl doll kit, or you can borrow a Kill-a-Watt reader to monitor the electricity usage in your home.
2.b Facts and Figures

Service District Area: 54,624 square miles
Legal Service Area Population: 86,208 (per 2013 Census)
Registered Library Card Holders: 50,587 (2.1% increase over FY13, 59% of residents in District have active library cards)
Non-Resident Borrowers: 414 (people who buy MLD library cards, don’t live in taxing district, up 10% from FY13)
46: Total Library Staff FTE (full-time equivalent) - 67 employees and growing

2.c Library Use in 2014

- Library staff answered 177,917 reference questions
- 53,463 people attended library programs (almost 93% attending Youth programs)
- 36 public computer terminals, used 78,893 times (up 31% over previous year)
- 14,000: average number of books the District buys each year
- More than 175,000 items in the District’s collection (not including digital collections)
- Filled 242,837 hold requests
- 13.4: average number of physical items users borrowed
- Total circulation: 1,034,983 (items borrowed by library card holders) including:
  - 662,236 books
  - 263,278 DVDs
  - 20,267 eBooks, Overdrive and recently launched 3M Cloud Library
  - 19,344 music items
  - 1,110 magazines, recently launched Zinio for digital magazines

2.d Funding

A Library District is funded by a percentage of property tax and has an elected Board of Trustees as its governing body. In Idaho the amount collectible is capped on increases and only roughly 1% of an individual’s total tax amount. Library Districts are capped at a 3% increase per year by law, despite the fact that the population and property values rise at a higher rate. At the current rate, libraries don’t have the funding to keep up with growth. The library’s budget is a combination of tax dollars and income generated through copies, fines & fees, grants and donations. Public Library Districts follow Idaho Statutes, Title 33, Chapter 27.
Meridian Library District Annual Budget
2012-2013: $3,615,696
2013-2014: $4,039,564
2014-2015: $4,327,496

A report that includes income and expenditures is filed annually with the Idaho Commission for Libraries, and an independent audit is conducted and filed with the State Legislative Offices through the Idaho State Local Governing Entities Central Registry as well as made available on the library’s website. The annual budget is presented at a Public Hearing per Idaho Code each year and also made available on the website.

3. OVERVIEW OF MERIDIAN

3.a Demographics

Meridian is a rapidly growing community, which has almost tripled in population size since the 27,000+ sq ft main library was built in 1996. Meridian is a largely white community whose only significant minority is its Latino population, at 6.8%.2 A young city, Meridian’s child-per family ratio exceeds even Idaho’s, which is third in the nation. A third of the population is under the age of 18 while only 8.9% are over the age of 65 (See right). The median age is 32.6, compared to 34.7 in Idaho and 37.2 in the US.

Meridian high school students have a significantly higher graduation rate and post-secondary education rate than both the rest of Idaho and the United States as a whole. The Meridian community enjoys low unemployment, above-average household income, and has less than half the percentage of people living below the poverty line than the national average. A higher than average proportion of Meridian residents are employed in professional and sales/office occupations. Workers in service, construction, and transportation occupations are underrepresented compared to the state and national average.

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2 Unless otherwise noted, information is taken from the census 2010 website (datasets that consider the 2008-2012 timeframe)
Meridian’s satisfaction with the local school district lags behind the national average. Only 52% of Meridian residents gave the West-Ada school system a positive rating in a 2014 citizen survey (compares to 63% nationally). The West-Ada school district is not very well funded, with average spending per student less than half the national average at $4,529. Due to low funding, many schools do not have adequate school library collections. Many of Meridian’s young people rely on the public library to supply reading materials for a variety of school assignments.

Meridian residents currently have limited public transportation options to get to the library, although there are plans for a complete bus service in Meridian. As a first step towards providing bus services, the free Saturday Fun Bus has been running on a 30-minute schedule since August 2014 and includes stops within walking distance of both the Cherry Lane and the Silverstone library locations.

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3 2014 City of Meridian Survey
3.b GROWTH FORECASTING

Meridian continues to grow in population size and number of households. Current projections made by Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho (COMPASS) indicate that the population of the City of Meridian will reach 154,780 by the year 2040⁴. Suburban housing continues to be built and sold at rapid speed. Commercial development is strong and the downtown revitalization gathers momentum with proposals to build a conference and a performing arts center. The U.S. Census lists Nampa as the second largest city in Idaho, however, estimates from COMPASS name Meridian as the second largest city in Idaho in 2014.

