

GREAT BARRINGTON LIBRARIES

RAMSDELL PUBLIC LIBRARY

Library Building Program May, 2024

GREAT BARRINGTON
LIBRARIES

This project was funded by the Citizens of Great Barrington through the Community Preservation Act.

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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & BUILDING ASSESSMENT

designLAB architects

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1.

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

The following Library Building Program is the culmination of a 12-month process, that initially began in 2018, to establish the framework for the future of the Ramsdell Library. The Great Barrington Library Trustees formed a planning committee in June 2023 to begin the strategic planning process. Following several months of community engagement, a new strategic plan, titled “Reflect, Reimagine and Reconnect,” for 2024–2029 was adopted and accepted by the MBLC in October, 2023. Concurrent with the development of the new strategic plan, a Community Preservation Act Grant was pursued. The grant was awarded to the Town to facilitate a community engagement process and to develop both a Building Assessment and Library Building Program. Several planning studies, dating back over a decade, preceded the recent Strategic Plan and current initiative.

A primary goal outlined in 2024–2029 strategic plan is to “reinvigorate, reimagine, and renovate our library facilities as safe, ADA accessible gathering spaces for the library staff and the entire community with a 30-year horizon.” Other strategic goals aim to expand community outreach and partnerships, elevate programming, and increase library usage, all of which support an overall initiative to reimagine the future of the Ramsdell Library.

Located in Housatonic, a village within Great Barrington, MA, the Ramsdell Library has been a civic centerpiece within the community for well over a century. Constructed in the early 20th century to support the local mill workers and their families, it is a well-loved and stately beaux-arts style building. However, Ramsdell Library is now well beyond its prime and has been showing its age for several decades. As public libraries have evolved dramatically over the past several decades, Ramsdell has largely stayed the same. This is both a testament to the building’s historic significance, but also a mindset of accepting the status quo and the lack of investment in the area. The building has a multitude of long-standing issues, including spatial, accessibility, acoustic, building system and building envelope deficiencies that greatly compromise library programming. These issues have been exacerbated by limited use in the recent years as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and staffing shortages that have left Ramsdell underutilized and with irregular hours.

Ramsdell’s reach extends beyond the bounds of Great Barrington itself as the neighboring towns of Stockbridge, West Stockbridge, and Alford all utilize library services. The percentage of registered borrowers who are residents in Great Barrington exceeds the national average and the total number of registered borrowers in the Great Barrington Libraries network exceeds the town’s overall population, a clear indicator of the library’s role and value within the surrounding region. The state of the building no longer supports the original community of Housatonic, let alone the welcomed extended communities that now solicit the library.

Over the winter and spring of 2024 a community engagement effort commenced to solicit feedback and ideas from the community at large, community leaders and library staff and trustees. This effort included several community meetings (both in-person and virtual), online surveys and feedback boards that were available at multiple locations throughout the community. The feedback painted an exciting picture for what the future may hold for Ramsdell. Generally speaking, the feedback portrayed that there is ambition, excitement and conviction in Great Barrington for the village of Housatonic to see a resurgence as a cultural, civic and economic destination for the community. As the demographics in the area shift, and fiber optic service is finally brought to the library later this year, there is immense potential for the Ramsdell Library and the services and spaces it provides to the community to be at the center of this resurgence.

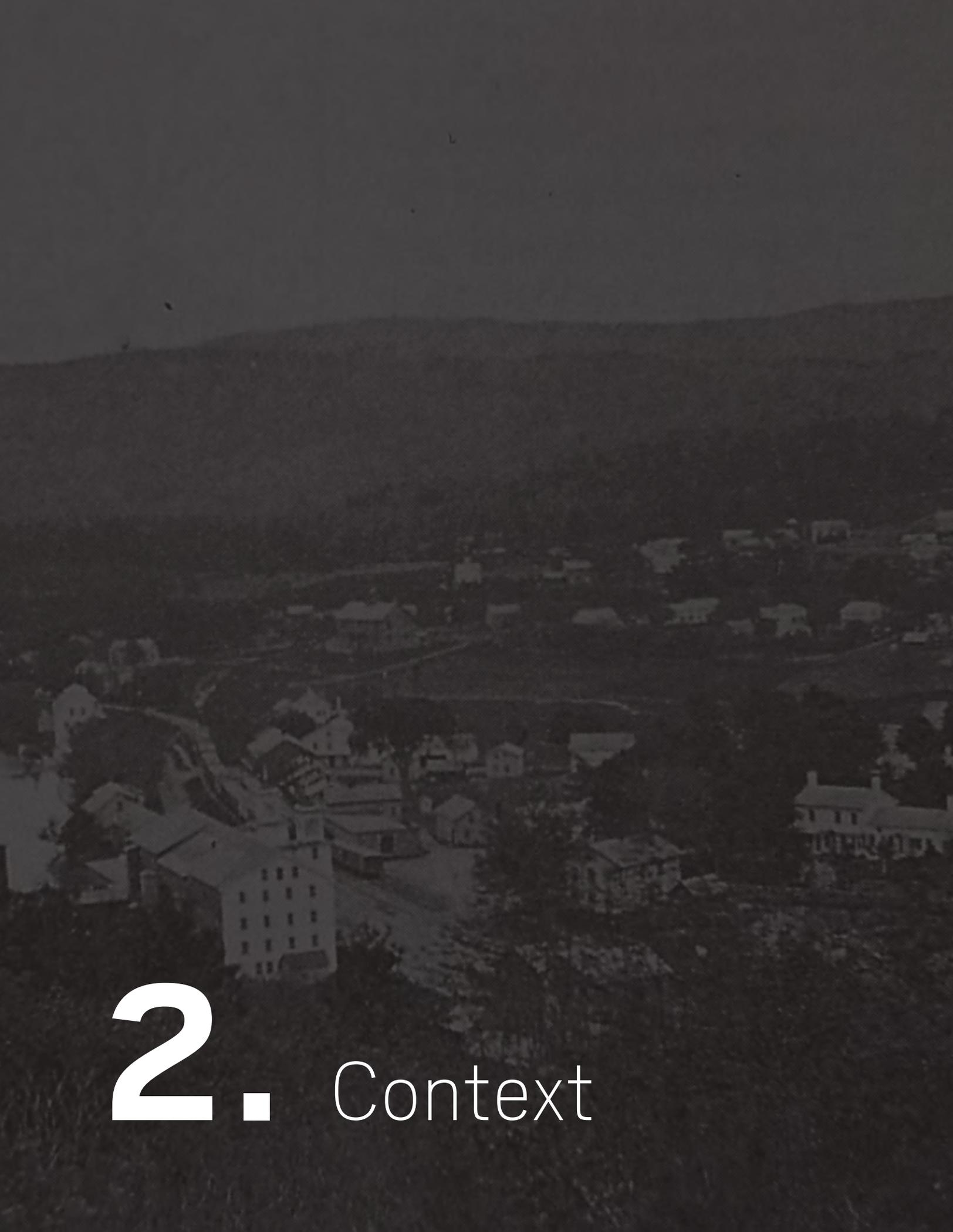
Executive Summary

continued

The proposed building program that emerged through this process, outlined on the following pages, presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reinstate Ramsdell as the civic centerpiece of Housatonic, Great Barrington and the surrounding region that it once was. This program is intended to complement what is offered at the Mason Library (Great Barrington's main library) by providing unique spaces, programs and library 'personality' with a focus on the arts and creativity. Complete with a renewed community room, a variety of meeting rooms, children's and teen spaces, a flexible workshop, a re-tooled collection and outdoor program area, a revitalized Ramsdell will become a thriving community asset and gathering place.

To help support this effort, the Great Barrington Library Fund has been established, incorporated in 2024. The primary objective of this non-profit is to spearhead a fundraising campaign to support the Great Barrington Library system with a capital project at Ramsdell as the top priority. The time for Ramsdell is now.





2. Context

History of the Community

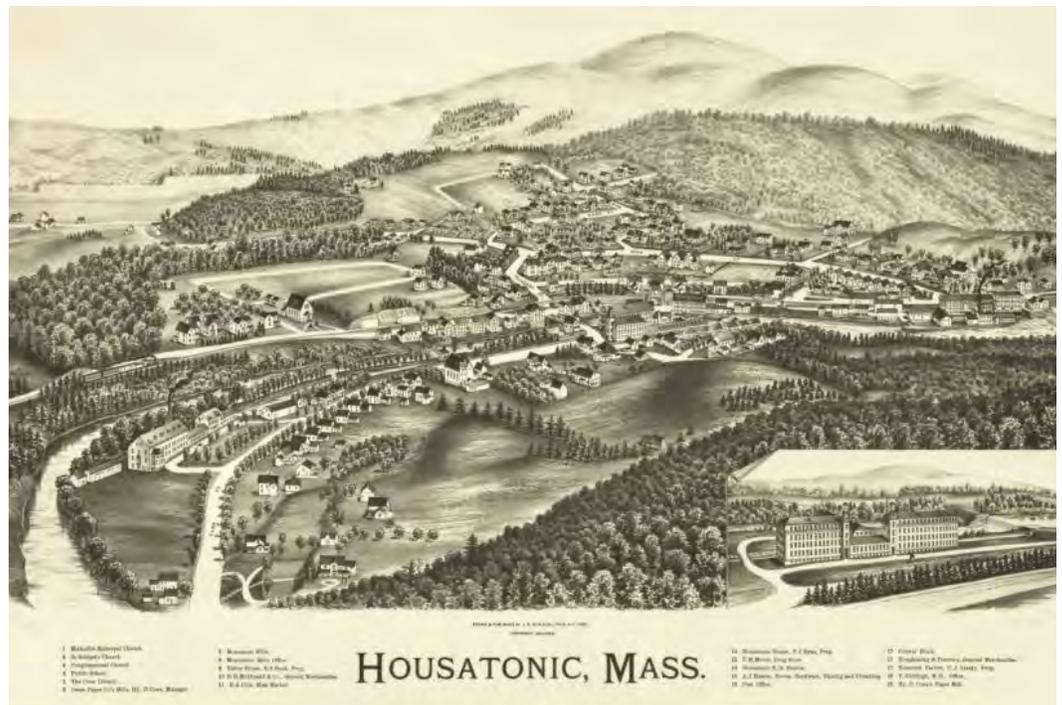
INTRODUCTION

Ramsdell Library is located at the intersection of Great Barrington, Stockbridge, and West Stockbridge, so it functionally serves the residents of all three towns. Ramsdell's character is most closely associated with Housatonic, the industrial village in northern Great Barrington for which it was originally designed.



EARLY HISTORY OF HOUSATONIC

Housatonic is an industrial village occupying a single square mile in the north of the Town of Great Barrington, Berkshire County, MA. The area, now called the Berkshires, is the traditional land of the Stockbridge-Munsee band of the Mohican People, taken in 1761 by colonial proprietors who established the Town of Great Barrington. Housatonic, located about 5 miles to the north of Great Barrington's center, was not settled until 1809 when industrial developers dammed the Housatonic River to power mills. After several decades, reputable cotton and paper industries developed in Housatonic. In 1850, the village's leading cotton mill was reincorporated as Monument Mills, a business that eventually rose to fame as the top producer of jacquard woven bedspreads in the United States. In 1873 Rising Paper Mill was built farther down the river, and was at that time the largest paper factory in the world. Although the paper mill was not continuously occupied, it is in use today by Hazen Paper, an uncommon exception to the mass deindustrialization and abandonment of factory buildings that occurred in New England post World War I. From 1923-1939, 30.9% of manufacturing workers in Massachusetts lost their jobs. The textile sector – on which Housatonic depended – suffered the most severely of all industries in Massachusetts from deindustrialization.



History of the Community continued

RECENT HISTORY OF HOUSATONIC & GREAT BARRINGTON

Today, Great Barrington is the southern center of Berkshire County. With 7,184 residents, Great Barrington is the largest town in southern Berkshire County as well as within the 20-mile tri-state radius, including southern Berkshire, northwestern Connecticut, and eastern Columbia County in New York.

Identity of Housatonic within Great Barrington

Housatonic and Downtown Great Barrington are two dichotomous locales, each with a distinctive personality but ultimately bound by the same tax bill. In 2012, Smithsonian Magazine rated Great Barrington the #1 Small Town in America; just two years later, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts placed a designation on Housatonic, deeming it a blighted community, because of the existence of buildings which are out of repair. Housatonic has additionally lagged decades behind Great Barrington Main Street in the availability of high speed internet and gas utility – community members have requested that the library provide public high speed internet due to the lack in homes.

In 2021, the Berkshire Eagle called attention to Housatonic’s untapped potential for revitalization, notably its “comparatively affordable housing, walkable streets, hiking trails, majestic old architecture, and not a single chain store within a binocular view.” Housatonic has a largely historic housing stock: 76% are structures more than 70 years old. Many of the public structures, including Ramsdell Library, are even older.

Industry & Economy

Great Barrington is a regional employment center. Businesses in Great Barrington employ almost 10,000 employees, or more than twice the number of workers that reside in our town. Most of these jobs are in retail, health care and social assistance. Other sectors accounting for substantial employment include educational services and accommodation and food services. Altogether these sectors employ 36.6% of workers over the age of 16 in Great Barrington, according to the US Census Bureau 2022 ACS 5-year estimates.

Additionally, tourists from around the country visit Great Barrington at all times of the year. In 2022, direct domestic visitor spending in Great Barrington made up 2.9% of the direct domestic visitor spending in Massachusetts, according to a 2022 Tourism Impact Data report by 1Berkshire. This level of activity supports much more business and employment than the town’s declining population otherwise would and is surely a key component of the town’s relative economic stability. For example, businesses within Great Barrington employ almost 10,000 employees per month, or more than twice the number of workers that reside in our town. Recognizing that these are not necessarily unique employees (an employee who works two jobs would be double counted in this data), and they are not necessarily full-time jobs, this is still an impressive level of employment for a small town.

History of the Community

continued

Public Services

Some public services are not provided by the town government directly. Two separate providers handle water supply and four handle internet service. Public education is offered by regional school system, to which Great Barrington supplies most of the students and most of the funding.

Health Sector

Health care services comprise a significant part of the local economy. Three long and short term care facilities are among the town's largest employers. Fairview Hospital in Great Barrington is a federally designated Critical Access Hospital, serving the town and region. Two organizations in the town provide affordable healthcare and the Claire Teague Senior Center supports senior citizens.

Culture

Housatonic is known for its friendly, small-town atmosphere, its spirited art scene, and its creative small businesses. Many of these establishments are located within Housatonic's historic buildings that have been adapted for modern use. For example, the nationally-known Pilot recording studio is located within a former Methodist church, the digital archiving studio Chicago Albumen Works is in the old Monument Mills building, the MUSE artists' studios occupy the former Country Curtains Mill building, and the Berkshire Pulse dance and creative arts center is in the renovated Rubin Mill. All of these are within a six minute walk of the Ramsdell Library. The Guthrie Center, founded by Arlo Guthrie, honors the famed musicians' legacy in the old Trinity Church building.

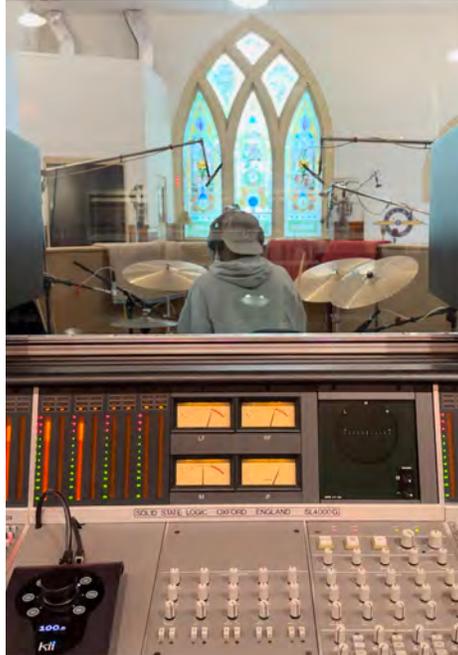
Recreation

There are many natural attractions in Great Barrington creating abundant opportunities for outdoor recreation enthusiasts. These include Monument Mountain Reservation on the north side of the town near Housatonic and the Butternut Ski Resort on the east side of town. Further east, just outside of Great Barrington, the Appalachian Trail passes through two state forests. 69% of the land in Great Barrington is forest, compared to just 1% that is deemed commercial and industrial. This natural context is a major asset of Great Barrington.



From left: MUSE (Multi-Use Studio Experiment), iconic water tower, former Cook's Garage
image by D.F. Panno

History
of the
Community
continued



Tracking drums for Bootsie Collins at Pilot Recording Studios



Young dancers at Berkshire Pulse dancing in the old Rubin Mill

Town Planning

Per the Community Master Plan approved by the Planning Board and Board of Selectmen in October 2013 (Appendix F), the renovation of Ramsdell Library would serve the goals of the entire Town of Great Barrington. Ramsdell Library was mentioned in 4 of the Master Plan strategies (LU H.6, SF 3.2, SF 3.3, and SF 5.3) and two dedicated narratives.

The Town of Great Barrington is invested in preserving Ramsdell Library to maintain a robust library collection and provide social space and other resources within Housatonic. At the time the Master Plan was published, the city hosted Master Plan “Office Hours” at Ramsdell Library, underscoring the building’s relevance as a civic center.

As stated by Great Barrington’s Master Plan and 2023–24 Community Preservation Plan, historic resource preservation will also help Great Barrington be a more sustainable community as it creates jobs and increases property tax revenue and tourism. It also preserves important educational opportunities and resources. By making use of existing buildings, historic resource preservation directs growth to locations where infrastructure already exists, allowing for the conservation of important landscapes. The efforts to renovate Ramsdell are consistent with the strategies HC1.2 and HC1.4 of the Master Plan, related to the preservation of Historic and Cultural Assets. According to the Community Preservation Plan, Ramsdell is prioritized for restoration because it is a town owned building, it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

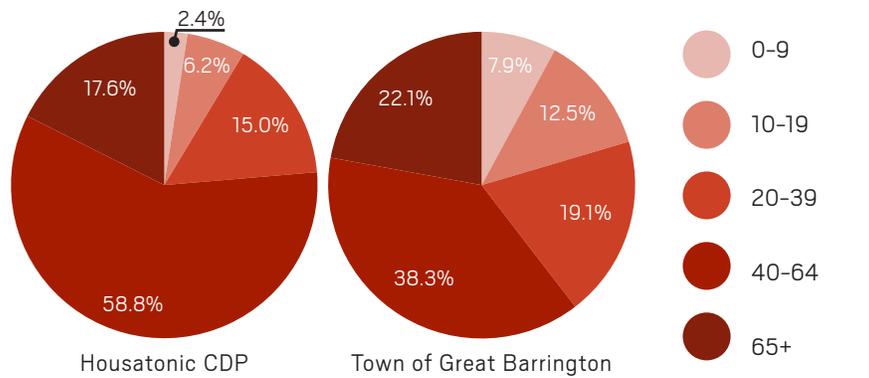
Community Demographics

TOTAL POPULATION:
 Housatonic CDP: 985
 Town of Great Barrington: 7,184

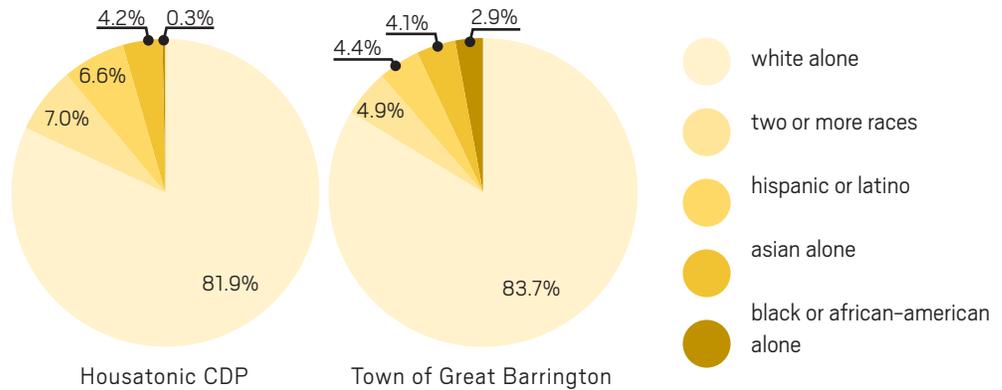
SUMMARY

Ramsdell Library provides library services to patrons who live in Housatonic as well as those across the entirety of Great Barrington. Housatonic is a Census Designated Place (CDP) within the Town of Great Barrington. Below are the current demographics of both the Housatonic CDP and the Town of Great Barrington according to the United States Census Bureau 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimate. The primary advantage of using multiyear estimates is the increased statistical reliability of the data for less populated areas and small population subgroups.

AGE DISTRIBUTION



RACE



DIVERSIFYING POPULATION

Great Barrington has a diversifying population. There is a growing minority Hispanic and Latino population making up at least 6% of the Town.

Great Barrington is also known for its facilities for disadvantaged populations; between Housatonic and Great Barrington’s centers there are a total of 17 businesses and community programs that are operated, in part, by staff with special needs.

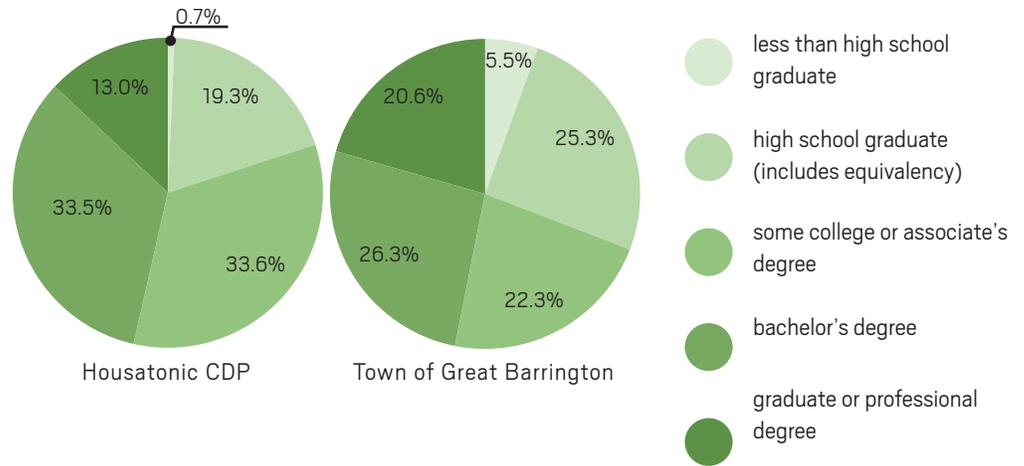
Community Demographics

continued

TOTAL POPULATION:
 Housatonic CDP: 985
 Town of Great Barrington: 7,184

TOTAL POPULATION AGED 25 YEARS OR OLDER:
 Housatonic CDP: 855
 Town of Great Barrington: 5,189

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION ATTAINED BY POPULATION AGED ≥25 YEARS



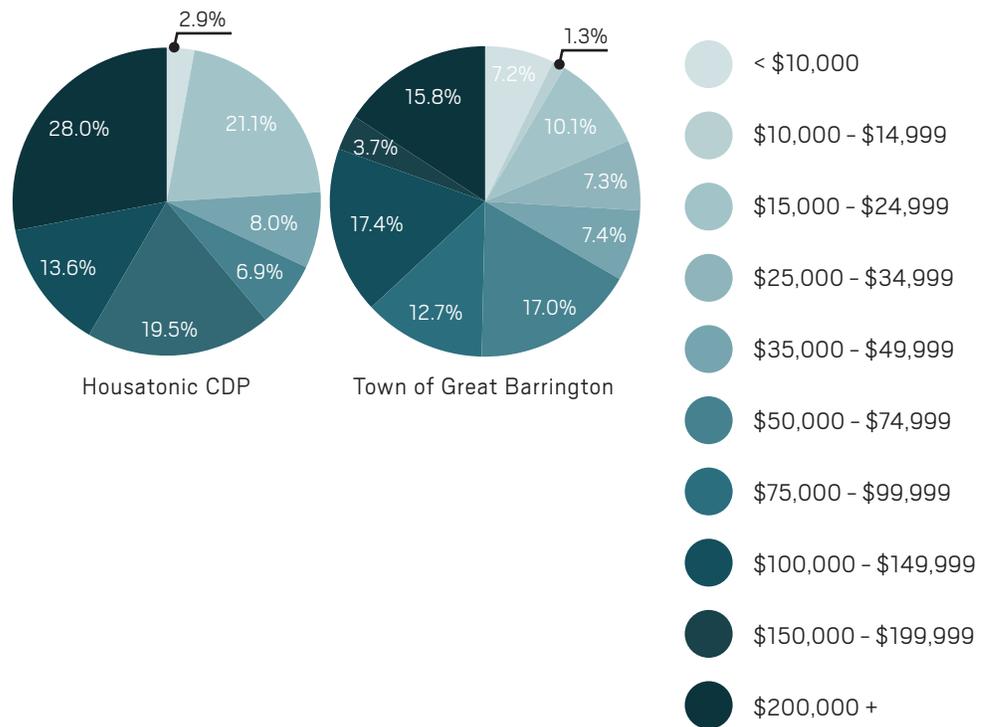
MEDIAN INCOME:
 Housatonic CDP: \$80,000
 Town of Great Barrington: \$74,205

MEAN INCOME:
 Housatonic CDP: \$127,053
 Town of Great Barrington: \$112,414

POPULATION LIVING BELOW 50% OF THE POVERTY LEVEL:
 Housatonic CDP: 2.3%
 Town of Great Barrington: 4.4%

HOUSEHOLDS WITHOUT A VEHICLE:
 Housatonic CDP: 7.5%
 Town of Great Barrington: 6.6%

HOUSEHOLD INCOME IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS IN 2022 INFLATION-ADJUSTED DOLLARS



Community Demographics

continued

SEASONAL POPULATION

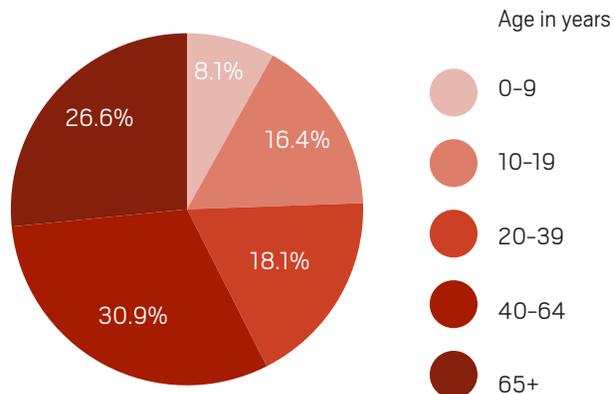
The Census Bureau defines “usual residence” as the place where one lives and sleeps most of the time. According to Susan Strate of the Donahue Institute, Berkshire County has “the profile of an increasingly seasonal location.” Like the Cape and Islands, Berkshire County is defined as a “recreation” county according to the USDA.

Ramsdell Library is a multi-faceted educational and social resource in that it serves both the usual Housatonic residents in addition to seasonal visitors who are vacationing or have a second home in the area. A renewed Ramsdell library as a primary community resource could help sway those who are considering Housatonic or Great Barrington as their ‘usual’ residence who are otherwise seasonal visitors to the area.

PROJECTED POPULATION

2050 population projection data for Housatonic CDP is not available, so only the 2050 population projection for the Town of Great Barrington is used. This projection, sourced from the Donahue Institute of University Massachusetts Amherst, is based on the US Census Bureau Decennial Census data. The population of Great Barrington is projected to decline by 8% from 7,184 residents (2022 ACS 5-year estimate) to 6,608 residents. The population under 65 are expected to decrease; those older than 65 are projected to increase, a phenomenon occurring in many parts of Massachusetts as well as the country.

Projected Age Distribution



Great Barrington 2050 Projection

However, not taken into account within these projections are new strategic initiatives focused on increasing the region’s population. Perhaps the most significant is a major effort by the Town of Great Barrington to add nearly 1,000 people amidst more than 400 new housing units planned for the area.

