

Guilford Free Library Renovation/Expansion Project

Frequently Asked Questions

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1. Where can I find information about the project?

Town of Guilford Website - <https://guilfordvt.com>

Guilford Free Library Website - <https://www.guilfordfreelibraryvt.org>

2. Why is an expansion needed at all?

The current library was built in 1891. More about the history of the Guilford Free Library can be found on the website.

In 2003 a small addition housing an entry way, bathroom, and basement storage was added to the original building. This was the first plumbing in the building since its original construction, and necessitated the addition of the septic holding tank, and a well. In 2012, an abutting portion of land was given to the Town. This increased the lot size from .29 acres to .48 acres.

The Guilford Free Library is a well-maintained building, with incremental improvements made over the years to increase energy efficiency and usability. It is cozy and quaint, and at 772 square feet of library space there is very little room to move in the building. Every effort has been made to allow for the efficient archiving of the holdings and computer terminal space, to allow for seating and foot traffic, but generally if there are more than 7 or 8 individuals in the Library at any given time it becomes very crowded. There is no meeting space, working space (booths), activity space, or a breakout room.

This Library does not currently meet the standards for the Americans with Disabilities Act, has some code deficiencies, and needs its heating system replaced. The Town of Guilford has put much emphasis in making all its buildings universally accessible. The planning for the new addition ensures accessibility, mechanical, and electrical codes are met. The project will ensure the library meets current energy code and reduce the Town's reliance on fossil fuels.

One key investment the Library has already made is in a high speed fiber network, and a powerful wifi router. Guilford has some of the poorest internet and cell phone coverage in the region, and access to the internet at the Library has proven wildly popular. A majority of internet hours are logged by people from their vehicles in the parking lot, partly because of the limited availability of desk space and seating in the building itself.

The major barrier to responding to demand and increasing the service and programming at the Guilford Free Library is the size of the building and the size of the site. Couple this with the historic nature of the building, and the overwhelming public sentiment that the library should remain in the village of Guilford Center at its current location, then a framework for design improvements begins to appear.

3. What is the demand for Library services and programs?

The most relevant data about the Library comes from 2019. The usage data for 2020-21 was skewed by the intermittent opening and closing of the Library in order to follow state and town pandemic guidelines. During 2019, GFL circulated about 5,000 library materials (books, audio books, periodicals, DVDs, and a few puzzles, passes and stuffed toys). 300 children and their parents attended 48 storytimes, and held 50 additional programs to educate and entertain 631 town residents.

At 772 square feet the GFL is in the bottom 10% of libraries in Vermont in terms of size, with an overall Town population landing at about the median (2,100 people) for communities in Vermont that have a library. The hours open per year (1,300), total program attendance (759 hours), and annual visits (4345) are at the median for communities in Vermont with libraries. The collection includes 3,861 print materials, 227 videos. In addition, 64 additional audio books and 64 large print books have been leased each year. By participating in the Catamount Library Network, the GFL essentially expands the collection from 4,300 to more than a quarter of a million volumes.

Approximately 10 patrons per week use four public access computers. Individual training and on-going support are provided to help people learn and feel more confident about using computers. Therefore, every citizen of Guilford has access to computer technology even if they do not own a computer. The Library has a fiber optic wireless connection, so that in addition to being able to download and upload huge files very quickly, patrons can use their laptops in the parking lot, at any time day or night. There is no password. The OnLine Resources are available to all Guilford residents. These resources include: OneClick Digital (downloadable audiobooks and ebooks); Universal Class (high quality online courses); Heritage Quest (genealogy research); VT OnLine Library (research, magazine and newspaper databases), as well as the catalogue.

Demand usage data is collected by the Guilford Library staff. It is non-unique, in other words the usage information does not identify specific individuals. The data is public information. It is published each year in Guilford's Annual Report, and provided to the Vermont State

Department of Libraries. You can find Guilford Free Library's data, as well as that of most other libraries in the state at https://libraries.vermont.gov/services/news/public_statistics.

4. What new features will be included, and how will the new space be used?

The new features will include additional collections space, private space for patron use, reading nooks, an activities room, a kitchenette, and an additional bathroom. The Library staff is developing a plan for the usage of the new space. Their vision is for the existing library space to be dedicated to expanding the adult collections and computer stations. The new addition will house the children's collections, librarian's work space, and a bathroom in the upstairs portion. An activities room, kitchenette, and a second bathroom will be downstairs. Cozy reading nooks will be scattered throughout the Library.