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⁴ Forecast data available at http://www.compassidaho.org/prodserv/demo-forecasts.htm
4. OVERVIEW OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES

4.a Impact
Local economies are in rapid transition with the advancement of technology evolving the way we live and work. Today, public libraries provide learning and information resources for individuals, families and businesses in a multitude of formats and mediums. In their role as community anchor institutions, libraries create opportunities for people of all ages through access to collections and technology. Public libraries provide programming that addresses the health, education, and workforce development needs of local residents and are places where people can gain assistance with research and information needs from knowledgeable library staff. Libraries enrich quality of life by providing traditional service benefits, benefits of business operations and program related benefits.

As was true when public libraries in America were founded, individuals in a community today benefit from the cost-savings of public access to resources over market costs of goods and services, as well as the self-identified benefits of getting information or access to technology. Additionally, public libraries provide programming that is highly localized and touches on many community development agendas, from school success to financial literacy, to public health. Libraries are also perceived as a place of peace within a community.

A good public library serves as an attractor for businesses and can strengthen property values by increasing the attractiveness of the area as a place to live. Libraries provide significant business-related spin-off benefits to the local economy that include employment and wage contributions, purchasing of supplies and materials, contracted services, library construction and even the effect on local business resulting from increased foot traffic. They are an excellent resource for startups and entrepreneurs.

A literate community is one that can be employed at higher-skilled, better paying jobs. Libraries promote literacy and provide resources to support and develop literacy in its constituents of all ages. Libraries have long been recognized as an important institution for adult and child literacy, but growing research links early literacy investments to school performance, and libraries are making deeper investments in delivering early literacy supports for young children and families. In Idaho, 68% of children did not have access to pre-school education from 2011-2013. This is much higher than the national average of 54%. As a result, public libraries place a large emphasis on early literacy and school readiness programs. Public libraries are also a safe place for out-of-school adolescents where they have access to healthy adult role models, exposure to literature, and learning opportunities and engagement with community members as a precursor to adulthood and integration as individuals in society.

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7 Population Reference Bureau, analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-11 three-year American Community Survey available at http://www.datacenter.kidscount.org/data#ID/2/0
4.b Physical Space Trends

In recent history, there is a trend toward larger facilities as the library’s role in communities expands and the demand for services increases. Facility size may be affected by population, square miles of the service boundaries, available land, and the ability to sustain operational expenses considerations.

Between 2006 and 2010, public library facilities in the United States increased in size relative to their service populations. The 2006 median for the 78 projects completed that year was 0.61 square feet per capita compared to a median of 0.81 square feet per capita for the 91 projects completed in 2008. Though fewer new libraries were completed in 2009 and 2010, those that were built continued the growth trend. New libraries that opened in Western states during that time frame increased significantly, from a median of 0.35 square feet per capita in 2006 to 0.62 per capita in 2008. This trend is the result of the increasing variety of service needs and the place of the library in bridging a dynamic digital divide.8

Trends in public libraries are to consider and design for the:

- library as makerspace with media labs and creative programs
- library as technology center with access to internet, fax and printing services
- library as learning space with quiet areas for reading and studying
- library as a community meeting place (social) and living room (quiet) with fireplaces, cozy furniture and open spaces
- library as the “3rd place” (to home and work/school) with open, social spaces and abundant meeting rooms

Public libraries have evolved from “houses of knowledge” to “houses of access” and the general public expresses increasingly complex ways they want to use their public library - more activities, more separate spaces, more print books, quiet spaces, convenience, technology (apps, ebooks, etc.) and closer relationships with librarians. Older library buildings can make delivering the varied, desired uses challenging. Newer library buildings and renovations are designed with flexibility and multi-use considerations in mind as well as modern operational efficiencies.

The expansion of the capabilities of libraries to access and deliver information via technology is greater than ever, and libraries are rising to the challenge both in improvements to the physical spaces as well as in the delivery of services to a community. Increasingly, this comes in the form of automation and designing libraries using Green Building efficiencies and automation technology like RFID for library materials. Despite increased technology adoption, there is still great demand for public libraries’ computer labs.