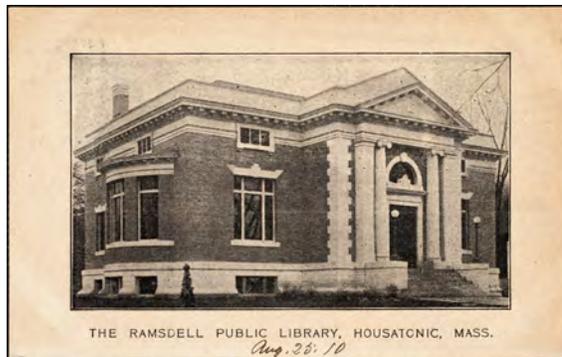
Additionally, Housatonic is slated for infrastructure updates, including new fiber optic cabling to Ramsdell Library and the surrounding area in the fall of 2024. The installation of this infrastructure is expected to make Housatonic a more desirable place to live and may impact population projections, all the more reason for a renovated Ramsdell.

History of the Library

RAMSDELL LIBRARY

Ramsdell Library was given to the Town of Great Barrington in the will of Theodore H. Ramsdell, owner of Monument Mills, who bequeathed a land parcel and \$25,000 to his heirs to erect and equip a public library to benefit village residents. His son, T. Ellis Ramsdell, allocated another \$15,000 toward the building and entered into an agreement with Boston architects McLean & Wright, who designed the library in the Beaux-Arts style. The library is auspiciously located on the site of the first house built in Housatonic. It was convenient for the paper and textile mill employees and the attendees of the two churches flanking the library site. The completion of Ramsdell Public Library in 1908 was a watershed event that exemplified the prosperity of Housatonic the year before its 100th anniversary as a town.

The original building featured 1 1/2 stories and a basement. Circulation through the original spaces remains largely similar today: entry through a stairwell antechamber leads to a striking rotunda lobby. Branching from there, stacks are located to the north, a reading room to the east (now used as a children's room), and a reading and reference room to the west. The upper level, known widely as "The Great Hall," contains a stage and open meeting space that has consistently served as a venue for public gatherings. Historically, those programs included preschool classes, concerts, dances, theater performances, and club meetings. The upper floor was also home to a public loom and storage for archival documents, art and artifacts. Since 2014 it has only been used as storage for the Historical Society and the Great Barrington Historical Commission, with the understanding that it will be vacated if needed.



Ramsdell postcard



Historic reading room



1940s preschool group in the Great Hall

History of the Library continued

RAMSDELL LIBRARY

The only significant renovation to Ramsdell was the 1930 addition by the firm Harding and Seaver. The interior alterations to the library building are minor and the building retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The stacks and the west-side reference room were both extended to the north, and a workroom for the library staff was added in the new northwest corner. The 1930 changes included improvements to lighting and storage, the addition of steel shelving, and an additional private one-stall lavatory off the east reading room. The cost of these renovations totaled \$12,500 at the time.

Today there is demand for the restoration of Ramsdell library. It is loved dearly by the community for its historic character – sophisticated and grand, yet still cozy and charming. In addition to its traditional library services, Ramsdell is also highly desired as a “third space” for coworking, sharing knowledge, and socializing. In 2014 it earned a listing on the National Register of Historic Places. It is one of two buildings in Housatonic with that designation and the only one that is publicly-funded. Over the years the Library has expanded its offerings to include services such as free wi-fi, mobile hotspots, online databases, eBook collections, a “library of things,” and programming for all ages. During COVID-19, in-person use of the library was suspended. Most of the space was converted to temporary storage for local history archives. There is a clear opportunity to leverage the library’s unique identity as a historic attraction that can flex to patrons’ needs.



The circulation desk in the late 20th-early 21st century (left) and in 2020 (right) with the 1930s addition in the background

Library Today

MISSION

The Great Barrington Libraries provide access to information and materials for the purpose of life-long learning, enhancing diversity, building community, and supporting the enjoyment of reading for pleasure.

VALUES

Welcoming

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Belonging (EDIB); serving people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities; everyone has a seat at the community table.

Community Focus

Recognizing and promoting what is unique about the Great Barrington communities and developing programming for all of our community members.

An Open Mind

Maintaining balance in collections, programs, and ideas that respect different viewpoints. Being respectful, open minded, and accepting.

Evidence-Based

Utilizing data and research, making library decisions that align with our resources, needs, and support systems.

Flexible & Forward Thinking

Being able to quickly adjust and be open to creative new ideas, changing times, and events using guidelines that will enable us to remain “library ready.”



The rainbow-painted crosswalk was an EDIB initiative at Ramsdell and Mason Libraries

RAMSDELL OPEN HOURS:

Sun 1-4pm | Mon-Wed 1-6pm | Thu-Fri closed | Sat 10am-3pm

Library Today continued

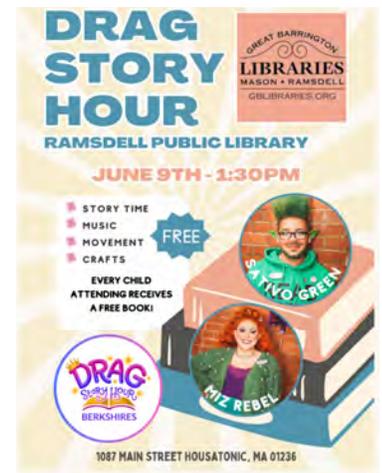
EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION & BELONGING (EDIB)

The Great Barrington Libraries are committed to creating a safe environment that values Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging. This commitment is defined within the Libraries' core values and the 2023 Strategic Plan which states "EDIB values are incorporated in our programming choices. Newcomers will be able to have a friendly face and access to information." In recent years, the Libraries have begun or since completed several EDIB initiatives, including:

- Great Barrington was designated as a Sanctuary City in 2017 by Town Vote.
- Trustees developed and adapted The Land Acknowledgment in 2022
- A statue of W.E.B. DuBois, who was raised in Great Barrington, will be unveiled in front of Mason Library in the Fall of 2024. Community fundraising paid for the entire project
- Two archaeological studies of the Ramsdell grounds have been completed to identify and protect important indigenous artifacts.
- Artifacts formerly held by the Library were repatriated to the Stockbridge-Munsee Tribe
- Installed rainbow-painted crosswalks at both libraries
- Hosted EDIB-specific programs including a Drag Story Hour and an African Drumming workshop with a Senegalese master drummer
- Annually celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month (September) and Jazz Month (April)
- Great Barrington Libraries hosted members of sheltering families from Haiti in February 2024 for a visit to the library, where they were given a tour, library cards and the Friends of the Library gave them each a book.



African Drumming workshop at Ramsdell



Flyer for Drag Story Hour

SERVICES

- A growing Library of Things including virtual reality sets, craft kits, home improvement tools, cooking and baking implements, and outdoor games and recreation equipment
- 6 internet terminals, and wireless internet for all visitors
- One-on-one tech support for laptop users
- Guidance on navigating careers and unemployment
- Volunteer opportunities

Library Today

continued

The Great Barrington Public Libraries are a Town department, reporting to the Town Manager's office. Governance responsibilities are delegated to an elected Board of Trustees, consisting of six members serving 3-year terms. Trustees work in collaboration with the Library Director to oversee funds and to determine plans, policies, and priorities for the libraries. The staff of the Great Barrington Libraries currently consists of 8 full-time and 6 part-time workers. Ramsdell is staffed by 2-3 members at any time.

GOVERNANCE



LIBRARY DIRECTOR

Responsible for day-to-day management of the libraries, making monthly reports to the Board of Trustees and an annual report for inclusion in the Town Report; carrying out plans, policies, and priorities as established by the Board of Trustees; and reporting to the Town Manager.

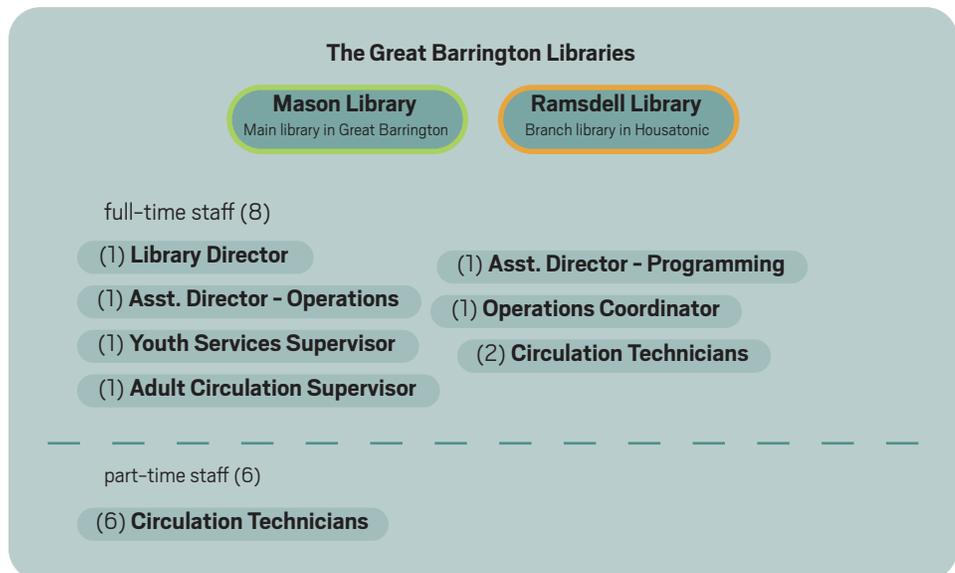
ASST. DIR. OF PROGRAMMING

Branch manager at Ramsdell, responsible for adult programming for both libraries.

OPERATIONS COORDINATOR

Responsible for all marketing and cataloging; arranging and supplying for childrens' programming

STAFFING



Library Today

continued

PROGRAMS & SERVICES

In recent years, a perfect storm of variables have dramatically impacted the library programming offered at Ramsdell. These variables included the COVID-19 pandemic, a period of rapid staff turnover, reduced hours, the temporary lack of both a library director and children’s librarian, and the lack of a current library strategic plan. From January 2020 – March 2024 this resulted in library programming at Ramsdell to be limited, or, at times, put on hold completely. Over the early months of 2024, this has begun to change, largely due to the new strategic plan and a new Library Director. Looking ahead, multiple programs are scheduled for 2024 with more in the planning stages.

- Crafty Saturdays: family-oriented craft workshops
- Sunday art program
- Monthly electronic music nights
- Film screenings in conjunction with the neighboring Unitarian church
- Book clubs
- Digital literacy
- Health and Wellness
- Financial Wellness

Ramsdell is gradually reintroducing programming in 2024. offerings include:

- African Drumming workshop
- Author talk: 100th anniversary of Melville’s Billy Budd with Jana Laiz
- Sing-along: Sean Fullerton “Acoustic Memories” songs from the 50s-80s
- Summer Reading Program Ice Cream Celebration
- Drag Story Hour



A mother and son crafting at Ramsdell



African Drumming Workshop



Party in the Park



Summer Reading Program Ice Cream Celebration

Library Today
continued

HOLDINGS BY COLLECTION AREA

physical holdings at Ramsdell Library

adult fiction	5,750
adult non-fiction	3,338
art books	1,700
children	3,290
teens	360
audio books	719
DVDs	2,296
periodicals/newspapers	209
reference	160
library of things	62
subtotal	17,884

electronic holdings shared by Ramsdell and Mason Libraries

ebooks - children's	16,571
ebooks - adult and YA	112,561
downloadable audio - children's	8,339
downloadable audio - adult & YA	71,719
downloadable video - children's	30
downloadable video - adult & YA	90
subtotal	209,310

TOTAL HOLDINGS	227,218
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Ramsdell Library is well-known for its art book collection. Community feedback has indicated that a complementary, yet distinct book collection compared to what is offered at the Mason Library should be a core resource at Ramsdell. Additionally, the Library of Things is unique to Ramsdell, and based on its popularity and demand, is projected to increase by several items in coming months.

Library Statistics

DATA SOURCE:

MBLC FY2023 ARIS
unless otherwise noted

FY2023 date range:
July 1, 2022–June 30 2023

* = direct from Great Barrington
Libraries Records

GREAT BARRINGTON LIBRARIES
PARENT LIBRARY NETWORK

7,164 municipal population served by library network

7,241 registered borrowers in network*

5,010 registered borrowers who live in Great Barrington*

MASON LIBRARY
MAIN

59,183
visitors

133,410
total circulation activity

3536
hours open

14,184
gross square feet

1912
year built

2005
year of most recent renovation

75
capacity of largest meeting room, main library

147
total public seating capacity

11
dedicated parking spots

2
individual study or group study rooms

432
total uses of all meeting rooms by public

RAMSDELL LIBRARY
BRANCH

4,297
visitors

11,398
total circulation activity

1,144
hours open

10,934
gross square feet including excavated portion of
basement*

1908
year built

1930
year of most recent renovation*

30
capacity of largest meeting room*

44
total public seating capacity (not including
potential on 2nd floor)*

0
dedicated parking spots

0
meeting or study rooms

Community Analysis

DATA SOURCE:

MBLC FY2023 ARIS
unless otherwise noted

FY2023 date range:
July 1, 2022–June 30 2023

Circulation and relationship to community composition and holdings:

Mason Library:

- 18.62 total circ per capita
- 0.45 average circulation per holding

Ramsdell Library:

- 1.59 total circ per capita
- 0.05 average circulation per holding

Programming and program attendance and relationship to community composition:

ARIS Data for Mason Library	Number of programs	Percent of total programs	Number of attendees	Percent of total attendees	Percentage of GB population
Adult programs	3	2.6%	47	2.5	79.6 (20+ years old)
Young adult programs	3	2.6	26	1.4	12.5% (10-19 years old)
Children’s programs†	115	99.1%	1800	97.3%	7.9% (0-9 years old)
All programs	116		1850		

- Programs for adults made up 2.6% of total programming, and were attended by 2.5% of total program attendees. 79.6% of Great Barrington’s residents are adults 20+ years old
- Programs for young adults made up 2.6% of total programming, and were attended by 1.4% of total program attendees. 12.5% of Great Barrington’s residents are young adults 10-19 years old
- Programs for children made up 99.1% of total programming, and were attended by 97.3% of total program attendees. 7.9% of the Great Barrington’s residents are children 0-9 years old
- There was 1 program for every 61.7 people
- Up to 25.82% of the population served attended a program

† Some events were “all-ages” and were therefore counted multiple times. The large proportion of children’s programming is the result of staffing – a dedicated Children’s Librarian on staff developed programming for 2022 but left in August 2023.

Attendance and relationship to community composition:

Mason: average 8.3 visits per member of the Great Barrington population served
Ramsdell: average 1.7 visits per member of the Great Barrington population served

Technology usage and relationship to community composition:

- There is 1 computer at Ramsdell Library for every 175 residents of Great Barrington
- Inside the library, most patrons bring their own laptops, and some borrow the ones owned by the library. Laptop users seem to primarily be in search of a quiet place to work away from roommates or children.
- Patrons, mostly seniors, often ask for support in navigating software and hardware.
- The collection of gaming systems including Virtual Reality are increasingly popular.

Online usage and relationship to community composition:

WiFi coverage and cellular service in Housatonic are inconsistent, both in speed and basic availability. As a result, Housatonic residents often come to Ramsdell library to use its WiFi. They are even seen using WiFi on the benches outside Ramsdell every Friday, when the library is otherwise closed. Ramsdell’s librarians welcome this behavior, in fact, there is a sign in front of Ramsdell promoting WiFi from the building to the curb.

Site & Facilities

GROSS SQUARE FEET:

10,934 GSF including
excavated portion of basement
7, 596 GSF excluding
basement

NET SQUARE FEET:

5,755

STREET ADDRESS:

1087 Main St, Housatonic
MA 01236

BUILDING & LOCATION

The Library is located on Main Street. The site is bounded by the Corpus Christi Church to the west and the Unitarian Universalist Meeting of South Berkshire to the east. The borders of Great Barrington, Stockbridge, and West Stockbridge intersect only 275 feet away from the Ramsdell Library lot, making the library conveniently available to all 3 towns. The Library's location on the north end of the village strengthens the identity of Housatonic's main street as a civic core. Ramsdell is relatively accessible to commuters and pedestrians. There are sidewalks on both sides of the street, there is a school bus stop outside of Ramsdell, and a public transportation stop 3 minutes away by foot.

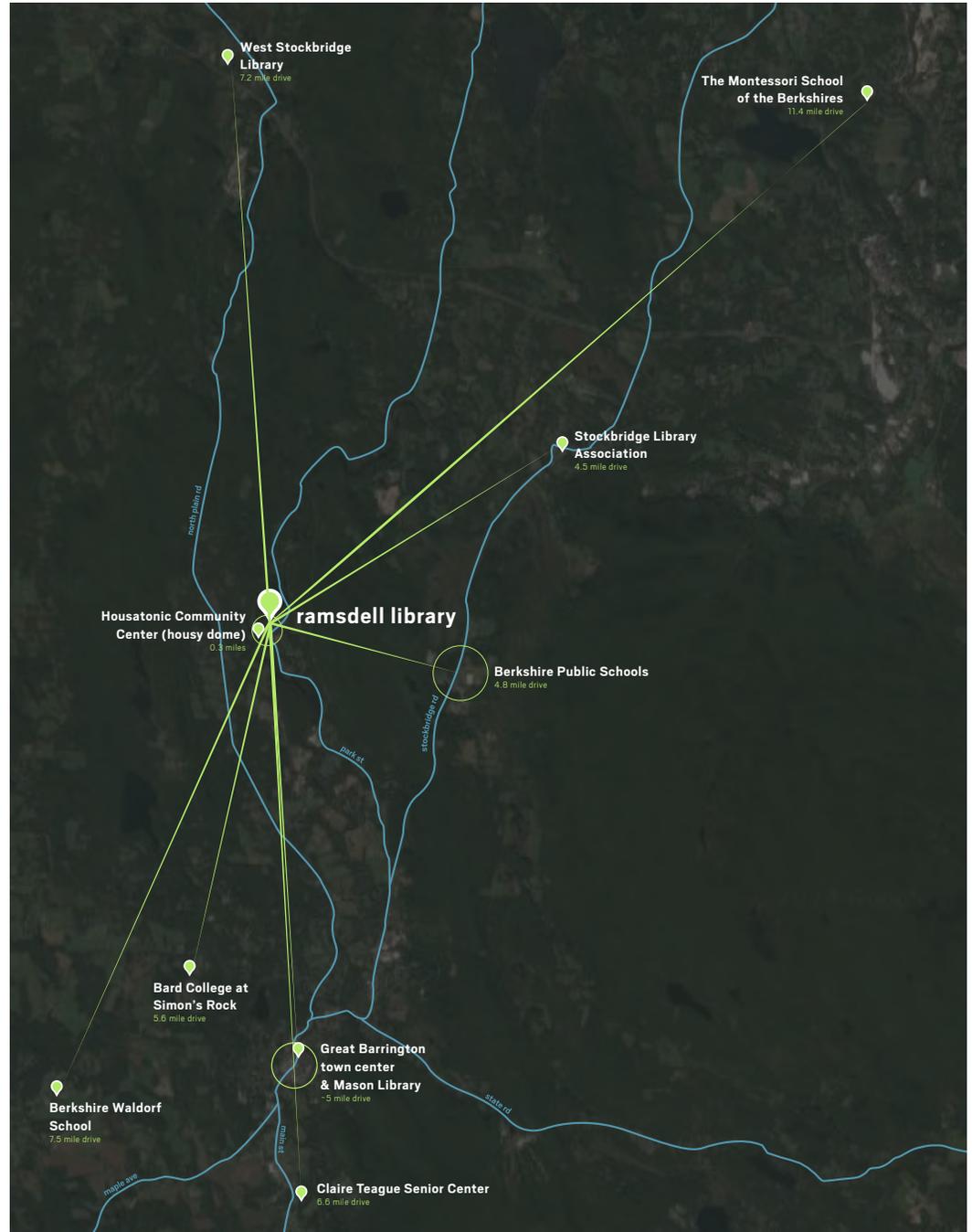
While Great Barrington town hall is 5.2 miles away in the Great Barrington town center, the Housatonic Community Center, commonly known as the Housy Dome is only 0.3 miles away. The Housy Dome is used for sports and indoor farmers' markets, so not overlapping with library programming. The farthest residence in Housatonic is a 1.8 mile walk or drive from Ramsdell Library; most other residences in the village are much closer.



Site & Facilities

continued

The Berkshire Hills Regional Schools are all within a 4.6 mile drive from Ramsdell. Other schools nearby include the Berkshire Waldorf School (7.5 mi. drive), The Montessori School of the Berkshires (11.4 mi. drive), and Bard College at Simon's Rock (5.6 mi drive). Homeschooling is another popular educational option in the area, and those families make thorough use of local public libraries. The Claire Teague Senior Center is a 6.6 mile drive from Ramsdell, which is a difficult drive for some seniors. The Great Barrington Libraries are an important complement to these education institutions and, afterschool programs, literacy and family meeting places in the area.



Site & Facilities

continued

The library site itself is largely undeveloped other than the recent addition of an ADA ramp and new stairs from the Main Street sidewalk to the building's main entry doors. The site is mostly grass and limited plantings and does not include any specific spaces designed to support library programs. While outdoor programs have occurred in the past, they've been very limited as the necessary infrastructure to support them is not available. Additionally, there are no general use or accessible parking spaces on the library site which creates a challenging issue for patrons with mobility issues or those who would benefit from the ease of access.



Site: mostly grass, paved wheelchair accessible approach



Relationship to surrounding buildings



ADA ramp



East side of building

Site & Facilities

continued

Opened in 1908, with an approximate 4,500 footprint, there are several spaces within the building that are historic in character, including the entry stair vestibule anteroom, the arrival foyer and flanking reading rooms. Ornate in nature and material, these spaces are signature features of the Beaux Art architecture style and the Carnegie era of library planning. An addition was added to the rear of the original building in 1930, creating additional staff and collection areas on the main level as well as a children's area.



Staircase in vestibule



Entry rotunda



View into reading room



Reading room



Staff workroom in 1930s addition



Children's area in 1930s addition



Stacks in 1930s addition

Site & Facilities

continued

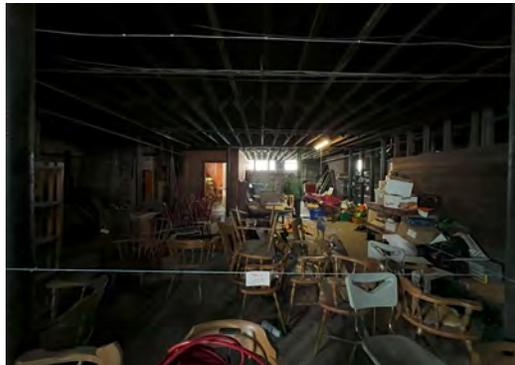
The upper level of the original library, once referred to as the 'Great Hall' is underutilized as it is not an accessible or usable space for library programming or staff use. The lower level is used only for mechanical space and general storage.



Storage in the Great Hall



The Great Hall used for storage



Storage in basement



Mechanical space in basement

The lack of an elevator within the library and accessible parking on site is a major impediment to library programming and patron use. Similarly are the lack of key program spaces for patron use and appropriate staff work spaces. Building infrastructure issues, including the lack of central air conditioning and the lack of ventilation, among others, are other major impediments within the building that impact library programming and functionality. Inaccessible, inadequate and non-compliant restrooms exacerbate all of these issues.



Inadequately sized circulation desk



Inadequately sized public restroom

Site & Facilities

continued

KEY ISSUES

To further define these issues, a complete building assessment was completed in conjunction with this Library Building Program. Library staff focus groups were also held in addition to questionnaires that were filled out by library staff and library trustees. The primary issues that were identified include:

Key Library Program & Functionality Issues:

- Lack of dedicated library program space
- Lack of patron meeting space
- Lack of dedicated staff work space
- Lack of staff break room
- Lack of tween/teen space
- Lack of flexible program space
- Lack of outdoor program space

Key Site Issues:

- Lack of on-site parking and vehicular access to the site
- Lack of outdoor program space
- Limited landscape and plantings
- Lack of dedicated path from accessible parking to building entry

Key Building Infrastructure Issues:

- Lack of elevator
- Accessibility deficiencies (non compliant thresholds, doors, stairs, etc)
- Lack of centralized air-conditioning
- Lack of ventilation
- Inconsistent and irregular heating
- Active building leaks
- Drafty and inoperable windows
- Moisture in the lower level/basement

Site & Facilities

continued

PLANNING EFFORTS TO DATE FOR BUILDING PROJECT

- 
- **2010 May** - Bid Documents for Ramsdell Library submitted by Drummey Rosane Anderson Inc. Prepared by The Berkshire Design Group Inc., funded by the Community Development Block Grant and the Town of Great Barrington
 - **2013 October** - Ramsdell Library was referenced in 4 strategies and 1 narrative in the Town of Great Barrington Community Master Plan, approved by the Planning Board and Board of Selectmen (Appendix F)
 - **2014 July** - Ramsdell library placed on National Register of Historic Places, in recognition of its importance to local and state history (Appendix G)
 - **2018 June** - Ramsdell Program and Facility Vision Report developed by Kimberly Bolan and Associates
 - *informed by community engagement
 - **2019 December** - Ramsdell Public Library Improvements Project Cultural Resources Due Diligence (archaeological study) submitted to Kimberly Bolan & Associates by Public Archaeology Laboratory
 - **2020 June** - Ramsdell Library Building Program developed by Rob Cullin
 - *informed by community engagement
 - **2021 December** - Intensive (Locational) Archaeological Survey for the Ramsdell Public Library Improvements Project submitted to Town of Great Barrington by Public Archaeology Laboratory (Appendix E)
 - **2022 September** - Construction drawings for Ramsdell Library Accessible Main Entry issued by Lerner Ladds Bartels Architects
 - **2023 September** - Great Barrington Libraries Strategic Plan 2024-2029 approved by Board of Library Trustees (Appendix B)
 - *informed by community engagement
 - **2023 November** - Library Trustees on Behalf of the Town of Great Barrington applied for Great Barrington Community Preservation Committee funding
 - **2023 December** - Ramsdell Library was included in the Municipal Building Conditions Assessment Report by Tighe & Bond
 - **2023 - 2024** Community Preservation Plan published by Town of Great Barrington Community Preservation Committee references Ramsdell as a historic resource in need of preservation, rehabilitation, or restoration
 - **2024 February - March** - Community Engagement Activities and Library Building Assessment by designLAB architects
 - **2024 May** - Article 14 in Great Barrington Town Meeting was passed by public vote. The article authorized the Town to apply for, accept, and expend MBLC grant funding, to be supplemented with \$150,000 in appropriated town funds, for the planning and design phase services for Ramsdell Library Improvements



THE RAMSDELL LIBRARY
Housatonic, Mass.

This library was made possible by a bequest of \$25,000 from Mr. Theodore Ramsdell, who died in 1903.
The building of Romanesque style architecture was started in 1906 and completed in 1908.
Mr. Theodore Ramsdell with his two brothers established the Monument Mills, manufacturers of bedspreads,
about 1843. He served as vice president and general manager.



3. Needs Assessment

Community Engagement

METHODOLOGY

In order to assess the future needs of the Ramsdell Library, the Board of Trustees, in collaboration with designLAB architects, solicited feedback from the local community through a series of meetings and engagement activities to seek public input on Ramsdell's spaces, programs, and resources. The tagline "Preserve the Past and Inspire the Future" was used to prompt reflection and forward-thinking from the audience. The activity formats, including visual, conversational, and written (in-person and online) were developed to engage residents with various communication styles. The activities prompted reflection on the present strengths and weaknesses of the library, and future visioning for its potential. It is estimated that over 100 community members provided feedback in at least one of these five outreach activities. This community feedback is in addition to the feedback that was provided during the 2023 strategic planning effort and outlined in that document.

Four types of exercises were done with the community to provide background and collect feedback. Please see Appendix C to view copies of each activity, if applicable.

Community engagement focus groups in person and online

At these meetings, The Great Barrington Libraries, the Library Trustees, and designLAB architects presented an overview of the Ramsdell Library feasibility study and then facilitated feedback in the form of a) live dialogue, b) Dotboards/Survey, c) Love/Breakup Letters, and d) Floor Plan Sketching.