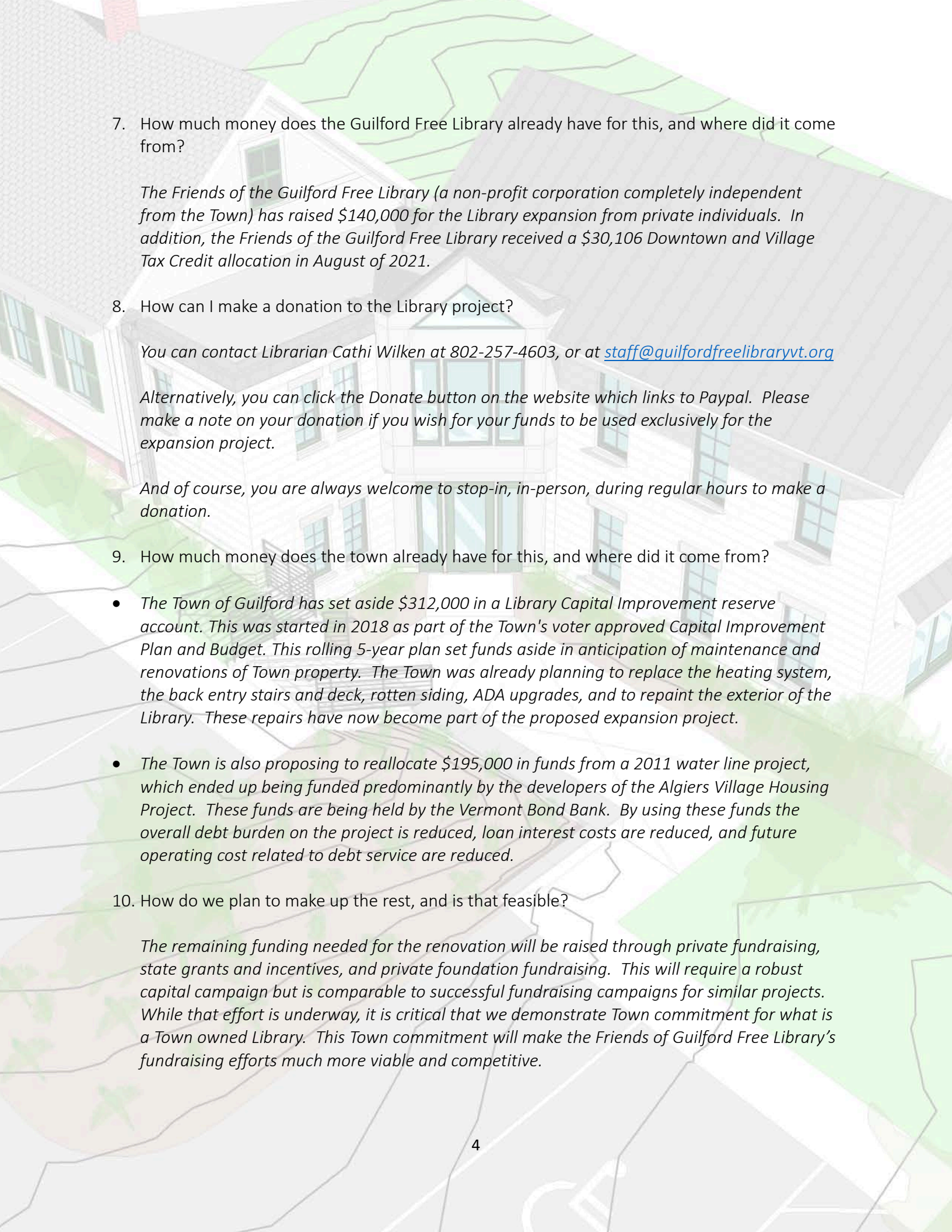
Of special note, the activities room will accommodate multiple uses. There will be adult and children's chairs and tables, with storage space to allow for opening the space up. There will also be direct access to the Library's outdoor space to facilitate programs like the summer camps which move in and out. The Library programs, such as storytime, arts & crafts, summer reading program, adult book group, and others, will be able to take place without interfering with the Library's collections or other patron use. As well, there will be a substantial increase in comfort, especially for adult groups that have been cramming around the current children's table. In addition, Guilford residents and town organizations will be able to reserve the ground level space for small gatherings.