4.c Service Trends

Any strong business or association ideally operates from a place of strength. Libraries identify service opportunities in a community that fit within the mission of the organization. Public

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8 Planning Study for the Nampa Public Library, pages 36-37
libraries continue to deliver the traditional services by collecting and making relevant resources available to a community, assisting individuals to find materials and providing a space for reading or study. Programming has become a priority in public libraries and the success of early literacy storytimes has resulted in expanding the model of community-based programming to reach and serve a wider audience. Expanding definitions of literacy allows librarians to expand program offerings beyond print literacy to financial, health, computer and cultural literacy (to name a few).

Libraries have re-imagined themselves as learning centers and the trend of the Maker Movement, for example, has gained strong foothold in public libraries. Many libraries include 3D printing, robotics, textile programs and spaces to engage individuals with interests in learning or becoming proficient in these areas.

Service to youth and families has always been a staple of public library services. In recent years, however, the use of libraries for collections and programs has increased by this population and in turn more purposeful services design by librarians has resulted. Storytime at the library is not just an entertaining 30 minutes, but has become an early literacy parenting class.

Reading continues to be a fundamental skill and books are still considered the library’s “brand.” As more content moves to the digital world, a new kind of literacy requires fluency - digital literacy - and libraries are taking advantage of their skills as information specialists having more than a century of experience evaluating and organizing media content. The demand for access to computers and the internet remains strong in public libraries, but increasingly, libraries are teaching computer classes and offering technology programs. Events range from social media for small business owners to computer coding clubs for kids. In a time when people feel overloaded with information, librarians have an opportunity to bring our information literacy skills forward to the community.

5. **HOW MERIDIAN LIBRARY COMPARES**

MLD is the thriftiest library in Ada County, spending just under $34 per capita in 2013 (see right).¹⁰

While the population of Meridian has tripled since the building of the Cherry Lane library, the library has only increased its footprint by about 16% in leasing a 4,500 sq ft space for the Silverstone branch. This puts the district second to last in terms of sq ft/capita (with Caldwell the only LYNX member further behind). MLD’s small footprint has led to a number of challenges, including:

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¹⁰ Compiled from ICFL Preliminary Public Library Statistics FY 2013
http://libraries.idaho.gov/landing/idaho-public-library-statistics
Branch programs are exceeding space capacity -- Silverstone storytimes average over 50 people, with up to 120 people at peak times. These patrons share a space of approximately 800 sq ft and block access to the restrooms whenever a program is ongoing.

Lack of shelf space at both locations makes it necessary to weed\textsuperscript{11} materials for space as opposed to use or relevancy. (Example: the Silverstone Branch is currently weeding items that have not checked out in the past eight months to one year, instead of the customary 2-3 years, to create space for new materials being added to the collection)

Collections are too small for community need (selection of books and other materials is inadequate but cannot be expanded due to space constraints). Meridian Library currently stocks 1.63 print books per capita, a ratio which increases to 2 items per capita when including all collections. This compares poorly to a national mean of 4 items per capita for a population of 50,000-99,999 or to even 3 items per capita for a population from 100,000-250,000.\textsuperscript{12}

Staff numbers have increased to compensate for increased circulation and service demand, leading to a shortage of staff space. The library has tried to creatively adapt by converting storage spaces into offices. Currently six staff members are working in former storage closets and many don’t have workstations at all.

Inadequate technology infrastructure does not allow the library to add permanent public access to technology. Most days there are waiting lists for computer sessions and we are unable to make certain equipment, such as the 3D printers, available in a fixed location in the libraries.

\textsuperscript{11} The library term for deleting items from a collection
In the past few years, the library has emphasized the acquisition of e-books, e-audiobooks, and other electronic library materials and is currently the biggest investor in database and electronic materials in Idaho at $93,218 per year in 2013.\textsuperscript{13} There is growing demand for these materials and the digital collections help supplement the physical collection.

The MLD offered a total of 1,125 programs in 2013. Within the LYNX consortium, this represents the third highest number of programs per year after the Boise library and Ada community library system. In an effort to expand what is possible with the existing spaces and to reach out to people who may be unable to come to the library, many of these programs were held offsite using the Bookmobile or Sprinter, or by sending staff to local daycares to do programs there.