- March 18th 6:30pm – 8:30pm – Community Meeting hosted at Ramsdell Library
- March 24, 2024 3:30pm – 5pm – Community Meeting hosted at Unitarian Church Community Room
- April 9, 2024 6:30pm – 8:30pm – Community Meeting hosted online (via zoom)



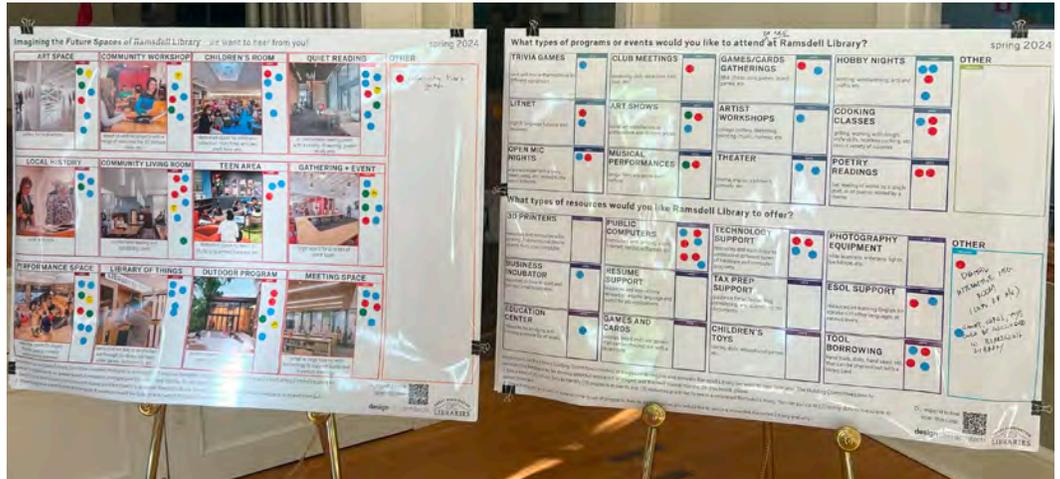
Community Engagement

continued

Dot / Sticky Note boards

3 multiple-choice questions about the future spaces, programs, and resources of Ramsdell were posted on 36"x48" boards ("Feedback Boards"). Community members were instructed to use up to 3 sticky dots per question to vote for their favorite options. The dots were color coded by age range. On each board there was also an option to post sticky notes with additional feedback and ideas about spaces, programs, and resources on the boards. The boards were presented at 4 sessions, and the same activity was available in the form of an online survey from March 16-May 10 2024. Over 100 people participated in this activity.

- March 16, 2024 at Great Barrington Farmers' Market
- March 18, 2024 at Ramsdell
- March 24, 2024 at Unitarian Church
- April 9, 2024 at Mason Library
- April 20, 2024 at Great Barrington Farmers' Market
- April 21-24 at Ramsdell
- April 25, 2024 at ExtraSpecialTeas



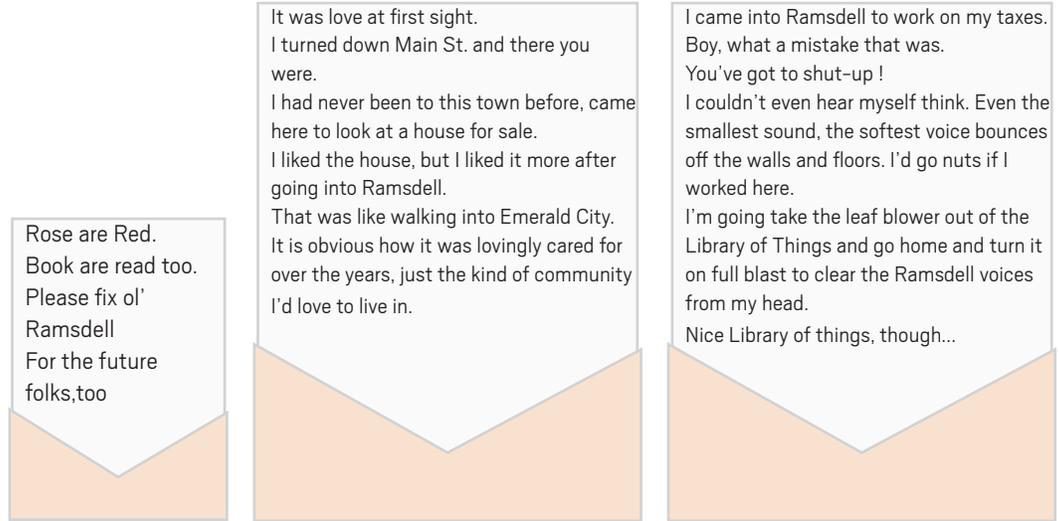
Community Engagement

continued

Love / Breakup Letters:

At the March 24th, 2024 community meeting, community members were encouraged to write a love letter or breakup letter to express their feelings on the successes and shortcomings of Ramsdell Library. This activity was also available on the library website and in-person at the Mason Library during the months of March and April, 2024.

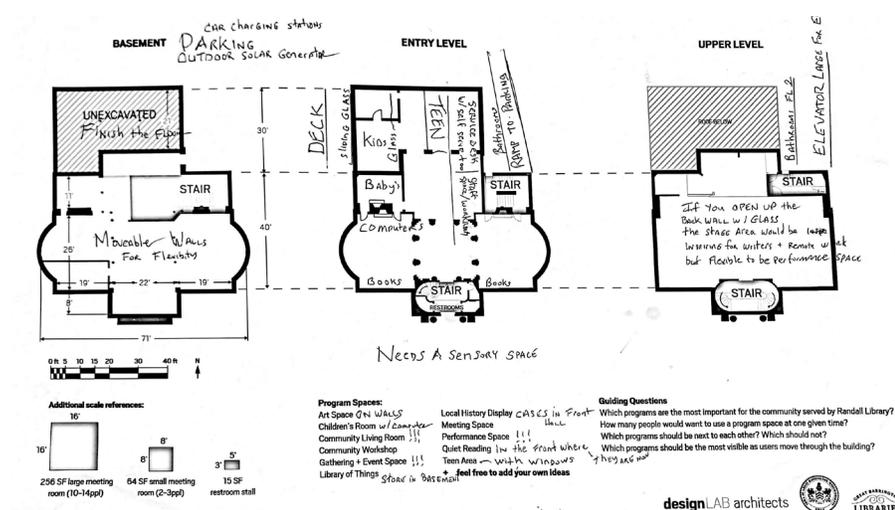
Sample results:



Floor plan sketching:

At the March 24th, 2024 community meeting, community members were encouraged to sketch their idea for a new floor plan for Ramsdell, with the option to add an addition. Scale references and a non exhaustive list of program ideas were provided. This activity was also available on the library website and in-person during the months of March and April, 2024.

Sample results:

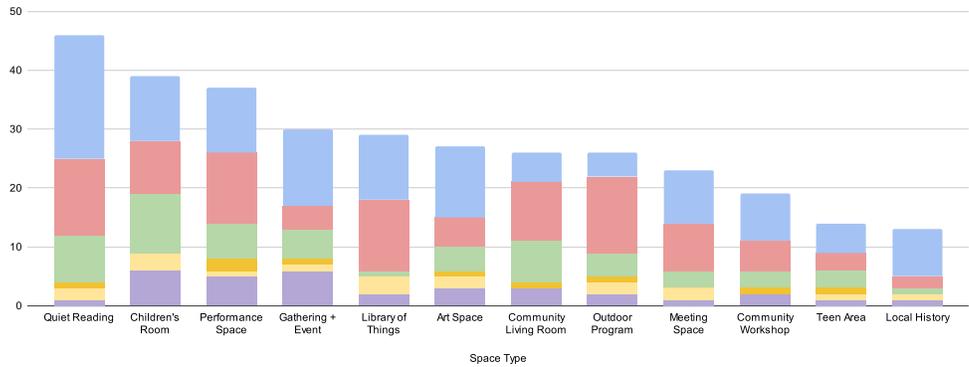


Community Engagement Results

KEY (ALL CHARTS)

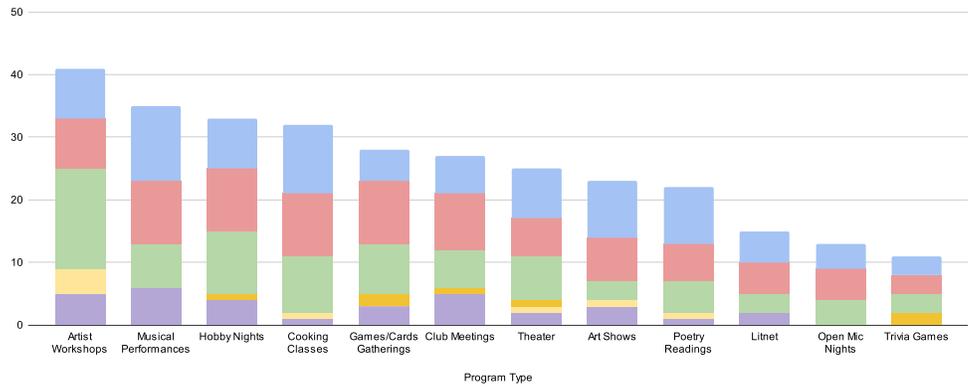
- adults 65+
- adults 40-65
- adults 19-29
- teens 13-18
- kids 0-12
- online votes

VOTES FOR SPACE TYPES



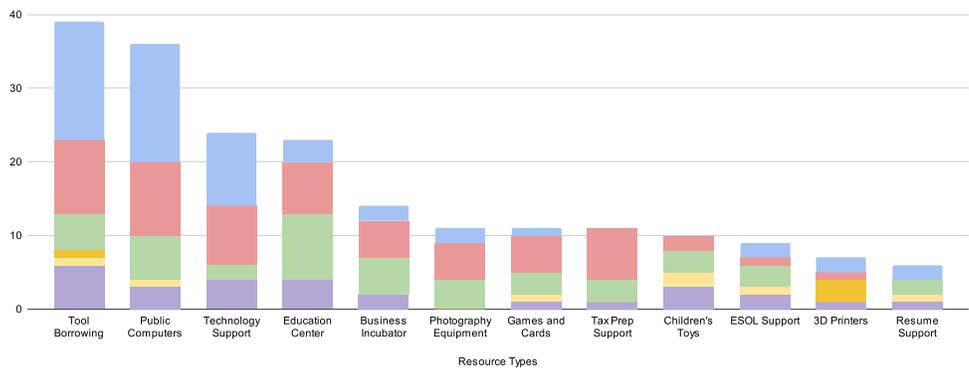
total votes: 329

VOTES FOR PROGRAM TYPES



total votes: 305

VOTES FOR RESOURCE TYPES



total votes: 201

Community Engagement Results

continued

(+1) indicates another functionally identical note was shared

RESPONSES TO OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

What additional types of spaces would you like to see in a renovated Ramsdell Library? Why?

Teen space	Children's room imaginative play stations (a play kitchen, a puppet theater, large doll house, extra large road rug, etc.) to encourage more creative and interactive play.	Children's area, coffee & tea offered	Comfy seating for both adults and children. very small meeting space with a screen for telecommunication (zoom room)
I would like to see the upstairs utilized since it is such a unique space. (+1)	I would like to see the front lawn used for book sales of donated items as a way of engaging the greater Housy community.	Could an addition be built on the back of the existing building similar to Mason Library?	Community herb garden
Sensory space	Makers' Space	Better acoustics and quiet spaces	Quiet reading, quiet small meetings
Gathering space for group programming and other civic events			



March 16, 2024 | Great Barrington Farmers' Market

Community Engagement Results

continued

(+1) indicates another functionally identical note was shared

RESPONSES TO OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

What additional types of programs or events would you attend at Ramsdell Library?

Talks about current events	Lectures on various topics sponsored by various groups (+1)	Mah Jongg class / Mah Jongg games. I believe the Monterey Library did this a couple of years ago.	Book club, knitting club and sewing club
Monthly or weekly film night	You put up an art challenge for all ages each week and people turn them in and you showcase them and chose a winner.	Tech classes (photography w/iphones etc.) once a month ongoing genealogy lectures, current events lectures and civil discourse (debates)	Native American landmarks info
	Veteran's Day Programs	Monthly genealogy Classes, online? (+1)	



March 24, 2024 | Community Meeting hosted at Unitarian Church Community Room



April 9, 2024 | Mason Library



April 25, 2024 | ExtraSpecialTeas

Community Engagement Results

continued

(+1) indicates another functionally identical note was shared

RESPONSES TO OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

What additional types of resources would you like Ramsdell Library to offer?

Self Check in/out	More books	Seed library	Show us the actual Library of Real Books, reading of them & check out & return. Need a library 1st, some other uses , NOT all.
Regular up to date computers. Not laptops, need bigger screen.	Technology for adaptive learning eg. robotic tech	Digital interactive meeting room (lots of A/V)	DS video games . You have 3d's but not DS
Fiber optic internet connection as Housatonic has poor connectivity	Parking for programming crowds (+1)	10-15 ft ladder	Flag @ Ramsdell
Games, puzzles, card games could be incorporated into the lending library.	Ukuleles-like Sheffield library has	Children toys	Consider the needs of the neurodiverse residents with furniture, resources etc. to welcome them
Open at night	Opening daily	I would like to avoid having to pay taxes for a fancy new playland;how about a paint job and central air? How about enough staff to open Mason on Monday's	Continued collaboration with UUMSB (next door neighboring church)
21st century=healthy eco buildings. Bare minimum clean air. We were closed for most of the pandemic, prepare for future ones.	Cooling/heating/charging during storms	Furniture that older people can (get) out of easier	

Staff & Trustee Engagement

STAFF AND TRUSTEE SURVEY & FOCUS GROUPS

The Library Trustees, SelectBoard members, and staff were engaged through a written questionnaire and a focus group meeting on April 25th, 2024 to provide feedback on the staff experience of Ramsdell and the general challenge the building and site present to library operations. Please see the Appendix D to view the blank forms used in this exercise.

Library staff and library trustee questionnaire responses are summarized as follows, which provide a holistic narrative of the library's needs:

Impediments to library operations or services due to site:

- Large insulated windows and lack of operable window blinds on the south side of the building cause huge temperature fluctuations and fading of library materials and furnishings.
- Lack of on-site general use and accessible parking
- No outdoor program areas

Health, safety, and/or security issues posed by site and/or building:

- Building is poorly ventilated. Windows are inoperable and there is no mechanical ventilation system.
- There is no active security system (e.g. cameras) or a panic button
- Several building envelope issues, including:
- Water leaks that may cause mold growth, structural damage, and compromised indoor air quality
- Drafty windows and doors that contribute to fluctuations in temperature and occupant comfort
- Energy inefficiency, especially in the heating system; exterior walls and roof lack insulation
- The door to the Great Hall on the upper level does not fully close, posing a fire hazard.
- Outdated electrical wiring does not meet functional requirements.
- Handrails on just one side of the stairwells.

Accessibility issues posed by site and/or building:

- There is no accessible route to enter the library nor to circulate between levels. The main entry can only be approached by a daunting series of granite steps. The 2nd level is accessed by three wooden staircases, two converging in the front and one in the back. The lower level is currently not accessible to the public and is only reachable via the rear staircase.
- There is no elevator.
- Neither the public nor the staff restrooms are ADA compliant. The restroom is poorly lit and too small. The staff toilet is too low.
- Aisles between the stacks are too narrow, not meeting current ADA accessibility requirements.
- Doorways between some rooms are very narrow, not meeting current ADA accessibility requirements

Staff & Trustee Engagement

continued

Impediments to staff workflow and productivity due to site and/or building:

- The staff service point, work, and lounge areas are all inadequate and need better space, furnishings, equipment, and storage solutions.
- The staff “room” at Ramsdell lacks the size and equipment needed for its intended function. There are two people working in a space that only really fits one.
- Materials are often processed at tables meant for patrons in a front room or table between the stacks. The materials pile up when waiting to be processed or weeded, taking valuable space away from public users.
- The printer is on the floor 20' from the circulation desk.
- There is no lock on the staff office door.
- The circulation desk also lacks workspace. Sightlines between the circulation desk and the rest of the library are blocked by obstacles.
- There is very little staff storage.
- No water fountains are available in the building.
- The staff bathroom has no sink.
- There is no staff break room or place for staff to store their belongings securely.
- Location and configuration of the circulation desk is not conducive to supporting staff needs and patron engagement

Impediments to serving all members of the community due to site and/or building:

- There is a lack of patron desktop computers (some patrons have a hard time working on the smaller laptop keyboard or seeing the smaller screen)
- Distribution of electrical outlets is limiting: power occurs only at the perimeter and does not reach all areas of the room
- There are no morning hours for families with young children

Other issues regarding site and/or building:

- Lighting levels are inadequate, especially in the stacks.
- Space lacks interior temperature control (it is often too cold or hot).
- There is only one usable building entrance
- Identification, wayfinding and signage is unclear and confusing. The library needs better signage near the street.
- Furniture is uncomfortable.
- There is a lack of privacy and acoustic separation.

Findings Summary

SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK FROM COMMUNITY AND LIBRARY LEADERSHIP

The overall public perception of Ramsdell library is bifurcated. On one hand, it has accumulated great sentimental value as a charming venue for events and traditional library activities as the large windows let natural light permeate the space, and the staircase, fireplaces, and circular lobby are impressive yet cozy architectural elements that have made Ramsdell a memorable destination for generations. On the other hand, it is criticized as a “dinosaur” frozen in the time of its last major renovation almost a century ago.

The matrix of space types and resources desired by the community on both the dot boards and online surveys show a commitment to traditional library resources and an enthusiasm for technology, community events, dedicated meeting space and new program offerings. Dedicated quiet spaces and children’s spaces were the top two desired spaces, and public computers and technology support were in the top three most desired resources. In concert with Ramsdell’s specialized art book collection, thematic program interests at Ramsdell leaned heavily into the arts including artist workshops, musical performances, and hobby nights. Tool borrowing for DIY projects was the top request for resources.

Feedback gathered from staff, trustees, and community members from the various engagement activities, in addition to library statistics, are outlined below.

General successes of Ramsdell Library

- Ramsdell is conveniently located at the junction of Great Barrington and the adjacent communities of Stockbridge, and West Stockbridge.
- The building is a well-known historical feature of Housatonic’s main street with a reputation for having a warm atmosphere and welcoming staff.
- Compared to Mason, Ramsdell’s smaller, spaces are attractive venues for more intimate programs (15-30 people)
- The Maureen Hickey Art Book Collection and the Library of Things are specialties of Ramsdell that are not available at Mason Library.

General areas in which the Library could improve:

- Increase open hours. The community expressed interest for the library to open daily and close later to accommodate evening events.
- Restore the second floor for public use
- Update the collection of books and other media to reflect current interests
- Provide tech support including access to high speed internet and desktop computers
- Become a “sticky” place where people want to stay and less transactional. Currently, the majority of patrons check materials out but do not linger in Ramsdell as the library lacks incentives and desirable spaces for people to stick around and mingle.

Who is the library serving well, adequately, and not well/not at all?

- Due to post-COVID challenge and a shortage in library staff, library programming has been very limited. Much opportunity exists to better serve all library users, including children, tweens and teens, the ‘in-betweeners’ and life-long learners.
- Teens are a vulnerable population generally underrepresented in Library outreach. The library should aim to offer teens a stable third space away from home providing a level of independence and enhanced by appropriate programming.
- The open hours and the building accommodate healthy retired people who can come during the day. Additionally, adults with disabilities make organized weekly visits.

Findings Summary

continued

What spaces do staff need to perform their roles successfully and optimally?

What adjacencies are necessary and/or desired?

- To optimize staff workflow, the staff workroom should be adjacent to the circulation desk but separate from the staff break room.
- A new, more spacious staff workroom should be equipped with at least two computer workstations and a processing table.
- The staff workroom should be visible to the public, as the direct sightline increases awareness between library staff and patrons.
- The staff circulation desk should be more comfortable and better configured. It will need to be used by at least one staff member during all open hours.

Are there any features that would create a better user experience?

- Outdoor placemaking: A landscape designed for recreation and relaxation in nature would distinguish Ramsdell from Mason.
- Improved outdoor signage could inform passersby of library hours and upcoming featured programs
- Green Building Initiatives that will reinforce the Town of Great Barrington's identity as a Green Community, including LEED, Passive House, or ILFI Living Building Challenge certifications.

How should technology/equipment be integrated into each space?

- High speed internet throughout the library should support patrons' personal and borrowed mobile devices.
- At least 4 hardwired public desktop workstations. In the village of Housatonic, many houses lack high-speed internet. Desktops are more user-friendly to people with visual impairments and/or limited computing experience. These computers should be located in a Technology Commons and complemented by a self-service printer paid by the user.
- Flatscreen TVs in spaces where group screenings or online meetings may occur (e.g. teen space, small meeting rooms). They could be wall-mounted, or on wheels if they must be shared between spaces.
- Spaces for small private meetings such as tutoring and conferences should be acoustically isolated.
- Large gathering spaces (or talks, concerts, etc) should be equipped with speakers. Hearing aid loop system units should be available upon request, especially for larger programs.
- There should be sufficient mains outlets throughout the building, most importantly in the reading rooms. The library is often a desired coworking space, so the reading rooms should be able to accommodate personal computers.

Which public library trends are important to incorporate?

- After hours programming
- A creative space for all-ages arts and crafts is desired, but it should be flexible, not permanent in the sense of a typical makerspace. Tools and machines that are used infrequently should have a storage space. Cycling creative supplies seasonally will help promote use

Findings Summary

continued

What programming and resources are desired?

- Interactive arts:
 - Repair cafes (patrons bring in broken objects, electronics, etc. and get help fixing them from someone in the community who has that knowledge base)
 - Seasonally rotating arts and craft workshops
- Modest presence of animals such as live bird demonstrations or a saltwater fish tank.
- Music programs, such as instrumental play-alongs, and music from different eras to suit different audiences
- Watching & Listening events, such as author talks, lectures, film nights, and magic shows.
- Club meetings, such as book clubs, scout meetings, cultural committee meetings
- Movement activities (indoors or outdoors) such as gardening demonstrations or yoga classes
- Services that are trending in public libraries such as:
 - assistance with navigating bureaucratic processes (e.g. passport applications, tax preparation support, etc.)
 - Technology support and classes
 - Library administered tutoring program
 - Education on financial and mental wellness
- Relevant afterschool activities for middle school, high school, and homeschooled students
 - Academic/skill building support: Computers, prominent presence of teen book collection
 - Recreation: board games, technology, video game consoles that may not be available in homes

What partnership opportunities exist for services and programming?

- Potential to share parking and make use of the licensed commercial kitchen at the neighboring Unitarian Church.
-
- Civic groups such as the Housatonic the Beautiful Committee, Cultural Committee, Housatonic Improvement Committee may use the space for organizing events
- Schools may organize visits to the library
- Small businesses and nonprofits may use the space and resources
- Rotating public art displays
- Local history exhibit in partnership with Historical Society

Collection Management

- Typically individual staff members are responsible for maintaining sections of the collections (e.g. large print) but due to understaffing not all of this maintenance has been completed in the last year. This has affected the aging population who use Ramsdell's large print and periodicals regularly.
- In general, Ramsdell is not large enough for a comprehensive collection in the way that Mason is. For example, in the health section, Ramsdell has such a small collection. It may be more sensible to commit that collection area to Mason and keep Ramsdell's collection more specialized (e.g. art books, foreign films)
- The collection is slated to decrease in some categories (e.g. adult nonfiction generally circulates less and contains some outdated volumes so it will be reduced).
- Library of Things (LoT) considerations
 - The collection needs to support LoT and vice versa.
 - Every new LoT item requires additional learning from staff
 - Move LoT into a dry, well-lit basement and only display color "cards" for each item.
- Retain and potentially expand foreign film collection

Findings Summary

continued

Which types of spaces should be retained and added?

- The following types of spaces should be incorporated into Ramsdell:
 - A variety of meeting room space (accommodating small, medium and large groups)
 - Dedicated quiet space
 - Dedicated after-school Teen Safe Space
 - Flexible multi-purpose program room
 - Staff workroom and break room
 - Outdoor program space with seating and internet connectivity
 - Shaded outdoor program space with seating and internet connectivity
- The following spaces should be retained and improved:
 - “Nooks and crannies” as unique spaces that are signature to Ramsdell’s historic nature
 - Children’s Room should be enhanced with program area and a variety of toys and activities. These should be integrated with the children’s books so that children have fun around books



4. New Library Program

General Requirements

VISION

An exciting future vision has emerged for Ramsdell that capitalizes on its legacy as the heart of the community and that same community's optimism and conviction about the future opportunity it holds. This vision is grounded in the following principles and goals:

- Providing a welcoming, inclusive and equitable environment for all library patrons and staff
- Creating spaces that support a balanced variety of library programs and age groups
- Expanding children's area and resources
- Creating dedicated teen area resources
- Utilizing flexible design principles to support future uses
- Optimizing existing spaces to their maximum potential
- Promoting a healthy community by creating the qualities of a 'third space' within Housatonic
- Introducing new spaces and programs to support the creative arts
- Providing a mixture of meeting spaces to support different group sizes and meeting types
- Aligning library resources and collections with community needs and interests
- Improving energy efficiency by integrating sustainable design principles into building operations
- Improving all building systems and security, including new heating, air-conditioning/ventilation systems, electrical, plumbing systems and fire protection systems

An exciting chapter lies ahead for the Ramsdell Library, the village of Housatonic, the town of Great Barrington and the broader region. A strong foundation has been laid and an exciting building program has been developed, setting the stage for a future renovation of the building. With Trustee leadership and the support of the town and a capital campaign, the future is bright to reposition the Ramsdell for future generations to enjoy for decades to come.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

The following general requirements outline overall program objectives that should be considered for any future renovation project.

Sustainability

A future renovation of the Ramsdell Library affords a once-in-lifetime opportunity to retrofit the existing library with fully modernized, energy efficient, sustainable building envelope and building systems. All efforts should be made to create as an energy efficient and sustainable building as possible. Considerations should be given to an all-electric mechanical system, a fully insulated envelope and environmentally conscious building materials. Geothermal and solar energy sources should also be evaluated. Additionally, LEED certification and/or Passive House certification should be evaluated. The library should resist climate change and not provoke it.

Resiliency Hub

Ramsdell has the opportunity to serve as a resilience hub to the surrounding community. With the proper infrastructure in place, including a back-up generator and access to a commercial kitchen at the neighboring Unitarian Church, Ramsdell could connect residents to resources and services to help the community prepare for disruptions, including chronic issues, acute emergencies or natural disasters. This aligns with goal 2 in the Great Barrington Libraries Strategic Plan (Appendix B).

General Requirements

continued

Healthy, Clean Air

Ramsdell Library, in its current configuration, suffers from a lack of ventilation as there is no mechanical ventilation system and many, if not all, of the existing windows are inoperable. This proved to be a major issue during the COVID-19 pandemic resulting in the building closing its doors to patrons entirely for an extended period of time compared to peer libraries. A future renovation of Ramsdell should seek to provide a safe and healthy environment for staff and patrons alike.

Universal Access

A fully ADA and universally accessible building and site is paramount to creating an inviting, equitable and inclusive environment at Ramsdell. All existing deficiencies should be addressed, most noticeably, providing accessible parking dedicated to the library and accessible access to the upper level of the building.

Evolving Demographic

As the demographics within Great Barrington and the broader region shift, accommodations should be made within Ramsdell to support them, including spaces and resources to serve the teen, aging, underserved, and minority populations.

Post-Pandemic Planning

Several library planning considerations have emerged as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. These considerations should be evaluated and implemented to the extent feasible. Considerations include, but are not limited to: contactless book drops and check-out, one-directional flow with dedicated entrance and exit points, touch-free bathroom fixtures, ample ventilation/fresh air exchanges, air purifiers, flexible furniture arrangements and provisions for hybrid/virtual programming.

After-Hours Community Access

Access to certain areas of Ramsdell Library (Meeting Rooms, Community Room, etc.) to support community use after hours when the library is closed is needed. Appropriate security provisions will need to be evaluated and should be taken into account to accommodate such use.

Security

Currently, Ramsdell Library is not adequately secured. Improved security measures should be integrated to the extent feasible, including, but not limited to: improved indoor and outdoor lighting, clear line-of-sight from staff locations to building and restroom entries, after hours access, security cameras and panic buttons. The building operation plan should account for maintaining two employees staffed to the building at all times. Additionally, simultaneous supervision of all occupied floors must be possible, at least by electronic means.

Adjacencies & Workflow

Adjacencies and staff workflow within Ramsdell can be dramatically improved and all efforts should be made to do so. Appropriate adjacencies between specific space types, such as the circulation desk and staff workroom or between the event space and storage room for example, will improve workflow, ease of use and the library's program offerings.