5. How is this different from the Broad Brook Community Center (Grange) project?

The Broad Brook Community Center (BBCC) is a non-profit organization and is unaffiliated with the Town and with the Guilford Free Library. The BBCC is nearly complete with an exciting multi-year effort to improve the former Grange building. The library project did review the design of the Community Center project to ensure that no duplicated community spaces are created. While there will continue to be community meeting space available at the Guilford Library, it is designed for a much smaller cohort of people than what will be available at the BBCC and will support library programming such as children's storytime and arts & crafts, the summer reading program, and the adult book group.

6. How much is the Town asking the voters to borrow?

*The Town is proposing to borrow \$205,000 to support the Library expansion. This borrowing would represent monthly payments of \$771 on a 30-year term. **This is the only new taxpayer funding being proposed for the expansion project.** Common to many improvement projects, the borrowed funds will only be spent if the project goes to construction. The other sources from the Town, listed below in #9, are already in place.*

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7. How much money does the Guilford Free Library already have for this, and where did it come from?

The Friends of the Guilford Free Library (a non-profit corporation completely independent from the Town) has raised \$140,000 for the Library expansion from private individuals. In addition, the Friends of the Guilford Free Library received a \$30,106 Downtown and Village Tax Credit allocation in August of 2021.

8. How can I make a donation to the Library project?

You can contact Librarian Cathi Wilken at 802-257-4603, or at staff@guilfordfreelibraryvt.org

Alternatively, you can click the Donate button on the website which links to Paypal. Please make a note on your donation if you wish for your funds to be used exclusively for the expansion project.

And of course, you are always welcome to stop-in, in-person, during regular hours to make a donation.

9. How much money does the town already have for this, and where did it come from?

- The Town of Guilford has set aside \$312,000 in a Library Capital Improvement reserve account. This was started in 2018 as part of the Town's voter approved Capital Improvement Plan and Budget. This rolling 5-year plan set funds aside in anticipation of maintenance and renovations of Town property. The Town was already planning to replace the heating system, the back entry stairs and deck, rotten siding, ADA upgrades, and to repaint the exterior of the Library. These repairs have now become part of the proposed expansion project.*
- The Town is also proposing to reallocate \$195,000 in funds from a 2011 water line project, which ended up being funded predominantly by the developers of the Algiers Village Housing Project. These funds are being held by the Vermont Bond Bank. By using these funds the overall debt burden on the project is reduced, loan interest costs are reduced, and future operating cost related to debt service are reduced.*