Meridian Library District is interested in supporting the creative interests of the community and is actively pursuing innovative technologies such as Maker Spaces, 3D printing, etc. Unfortunately, the library is currently unable to keep up with demand for basic tech-related services such as outlets and charging stations for in-library use of laptops, phones and tablets. Technology use has evolved significantly in the last several years and neither Meridian location was designed for current usage patterns. Also, though the library has Internet connectivity superior to most Idaho libraries at 34.3 Mbps, it still lags significantly behind the national mean of 57.4 Mbps.\textsuperscript{14} This frequently makes Internet and catalog searches frustratingly slow for patrons.

6. \textbf{COMPETITION AND STRENGTHS}

Competition is a reality for any business or association and public libraries are no exception. Libraries compete for funding, compete with other industries for audience, compete with technology for relevancy and compete with each other for prestige.

Meridian Library District’s strengths include a strong positive attitude; community goodwill; forward momentum under new leadership and structural reorganization; a high technology proficiency among staff; a multi-generational, diverse workforce; strategic civic and community partnerships; and it functions as a destination in town. Identified weaknesses include older,
inflexible buildings; not enough space to add staff in order to improve services to the growing community; and not enough locations within boundaries to be considered convenient to residents. Meridian does not have independent bookstores, typically seen as a competitor to libraries. There is one used bookstore, one media retail chain (Hastings) and one religious bookstore (Seagull). Meridian has a number of coffee shops where residents are often found using wireless Internet. Downtown Meridian offers free wifi in its core and has invested in the emerging New Ventures Lab, a modified incubator for supporting startups akin to the Water Cooler (Boise).

7. SPACE NEEDS

If a quality level of library service is to be provided, adequate facility space must be available. In the last 40 years, standards for library building size has grown from:

- 0.6 SF per capita in the pre-computer era of the 1960s and 1970s; to the
- 0.8 SF per capita in the fledgling computer era of the 1980s to mid-1990s; to the
- 1.0 SF per capita in the electronic age of the 21st Century.\textsuperscript{15}

Meridian Library District has not changed its physical footprint since the opening of the Silverstone Branch in 2009. The current square foot per capita is .4, less than half the industry standard, and will continue to shrink if the District doesn’t expand to meet the expansion of the population being served. As previously referenced, projections made by COMPASS indicate that the population of the City of Meridian will reach 154,780 by the year 2040.

Collections
Rapid advancements in technology have resulted in changing media formats, which in turn affects the needs a library might have for shelving - typically one of the largest commitments for space in a traditional library. Increasingly, libraries are shifting funding to digital, cloud-based, streaming collections, while a demand for the physical collections remains. Meridian Library has expanded virtual collections, both to meet modern demand, but also due to the inability to expand physical collections because of the existing space limitations. A reasonable goal is to have 2.5 items per capita in a library collection. In order to meet current population measurements, Meridian Library doesn’t have far to go. Current holdings are 2.03 items per capita, though the ratio will decline, not close the gap, unless the library expands its footprint and ability to add items to the collections.

Seating
A total of 4.5 to 5.0 seats for each 1,000 people served is recommended, to provide a range of 533 to 592 seats, not including auditorium, public meeting room, or conference room. Patrons of a library come to sit and read, work on a laptop, have a meeting, play games or do homework. Libraries need to have both adequate and comfortable seating. Standards for seating range from 4.5-5.0 seats for every 1,000 people served (roughly 500 seats) not including meeting or conference rooms. Meridian Library presently has fewer than 200 seats, which is less than adequate. Currently, many patrons select seats near an electrical outlet to charge a laptop or other device. Meridian Library’s seating does not meet this need at

\textsuperscript{15} City of Boise, Master Library Facility Plan, October 2000
the Silverstone Branch, and there are sections of the Cherry Lane library that have no power outlets available at all, resulting in underused available seating.