Flexibility

All spaces should be designed to be as flexible and as future proof as possible. Individual spaces need to meet the programmatic needs of today, but should also be designed in such a way that they can adapt to future needs. Moveable furniture, limited built-ins and ample power and data locations can help facilitate this need.

General Requirements

continued

Acoustics

The current acoustic conditions within Ramsdell are a major impediment to library programming and patron use. Any future renovation of Ramsdell should prioritize acoustically isolated spaces and properly tuned acoustic environments for their primary program use.

Lighting + Electrical

Natural daylight should be optimized throughout Ramsdell in conjunction with new programmable LED lighting and controls. Wall outlets should be installed to provide adequate power and charging locations for computers and other devices. Floor and/or ceiling power outlets should be provided in primary spaces to support flexible use and future rearrangement of furniture.

Data + Tele/Com

A robust network of wireless access points (WAPs) and wired ethernet jacks should be provided to support both the ease of patron and staff internet access and the installation of equipment (printers, computers, etc.).

Fixtures, Furnishings + Equipment

The selection and arrangement of Fixtures, Furnishings + Equipment (FF+E) provide an opportunity to support flexible use and will help future-proof Ramsdell Library for years to come. To the extent possible, moveable furniture and equipment on casters should be considered to facilitate the ease of reconfiguring spaces to support a variety of programs and uses.

Maintenance

Materials that are durable, long lasting and with minimal maintenance requirements should be a primary consideration for any new material introduced into the building.

Signage + Wayfinding

The Ramsdell Library would benefit from a comprehensive approach to signage, wayfinding and identity. Signage at the street announcing future events could help improve awareness of library offerings and attendance while also improving Ramsdell's civic identity within the community. While not a large building, wayfinding within the building will still help patrons navigate to different locations within the Library and better understand the type of intended use for each space.

New Library Space Summary

POTENTIAL ENTRY & ARRIVAL

ADDITION

A welcoming space for visitors to orient themselves to the library's offerings

- entrance lobby/lounge
- circulation/public services desk
- staff workroom
- book drop
- self-checkout(s)
- elevator

COLLECTION

Storage and browsing of library holdings

- photocopier(s)
- browsing/new
- a/v materials
- foreign films
- current periodicals
- internet comps/tech commons
- reference
- reading room(s)
- adult nonfiction
- art book collection
- adult fiction
- library of things
- local history archives

TEEN SPACE

Discreetly supervised teen socialization near young adult books outside of school hours

- teen resources
- teen collection

CHILDREN'S SPACE

Flexible space for young children to play, read, and participate in programming.

- children's collection
- children's room
 - service desk
 - preschool area
 - school-age area
- program room
- storage
- family restroom

ADMIN

Book processing, computing, and staff resources

- staff break room
- custodial closet
- server/network room
- general storage

PROGRAM

Event space for 15-30 people

- community room
 - kitchenette
 - storage
- multipurpose room/workshop
- small meet/group study rooms
- art display/gallery

OUTDOOR

Relaxation and programming in the landscape

- arrival court
- outdoor program area
- reading garden
- parking

New Library Space Summary Chart (1/2)

	SQUARE FEET (SF)	COLLECTION (VOLUMES OR ITEMS)	READER SEATS	PROGRAM SEATS	PUBLIC COMPUTERS	STAFF COMPUTERS	OPACS
ENTRY & ARRIVAL							
Entrance Lobby/Lounge	700		8				
Circulation/Public Services Desk	120					1	
Staff Workroom	180					2	
Book Drop	10						
Self-Check(s)	20				1		
Elevator	400						
Subtotal	1430		8		1	3	
COLLECTION							
Photocopier(s)	10						
Browsing/New	120		6				
Audiobooks	40	719					
DVDs	65	2296					
Current Periodicals	40	209					
Internet Comps/ Tech Commons	50		4		4		
Reference	100	160	4				
Reading Room(s)	1200		24				
Adult Nonfiction	450	3338					1
Art Book Collection	200	1700					
Adult Fiction	650	5750					1
Library of Things	100	62					
Local History Archives	150		6				
Subtotal	3175	14234	44		4		2
TEEN SPACE							
Teen Resources & Lounge	275		10				1
Teen Collection	150	360			1		
Subtotal	425	360	10		1		1

New Library Space Summary Chart (2/2)

	SQUARE FEET (SF)	COLLECTION (VOLUMES OR ITEMS)	READER SEATS	PROGRAM SEATS	PUBLIC COMPUTERS	STAFF COMPUTERS	OPACS
CHILDREN'S ROOM							
Children's Collection	450	3290	4				1
Children's Zones	400						
Service Desk	in above					1	
Preschool Area	in above		4				
School-Age Area	in above		4				
Program Room	250			16			
Storage	70						
Family Restroom	80						
Subtotal	1200	3290	12	16		1	1
ADMIN							
Staff Break Room	100						
Custodial Closet	30						
Server/Network Room	30						
General Storage	100						
Subtotal	260						
PROGRAM							
Community Room	1400			30			
Kitchenette	in above						
Storage	80						
Multipurpose Room/ Workshop	400			12			
Small Meet/Group Study Rooms	200		12				
Art Display/Gallery	50						
Subtotal	2130		12	42			
Total Net SF	8670						
30% Unassignable area	2601						
Total	11,271 gross SF	17,884 volumes/items	86 reader seats	58 program seats	6 public computers	4 staff computers	4 OPACs

Entrance Lobby/Lounge

PROJECTED SF
700

FUNCTION
Providing a welcoming first impression and informal community living/reading room. Browseable collection.

OCCUPANCY
8 public

User Seating

8 Lounge Seats

Furnishings

2 Reading tables

Shelving

4 Display bookshelves

Library Material Capacity

24 LF Display materials

Near/Far

Near Circulation Desk, Reading Rooms, Elevator

Far N/A

Architectural Details

This space should feel inviting and inclusive with casual, comfortable seating and (potentially) portions of a browseable collection. Potential location for book-drop.

Circulation/ Public Services Desk

PROJECTED SF
120

FUNCTION
Checking materials out, guiding patrons to available resources, answering general patron inquiries, minor book processing.

OCCUPANCY
2 staff
2 public

Public Service Desk

1

User Seating

2 Staff task chairs

Shelving

Shelving for reserves/holds

Library Material Capacity

12 LF Reserves/holds

Equipment

1 Staff computer workstation
2 Mobile book carts
1 Book drop
1 Self check-out station

Near/Far

Near Staff workroom, entrance lobby/lounge, stacks
Far Quiet Reading Areas

Architectural Details

Circulation desk should be ADA accessible. Provide clear line-of-sight/views to building entries, elevator and as many patron areas as feasible.

Staff Workroom

PROJECTED SF
180

FUNCTION
Processing books, general working, storage for personal items.

OCCUPANCY
2 staff

User Seating

2 Staff task chairs

Furnishings

2 Workstation desks
1 Book processing table

Shelving

Shelving above each workstation

Library Material Capacity

TBD

Equipment

1 Phone
2 Computer workstations with ethernet
1 Color printer
1 Book drop collection bin
4-6 Library loan bins
1 Processing table
2 Book carts

Near/Far

Near Circulation desk, entrance lobby/lounge
Far N/A

Architectural Details

Provide shelving above/adjacent to staff workstations.
Clear line-of-sight / view to circulation desk consider interior glazing).

Self Checkout

PROJECTED SF
20

FUNCTION
Checking out items.

OCCUPANCY
1 public

Equipment

1 Public computer workstation or self check module

Near/Far

Near Circulation desk
Far N/A

Architectural Details

Self check-out station should be ADA accessible. It can be standalone or integrated into circulation desk

Elevator

Near/Far

Near	Entrance lobby
Far	N/A

PROJECTED SF

400 (approximately 100 SF per floor plus machine room)

Architectural Details

Elevator cab size needs to meet all applicable building codes, stretcher and ADA requirements. Elevator is ideally integrated into the entrance lobby and is clearly visible upon entering the library.

FUNCTION

Transit between floors.

OCCUPANCY

N/A

Collection

PROJECTED SF
1545

FUNCTION
Storage and display of all adult materials and Library of Things.

OCCUPANCY
6 public

User Seating

4 Lounge seats in browsing/new area
2 Table/carrel seats in reference area

Furnishings

2 Tables in reference area

Shelving

~1650 LF

Library Material Capacity

719 Audiobooks
2296 DVDs
209 Current Periodicals
192 Reference books (includes 20% increase from current)
4005 Adult nonfiction (includes 20% increase from current)
2040 Art books (includes 20% increase from current)
6900 Adult fiction (includes 20% increase from current)
80 Library of Things items

Equipment

2 Public computer workstation/OPACs

Near/Far

Near Circulation desk, reading rooms
Far Children's area, teen area

Architectural Details

Library of Things Display (images of items) should be separate from the storage of Library of Things items (in general storage).

Tech Commons

PROJECTED SF

50 SF computers
10 SF photocopier

FUNCTION

Public internet/printer/internet access.

OCCUPANCY

4 public

User Seating

4 Computer workstations

Furnishings

4 Desks/worktables

Equipment

4 Public computer workstations
1 Photocopier with scan and fax capability

Near/Far

Near Circulation desk
Far Children's area, teen area

Reference

PROJECTED SF
100

FUNCTION
Quiet, research focus area.

OCCUPANCY
4 public

User Seating

4 Table/Carrel Seats

Furnishings

1 Work table

Shelving

20 LF

Library Material Capacity

200 Volumes

Near/Far

Near Reference collection, circulation desk

Far Children's area, teen area

Reading Rooms

PROJECTED SF
1200

FUNCTION
Quiet patron reading and/or
research space

OCCUPANCY
20-30 public

User Seating

8	Lounge seats
16	Table carrel seats

Furnishings

1	Periodical/newspaper display
---	------------------------------

Shelving

100 LF	Potential portion of browsing collection
--------	--

Library Material Capacity

200	Volumes (potential portion of browsing collection)
-----	--

Near/Far

Near	Entrance lobby/lounge
Far	Children's area, teen area

Architectural Details

Potentially located within one, or both, of the existing reading rooms given their historic significance and character. Reading rooms should include acoustic treatment within the space, acoustic separation from adjacent spaces and appropriate natural and artificial lighting levels.

Local History Archives

PROJECTED SF
150

FUNCTION
Storage and viewing of local history archives.

OCCUPANCY
6 public

User Seating

2 Lounge seats
4 Table seats

Furnishings

Display shelving and vitrines

Near/Far

Near Circulation desk, entrance lobby, reference area
Far Children's area, teen area

Architectural Details

Area should be welcoming, inviting, well-lit and highly visible to library patrons.

Teen Space

PROJECTED SF
425

FUNCTION
'Third' type space for teens to gather and socialize through homework, reading, gaming (board and video), craft activities, etc.

OCCUPANCY
1 staff
10 public

User Seating

6 Lounge seats
4 Table seats

Furnishings

Worktables for crafting/projects
Storage cabinets for materials

Shelving

50 LF

Library Material Capacity

450 Teen collection (includes 20% increase from current)

Equipment

1 Minifridge
1 Flatscreen TV with A/V
1 Public computer workstation / OPAC
Gaming consoles
Laptops
Storage cabinets

Near/Far

Near Staff locations (circulation desk and/or workroom)
Far Main entrance, reading rooms, collection area

Architectural Details

This space should be organized and located in such a way to support discreet supervision by library staff (e.g. glass dividers). All materials (flooring, fabrics, etc.) should be easy to clean and maintain.

Children's Room

PROJECTED SF
850

FUNCTION
Store children's collection and provide space for play, interaction and reading.

OCCUPANCY
1 staff
20-30 public

User Seating

- 1 Staff task chair
- 4 Large reading chairs
- 4 Children's seats
- 4 Table seats

Shelving

304 LF

Library Material Capacity

3948 Children's collection (includes 20% increase from current)

Equipment

- 1 Whiteboard on wheels
- Toys/games
- Play tables (lego, train, puzzles, etc)
- Play walls (lego, magnet, etc)

Near/Far

- Near Children's program room, children's storage, family restroom
- Far Collection, reference, reading rooms, teen area

Architectural Details

Children's Room should be acoustically isolated from adjacent areas.
Provide discreet areas within Children's Room for different age groups.
Shelving / Furniture should be on casters to support flexible use/arrangements .

Children's Program Room

PROJECTED SF
250

FUNCTION

A separate area for Children's activities (storytime, toys/puzzles/games, crafts, screenings, etc.) that is adjacent to Children's collection.

OCCUPANCY

1 staff
16 public

User Seating

16 Children's seats

Furnishings

4 Tables seating 4 each
2 Folding/nesting tables on wheels
16 Storytime cushions/chairs

Equipment

1 LCD TV Screen with A/V
1 Sink
Counter surface with storage above/below
1 public computer workstation / OPACs

Near/Far

Near Children's room, family restorom, children's storage
Far Collection, Reference, reading rooms, meeting rooms, teen area

Architectural Details

This space should be organized and located in such a way to support flexible children's programming. It could be located within, adjacent or a separate location altogether from the Children's Collection area. All materials (flooring, fabrics, etc.) should be easy to clean and maintain.

Children's Storage

Near/Far

Near

Children's program room, children's room

Far

N/A

PROJECTED SF

70

FUNCTION

Storage for children's program materials (materials, crafts, activities, games, etc.) and additional furniture.

OCCUPANCY

N/A

Family Restroom

PROJECTED SF
80

FUNCTION
Dedicated restroom for family use.

OCCUPANCY
1 adult
2 children

Equipment

1	ADA toilet
1	ADA sink
1	Changing station

Near/Far

Near	Children's program, children's room
Far	N/A

Staff Break Room

PROJECTED SF
100

FUNCTION
Area for staff to take breaks and eat lunch.

OCCUPANCY
2 staff

User Seating

2 Staff chairs

Furnishings

1 Table

Equipment

1 Sink
1 Small refrigerator
Counter surface with storage above/below
Staff lockers

Near/Far

Near Staff workroom
Far Entrance lobby, patron areas

Custodial Closet

PROJECTED SF
30

FUNCTION
Store general building and cleaning supplies.

OCCUPANCY
N/A

Furnishings

Wall mounted storage shelving

Equipment

1 Cleaning cart
1 Mop sink
Storage shelving

Near/Far

Centrally located yet in a discreet location

Server/Network Room

Equipment

Equipment rack

Near/Far

Near N/A

Far Main entrance, patron areas

PROJECTED SF

30

FUNCTION

Dedicated storage space for building network equipment (server, network switch, etc.).

Architectural Details

Space may require dedicated cooling

OCCUPANCY

N/A

General Storage

PROJECTED SF
100

FUNCTION
Space to store various items to support library programming (materials, equipment, furniture, etc.).

OCCUPANCY
N/A

Equipment

Storage shelving units

Near/Far

Centrally located, yet in a discreet location

Community Room

PROJECTED SF
1400

FUNCTION
A flexible room designed to support a variety of library programs and community events.

OCCUPANCY
20-30 public

User Seating

30 Stackable program seats

Furnishings

6 Foldable tables on casters

Equipment

1 Projection screen and/or flat screen with A/V
Assisted listening equipment
Speakers
Video camera for large-scale online calls/streaming
Small kitchenette with sink and storage above/below

Near/Far

Near Main entrance, circulation desk
Far N/A

Architectural Details

Space should be located and organized in such a way to support after-hours use A/V set-up to support a variety of uses (movie screenings, music performances, poetry readings, guest lecturers, etc.).
Acoustic treatment within room.
Acoustically isolate space from adjacent areas.
Adjustable window shades.
Adjustable LED lighting.

Community Room Storage

PROJECTED SF
80

FUNCTION
Store furniture and other equipment that are not in use within Community Room itself.

OCCUPANCY
N/A

Equipment

2 Chair storage cart with casters

Near/Far

Near Community Room
Far N/A

Multipurpose Room/ Workshop

PROJECTED SF
400

FUNCTION
A flexible space designed to support messy uses, programs and seasonal rotation of large-format tools (crafting, woodworking, U-fix-it, fiber arts, etc.).

OCCUPANCY
12 public

User Seating

12 Stackable chairs

Furnishings

4 Foldable tables on casters

Equipment

Tools to support crafting, light wood working, electronics, fiber arts, etc. (To support the maximize flexibility of this space, any equipment in this space should be storable or relevant to year round activities)
Storage cabinets

Near/Far

Near Entrance lobby, teen room
Far N/A

Architectural Details

All furniture/equipment should be on casters to support flexible use. All materials (flooring, fabrics, etc.) should be easy to clean and maintain.

Small Meet/ Group Study Rooms

PROJECTED SF
200

FUNCTION
Acoustically separated space for small group focus/conferencing. 2 rooms at 100 SF each. Can be bookable.

OCCUPANCY
2-6 public (each room)

User Seating

6 Chairs (each room)

Furnishings

1 6-seat conference table (each room)

Equipment

1 Wall-mounted flat screen TV with A/V (each room)

1 Whiteboards with markers (each room)

Video conferencing room capability (each room)

Near/Far

Near Entrance lobby

Far N/A

Architectural Details

Acoustic treatment within each room and each room acoustically isolated from one another and adjacent spaces.

Art Display/ Gallery

PROJECTED SF
50

FUNCTION
Rotating (or permanent) display
of community art (children, local
artists, etc.).

OCCUPANCY
4 public

Equipment
Picture rails for hanging artwork

Near/Far
Near Entrance Lobby
Far N/A

Outdoor

PROJECTED SF
N/A

FUNCTION
A transitional space between parking and building entrance that can be used casually or for library programs.

OCCUPANCY
12 public

Furnishings

- Shade structure
- Outdoor cafe tables and chairs
- Outdoor benches

Equipment

- Outdoor power outlets

Near/Far

Near	Building entrance
Far	N/A

Architectural Details

The Outdoor Program Area should be designed with a combination of soft and hardscape landscape areas that can be flexibly used and will support and encourage casual reading, community gatherings and outdoor library programs (concerts, children’s story-hour, touch-a-truck, etc.).

Site Development Opportunities

CURRENT SITE

The Ramsdell Library is located at 1087 Main Street in the Housatonic area of Great Barrington, MA on an approximately .76 acre lot. It is flanked by churches on the east and west sides. The front approximately two-thirds of the site is largely flat. The rear approximate one-third of the site is a large hillside that begins rising almost directly behind the library. The parcel is zoned as Residential-3 in the Housatonic Overlay District. R-3 zoning requirements include 25' front-yard setbacks, 10' side-yard setbacks and a 30' rear-yard setback. Maximum site coverage is 25% and maximum building height is 35'.

Preliminary analysis suggests that there is ample opportunity on the existing site to accommodate new spaces to support library programs, future building renovations or additions, parking and landscape areas and that it is well-suited to serve the future needs of the library and community well into the future. Future design phases will need to further analyze the site to determine how much of the site can be dedicated to each of these uses. Conceptual analysis of potential access and parking strategies on the existing site have been developed as part of the Library Building Assessment to help determine the viability of on site parking.

The Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc. (PAL) was contracted to perform two archaeological assessments of the Ramsdell Library site in 2019 and 2021. In the latter study, none of the recovered materials were flagged as significant archaeological resources, and it was concluded that no further archaeological investigations are recommended before construction may commence.



Site Development Opportunities

continued

426 PARK STREET

This is the location of the former Cook's Garage. It is a municipally owned, vacant 2-story brick building in the Housatonic village center and significantly larger, at 38,500 square feet, than the current library at 10,900. Its poor condition would require a gut renovation.

The 1.15-acre property is bordered on the west by the Housatonic River. The EPA conducted a two-phase brownfield environmental site assessment, followed by a March 2023 market analysis to determine usability of the site. Their findings showed asbestos, PCBs, and lead, all of which would have to be removed as the first step in any project on this property. Its location on the river adds significant complexity and expense to not only the removal of toxic materials, but to developing the site. Furthermore, a portion of the property is within a FEMA 100-year floodplain; the site suffered a major flood in 1974.

In addition to being bordered by the river, 426 Park Street shares walls and a limited right of way with the mill building at 420 Park St. Cook's Garage has no direct street frontage. Access to the building is narrow, at 15 feet wide, and the less than 6,000 square feet of shared space for trash removal, deliveries, and parking, is woefully inadequate. No further parking exists near this location, on or off the street.

All things considered, the Trustees concluded that this building would be a poor alternative to the current Ramsdell Library site.

410 PARK STREET NORTH

This is a well-maintained, 13,300 square-foot, 3-story brick building, three buildings away from the Cook's Garage site, currently on the market for \$2.7 million. The cost to purchase and adapt this building into a library would be significant. It has no elevator, parking is inadequate, and the building is in the FEMA flood plan zone, with mechanicals in the basement.

The Trustees concluded that this building would also be a poor alternative to the current Ramsdell Library site.

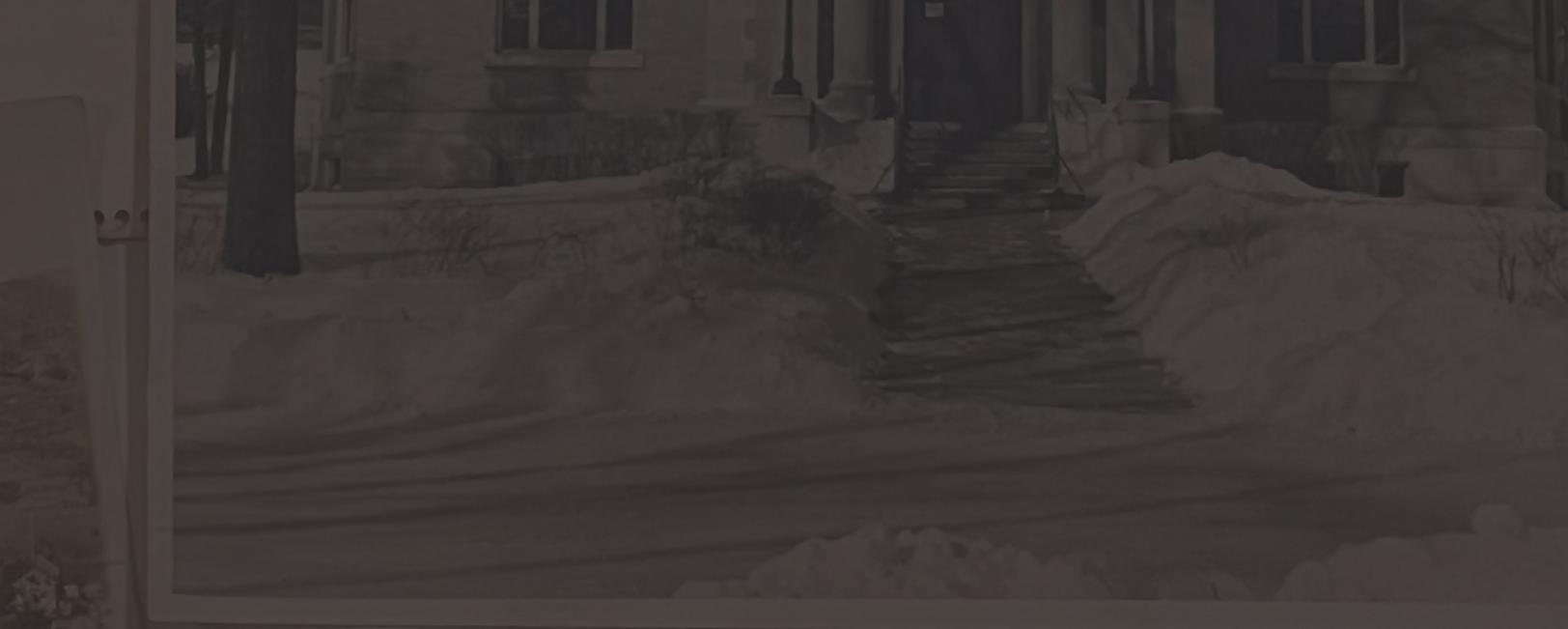
SHOVEL READY EMPTY LOTS

There are no available shovel ready commercial lots in the immediate Housatonic village area. Even if there were, site development and construction costs for a building similar to Ramsdell would be significantly higher than reimagining our current library building.

The overwhelming conclusion after live polling at our community engagement sessions and by a unanimous vote of the Trustees is that the current Ramsdell Library building/site is the best location for a revitalized library in Housatonic. It should be noted that the original deed of the library from the Ramsdell family stipulates that the building would revert to heirs of the family should the building cease being used as a library.



5. Appendices



Appendices

- A.** Building & Site Assessment
 - B.** 2023 Great Barrington Libraries Strategic Plan
 - C.** Community Engagement Materials
 - D.** Staff & Trustee Engagement Materials
 - E.** Archaeological Study
 - F.** Great Barrington 2013 Master Plan Excerpts
 - G.** National Register of Historic Places Record
- 



A. Building & Site Assessment



GREAT BARRINGTON LIBRARIES
RAMSDELL PUBLIC LIBRARY

Building Assessment May, 2024

designLAB architects



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INTRODUCTION

CONTEXT & HISTORY

Located in Housatonic, a village within the town of Great Barrington, the Ramsdell Library opened to the public in 1908. Designed by Boston architectural firm McLean & Wright in the Beaux Arts style the building is predominantly stone and brick masonry with wood windows and ornamental wood trim. It was expanded, designed by architectural firm Harding & Seaver in 1930. There have been very few changes to the building since this time. The building has three levels: a main primary level that houses all of the library services and spaces; the upper level, which is not currently open to the public as there is no accessible access to the space; and the lower level which is unfinished and includes general storage and the building's mechanical and electrical equipment.

The main level of the library sits approximately five to six feet above the sidewalk on Main Street and was only accessible via the main entry stairs, thus making the building inaccessible to anyone with a mobility impairment. In 2023, the front entry sequence was updated to include a new handicap accessible (ADA) ramp. This was a major step forward in creating an inclusive and accessible library. However, there are several major barriers to accessibility and inclusivity within the library, including the lack of an elevator, non-compliant restrooms and non-compliant doorways and thresholds.

Ramsdell Library is a key historic and civic mainstay within the village of Housatonic, the town of Great Barrington and the broader region. It was entered onto the Historic Register in 2014 and is a venerable example of Neo-Classical and Beaux Arts architecture in the region. The building has seen little attention over the past several decades and is in dire need of significant investment to both modernize the existing building infrastructure and to support 21st century library services and programs. With the appropriate investment and attention, the building will be well positioned to continue to offer these vital library services to the community for generations.

PROCESS

designLAB and our consultant team from EDM visited the building in February 2024, extensively touring the building, the surrounding site and the village of Housatonic. A drone survey of the existing roof was completed in early April 2024. The observations from the site visit and drone survey, combined with a review of all existing documentation on the building provided by the town and conversations with various building stakeholders, have formed the basis of this building assessment.

OVERALL FINDINGS

The Ramsdell Library is in need of a major renovation and modernization. While there are no documented structural deficiencies and the building envelope is generally in serviceable condition, the building lacks major components of a 21st century library, including centralized air conditioning, ventilation, sprinkler system, adequate restrooms, an elevator and accessible parking. The following issues should be further analyzed and addressed during future renovation planning.

Accessibility:

- Provide accessible parking with direct path to building entry
- Provide accessible path to all program areas within the building, including upper level
- Address all non compliant door openings, hardware and thresholds
- Address all non compliant stair and railing conditions
- Provide fully compliant, accessible restrooms

Building Systems:

- Provide compliant heating, cooling and ventilation system
- Provide compliant fire alarm and sprinkler system
- Evaluate non fossil-fuel-based and/or renewable energy source

Building Envelope:

- Clean and selectively repoint all exterior masonry
- Evaluate strategies to insulate the existing walls and roof
- Replace deteriorated pediment roof
- Replace failed flashings/sealants
- Develop window restoration program and install new storm windows

Site:

- Evaluate options for on-site parking
- Consider opportunities for outdoor library program space





RAMSDELL PUBLIC LIBRARY

SITE

SITE

GENERAL

The Ramsdell Library is located at 1087 Main Street in the Housatonic area of Great Barrington, MA on an approximately .76 acre lot. It is flanked by churches and a large hillside rises directly behind the library. The site topography rises 8 ft in elevation from the sidewalk to the front stair, and rises 27 ft in elevation in the back of the Library. A recently completed accessible ramp has been installed to the front entrance of the building. The remainder of the site is largely covered in grass.