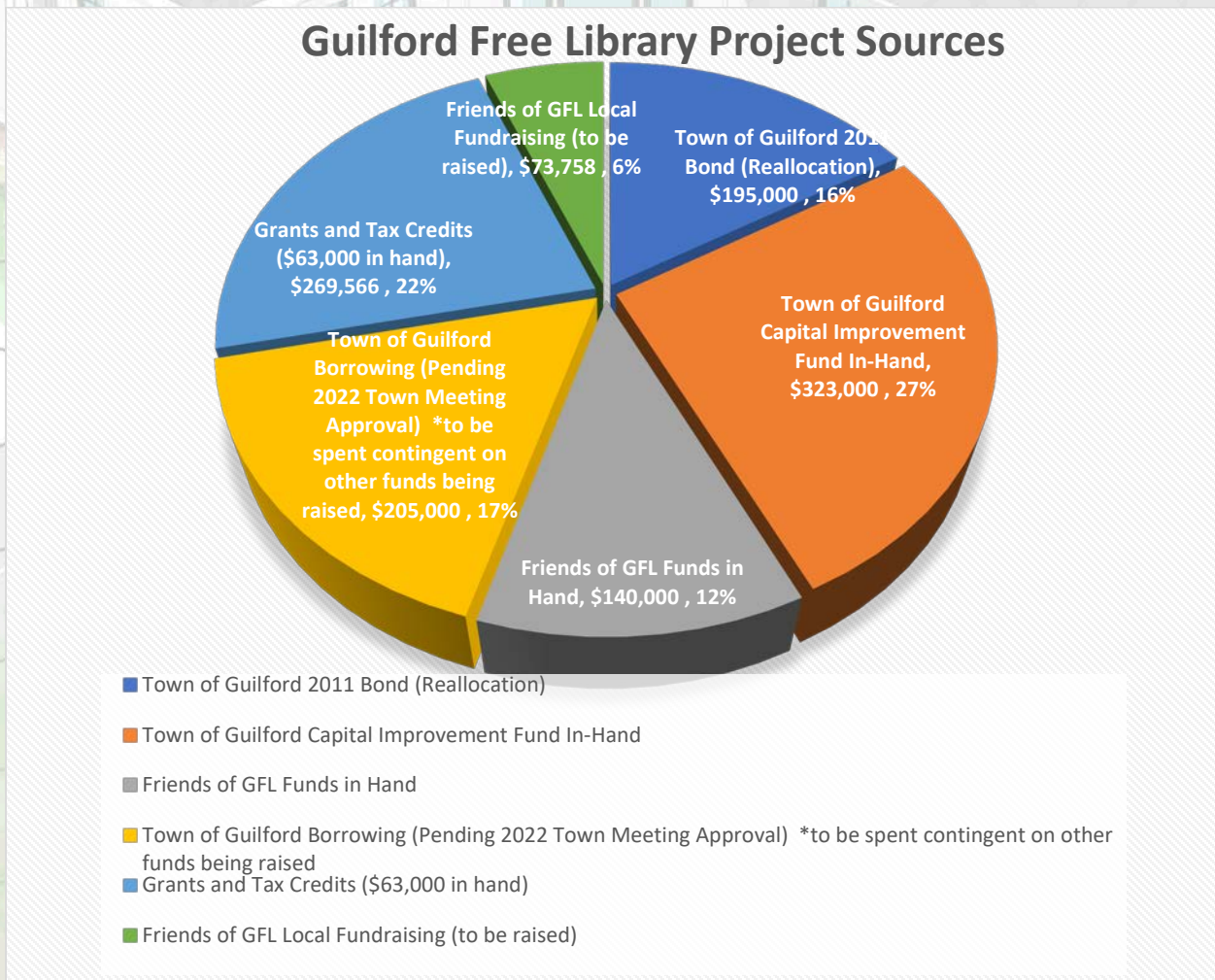
10. How do we plan to make up the rest, and is that feasible?

The remaining funding needed for the renovation will be raised through private fundraising, state grants and incentives, and private foundation fundraising. This will require a robust capital campaign but is comparable to successful fundraising campaigns for similar projects. While that effort is underway, it is critical that we demonstrate Town commitment for what is a Town owned Library. This Town commitment will make the Friends of Guilford Free Library's fundraising efforts much more viable and competitive.

11. How much has this project costs to date?

As of February 1st, 2022 the project has incurred \$60,847.50 in design and development costs. Of that amount \$38,500 has been paid for by a Community Development Block Grant that the Town applied for in 2018 and was awarded specifically for this project. \$22,347.50 in costs to date have come from the Town's Capital Improvement Fund, part of which is specifically allocated for the Library.

12. Can you provide detailed information on the sources for this project, as you showed at the Public Meeting on February 2nd?



13. Wouldn't it be cheaper, and maybe turn out more ideal, if you were to build a separate new building rather than add on to the old one?

Years of surveys and polling by the Library staff have revealed an overwhelming community sentiment to keep the Library in Guilford Center, and to maintain Library operations at the

historic building. The site is not without challenges. However, there are no suitable building site opportunities elsewhere in Guilford Center. The 2020-2021 grant funded Feasibility Study did not contemplate replacing the library at a new location or creating a separate building at the current site. The Town did briefly consider moving the Library next door to the Guilford Meetinghouse. Due to the Meetinghouse's configuration, small lot size, and lack of plumbing, there would be no cost saving to do so. Due to the historic designation of that building, there were certain funding opportunities that would not be available at the Meetinghouse building, which are available at the current location. Expanding at the current site means we don't have to bear new site development and permitting costs, even if there was land available.

14. What is the size of the old building and the addition?

*Current Building (includes 2003 addition, basement mechanical space) – 1,544 square feet
Proposed Addition – 1,938 square feet
Total After Expansion/Renovation – 3,428 square feet*

15. Why is this project so expensive?

Building and site construction cost are estimated to be \$968,000. For this combined renovation/addition project this comes out to \$282 construction costs per square foot. This project has undergone two rounds of estimating, one at the preliminary stage in August 2020, and one in December 2021. Another round of estimating will be completed this spring. Ultimately the project will be competitively bid as is the policy of the Town of Guilford. Total Estimate Development Cost for the project is \$1,206,000, which includes non-construction costs such design, management, permitting, legal, insurance etc.