Meeting Spaces
Public libraries are gathering places for a community, so providing meetings rooms of various capacities has become a standard. Some libraries construct auditoriums with several hundred seats for concerts, films and lectures. Most common is a large, multi-purpose room with seating for 100-200 using stackable tables and chairs. Some libraries design special storytime rooms in the children’s area. As the role of technology becomes more important, newer built libraries typically include a computer lab for teaching in addition to a public computer lab for general computing and internet access. Larger libraries will add a board room or smaller conference room for seating from 15-30. Small group study rooms are in high demand. Meridian Library on Cherry Lane offers the multi-purpose, small conference and a children's storytime room, and was able to retain the two small study rooms through a minor remodel in 2013. The two conference room spaces are so heavily used by library staff they are rarely available for use by the general public. **The Silverstone Branch library has no program or meeting room space.**
8. RECOMMENDATIONS
The committee presents recommendations both for the areas of the district as well as models. Leveraging partnerships will reduce capital and operating costs for new or expanded facilities.

1. South Meridian East - pursue the joint-use project with community partners, the Treasure Valley YMCA and West Ada School District, to provide a community library.
3. Central District - pursue having a library downtown, either short- or long-term.
4. South Meridian West - build a neighborhood branch library with owned land or otherwise.
5. North Meridian East - seek opportunities to have a storefront or express library in the higher density corridor.

These recommendations take into account the community demographic profile, service priorities and an assessment of library service needs. Peer libraries were examined to determine the number of locations and square footage for libraries serving similar populations with similar budgets. The strategy for Meridian Library District should be to embrace the suburban design in the city and focus on adding locations to increase convenience for access by operating a total of 5 libraries in the district. These are the proposed opportunities to pursue at this juncture.

South Meridian, East
Pursue West Ada/YMCA Joint-Use Project in South Meridian
Community Library Model
Priority: Immediate
This proposed project, two miles away from the existing Silverstone branch, makes sense based on the needs and available resources. The branch library would be approximately 20,000 square feet in size and function as both a public library and as the library for the elementary school students. Sharing the site with the partners would provide cost-savings and allow the library to expand services, but keep operating expenses to minimum growth. Sharing the site with the partners would increase opportunity to reach new library users and increase the convenience for library users by residents using the YMCA, school or city park. A unique partnership with the school could provide an opportunity to design a literacy assessment to demonstrate impact of the public library’s early literacy efforts.

Capital Funding: Building this branch library would
require a bond to be passed by voters. The estimates at this time are around $5 million for the capital costs. That number may change as the design phase has just begun, but given the size, will likely remain in that ballpark.  
**Operating Funding:** Based on estimated costs per square feet, operating this branch can be absorbed into the current budget projections. The estimate for operating a branch library of that size with existing operating hours is $1,602,000 per year.

**North Meridian, West Branch Library in North Meridian Community/Neighborhood Model**  
**Priority:** 3 years  
Continued residential growth in Northern Meridian and the identified absences of libraries in the Chinden/Ustick corridor make this area the third priority. The most desirable scenario would be to have land donated for a future building project. An estimated 15,000-20,000 square foot branch library in Northwestern Meridian would provide increased access to residents north of the Main Library on Cherry Lane. The branch would be a fully functioning branch with traditional library services.  
**Capital Funding:** Building this branch would require a bond be passed by voters. Current construction cost estimates from the YMCA/West Ada partnership allow speculation there might be further cost savings should the 2 projects be undertaken at the same time, or using the same or similar partnership model.  
**Operating Funding:** Estimates for a branch this size would be approximately $90/sq ft. Operating a 15,000 square foot branch library would cost between $1,027,950 - $1,335,000, depending on the total hours of operation.

**Central District**  
**Open downtown Meridian location - Storefront Model**  
**Priority:** Immediate  
Opening a retail storefront would be a short-term solution to having a presence downtown and would allow MLD to add the technology services we are unable to add into the existing facilities without a major renovation/expansion. The technology satellite (working name “unbound” library) is a technology laboratory and educational facility where residents can experiment with emerging technology, digitize their content, create new content, and attend classes, meetings and other programs. The technology lab would be a complement to the New Ventures Lab and would offer 3D printing, computer coding workshops and hack nights. It would not function as a traditional branch library, but would focus on technology and event programming. This lab would serve all ages, but specifically aim to attract Millennials to Meridian as well as serve entrepreneurs and small business owners. We already own a great
deal of equipment, so there would be minimal capital outlay to get it up and operational as well as offer opportunities for grants and sponsorships to support operations moving forward. **Capital Funding:** The outpost would use an existing building and not require a bond to pass. An arrangement could be made with Meridian Development Corporation (MDC) and the City of Meridian to use an existing space and the cost of a lease could be saved. MDC would handle minor tenant improvements and the library would keep capital improvements to a minimum, thereby reducing potential “sunk” costs. **Operating Funding:** Projections indicate the outpost could be operated at about $150,000/annually with the first full year (FY16) being slightly higher. Using existing staff, having minimal utilities and maintenance costs and flexible operating hours, this project could be absorbed in the current budget if some adjustments are made.