LANDSCAPE & OUTDOOR PROGRAM SPACES

Limited plantings, including ground cover, grasses and small shrubs were planted with the recent ramp installation. Otherwise, there is limited landscape on the library site other than several areas of lawn. There are no exterior spaces that have been specifically designed or are conducive to supporting library programs. Outdoor event spaces, including shade structures should be considered for future use.

The installation of the new entry ramp on the main lawn between the building and sidewalk created multiple conditions where the exterior finish grade slopes back towards the building. These conditions should be addressed to prevent ponding against the building and potential water infiltration.

PARKING & ACCESS

Currently, there are no parking spaces or driveways on site and there are no accessible parking spots associated with the recently installed ramp. A handful of street parking spaces along Main Street are used by library patrons.

Conceptual analysis of potential access and parking strategies on site have been developed as part of this assessment to help determine the viability of on site parking. A shared parking arrangement with the adjacent Unitarian Church (1089 Main Street) has been identified by Library Trustees as a potential strategy. The conceptual strategies included as an appendix to this report utilize the adjacent church driveway as a one way entrance to a shared parking lot behind the library and church buildings. A one-way exit on the library property connects the parking area back to Main Street as a one-way loop. New accessible parking spaces should be provided with a direct path to an accessible building entrance.

In any of these parking strategies, a formal arrangement with the adjacent church would need to be developed. Additionally, each scheme would require significant earthwork to remove and retain a portion of the hillside behind the library as there is a significant grade change of up to 26 feet from the back of the buildings to the property line. The parking lot at the back of the Unitarian church has a boulder retaining wall that ends adjacent to the Library property line. To construct a connection from the Unitarian church lot to the proposed Library lot a new retaining wall will need to be provided to retain the grade consistently. Depending on the parking strategy considered, the length of this retaining wall could be over 200 feet in length and up to 13 feet tall at the west corner of the Library.

A new ramp was installed in 2023 (approximately \$700,000) from the sidewalk along Main Street to the original main entry doors. The majority of this ramp is a sloped walkway with a 1:20 slope that does not require handrails. However, there are portions of the ramp, closer to the sidewalk, that are steeper. This portion of the ramp should include handrails, if the slope is steeper than 1:20. While this ramp does provide an accessible path from the sidewalk to the building entry doors, the building doors themselves are not ADA compliant nor does it connect to accessible parking spaces.



View of the front of the library from the sidewalk along Main Street (the new ADA ramp, installed in the summer of 2023, is visible)



New accessible ramp on the approach to the library entrance. Landscape is limited to grass with minimal plantings



New accessible ramp on the approach to the library entrance



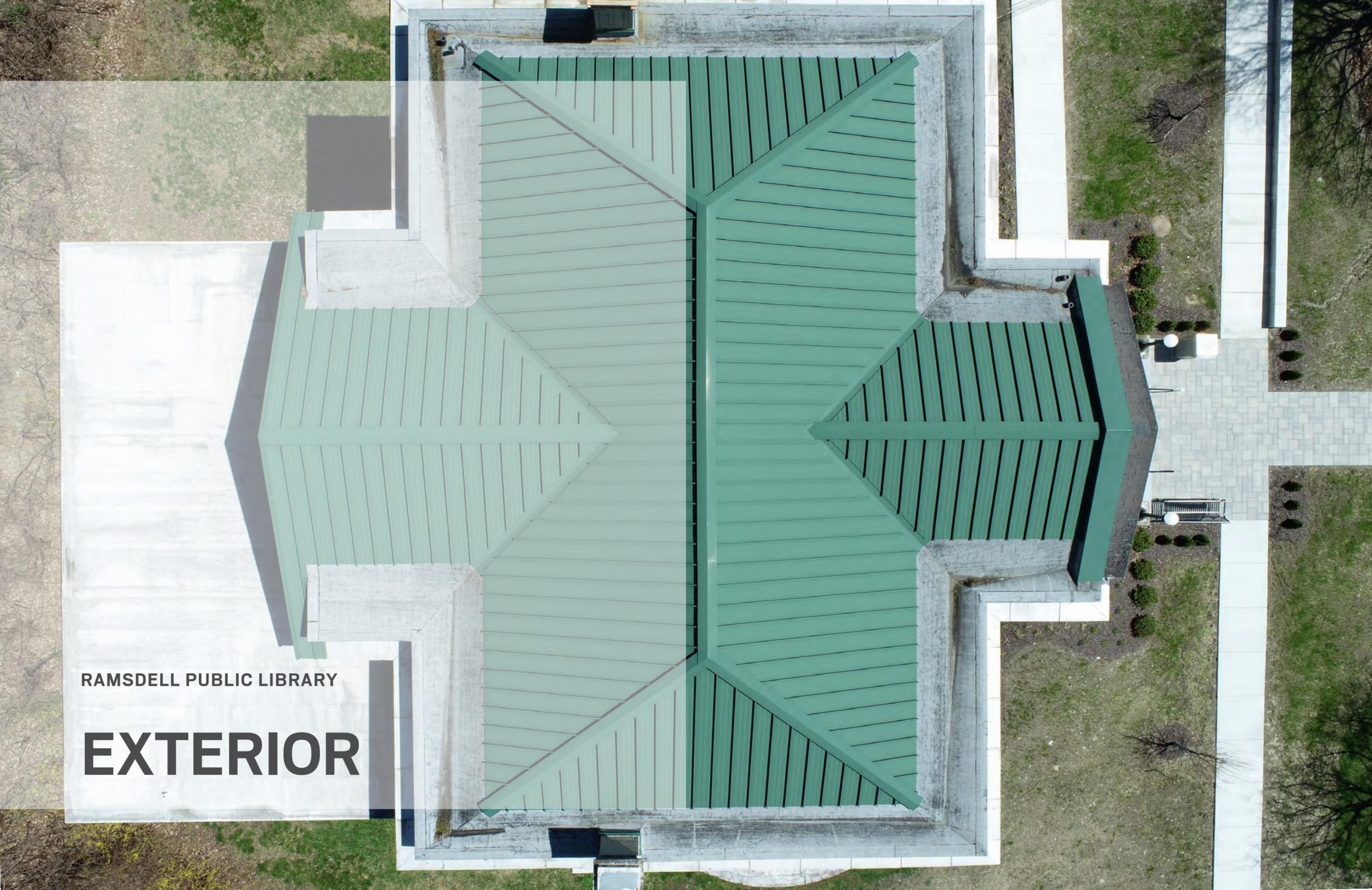
East side of site, between Ramsdell and adjacent Unitarian church



Wooded area and steep rise in elevation behind the library



Passage between the library and the adjacent Unitarian Church



RAMSDELL PUBLIC LIBRARY

EXTERIOR

ROOF

1908 BUILDING

The original building has a sloped standing-seam metal roof that was installed in 2007. It is assumed that the original library roof was either slate or standing seam copper, but this has not been verified. Based on other similar buildings of the period, it is also assumed there was an original skylight in the center of the roof, based on the laylight that is still evident in the upper level, that is no longer in place. It is possible that the skylight could have been covered in the 2014 roof replacement. The current standing seam metal roof is approximately 10-years old and appears to be in good serviceable condition. It was not possible to access the roof at the time of this survey, but a drone survey was completed.

There is an integral gutter around the perimeter of the original building at the base of the standing-seam metal roof. This gutter is lined with a roofing membrane. It was not possible to verify the type of membrane, but it is assumed to have been installed at the same time as the standing-seam metal roof. There are roof leaders at select corners of the gutter that lead to interior roof drains. The condition of the interior roof drains is unknown and should be investigated further. Additionally, the roof drains do not have proper drain bodies and covers and are simply covered by wire mesh. These appear to be functional, but further analysis should be completed to determine their service life and if there are an adequate number of roof drains for the associated roof area.

1930 ADDITION

The 1930's addition has a flat roof that is covered in a continuous roofing membrane. The type of roof membrane was not able to be verified, but is assumed, based on its appearance, to be the same as the roof membrane in the integral gutter of the original building's roof. There is little evidence of ponding on the roof. The membrane appears to be in good serviceable condition.



Overall roof context illustrating the sloped standing-seam metal roof on the original building and the flat membrane roof on the 1930s addition



Overall roof context illustrating sloped standing-seam metal roof on the original building and flat membrane roof on the 1930s addition



Typical condition of the integral gutter and standing-seam metal roof



1930s addition membrane roof



1930s addition membrane roof



Typical condition of the perimeter gutter, lower perimeter roof and entablature on original building

ROOF continued

FLASHINGS

There are a variety of flashing types and flashing materials on both the original building roof and 1930's addition roof. In general, they appear to be in a fair or good serviceable condition. However, there are several locations where sealants have cracked and are failing. This is particularly evident along the pediment and the perimeter low roof. Water ingress is visible on the interior where there is water damage to the walls.

PERIMETER LOW ROOF

The perimeter low roof, below the integral gutter, appears to be clad in a coated metal system, though this was not able to be verified. There are seams approximately every two to three feet that are covered in sealant. The roof appears to be in good serviceable condition. However, the flashing condition between this roof and the vertical face of the adjacent entablature is failing with cracked and missing sealant.

BAY WINDOW LOW ROOF

The two bay roofs on either side of the original library appear to be clad in the same membrane roofing material as the original roof integral gutters and the 1930's addition flat roof and is in good serviceable condition. However, the flashing condition between this roof and the vertical face of the adjacent brick wall is failing with cracked and missing sealant.

PEDIMENT

The roof of the pediment above the original entrance is in poor condition. It is covered in asphalt shingles that are extremely deteriorated with several that are missing entirely. Additionally, the flashing between the roof and the adjacent entablature is in similarly poor condition with a variety of mastics and temporary repair measures installed in several locations. Both the pediment roof and flashing should be replaced in the near future. Considering the prominence of this roof above the primary building entrance, a copper roof and corresponding flashings should be considered.



Original building pediment roof



Typical condition of the bay window roof



Typical condition of the bay window roof



Typical condition of the perimeter low roof and the wood entablature above it



Typical roofing transition between 1930s addition and the original building



Example of visible water damage on the upper level of the original building

MASONRY

BRICK

The exterior walls of both the original building and 1930's addition are predominantly a buff roman brick with a sandstone stone base. The bricks were poorly matched in the 1930s, and the addition was not toothed in. There is no expansion control for the bricks in either facade, and likely no weeps either. The walls sit on a continuous granite block foundation. Both the original building and 1930's addition walls are generally in good condition with localized areas that require repointing. There are localized areas of cracking that have been repaired with sealant in a non-appropriate manner. The sealants have since failed and should be removed so a proper repair can be made. The entirety of all exterior wall surfaces should be cleaned with an appropriate cleaner.

SANDSTONE

The facades of the original building consist of distinct sandstone features which include columns, entablature, quoins, and window sills and heads that are defining components of the building and characteristically beaux arts in style. Only the sandstone window sills and heads were replicated in the 1930's addition. The sandstone is also in good condition, with minimal deterioration and spalling. A small portion of the sandstone features should be evaluated further to determine if replacement is necessary.

CHIMNEYS

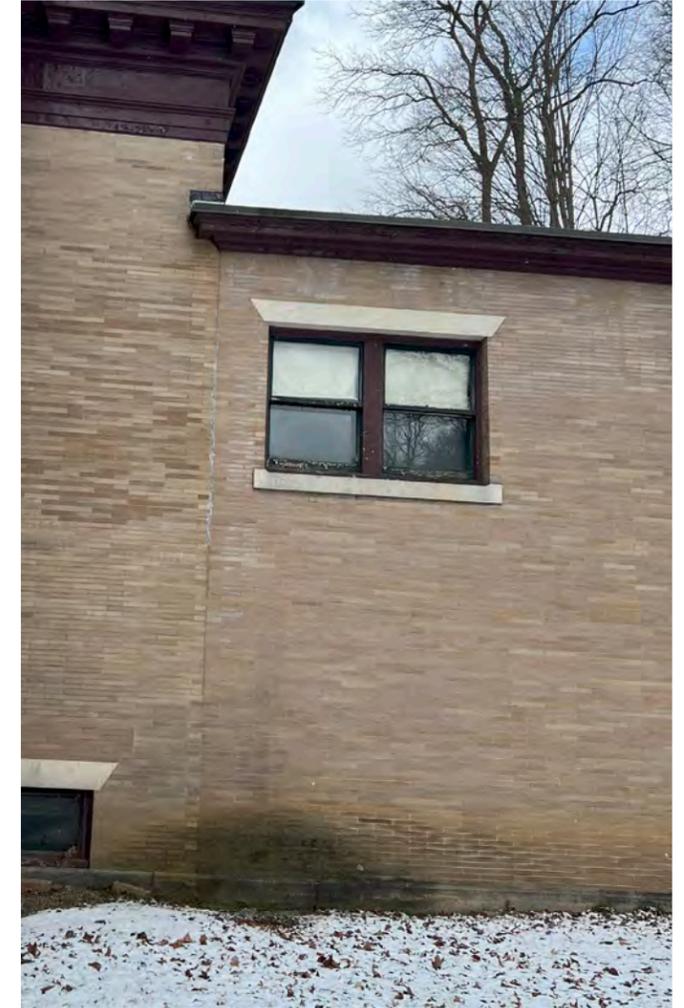
The chimneys appear to be in sound condition, but would benefit from localized repointing and cleaning. The recently installed chimney cap that was installed as part of the boiler replacement should be replaced with a new chimney cap that is compatible with the historical character of the original building. A matching cap should be installed on the other chimney.



Typical original building masonry conditions



Typical original building masonry conditions including sandstone base and granite water table



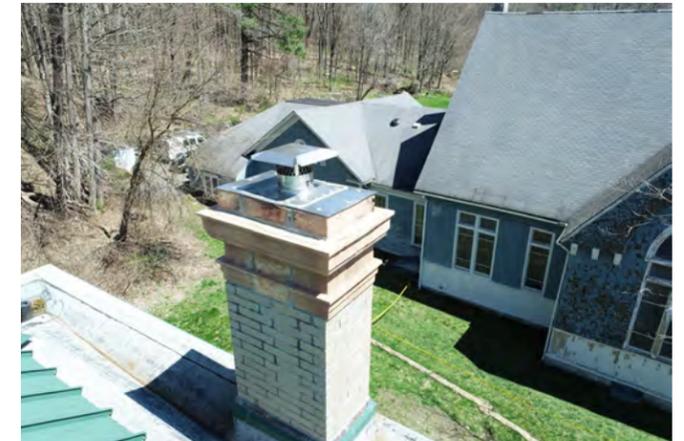
Typical masonry condition of 1930s addition, including typical joint between 1930s addition and the original building



Location of the chimneys on the west and east sides of the original building



West chimney condition

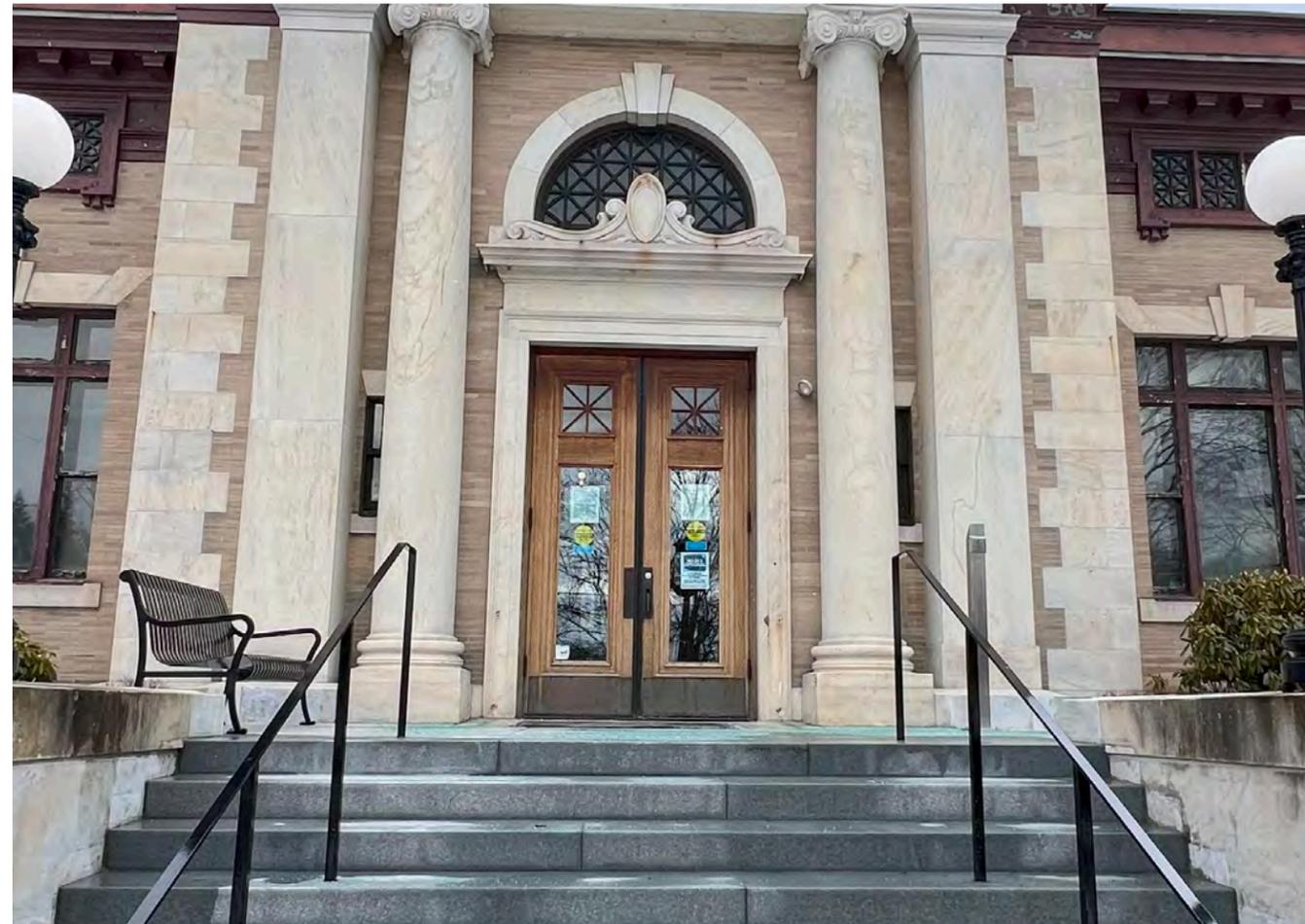


Typical east chimney condition with recently installed chimney cap

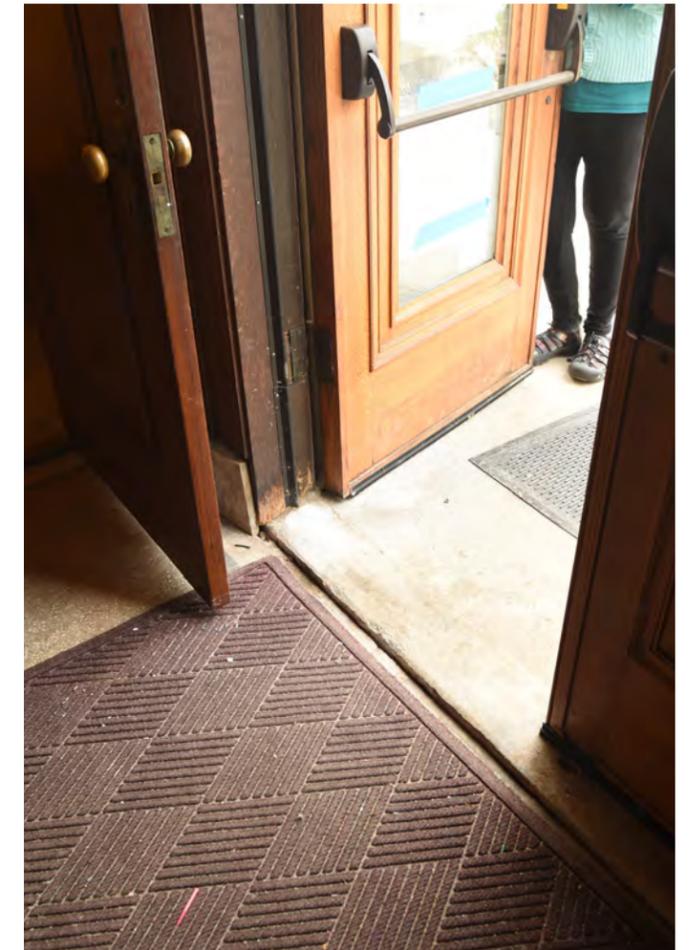
OPENINGS

DOORS

The primary entry doors into the building appear to be original. They have been retrofitted with some new hardware (door pulls, panic hardware, astragal) though other hardware components appear to be original (hinges). The doors are not handicap accessible with multiple non-compliant conditions including the clear width and threshold. When open, the door to the bathroom in the vestibule obstructs the clear opening of the primary entry door exacerbating this issue. The doors should, at a minimum, be refinished with a compliant threshold and handicap actuators installed.



Primary entrance to the original building



Primary building entrance door and threshold (adjacent bathroom door is also visible)

OPENINGS

WINDOWS

There are a variety of window types within the original building, including double-hung and fixed windows in different configurations. All appear to be original and are generally in fair condition but with limited functionality as many of the windows are painted shut and/or have broken counterbalances. A full window restoration program should be considered for the building. Including, but not limited to replacing all glazing putty, replacing any broken glass, stripping, repairing and refinishing all wood window frames, sashes and trim, replacing all hardware, repairing any broken counterbalances and replacing all weather stripping and sealants. Additionally, replacement, operable storm windows should be considered to improve thermal comfort and energy efficiency.



Cracked window pane



Typical exterior window condition with interior storm window present



Typical exterior window condition



Typical exterior bay window condition (1 of 2) in main reading rooms



Typical interior bay window condition (1 of 2) in main reading rooms



Typical exterior window condition in upper level of original building



Typical exterior window condition in lower level of original building



Typical interior window condition in lower level of original building



Typical interior window condition in upper level of original building

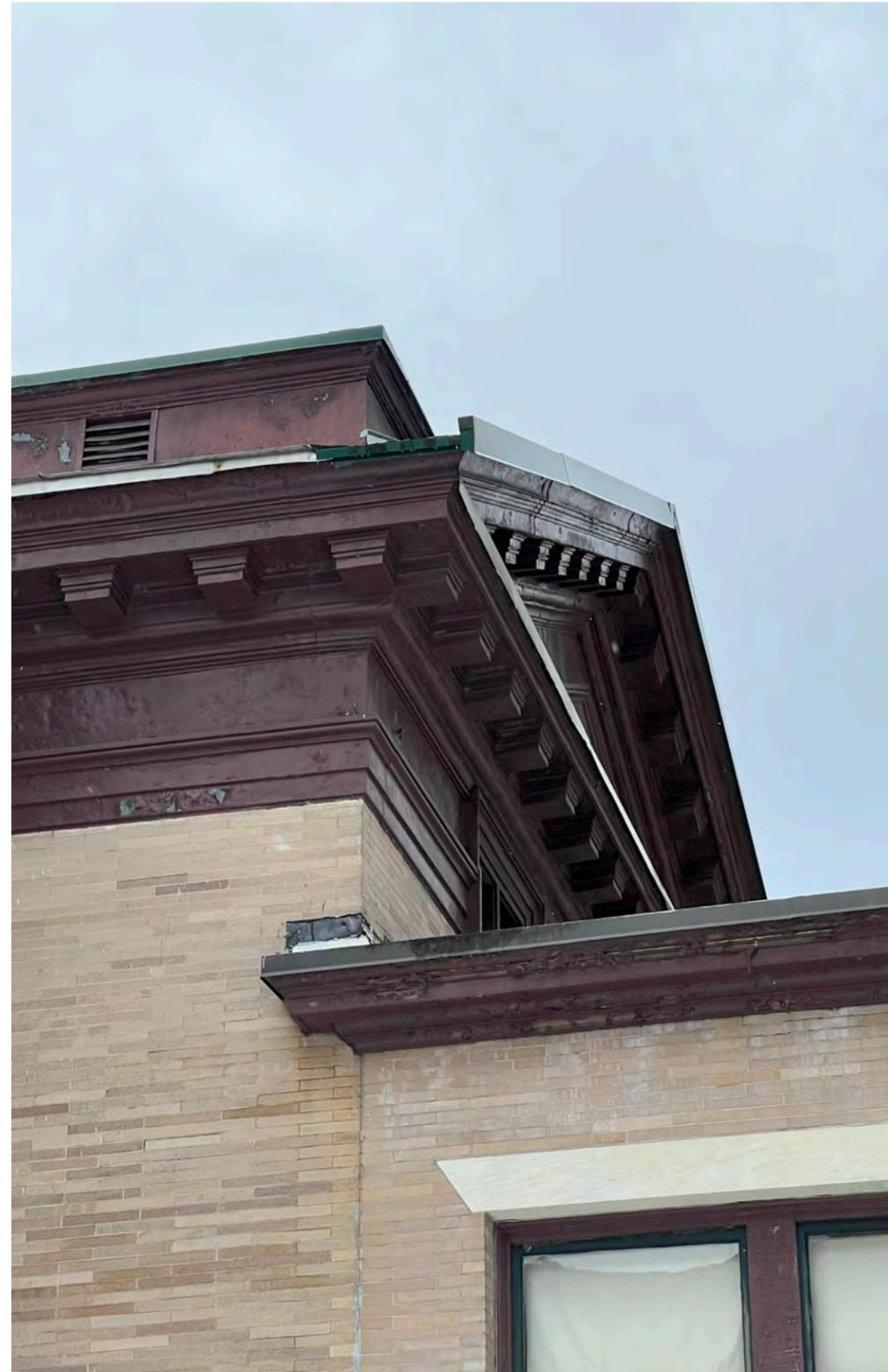
ORNAMENTAL WOODWORK & INSULATION

ORNAMENTAL WOODWORK

There are a variety of ornamental wood elements on the original building. Primary elements include door and wood trim, the entry pediment moldings and the building's perimeter entablature, moldings and cornice. The majority of these elements are in fair condition with visible paint peeling and localized areas of deterioration. A detailed survey should be conducted to determine which areas of deterioration require repair and/or replacement. All of the existing woodwork should be stripped of existing paint, primed and repainted.

INSULATION

It was not possible to verify the conditions within the original building attic. However, it is assumed that both the exterior walls of the original building and addition, as well as the roofs, are uninsulated. This lack of insulation contributes greatly to the thermal variability within the building and the building's considerable energy use and efficiency. Further investigation and analysis should be performed to determine feasible strategies to insulate the building to improve thermal comfort and energy efficiency.