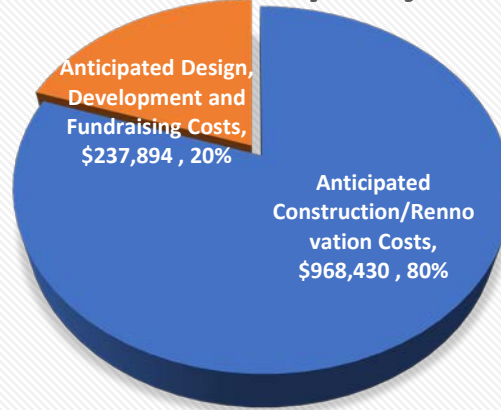
The project is expensive for two major reasons:

1. Elevator. The elevator, additional bathroom, and associated electrical and interior space adds an extra \$150,000 to the project. These features are required to meet accessibility standards for public spaces. The 2020 Feasibility Study explored options to complete the Library expansion without an elevator (or with conveyance such as a lift or Limited Use/Limited Application device), but due to the small lot size, topography, and specific code requirements for municipally owned facilities, an elevator will be necessary to access both levels. Even though the elevator is expensive, there are several grant sources which assist with elevators in public buildings specifically. If it weren't for these potential sources, the elevator costs would be a difficult obstacle to overcome.

2. Current Market Conditions. At this moment in time public projects are experiencing rapid inflationary costs. Many projects in Vermont are stalled, are seeking additional funding, or are trimming back plans. We don't know what the future will bring for construction cost. In particular, we won't know for sure what our project costs are until we bid the project in 2023.

If additional funding is needed for the Library addition, it will come from other sources and not from additional Town borrowing.

Guilford Free Library Project Uses



- Anticipated Construction/Renovation Costs
- Anticipated Design, Development and Fundraising Costs

16. What about the 2020 Feasibility Study referenced above?

A grant funded feasibility study on the Library addition was conducted throughout 2020. Several public hearings and selectboard meetings were held regarding this project in 2020, and 2021. The feasibility study set out to determine if it was feasible to expand the Library at its current location by identifying project constraints, estimated project costs, identify funding mechanisms, and conducting additional due diligence necessary for a public project benefitting from federal funding. This study can be downloaded on the town website. Please be advised that this study is dated, and the Library addition project has progressed in design since this report was completed. The design and cost information included in this report is not current, and has been superseded with new information, reflected in the cost information provided above.

17. Will it cost more to operate a larger Library?

Almost certainly yes. We are developing a budget for operations in an expanded library, but operating cost will depend on final design decisions. We are currently at the 60% design stage. Annual maintenance and inspections, utility costs, and insurances (to name a few) are likely to increase. Debt service (as discussed in # 6), will be a new expense. Programming and staffing cost are likely to remain similar.

18. What is the proposed timeline for this project?

If this proposal was approved at Town Meeting, the goal would be to begin construction in mid-2023.

19. What physical changes are being proposed for the library?

The current designs can be viewed on the Town and Library websites (<https://guilfordvt.com/> and <https://www.guilfordfreelibraryvt.org/>, respectively). These designs are at the 60% stage and include floor plans and site perspectives.

20. Isn't it a conflict of interest if a selectboard member supports the Library project or is involved with the Trustees of the Guilford Free Library?

The Guilford Free Library is a municipal library, owned by, and servicing the Town. The town benefits from having a volunteer citizen-led Board of Trustees, and The Friends of the Guilford Free Library, a nonprofit, volunteer fundraising and library assistance organization. Each year Town Meeting appropriates money in support of the library and its building. Each year the Guilford Free Library trustees and Friends raise money to purchase new books and provide programs. This is a common model throughout Vermont.

All selectboard members have disclosed potential conflicts of interest upon taking their seats and had those potential conflicts vetted by the Vermont League of Cities and Towns. No selectboard member has a conflict of interest with regard to supporting the Town Library.

21. Will there be a meeting space "reservable" by the public?

Yes. The ground level activity space has been designed for outside groups of individuals to use at times that Library programming is not taking place.

22. Will there be a covered outdoor space with an outlet for laptops?

No. At least not at this point in the planning process. There will be a public outdoor plaza area that should be able to benefit from some north side sun shading but will not be covered.