**Downtown Library**  
**Priority: 10 years**  
In larger cities, the downtown is home to the anchor library if the system has multiple locations. Based on examining the city design and patron feedback in the strategic planning process, Meridian would prefer more branch libraries to increase convenience as opposed to centralizing the system into one larger flagship location downtown. There is also strong opinion, however, that the community’s public library should have a presence downtown. It is the opinion of this committee that MLD should continue to explore opportunities to move the Cherry Lane location downtown should a suitable footprint to support an approximately 30,000 square foot building be found. Furthermore, it is the opinion of this committee that MLD should continue to maintain the Cherry Lane library with minor improvements and refrain from a large-scale renovation in the near future. Within 10 years, the District will have to consider a major renovation of the 30-year old building. **Capital Funding:** Any new construction would require a bond to be passed by voters. If a building were found that meets the needs of the library, it could be purchased without a bond and capital reserves used to fund improvements. **Operating Funding:** The existing Cherry Lane library costs would be moved to this location, so there are no anticipated increases in operational costs. With a modern building, operating cost savings could be assumed both in the utilities as well as staffing. The Cherry Lane library houses district operations, therefore the operating costs are higher than a normal branch library of comparable size. In 2014-2015, the total District & Cherry Lane operating costs are $3,897,049.

**South Meridian, West**  
**Linder/Overland Branch**  
**Community/Neighborhood Model**  
**Priority: 10 years**  
The District already owns land in southwestern Meridian. We can use the same design for the North Meridian branch and build both simultaneously to capitalize on cost-savings in similar fashion to the West Ada School District’s building strategy. Influence maps tracking the radius of use indicate redundancy between this land and the downtown/Cherry Lane locations, whereas slightly further south and west would provide more consistent coverage over the land within the boundaries. The library should remain open to opportunities in that quadrant. Residential development is starting to pick up speed that far west and south of the freeway. As
the Ten Mile corridor begins to be built up, the traffic will increase and the location will be accessible from major thoroughfares. **Capital Funding:** Building this branch would require a bond be passed by voters. Current construction cost estimates from the YMCA/West Ada partnership allow speculation there might be further cost savings should the 2 projects be done at the same time or using the same or similar partnership model. **Operating Funding:** Estimates for a branch this size would be approximately $90/sq ft. Operating a 15,000 square foot branch library would cost between $1,027,950 - $1,335,000 depending on the total hours of operation. While this project could be tied into a multi-project bond project to capitalize on reduced construction costs by including multiple projects on the same bond, projected operational funding does not indicate the location could be supported until 2026.

**North Meridian, East**
**Storefront Branch Library in North Meridian**
**Priority: 10+ years**
Residential and commercial development has mostly filled in the North Eastern section of library district boundaries, but an opportunity to have a library should remain on the table as an option. This could come in the form of a small, storefront (especially if no or low-cost lease) or a creative partnership. This recommendation would be ideal to cover all areas of the District and would fill a hole in the Treasure Valley for libraries. **Capital Funding:** Unless land were to be donated that would require a successful bond to build, a smaller retail storefront space could be found for a branch library. The anticipated high-cost of a retail lease does not fit with available funding and therefore lowers the priority. **Operating Funding:** Using the Silverstone branch library operating expenses, we could estimate a fully-functioning branch library would cost about $250,000 per year to operate. Despite the low cost to operate, the high cost of retail space, and potential on the western side of north Meridian, this facility is the last on the priority list at this time.

**9. TIMELINE**
Immediate priorities are pursuing the YMCA/West Ada and downtown technology outpost projects. If time allows for making determinations on the North and South Meridian projects, those could be included in a bond ballot (3 libraries total). The South Meridian, East project is
scheduled to open fall of 2017 and is currently under schematic design phase. The earliest Meridian Library could put a bond on the ballot would be November of 2015.