Typical condition of ornamental woodwork including window frames, soffits (1930s addition) and entablature and pediment (original building)



Typical condition of ornamental woodwork including window frames and entablature (original building)



RAMSDELL PUBLIC LIBRARY

INTERIOR

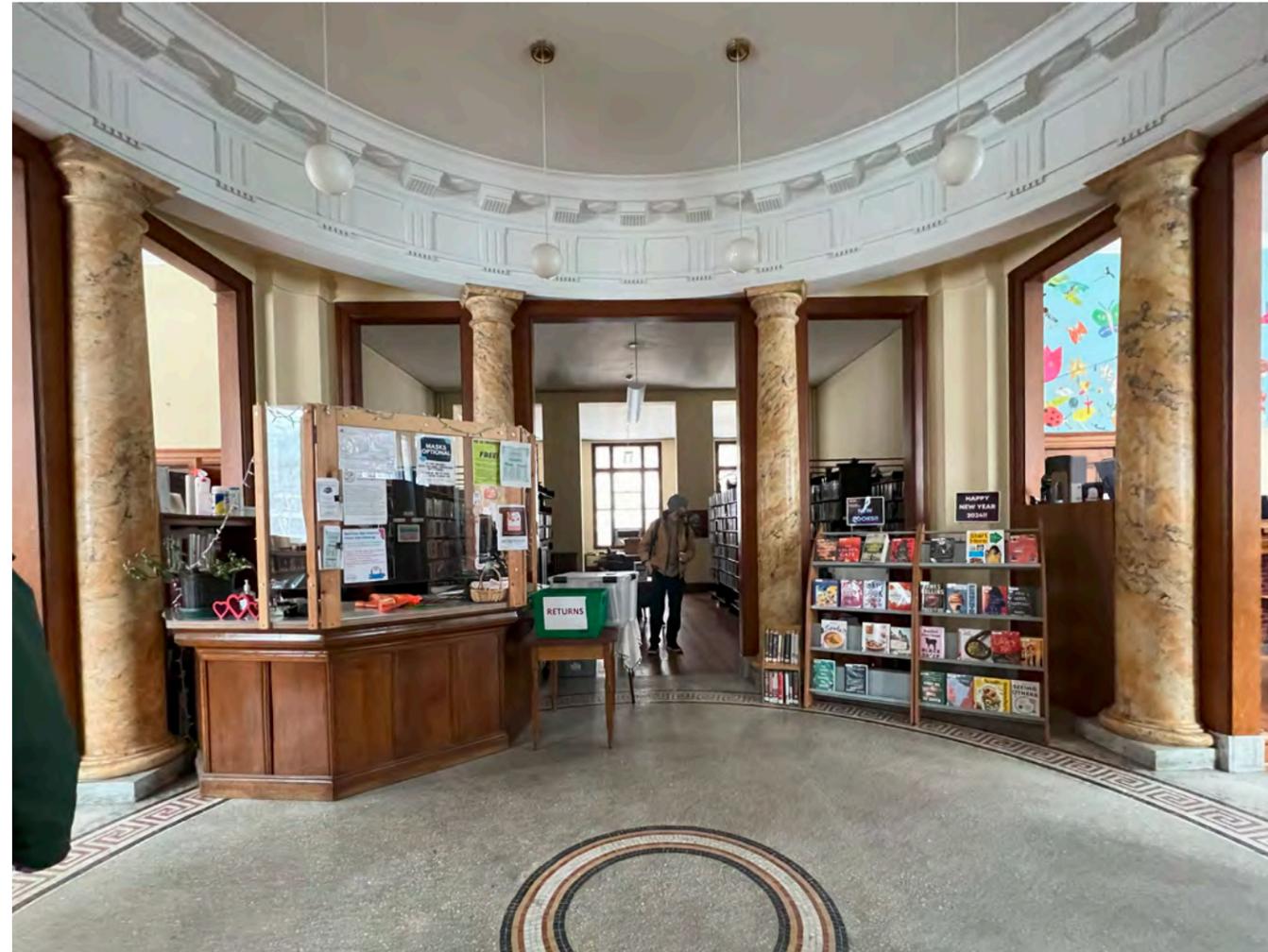
INTERIOR

ORIGINAL FEATURES

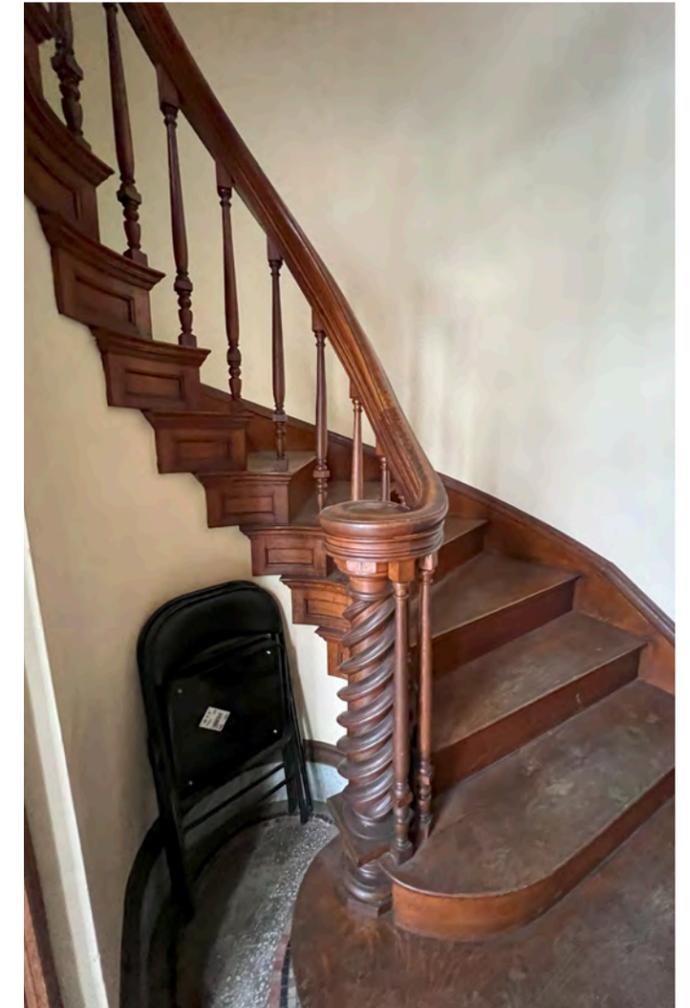
The interior features of the original building, neo classical and beaux arts in style, are quite striking and characteristic of the era. Most notably is the axial entry sequence from the main doors, though the stair vestibule anteroom and into the arrival foyer with its flanking, symmetrical reading rooms. This is a quintessential arrangement in turn-of-the-century civic buildings and every effort should be made to keep it intact as a defining feature within Ramsdell Library.

The refined material palette within the arrival foyer, reminiscent of an Italian rotunda, includes a terrazzo and inlaid mosaic tile floor, marble columns, wood trim and ornamental plasterwork all of which provide an elevated sense of place and civic pride. Though it no longer exists, it is likely that originally there was a large ornamental chandelier in this space. All of the materials within the entry foyer are generally well preserved and in sound condition. Similarly, each Reading Room, complete with high ceilings, plaster moldings, ornate fireplace surrounds, wood floors, doors and trim work are well preserved.

The upper level of the library was originally designed as a community gathering hall, with a large open floor area, raised stage and support space. The original defining feature of this space was a central laylight in the ceiling with a corresponding skylight at the roof designed to fill the space with natural light. The skylight has since been removed or covered over through the laylight at the ceiling still remains.



Arrival foyer with original features.



Primary building stair with original detailing



Upper level 'Grand Hall' (with original laylight present in the center of the ceiling)



Original fireplace (1 of 2) in the original reading room



General storage area in the lower level of the original building

INTERIOR continued

STAIRS

There are two stairs within the existing building. The main stairs within the entry stair vestibule connect the main level with the upper level. This stair would have been the primary public stair within the building before the upper level of the building was closed to the public. While it is in character with the original building and grand in nature there are several accessibility issues, including non compliant nosings and handrails.

The second stair in the rear of the building is largely a service stair. It is smaller in nature and similarly has several accessibility issues including non compliant handrails and landings. This rear stair provides the only access to the lower level of the library.

Non compliant conditions exist on both sets of stairs, including handrail width, lack of handrail continuity, lack of handrails on both sides of the stairs, non compliant handrail and guardrail heights, landing sizes and stair clear widths, among others.

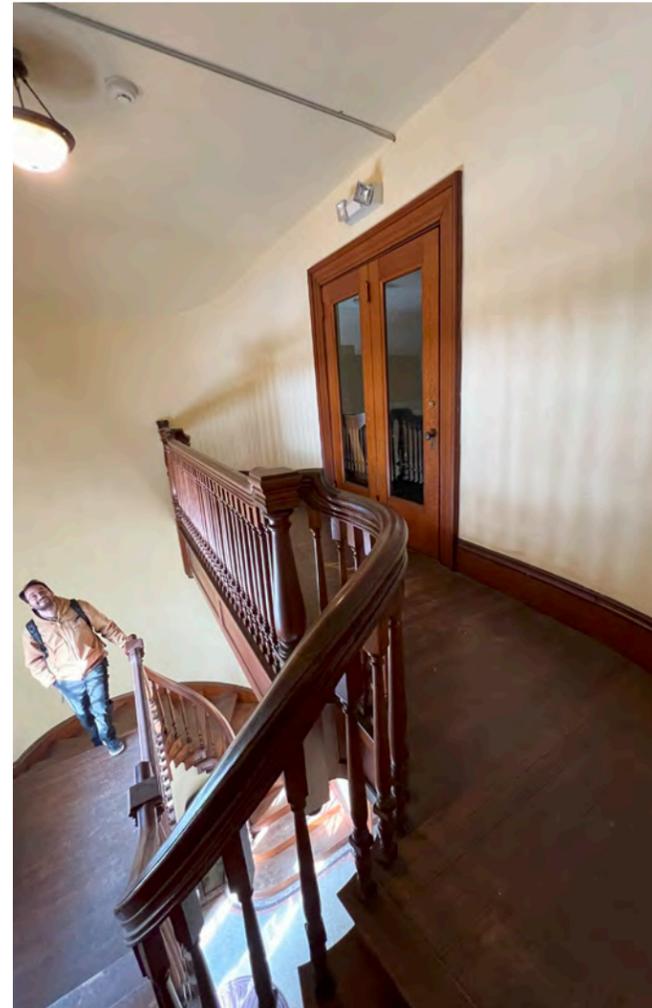
While both stairs have non-compliant conditions within them it may be possible to seek relief from some of the conditions, through the form of building code and/or accessibility variances, considering the historic nature of the building.

RESTROOMS

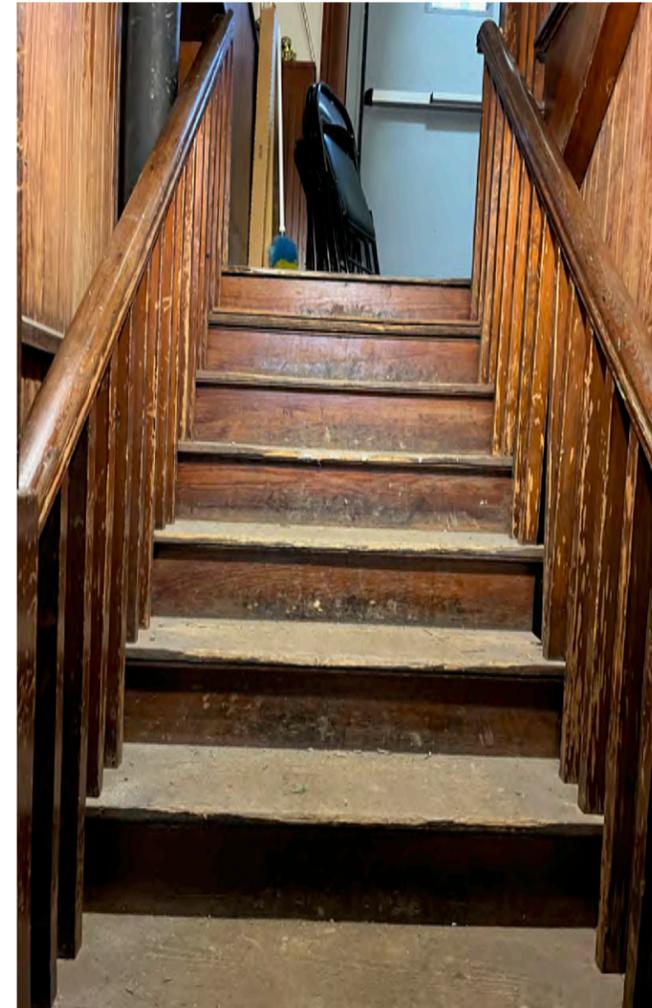
There are two restrooms within the library. One located within the entry stair vestibule and one in the rear of the building tucked beneath the service stair. Both are entirely too small and have several non compliant accessibility and building code conditions. There is also not an adequate fixture count to support the building occupancy. If a future building renovation is considered, new adequately sized restrooms, with the appropriate amount of fixtures, will need to be provided.

DOORS + HARDWARE

There are a variety of doors and door hardware throughout the interior of the library. Many of the doors are original and in working condition. However, most have non-compliant accessibility conditions including non-compliant clear widths, push/pull clearances, thresholds and hardware.



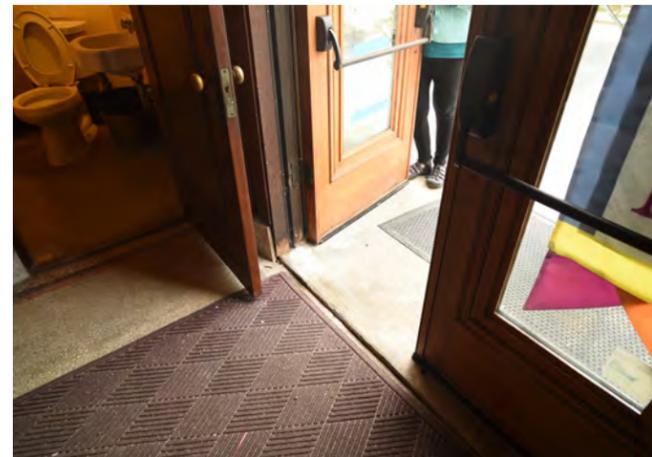
Primary stair at upper landing to second floor with multiple non-compliant conditions present



Stair to the lower level with multiple non-compliant conditions present



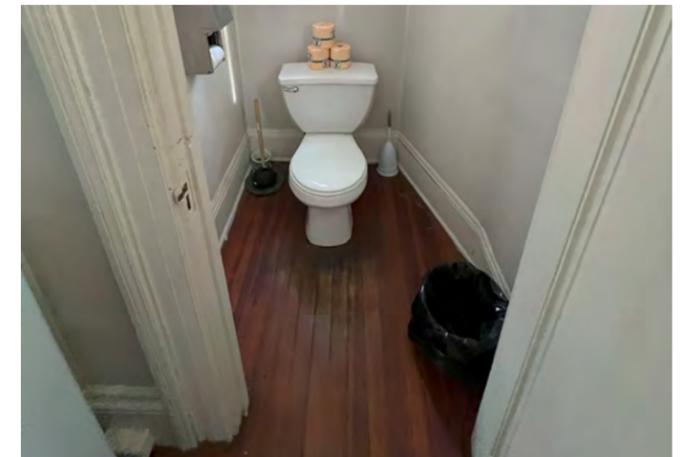
Primary patron restroom off entry stair vestibule with multiple non-compliant building code and accessibility conditions present



Primary entrance doors have non-complaint conditions, including the threshold and door hardware



Primary stair upper landing with multiple non-compliant conditions present



Staff restroom that does not include a sink. There are several non-compliant building code and accessibility conditions present.

INTERIOR continued

ACOUSTICS

There are varying acoustic characteristics throughout the different spaces within Ramsdell, though none are best suited for the specific type of use within each space. The most challenging acoustic issue is the lack of adequate acoustic isolation between spaces. A noise in one area of the main level travels easily to opposite areas on the floor creating a distracting, and at times, disruptive library environment. Additionally, the arrival hall and flanking reading rooms are quite live and echoey which exacerbates this issue.

STACKS

The library book stacks are located predominantly within the 1930's addition and are typical of that era. The shelves have integrated lighting between them and are braced at the top to each other and against perimeter walls. While generally functional, the shelves do not have adequately accessible aisle clearances between them, and provide minimal flexibility for programming.

LOWER LEVEL

The lower level of the library consists largely of unfinished general storage space with a portion of the original footprint dedicated to building systems (boiler, oil tanks and electrical panels). There is a crawlspace beneath the 1930's addition with exposed earth. The lower level is noticeably damp. Given the age of the building, it is assumed that there is no vapor barrier beneath the existing slab in the original building. Considering the exposed earth and dampness in the lower level, the lack of a vapor barrier, and the biological growth evident in the exterior walls on the main level, the building may be experiencing a condition known as the "Rising Damp". In this situation, moisture from ground water infiltrates through the basement slab and foundation wall and continues to rise through existing masonry into the spaces above.



Crawlspace beneath 1930's addition (there is no vapor barrier present)



Arrival hall (with lack of acoustic separation to adjoining spaces)



General storage area in lower level of original building



Stack area in 1930's addition



Stack area in 1930's addition (aisle widths are too narrow and non-compliant)



Stack area in 1930's addition



RAMSDELL PUBLIC LIBRARY

STRUCTURE

STRUCTURE

GENERAL

The building exterior is constructed with masonry bearing walls of multi-wythe brick clad with a mixture of stone and brick veneer. The wood-framed roof and floors are supported at the exterior walls, interior masonry walls or piers at hearths, and interior wood framing, consistent with similar buildings of that era (1908 and 1930).

The building structure is in sound condition without any documented deficiencies. However, our investigation did not include investigative or exploratory openings within the existing library to determine the framing condition or configuration. It was also not possible to access the existing attic to assess the roof structure. It is recommended that any future design efforts include exploratory demo field investigation to review any hidden framing conditions and to address any potential unforeseen conditions.

Within the basement, there are a series of steel columns and load-bearing masonry walls within the original building. The 1930's addition is supported with a series of steel columns with load-bearing beams, however it was not feasible to access the crawl space to verify these conditions. The first-floor wood floor joists are visible throughout both the original building and 1930's addition and are in acceptable condition.

The rubble-masonry basement walls of the original building are capped with a brick-masonry skirt above grade and founded on large stone or boulder footings. It is assumed that the 1930's crawl space addition foundation was constructed similarly. Terracotta tiles on the interior face of the perimeter walls within the 1930's addition crawl space hide the foundation wall structure. There is a concrete floor slab in the basement within the original building footprint, and no floor slab within the crawlspace.

It was reported to us that the existing basement has flooded on multiple occasions over the year, which is a common occurrence with foundations from this era that do not include modern surface water drainage, footing drains, or under slab drainage. Further investigations should be performed to determine cost effective mitigation to reduce water intrusion into the basement.

It is recommended that during the design phase of any future renovation plans include exploratory openings in strategic locations within the existing building to determine the existing size and bearing capacity of existing framing members/floor assemblies. This information will be necessary to determine how existing spaces could be reprogrammed to support different uses and programs.



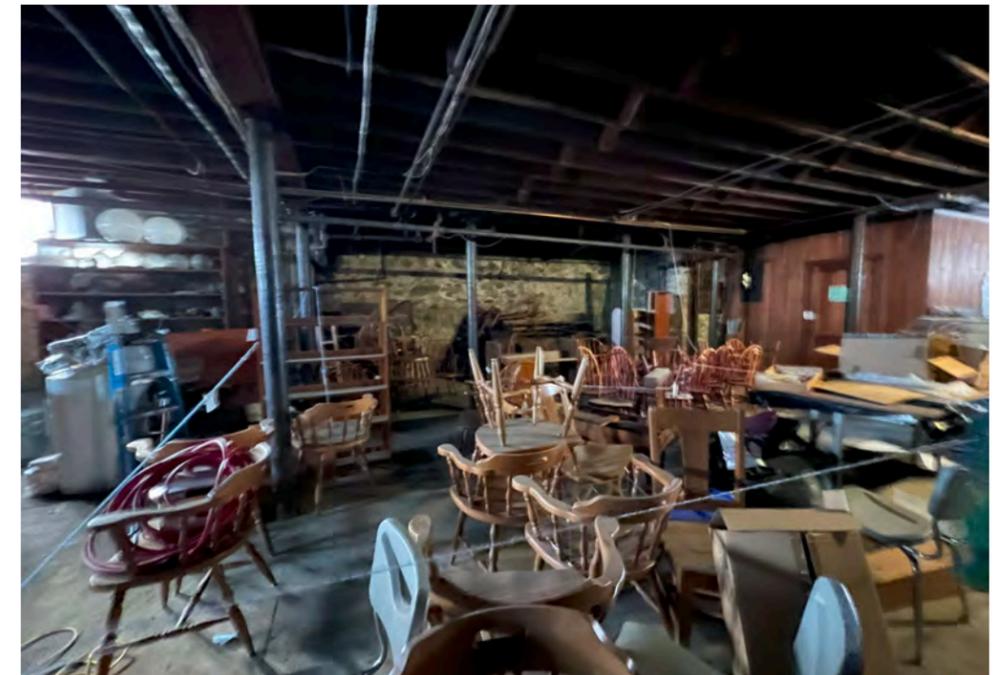
Steel posts and columns in the 1930's addition crawlspace. Floor joists are also visible. The foundation wall (behind terracotta tiles) is not visible.



Upper course of stone foundation wall is visible beneath sandstone base



Stone foundation wall in lower level of original building



Steel columns and wood floor joists in lower level of original building

RAMSDELL PUBLIC LIBRARY

BUILDING SYSTEMS



WARNING / ADVERT

THIS EQUIPMENT IS DESIGNED AND TESTED BY SQUARE D TO PERFORMANCE LEVELS WHICH EXCEED UNDERWRITERS LABORATORY STANDARDS. USE OF OTHER THAN SQUARE D CIRCUIT BREAKERS MAY ADVERSELY AFFECT USER SAFETY, APPAR RELIABILITY AND WILL VOID THE WARRANTY.

12069502

Computer Outlets

1	2nd floor	PANEL	2
2	main room outlets	outlet	3
3	2nd floor	cellar lights Library lights	4
4	main room outlets	outlets	5
5	alarm system	outlets outlet children's area	6
6	2 gang floor outlet	outlets outlet children's area	7
7	cellar light	light outlet	8
8	floor outlet Em	light	9
9	BoILER	Rotunda LITES	10
10	Computer outlets	2nd floor Rm LITES	11
11	Computer outlets	existing circuit	12
12	breakroom outlet	computer outlets	13
13	breakroom outlet	Break room outlet	14
14	Air Cond. Reference Rm	Dehumidifier outlet	15
15	Air Cond. Outlet	SPARE	16
16	220V	Back Stairwell	17
17		1st floor Kit. Rm	18
18		2nd floor Stairwell	19
19		2nd floor LITES + SPARE	20
20		Juvenile Fiction	21
21		Work area	22
22		Northwest LITES	23
23		2nd floor BACK STAIR LITES + SPARE	24
24		West Main LITES	25
25			26
26			27
27			28
28			29
29			30
30			31
31			32
32			33
33			34
34			35
35			36
36			37
37	Hot WTR		38
38	HTR	Door openers	39
39			40
40			41
41			42

MECHANICAL EXISTING CONDITIONS

The heating system consists of an oil-fired steam boiler (fig M1). This boiler is connected to one and two pipe cast iron steam radiators placed throughout the building. The boiler system is new, replaced within the past year. Fuel is stored and provided to the boiler via three 275-gallon oil tanks that are piped in parallel (fig M2). The age of these tanks is unknown, it is believed that they are no more than 10 years old. A single fill pipe is located on the east side of the building. Combustion air is provided for the boiler utilizing a fan powered combustion air system wired to run when the boiler is activated (fig M3). This fan system is ducted to the exterior through an old, infilled basement window and terminated with the manufacturer's air hood. The boiler is vented into the original chimney using a stainless-steel chimney liner terminated at the top of the chimney with a weather cap.

Heat is distributed throughout the building with cast iron steam piping run in the basement connecting to radiators to serve the first floor (fig M6). Piping is also run to the radiators on the second floor. Vertical piping to the second-floor radiators is exposed on the first floor in multiple places (fig M5). The radiators appear to be original to the building and placed appropriately to provide proper coverage of heat (fig M4). This steam piping allows steam to rise and condensate water to drop and return to the boiler.



fig M1



fig M2



fig M3



fig M4



fig M5

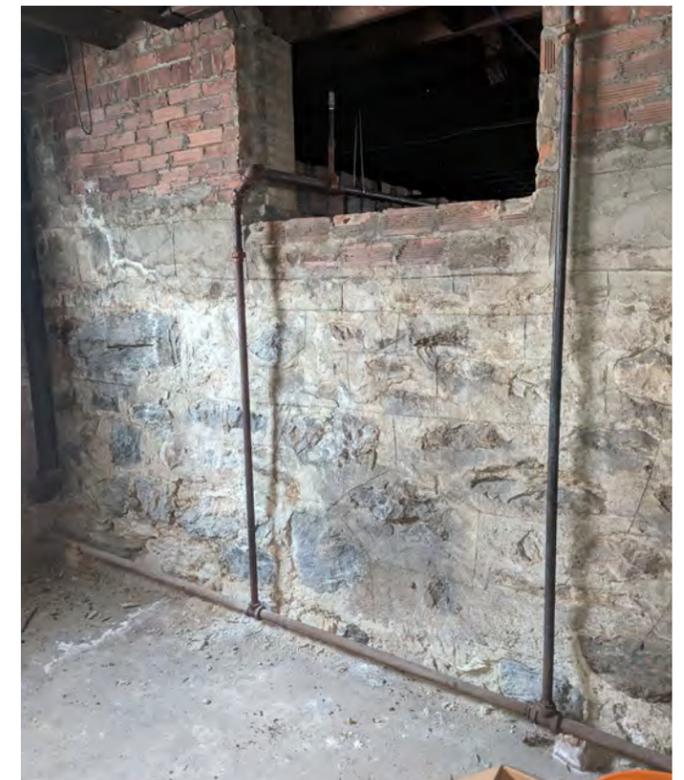


fig M6

MECHANICAL EXISTING CONDITIONS

The steam distribution system comprised of cast iron pipe, fitting, valves, & radiators. Steam piping in the basement runs mostly at the perimeter with high piping for steam and low piping for condensate water to return to the boiler system (fig M8, fig M9). The age of the piping is unknown, it is presumed that all or most of the piping is original to the building. There are signs of surface rust staining near air vents typical to some water being released during normal operation (fig M7). The system was running at the time of our visit. The system was functional and there was no visual leaking near the boiler, pipes, or radiators.

The steam piping throughout the basement and first floor is not insulated. This would be required by the current code. The new steam piping at the boiler is insulated per code.

This system is controlled with one thermostat located in the main lobby area which controls one zone of heating for the entire building. These controls are local controls, no BMS system is present.

This building has no mechanical ventilation, only natural ventilation using openable windows and doors. There is no central air conditioning in the building. A window air conditioner is installed on the first floor.

There are two ceiling vents on the second floor that appear to be original to the building, there is no evidence that these vents are still functional, it is believed that the ducting of exterior termination(s) of these vents has been removed at some point and do not exist with the existing roof (fig M10, fig M11, fig M12).

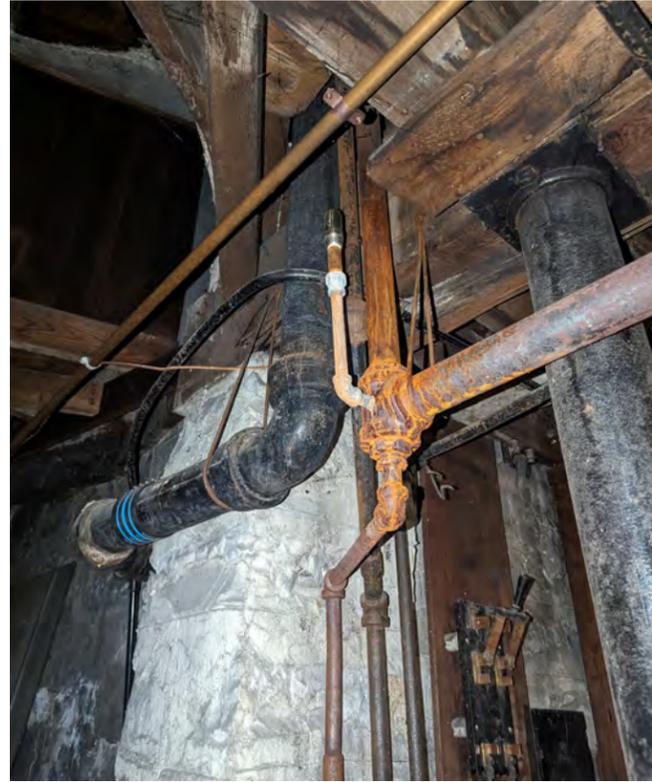


fig M7



fig M8

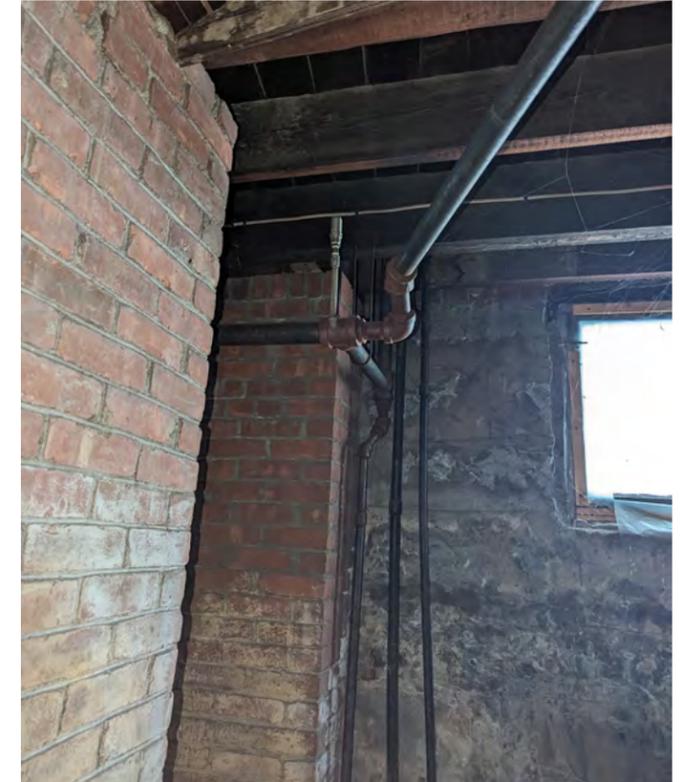


fig M9



fig M10



fig M11

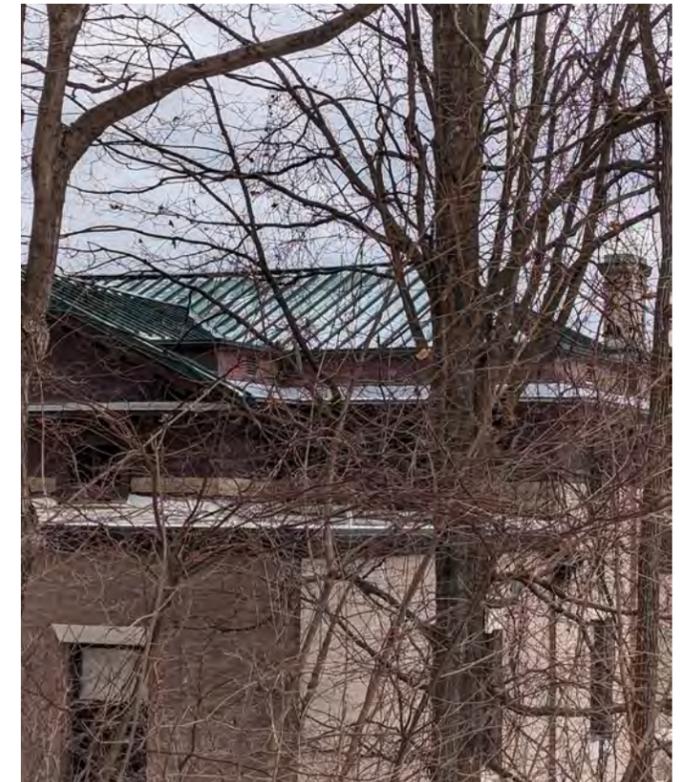


fig M12

MECHANICAL

RECOMMENDATIONS

VRF HEATING & COOLING

Two high efficiency VRF Heat Recovery Heat Pump systems are recommended for the building, one to serve the first floor/basement spaces and one to serve the second floor. This will consist of two ~12.5-ton outdoor heat pump units located on the flat addition roof in the rear of the building. These outdoor units will connect to indoor ductless wall mount fan-coil units via copper refrigerant piping. These fan-coil units will be located throughout the building in either a high wall configuration or low wall console style unit or a combination of both to accommodate the room or space characteristics. Each indoor unit will connect to a thermostat to provide independent temperature control allowing the building to be served with multiple heating and cooling zones. This system will provide high efficiency cooling and backup heating for the building. This system will also provide conditioning for the Network Room located in the basement.

EXISTING BOILER

The existing oil-fired steam boiler system has been recently replaced and updated. There is potential to reuse it as the primary source of heating and domestic hot water. However, it is recommended that non fossil-fuel based building systems (i.e. electric heat pumps) be strongly considered for any future renovation projects, thus requiring a different type of system than what is currently installed.

VENTILATION

Ventilation air will be provided to the building via Energy Recovery Ventilators (ERVs). These ERVs will provide some conditioning to the incoming (fresh air) utilizing energy from the outgoing (exhausted) air.

One exterior ERV ~ 800 CFM will be located outside the building on the flat addition roof to serve the second floor. Supply and return ductwork will connect to this unit, enter the building and run in the backstage rooms. This ductwork will connect to multiple diffusers and grilles in the wall between the backstage rooms and direct air into the large second floor room to provide the required ventilation for this area. This ductwork will be exposed in the backstage rooms and will have duct mounted diffusers and grilles to serve the backstage rooms. The ductwork external to the building will be insulated and weather sealed.

Two interior ERVs ~ 400 CFM ea. will be located in the basement suspended from first floor structure above. Supply & Return ductwork will connect to these ERVs and run down the length of the basement connecting to floor registers and grilles to provide fresh air to the first-floor spaces above. The ERVs located in the basement will connect to exterior louvers located in existing basement window openings (or other access to outdoor air will be required) to capture fresh air and exhaust indoor air.

All ductwork in unconditioned spaces will be insulated. Each ERV will be equipped with a duct mounted electric heating coil to temper the incoming air.

All controls for the ERVs will be local to the units. These systems will provide all required fresh air to the building as well as required exhaust for the existing and new Bathrooms, Janitors Closet, Break Room & Kitchenette.

NOTE

The preferred location of the exterior equipment is on the 1930's addition roof, although if the roof is unable to support the weight load it can be located on the ground below, locations to be determined.

ELECTRICAL EXISTING CONDITIONS

The main electric service for the building is rated as 240/120-volt, 200 amp, 1-phase. The existing electrical service originates at a pole mounted utility transformer located on Main Street, with (1) 25kVA step-down transformers installed on pole #32 (figure E1). Service is routed overhead to a combination utility meter/main disconnect via weatherhead on the exterior of the building (figure E2). The service continues to the basement utilizing SER cable and terminates to an MLO panel (figure E3). From there, power is distributed throughout the building. Based on visual observation, no spare circuit breakers exist, based on position of the branch circuit breaker handles and the circuit directory.

The overhead electrical and telecom service conductors are routed through trees and could be a potential hazard should any branches break off the tree. Additionally, the telecom conductors are being supported by these trees and are low enough where they can be touched if standing on the access ramp. This should be addressed with the local utility companies to alleviate this potential issue.

A grounding electrode conductor (GEC) is installed from the main panel and terminated to within 5 feet of the entrance of the incoming water pipe. However, the manner in which this GEC is installed is not in conformance with National Electric Code (NEC) Articles 250.64(B)(3) and 300.11(C) as it is zip tied along the distance of the water pipe (figure E4).

The panelboard is in adequate condition to be used for future renovations. However, any upgrades to this building will require an upgrade of the electrical service. Peak demand data was not provided at the time of this report.

The majority of cables installed consist of NM-type, based on visual observation at the panelboard. Based on the construction type and building classification, this type of cabling may not be allowed per NEC Article 334 and local building codes.

There are decommissioned electrical items located in the basement that are recommended to be removed. This includes old disconnect switches (figures E5 and E6) and old knob and tube that were part of knob and tube wiring.

There is no indication an arc flash study has been performed as arc flash labels do not exist. It is assumed a short-circuit and coordination study have not been performed.



fig E1



fig E2



fig E3



fig E4



fig E5

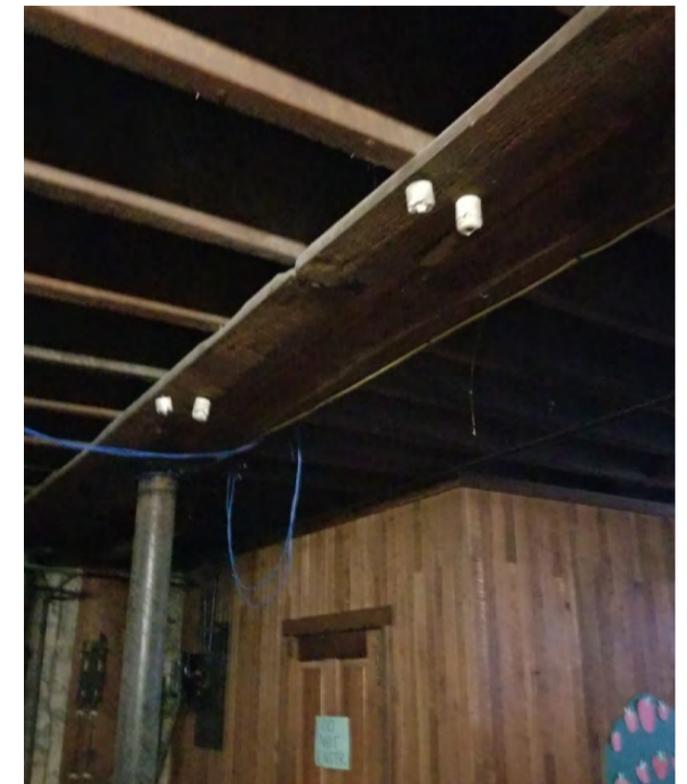


fig E6

ELECTRICAL

EXISTING CONDITIONS

LIGHTING SYSTEMS

Interior lighting consists of a combination of surface and pendant mounted fixtures, lamp sockets, and wall sconces. Local switching via toggle switches, pushbuttons, and pull cords, exist throughout to provide manual control. No automatic controls exist.

Exterior lighting consists of (2) post top style fixtures located at the exterior stairs. There is no indication automatic controls via photocell are provided for these fixtures. One of the fixtures was operational, while the other was not during the time of the site visit.

Interior emergency lighting is provided via exit/elu combos and located above doors that are assumed to be part of the path of egress. During the field investigation, the emergency lighting component did not operate when the test switch was activated.

Exterior emergency lighting is located at the main entrance doors and exterior door located on the back of the building. These appear to provide the necessary egress emergency lighting in accordance with NFPA 101. However, these fixtures were not tested to ensure they are fully operational.

POWER SYSTEMS

Existing receptacles are located throughout and are a combination of recessed and surface mounted devices. Most of the devices appear to be in adequate condition, except for those noted below:

- Non-grounded type duplex receptacles exist. These should be replaced in accordance with NEC Article 250.130(C) or 406.4(D)(2) (figure E7).
- Coverplate installed at the GFI receptacle located below the electrical panel is slightly ajar.

An existing recessed mount panel is located near the doors leading to the basement and is being used as a splice box (figure E8). All splices, grounding terminal, and bonding connections should be reviewed to ensure conformance to NEC 250.148.

Additionally, the cover for this splice box is accessible and allows unauthorized access to all building occupants. It is recommended to install a screw-cover and label it accordingly.

FIRE ALARM

Fire alarm consists of a central station and burglary alarm system, with the control panel located in the storage room at the main entryway (figures 9 and 10).

Equipment is manufactured by Honeywell, and model number is #3NWT. The system monitors smoke detectors located in the building as well as front and back doors and motion sensors. No other fire alarm devices are located in the building other than smoke detectors. A new battery is labeled as being installed in 2022, and the system appears to be functional.



fig E7



fig E8



fig E9

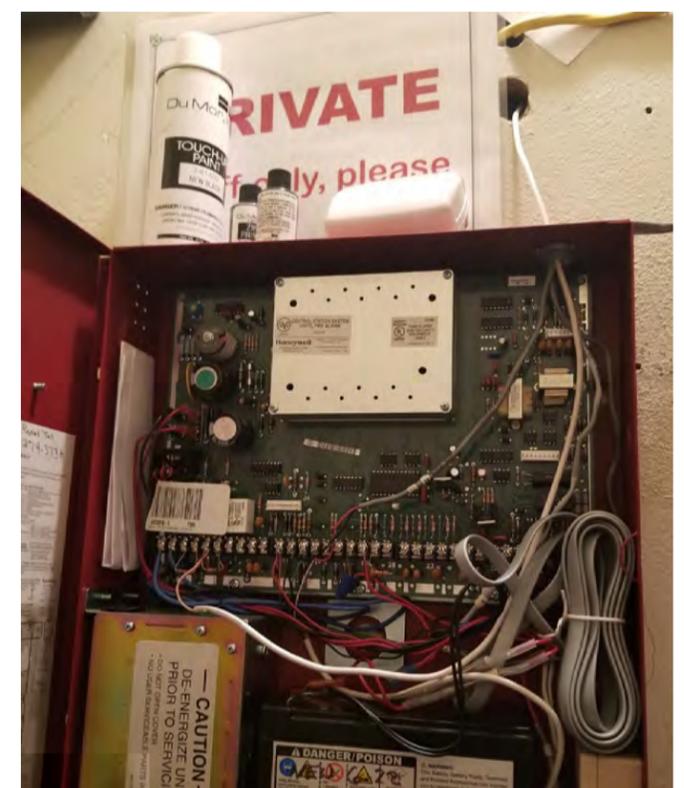


fig E10

ELECTRICAL

RECOMMENDATIONS

ELECTRICAL SERVICE

The grounding electrode installation should be reinstalled in strict accordance with National Electric Code (NEC)

- NFPA 70, 2020 National Electrical Code
 - attn: Articles 250.64(B)(3) and 300.11(C)
- NFPA 101 Life Safety Code
- Massachusetts State Building Code
- Massachusetts Energy Conservation Code (IECC 2021)
- ANSI C2 National Electrical Safety Code

Due to the lack of pole space, and size of the existing service it is likely that any renovation will require the service to be upgraded. The size of the new service will be based on (2) main factors. The first factor is the additional load created by the renovation design. This includes the load created by the new HVAC design and the load created by new lighting, and specialty equipment, such as ranges and cooktops used for a break room, large machinery, etc. Since the HVAC industry has been leaning toward electrically operated equipment in lieu of using natural or propane gas, the electrical demand of the HVAC system is now the largest contributor to deciding electric service size. The second factor is the buildings' current peak demand. By first assessing what the electric use of the current building is, and adding in additional loads, the new service size can be calculated.

DISTRIBUTION

The electrical service for the building should be served via underground and originating from a pad-mounted transformer. Transformer should be located on the site. The exact location should be determined by the utility company (Eversource).

The main utility meter should be located on the exterior of the building, in a location that is easily accessible to the utility company. Hot/cold sequencing should be coordinated during the design phase of this project.

A new electrical service for the building should be provided at 208/120V, 1,000A, 3-phase, 4-wire. A service-entrance rated main distribution panel should be located in the electrical closet located in the building. The panel should be provided with a type I surge protective device, 100% rated main circuit breaker, and a revenue-grade energy metering device. Service size is approximate based on available information at time of report publication. Exact size of the service should be determined during the design phase.

Approximately (3) branch circuit panelboards should be added during the design phase. Panelboards shall be located in the electric room. Panelboards should be provided with copper phase, neutral, and ground bussing (fully rated) and lockable covers.

GROUNDING SYSTEMS

Assuming the service is upgraded, a new grounding system consisting of grounding electrode conductors connected to the main service ground bar should be provided. Conductors should be connected to the water service, gas service, concrete encased electrode, ground rods, and telecom grounding system. Combined resistance of the grounding electrode system should not exceed 5 ohms. The neutral to ground bond should be located in the main service equipment enclosure.

A separate, insulated equipment grounding conductor, sized per NEC, shall be provided within each raceway and cable, with each end terminated on a suitable lug, bus, enclosure, or bushing.

LIGHTING SYSTEMS

Lighting should be provided in the building that consists of high efficiency, LED fixtures. The power density within this space should be approximately 0.75 to 0.98 watts per square foot. Fixtures with screw shell lamp bases, which are designated to remain should be upgraded to A line LED lamps instead of incandescent.

The interior lighting should be designed with luminance foot-candle levels recommended by the IESNA and US EPA Energy Star. These luminance levels should provide lighting that complies with the energy code interior lighting power allowance in the Massachusetts energy code.

Lighting controls should be updated to include occupancy sensors, to turn off lights when areas are not occupied for extended periods, manual dimming switches and automatic day light sensors to lower illumination when sufficient ambient lighting is present.

Lighting controls should consist of the following:

- Ceiling mounted occupancy sensors should be provided for the following spaces:
- Laundry rooms, storage rooms, food prep areas, large offices and training rooms, corridors and hallways, exam rooms, staff rooms, etc.
- Wall switch occupancy sensors should be provided for the following spaces:
 - Small offices, smaller bathrooms, janitor's closet, etc.
- All spaces should be provided with manual override switches and dimming capabilities.
- Ceiling mounted day light sensors should be provided to control the amount of electrical lighting based off of the natural ambient light in a given room.

Exterior lighting consists of (2) post top style fixtures located at the exterior stairs. These fixtures should be re-lamped with new LED energy efficient bulbs. Controls for exterior fixtures should be either by timed switch control or photocell to ensure fixtures are not energized during daylight hours.

EMERGENCY LIGHTING AND EXIT SIGNAGE

Emergency lighting should be provided by a combination of fixtures with integral battery backup, emergency lighting units and remote lighting inverters providing a minimum of 90 minutes of battery backup upon loss of power. For interior spaces the type of emergency lighting should be based on fixture selection in any given room. Exterior egress lighting located at egress doors should contain integral emergency battery backup or be powered remote lighting inverter based on fixture type selected during design phase. LED Exit signs should be provided throughout the space and should contain integral battery backup.

Interior emergency lighting is provided via Exit/ELU combos and located above doors that are assumed to be part of the path of egress. Emergency egress lighting should be regularly maintained. Once a month, personnel should test whether emergency lighting and signage is operational. Batteries should be replaced when performance starts to diminish, and the new battery should be marked with date installed.

Exterior emergency lighting is located at the main entrance doors and exterior door located on the back of the building. These appear to provide the necessary egress emergency lighting in accordance with NFPA 101. Emergency egress lighting should be regularly maintained. Once a month, personnel should test whether emergency lighting and signage is operational. Batteries should be replaced when performance starts to diminish, and the new battery should be marked with date installed.

ELECTRICAL

RECOMMENDATIONS continued

POWER SYSTEMS

All accessible abandoned wiring and equipment should be removed and discarded. This includes but is not limited to all components of knob and tube wiring, and unused disconnects. If any of the knob and tube wiring is found to be in use. The circuit should be deenergized. The portion of the circuit containing knob and tube should be removed and discarded. New wiring should be installed in strict accordance with the 2023 National Electrical Code (NEC)

All existing branch circuit wiring should be inspected, and integrity should be verified by the electrical contractor prior to reconnecting to new or existing equipment. All new receptacles, lighting, and mechanical equipment should be served with new wiring.

As noted above, all non-grounded receptacles and wiring should be removed, install new wiring and devices. New devices shall be tamper resistant.

All convenience power should be 120V and should be powered from the local power panelboard.

General purpose convenience power should be provided throughout the building using commercial grade duplex receptacles. The standard should be white devices and cover plates. Special requirements are as follows:

- Ground fault protected (GFI) receptacles should be provided within kitchens, 6 feet of a sink, and wherever required per NEC requirements.

The distribution of power should be concealed in finished areas and exposed in electrical/mechanical rooms. MC type cable should be used for branch circuits run above hung ceilings or concealed in walls. No conduits or cable should be exposed in finished areas.

Metallic raceways where required for feeders will be EMT in locations where exposure to physical damage is minimal and threaded rigid galvanized conduit in locations where the raceway will be exposed to physical damage or prolonged wetness.

All wiring should be designed with less than a 3% voltage drop for all feeders and less than a 2% voltage drop for all branch circuits.

Per the Massachusetts energy code, 50% of all general-purpose receptacles should be automatically controlled.

Power should be provided to new HVAC equipment.

Mechanical equipment rated below ½ HP will be supplied by 120V single-phase power. Mechanical equipment rated ½ HP and above should be supplied with 208V three-phase power.

Feeds to existing HVAC equipment that is designated to remain may be reused if cabling integrity is verified. If the integrity of cabling cannot be verified, new feeders should be provided.

Local disconnect safety switches should be provided for all permanently connected equipment to allow a lockout point for zero energy state compliance per OSHA requirements.

Mechanical equipment to be provided with dedicated circuits includes but is not limited to:

- (2) heat pump water heaters – 208V, 100A, 3-phase
- (1) 26-ton outdoor heat pump – 208V, 118A, 3-phase
- (12) ERV units' various sizes – 208V, 1-5A, 1-phase
- (20) VRF indoor units – 208V, 1-5A, 1-phase each.

Additional receptacles and power connections should be provided for the following items but not limited to:

- Two general purpose receptacles in the sprinkler room.
- One general purpose receptacle in the electrical room.
- Dedicated receptacles for plug in equipment in the Laundry Storage, Dishwash, Food Prep, Break room
- One general purpose receptacle each in the restrooms.
- Dedicated receptacles for 1 Refrigerator, 1 microwave, 1 coffee maker & 1 toaster (total of four dedicated 20A circuits) in the break room.
- One special purpose receptacle for autoclave – 208V, 50A, 1-phase.
- Four general purpose receptacles in each office.
- Exterior receptacles, quantity = approx. 10.

OPTIONAL STAND-BY BACKUP GENERATOR

Should design (1) 350kva diesel generator. The generator should be connected to the distribution system via an automatic transfer switch located in the main electric room. The generator should supply standby backup power for the building. All life-safety and emergency systems shall be supplied with emergency battery backup that will last a minimum of 90 minutes. The intended purpose of the genset is to provide power to branch circuit power and lighting(nonemergency) equipment in the case of a power loss.

FIRE ALARM RECOMMENDATIONS

The fire alarm system is adequate for the current layout. If renovation of the building includes altering the layout of new devices and appliances may be necessary. Devices such as smoke detectors, pull stations and notification appliances would be added to the existing system. System will need to be reprogrammed to include new devices and appliances.

PLUMBING

The building has one Public Restroom located in the entry vestibule (fig P1). This Restroom consists of one elongated water closet (fig P2) and one small hand sink mounted to the wall with exposed piping below (fig P3). There is a second Staff Restroom which consists of one standard water closet only (fig P4, fig P5). There is no hand sink in the Staff Restroom. Domestic hot water is heated for the restrooms using a 30-gallon electric water heater located in the basement near the boiler (fig P6.1). The age of this water heater is unknown but as fully functional with no leaks near the tank at the time of our visit.

There is a 1" copper electronically metered water main that enters the building at the southeast corner of the building (fig P6.2). The domestic water piping in the basement consists of a combination of newer copper piping, old copper piping and galvanized steel piping (fig P7).



fig P1



fig P2



fig P3



fig P4



fig P5



fig P6.1



fig P6.2

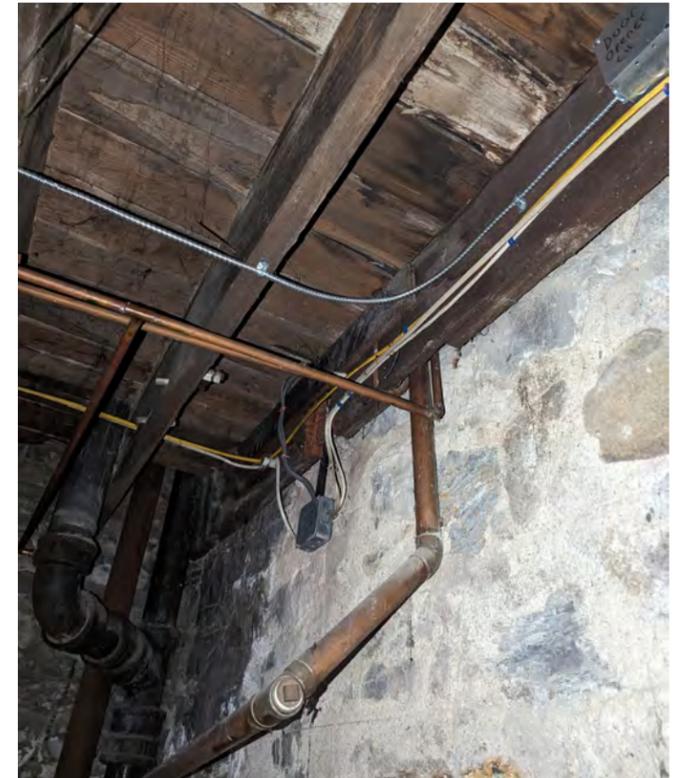


fig P7

PLUMBING

There are also portions of galvanized piping abandoned in place and replaced with copper in some areas (fig P8).

The domestic water piping is not insulated. This would be required by the current code.

Galvanized piping is no longer allowed per code requirements.

Drain piping is primarily run in the basement connecting to the fixtures on the first floor above. This piping is a combination of copper and cast iron (fig P9, fig P12). This piping shows some signs of corrosion around the fittings but no evidence of active leaking (fig P13, fig P14). There have been sections of cast iron piping removed and replaced with new using "no hub" style clamps indicating repairs and or maintenance (fig P10, fig P11). The age of the piping is unknown.