The climate in Meridian is not favorable to debt issuance at this time, yet the demand for public services grows as the community grows and the use of the library increases. Meridian Library has not successfully passed a bond since 1996; the library makes the final payment on that debt in August 2015. Two attempts were made in 2006 and 2007 to build a branch library on Linder and Overland. Both failed, resulting in the opening of the leased Silverstone Branch Library. With positive momentum and a re-imagining of what the public library identity is, it is possible to reach the supermajority required to pass a bond by a public agency in Idaho. Naturally, the library does not want to fail, and great care should be taken to determine what amount or scale the community would come out in favor of before putting a ballot forward. Considerable work should be put into financial research, testing those figures with community members (a common practice is to use a consultant to conduct an independent survey), then developing the strategy and releasing the materials for the public to make their informed decisions at the ballot box.

10. COST ESTIMATES

- Current project cost estimates to build are approximately $237 per square foot. Construction costs alone are lower at $191 per square foot.
- Current cost estimates to operate are approximately $90 per square foot.

Main Library
A Main Library typically has the largest collection, seating and public meeting areas of any other libraries in a city or system. It often has a cafe, Friends of the Library bookstore, plus houses the administrative and support services for the system. Main libraries tend to have the greatest hours of operation and serve residents who live within a 1.5-2 mile radius of the
building. The size of a main library will vary based on the location, but is nearly always found downtown. The library on Cherry Lane functions as the district’s main library, but is more the size of a Regional Library. It was built for a city of 40,000, a population which Meridian has long since passed.

**Capital Projection:** Current estimates for cost per square foot for capital projects indicate it would cost approximately $11-12 million to build a main library of 50,000 (gross) square feet. The City of Nampa just opened a new 60,000 square foot library downtown for a total cost of $16.8 million.

**Operating Projection:** Operating cost estimates at $90 per square foot would result in a range from $3,150,000 (35,000 sq ft) to $4,450,000 (50,000 sq ft) dependent upon the size of the building.

**Regional**

A regional library serves residents within a three to five mile radius, ranges from 25,000-35,000 square feet and serves as a kind of “backup” to other community or neighborhood libraries due to the larger collections and operating hours. It could have anywhere from seven to ten FTE and is typically open six days a week for 60-64 public service hours. Meridian Library District’s Cherry Lane library meets this definition most closely, though much of the space is allocated to District operations which drive the FTE for this location much higher.

**Capital Projection:** Current estimates for cost per square foot indicate it would cost approximately $7-8 million to build a new Regional Library of 30,000 square feet.

**Operating Projection:** Based purely on costs per square foot for estimations, versus a detailed budget, operating a Regional library this size would cost $2,700,000. Because the Cherry Lane library houses district operations, actual operating costs are higher than a branch library of comparable size. In 2014-2015, the total District & Cherry Lane operating costs are $3,897,049.

**Community**

Another full-service type of library, a community library, expects to serve residents living within a two to three mile radius of the library and ranges in size from 18,000-20,000 square feet. Community libraries provide collections and programs that support the community it serves - often families in suburban areas. There are meeting rooms in addition to program rooms, and the library would expect to be open 48-54 hours, six days a week. Staff would include a supervisor and assistant supervisor, two librarians and library assistants and five to seven support staff.

**Capital Projection:** Current estimates for cost per square foot indicate it would cost approximately $5-6 million to build a new community library of 20,000-30,000 square feet.

**Operating Projection:** Based purely on costs per square foot for estimations, versus a detailed budget, operating a community library this size would cost approximately $2,250,000 per year.

**Neighborhood**

A neighborhood library would be open 35-40 hours, five to six days per week and would range from 8,000-12,000 square feet. It would expect to serve residents living within a one to two mile radius of the facility. A smaller footprint would dictate smaller collections, seating and public internet computers. Staffing would be comprised of a supervisor, a librarian, two library assistants, and three or four support staff.
Capital Projection: Current estimates for cost per square foot indicate it would cost approximately $2 million to build a new neighborhood library of 10,000 square feet.

Operating Projection: Based purely on costs per square foot for estimations, versus a detailed budget, operating a Neighborhood library this size would cost under $1 million per year.

Storefront
The smallest of the library models is the storefront model, usually ranging from 3,000-6,000 square feet in a leased, retail space. Staffing would be limited to a librarian, a library assistant, and one or two support personnel. A storefront library would be open five days per week, with 30-35 hours per week for public service, and would expect to serve residents within a radius of one-half to one mile from the building.

Capital Projection: Current estimates for cost per square foot indicate it would cost just over $1 million to build a new storefront library of 5,000 square feet, though it is highly unlikely that would be necessary.

Operating Projection: Based purely on costs per square foot for estimations, versus a detailed budget, operating a community library this size would cost approximately $450,000 per year. The variable would be the cost of a lease, which from the library’s recent experience with the Silverstone branch library, could be in the neighborhood of $100,000 per year. As the costs of commercial real estate continue to rise in Meridian, the library should use this model sparingly.

11. FUNDING AND FISCAL PROJECTIONS
A Library District is funded by a percentage of property tax and has an elected Board of Trustees as governing body. In Idaho the amount collectible is capped on increases and only roughly 1% of an individual’s total tax amount. The library’s budget is a combination of tax dollars and income generated through copies, fines & fees, grants and donations. Public Library Districts follow Idaho Statutes, Title 33, Chapter 27.

Meridian Library District Budget
2012-2013: $3,615,696
2013-2014: $4,039,564
2014-2015: $4,327,496
### MLD Income - 10 Year Income Projection

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Capital - New Building

In Idaho Statutes 33-2728, the code states libraries may issue bonds, “To acquire, purchase, or improve a library site or sites; to build a library or libraries, or other building or buildings; to demolish or remove buildings; to add to, remodel or repair any existing building; to furnish and equip any building or buildings, including all facilities and appliances necessary to maintain and operate the buildings of the library; and to purchase motor vehicles for use as bookmobiles.”

The issuance of bonds, the expenditure of bond proceeds and the repayment of the bonds shall all be as specified in school district law. This requires a supermajority (⅔) of voters in the election to pass and elections for libraries may only be held on the May or November ballots.

Other options for securing the capital to fund the construction of a new library are to pass a Plant Facility Levy (IC 33-2729) or to raise the money privately. A Plant Facility Levy requires only a majority (55%) vote in favor and allows schools and libraries in Idaho the ability to build or improve facilities over time, or in phases.

Other Funding

Meridian Library has a Friends of the Library group that hosts book sales in support of the library’s mission. The amount of money raised and distributed to the library varies, but ranges in the $1,500-$2,000 per year range.

Some libraries have a Foundation that performs fundraising for capital projects. Meridian Library is open to this, but does not have a champion to initiate and lead it yet.

The Library Director is working on a fundraising strategy, but conservative projections are for a range of $2,000-$3,000 annually. The library seeks to obtain grant funding and sponsorships where possible. New construction projects would include naming opportunities as well as grants to assist in the total capital fund.

While an ideal or recommended standard of square feet per capital is 1, pursuing the improvements recommended in this report would bring the library somewhere between the current .4 and 1 square feet per capita. These additional locations plus Meridian Library’s history of operational efficiency would provide the library with the tools required to continue to serve our community with a high standard of service and innovation to meet the literacy and community needs in Meridian.
12. ADDITIONAL REFERENCES/RESOURCES

Boise Public Library; Master Library Facility Plan
http://www.boisepubliclibrary.org/media/4307/MasterLibraryFacilityPlan.pdf

COMPASS
Demographics Forecasts: Population, Housing and Employment
http://www.compassidaho.org/prodserv/demo-forecasts.htm

Institute of Museum and Library Sciences,
Public Libraries in the United States Survey, 2012 Report
http://www.imls.gov/assets/1/AssetManager/PLS_FY2012.pdf

Meridian Economic Development Report; Meridian Rising, a five-year economic development strategy

Nampa Public Library
Planning Study for the Nampa Public Library Program
FFA Architecture and Interiors, Inc. and Ruth Metz Associates

Pew Internet & American Life; Libraries
http://libraries.pewinternet.org/

Public Library Association Metrics,
National Trends
http://publiclibrariesonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/53n2_reid_figure5.jpg

United States Census Bureau
http://www.census.gov/

United Way Treasure Valley Community Assessment 2014

Urban Libraries Council
Making Cities Stronger, 2007 Report
http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/1001075_stronger_cities.pdf