fig P8

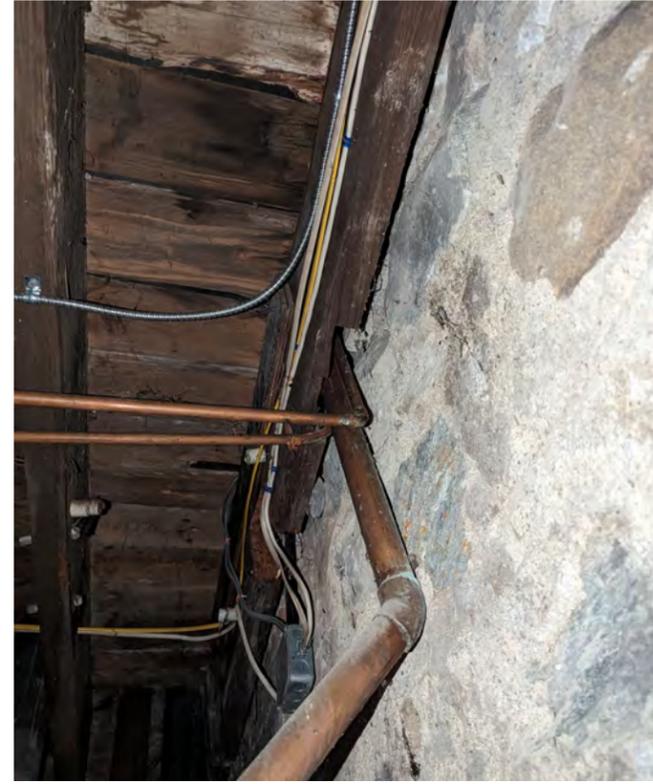


fig P9

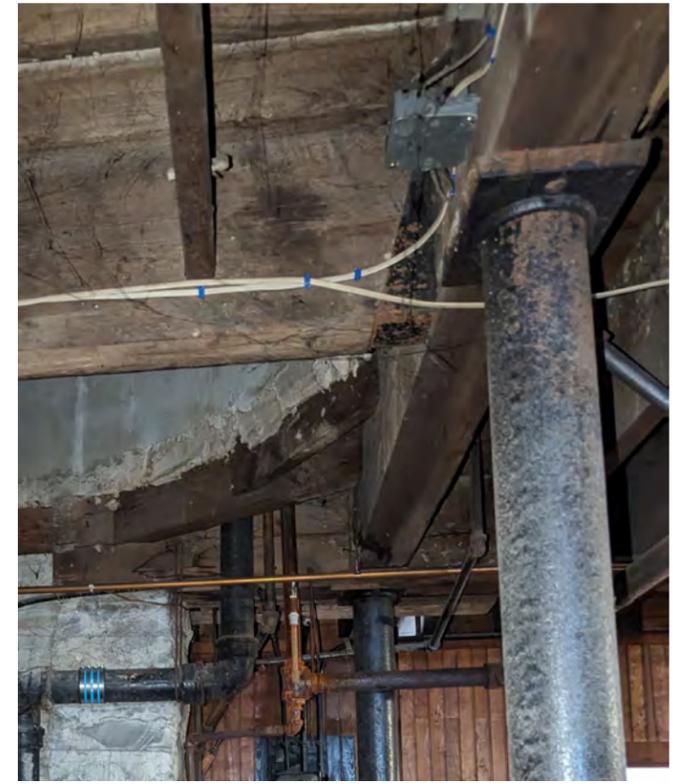


fig P10



fig P11



fig P12

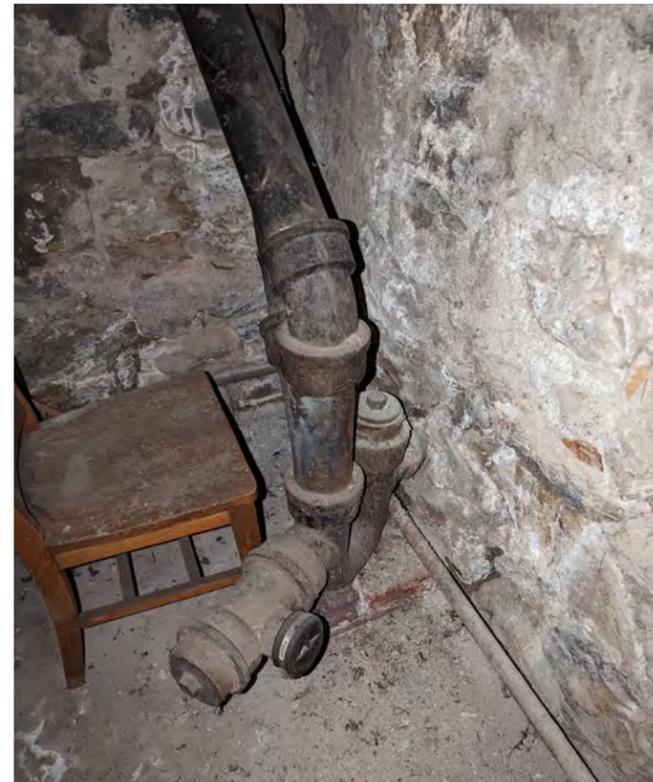


fig P13

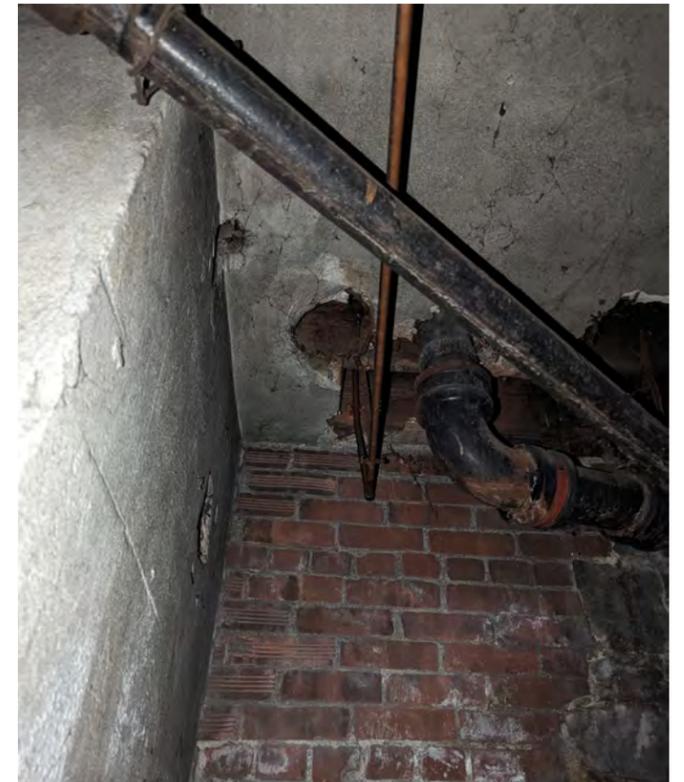


fig P14

PLUMBING

RECOMMENDATIONS

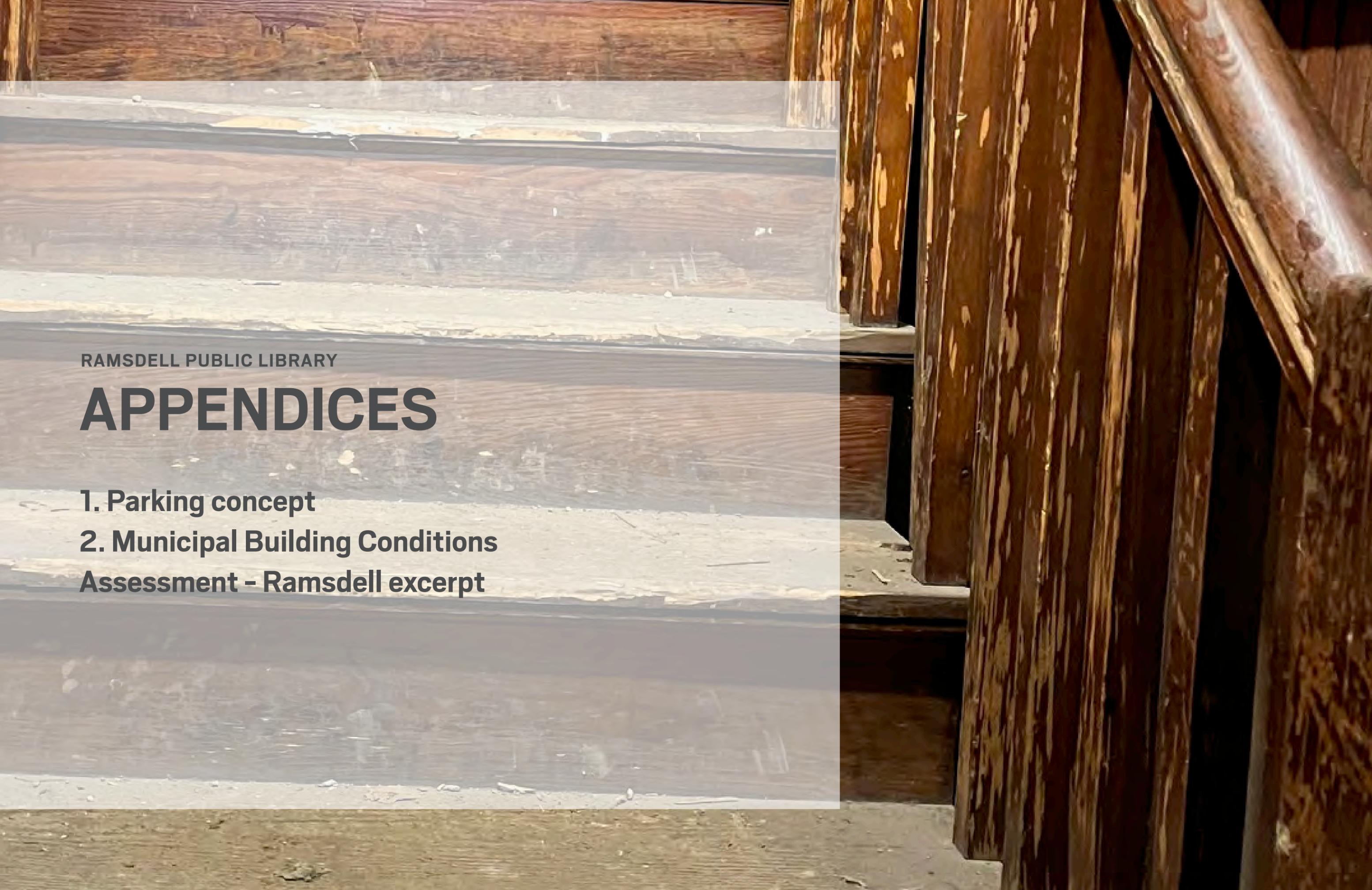
PLUMBING

Due to the age, size and unknown condition of the domestic water piping as well as the drain waste and vent piping it is recommended that all this piping be replaced in its entirety. The new domestic hot and cold-water piping should be insulated to comply with building code requirements. The new piping configuration will accommodate any new bathroom renovations and added fixtures.

The existing domestic water storage tank system currently connected to the oil-fired boiler will be upgraded to a larger tank including system components such as a mixing valve and recirc system to provide adequate domestic hot water for the proposed renovations. The new tank will remain connected to the boiler for water heating. Indirect tank size will be determined as the design progresses.

The new plumbing system will provide all required domestic hot and cold water, drain, waster & vent piping needed for the existing and new Bathrooms, Janitors Closet, Break Room & Kitchenette.

Although it is not anticipated the water and sewer services existing to the building will need to be evaluated by fixture count as the design progresses.

A photograph of a wooden staircase with a semi-transparent text overlay on the left side. The text overlay contains the title 'RAMSDELL PUBLIC LIBRARY APPENDICES' and a list of two items: '1. Parking concept' and '2. Municipal Building Conditions Assessment - Ramsdell excerpt'. The background shows the wooden steps and railings of the staircase.

RAMSDELL PUBLIC LIBRARY

APPENDICES

1. Parking concept

**2. Municipal Building Conditions
Assessment - Ramsdell excerpt**

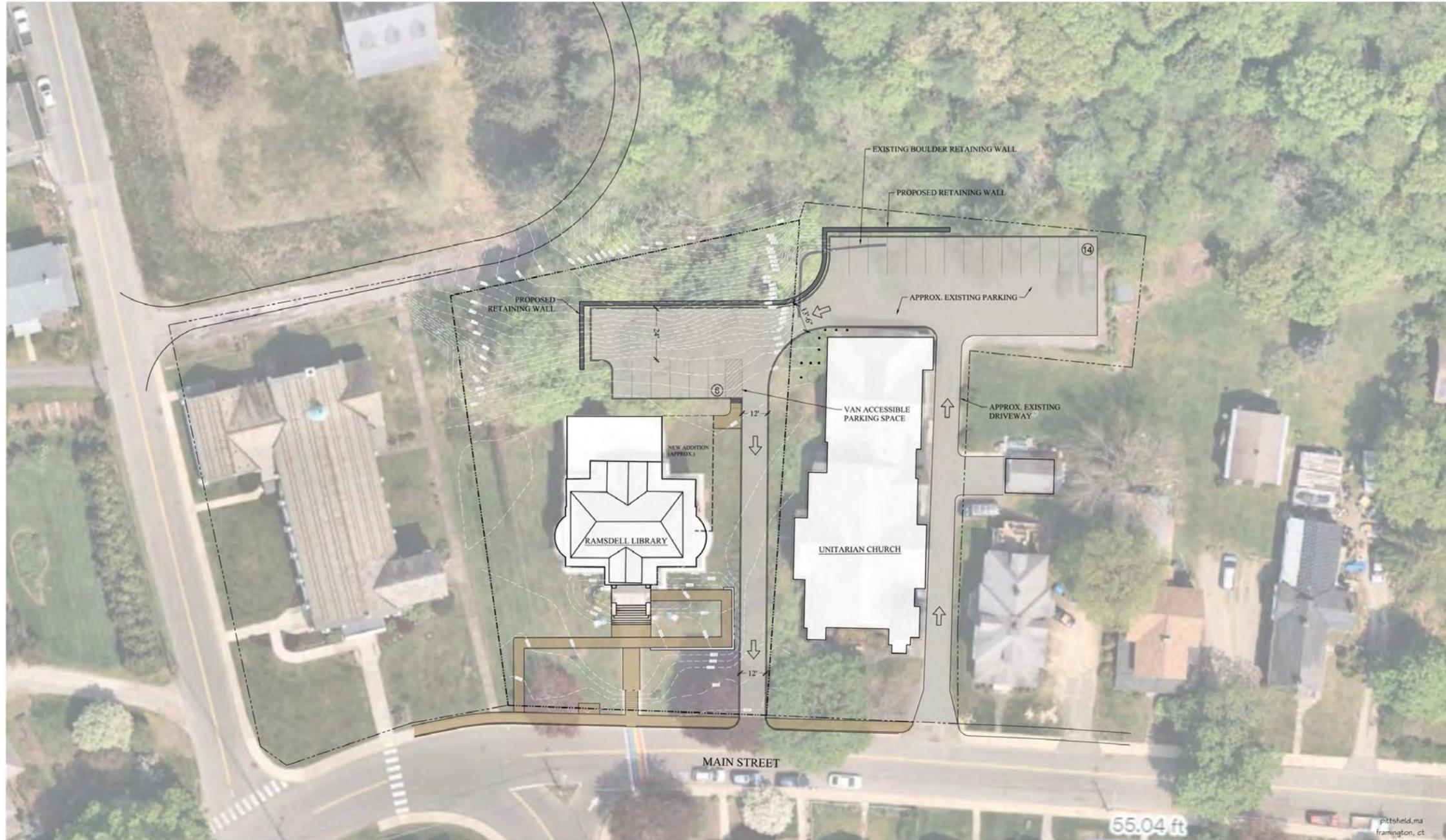
A photograph of a wooden staircase with a semi-transparent text overlay on the left side. The text is in a clean, sans-serif font. The background shows the wooden steps and railings of the stairs, with a warm, natural wood tone.

RAMSDELL PUBLIC LIBRARY

APPENDIX 1.

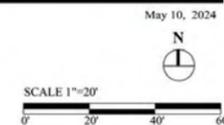
Parking Concept

PARKING CONCEPT



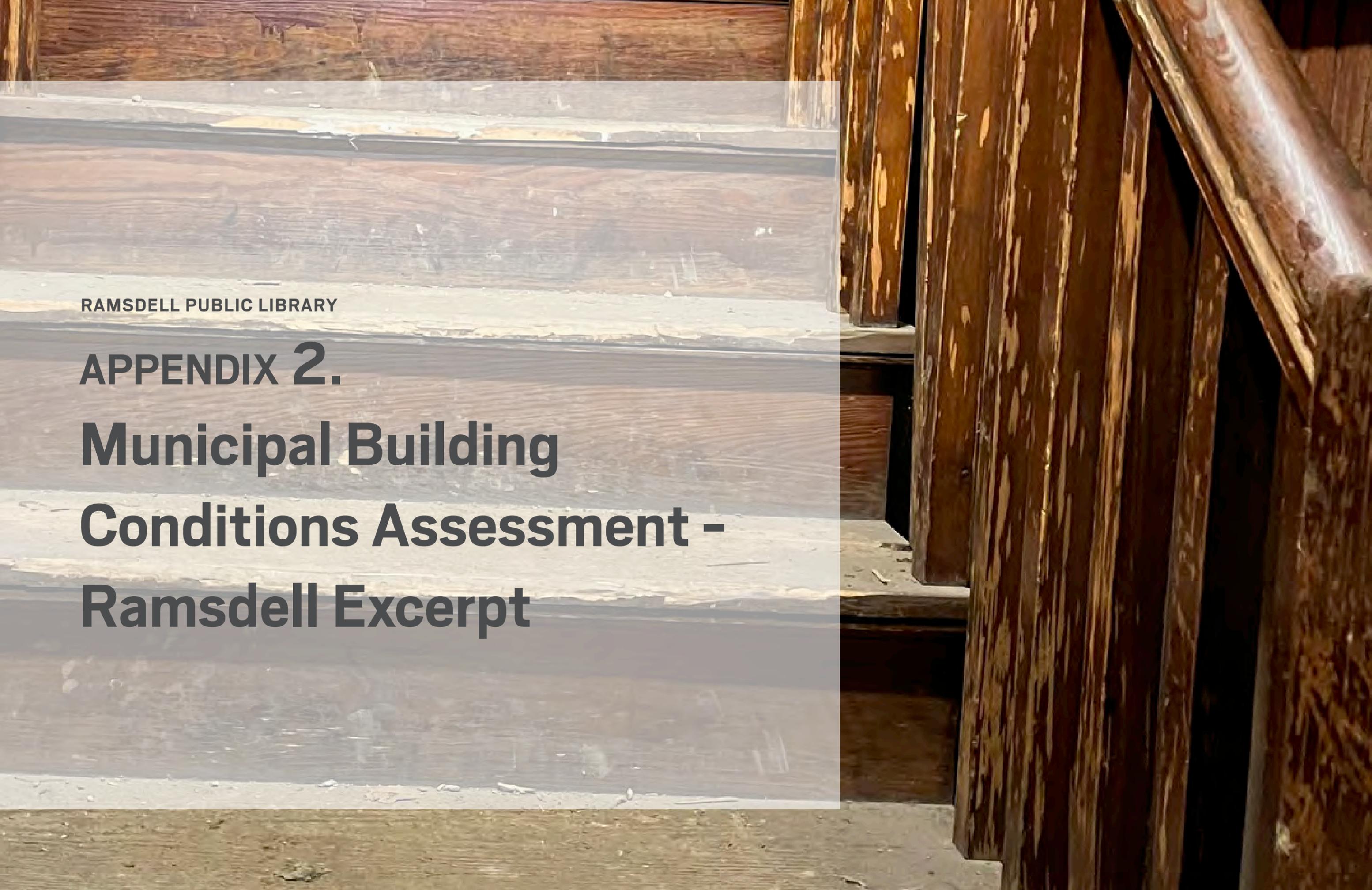
CONCEPT 1A - PARKING

Ramsdell Library
1087 MAIN STREET
HOUSATONIC, MASSACHUSETTS



pittsfield,ma
framington, ct
troy, ny
(888) 336-6500
team@edm-ae.com



The background of the slide is a photograph of a wooden staircase. The stairs are made of light-colored wood, possibly oak, and are partially covered by a semi-transparent grey rectangular overlay. To the right of the overlay, the dark wood of the staircase's balustrade and handrails is visible, extending vertically. The lighting is natural, highlighting the grain of the wood.

RAMSDELL PUBLIC LIBRARY

APPENDIX 2.

**Municipal Building
Conditions Assessment -
Ramsdell Excerpt**



Great Barrington, Massachusetts

MUNICIPAL BUILDING CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT REPORT

Town of Great Barrington

December 2023

Tighe & Bond

The following are more critical Plumbing deficiencies that should be addressed within the next 5 years (Immediate or Category A):

- There was no oil/water separator observed on the site serving the garage floor drains. We also could not locate plans confirming the presence of one. If there indeed is no oil/water separator, one will need to be installed immediately to comply with MA Plumbing code.
- There is currently debris being stored in front of the emergency shower which OSHA would consider an obstruction. The space and path around any emergency plumbing fixture must stay clear of obstructions and tripping hazards.

The total anticipated cost of the Plumbing modifications that should be addressed within the next 5 years (Immediate or Category A) at the Town Hall Building is **\$35,000** not including contingency.

Table 2-3 provides a summary of the estimated costs by discipline for the Fire Station

Table 2-3 Summary of Estimated Costs for Fire Station

Discipline	Estimated Cost for Each Action Category ⁽²⁾			
	Immediate	Cat A	Cat B	Total
Electrical	\$14,000	\$15,000	\$349,000	\$378,000
Structural / Architectural	\$252,000	\$104,000	\$4,000	\$360,000
HVAC	\$0	\$91,000	\$321,000	\$412,000
Plumbing / Fire Protection	\$35,000	\$0	\$20,000	\$56,000
Subtotal	\$301,000	\$210,000	\$694,000	\$1,206,000
Contingency (40%)	\$120,400	\$84,000	\$277,600	\$482,400
Total	\$421,400	\$294,000	\$971,600	\$1,688,400

2.3.3 Ramsdell Library

The Ramsdell Library is located at 1087 Main Street in Great Barrington. It was built in 1906 and has had some renovations since, it is currently undergoing a ramp project to make the building accessible. It is two stories, around 8,674 square feet. The main level is the library with office, the basement contains utilities and storage.

Electrical

The Ramsdell Library building electrical distribution consists of a 120/240V, 200A, single phase power distribution system. The utility power is being fed from a 200A, main circuit breaker (and utility meter combination) located on the exterior of the building. The electrical distribution equipment consists of a main distribution panel and other miscellaneous distribution equipment.

Overall, the electrical equipment at the Ramsdell Library Building is in Fair condition. Most of the electrical equipment appears to have been installed in 2000 or before. There is knob and tube wiring remaining in the building, which is incompatible with equipment that

requires grounding and can be a fire hazard and safety concern. It is recommended to rewire the areas where knob and tube wiring is still in use.

It is also recommended to install a surge protection device in this facility and replace all electrical distribution equipment that is 30 years of age or older to maintain the reliability and functionality of the electrical service at the Ramsdell Library building.

The total anticipated cost of the electrical deficiencies that should be addressed within the next 5 years (Immediate or Category A) at the Ramsdell Library is **\$17,000**, not including contingency.

Structural / Architectural

The architectural and structural components observed on the site visit include the exterior building envelope, space occupancies and the building interior, egress components, and accessibility features. The architectural and structural observations from the site visit are noted in the following sections.

Exterior Building Envelope

Note: Access to the building roof was unavailable during the planned site visit. The team was unable to inspect the roof construction, roof access elements, exterior roofing materials, and roof drainage systems among other roof related components. Therefore, the assessment of these components is excluded from this report.

Exterior wall construction

- The construction of exterior walls is of masonry beige brick veneer, with a limestone wall base and cap on top of a granite course at grade. An addition was built on the north side of the building at a later time to add more space to the main book room, with same wall construction. However, the limestone wall base does not wrap the rear of the existing building, or the rear addition. In addition, the exterior walls have painted wood entablature with geometric paneling original to the building around the top perimeter, as well as a pediment above the main entrance door. The exterior walls contain limestone sills and lintels at the bottom and top of window openings, respectively, except for the basement windows, which are located within the limestone wall base. A portion of the walls on the side of the building are curved with the same painted wood entablature and geometric paneling at a lower elevation.

Entrances and exterior doors

- The main entrance has a large wood double door with a wood frame and bronze door hardware, which shows visible patina. The decorative trim as well as the columns and pilasters around the door are made of limestone. The entrance has large stone steps and landing with metal handrails, as well as limestone half walls with wide stone pillars on each side of the stair, which have exterior standing lights on top. In addition, the protruded front wall which houses the main entrance door has limestone quoins on the corners.

- A stainless-steel door with hollow metal frame, metal hardware, a limestone lintel with a key, and a light above the door is located at the rear building leading to outside grade.
- A concrete enclosure with a metal bulkhead hatch door is located east of plan and connects the basement level to grade.

Exterior Windows

- The exterior windows within the building are uninsulated, single-pane, wood framed windows with painted wood trim and geometric wood screens around the upper smaller windows. Curved windows are located within the curved walls, which have newer storm windows installed on the exterior, which appear to be painted vinyl. In addition, the exterior basement windows have been provided with wire mesh screens with wood frames installed on the exterior side.

Observations of the existing conditions of the exterior envelope are summarized in the following:

- The exterior walls are generally in good condition, except for the wood entablature around the perimeter of the building, which has chipping and peeling paint in multiple locations (Photo A/S1 & Photo A/S2). In addition, the exterior walls facing north (at the rear of the building) have accumulated moss and vegetation on the lower portion of the walls, due to the shaded environment and lack of sunlight (Photo A/S3).
- The main entrance is generally in good condition, except for the patina on the main entrance door hardware and the rust observed on the stair steps where they connect with the railings. Rust was also observed at the stone caps above the limestone wide pillars where the exterior standing lights are (Photo A/S4).
- The rear door is in good condition, except for some paint chipping around the door frame (Photo A/S5).
- The concrete enclosure and basement bulkhead door appear to be in good condition.
- The windows in the building are in fair/poor condition, due to general aging of the frames and poor energy efficiency (Photo A/S6). The mesh screens on the basement windows are in poor condition, showing signs of rot due, deteriorating finish, and exposure to weather (Photo A/S7).

Building Interior

The main spaces of the building are located on the first floor, including a lobby, a main book room, two reading rooms, a children's reading room, an office, and a break room, while the basement and attic levels contain supports spaces and storage rooms. In addition, the attic floor hosts a presentation room with a raised stage at the north side of the building, surrounded by small, connected backstage rooms. It was noted that the full-height basement floor is situated below the footprint of the original building, while the rear addition was built above grade with a short crawlspace below that is connected to the original building basement from the interior, with no means of access. The different floors of the building are connected by two sets of interior staircases. One is located in the main vestibule and the other is adjacent to the rear book room.

Interior walls

- The construction of the interior partitions on the first floor and the attic are assumed to be mostly wood stud framed with painted plaster and a wood base, except for the break room on the first floor, which has a ceramic tile backsplash behind the sink and countertop. The two reading rooms on each side of the lobby contain fireplaces, with masonry brick facing, wood trim, and wood mantels. The main rooms on the first floor are connected by large, framed openings with stained wood trim. The main lobby on the first floor contains circular marble columns on the perimeter of the room with marble bases and crowns.
- The interior partition walls within the basement consist of exposed wood stud framing, except for some partitions that are enclosed in wood boarding. The basement also contains a masonry structural pillar supporting the rear stair. The interior side of the stone foundation walls is unfinished, as observed from the basement interior.

Interior ceilings

- The ceiling construction for the first floor and the attic is of wood framing and painted plaster. The ceilings in the attic are sloped to match the roof pitch. The first-floor lobby ceiling has oval-shaped painted wood entablature situated above marble columns surrounding the lobby.
- The ceiling construction for the basement is the exposed wood structure of the above floor.

Interior floors

- The construction of the floors on the first floor and the attic are of wood framing and finish, except for the main entrance and lobby, which has terrazzo flooring with mosaic accent tiles.
- The basement floor is of unfinished concrete.

Interior doors

- The interior doors within the building are of stained wood with raised panels and bronze hardware located within stained wood frames, except for the doors in the break room, which are painted (not stained).

Interior windows

- The interior side of the windows, windowsills, and window trims are of stained wood throughout the building, with metal hardware, except for the windows in the break room, which are painted (not stained). Interior glazed screens have been installed on the interior side of the windows along the back wall of the rear book room.

Casework, fixtures, and appliances

- The building contains only one unisex public restroom, which is located in the main entrance vestibule, and it contains a porcelain wall-mounted sink and a floor-mounted toilet. In addition, the break room (for staff use) has a porcelain sink and a floor-mounted toilet in a separate compartment from the sink.

- The main lobby has a stained wood desk with raised panels, a laminate countertop, and a glass protective top, in addition to small metal shelves with wood end panels.
- The reading rooms on each side of the lobby and the children's reading room have wood shelving located around the room along the walls. The office connected to the children's reading room has a built-in wood cabinet with a door and hardware that matches the doors and hardware within the building. In addition, the office has wood wall-mounted shelving on one side.
- The rear book room has painted metal bookshelves that are fastened to the floor and seem to be original to the building. In addition, the west side of the main book room contains large wood built-in cabinets with doors and hardware that match the doors and hardware within the building.
- The break room contains painted wood base cabinets below a laminate countertop, as well as some painted wood shelving mounted on the wall above the counter. In addition, the break room has large painted built-in tall cabinets, a mini-fridge, and a microwave.

Miscellaneous:

- Interior building signage, whether emergency, room identification, or directional, was observed to be limited.

Observations of the existing conditions of the building interior are summarized in the following:

- The interior walls within the building are generally in good condition, except for the wood wall bases adjacent to the radiators, which are showing moisture damage (Photo A/S9). Furthermore, the wall bump out in the middle of the children's reading room is showing signs of visible water damage from within the wall (presumably leakage caused by failure of roof drainage which is passing through the wall bump out) (Photo A/S8).
- The unfinished interior walls in the basement are in good condition, provided that there is no wall finish (Photo A/S10).
- The marble columns, crowns, and bases within the main lobby on the first floor are in good condition.
- The painted plaster ceilings are generally in good condition, except for some areas in the attic where visible cracking was noticed along the ribs and chords of the roof pitch, as well as some moisture damage and holes where the sloped ceiling meets the walls in the left and right rear corners of the closets (Photo A/S11 & Photo A/S12). This is also presumed to be caused by failure of the roof drainage system. Visible cracks were observed at the base of the beam above the stage located in the attic, which needs further structural inspection (Photo A/S13 & Photo A/S14).
- The exposed ceiling in the basement is in good/fair condition, provided that it is unfinished (Photo A/S15).
- The wood floors in the main and attic levels, as well as the terrazzo/tile floor in the lobby and vestibule are in good condition.
- The basement concrete floor is generally in fair condition, showing signs of cracking and spalling in several locations (Photo A/S16 & Photo A/S17).
- The interior doors throughout the building are overall in good condition.
- The finish of the interior side of windows, windowsills, window trims throughout the building are overall in good condition.

- The plumbing fixtures in the public restroom and the break room are overall in fair condition. The sink drainpipe in the public restroom is showing corrosion around the floor penetration below the sink (Photo A/S18). In addition, moisture damage was observed around the break room sink edge where it meets the countertop, and some corrosion around the base of the faucet (Photo A/S19).
- The desks, shelving, and cabinetry in general that are located in the main lobby, reading rooms, children's reading room, and main book room are overall in good condition.
- The base cabinets and shelving in the break room, as well as the large built-in cabinets are in fair condition, with some general aging. The mini-fridge and microwave seem to be dated and in fair condition (Photo A/S20 & (Photo A/S21).
- Proper comprehensive egress/emergency signage, room identification signage, and directional signage are missing throughout the building.

Egress Components

- The main spaces that are open to the public are arranged in a concentric design manner, where the main spaces and main entrance vestibule connect back to the central lobby.
- The main stair is located within the main entrance vestibule and connects the first floor to the attic. The walls within the main stair are painted plaster with a wood wall base that follows the stair path. The rear stair is adjacent to the rear book room, off of the lobby, and connects the first floor, attic, and basement levels. The rear exit door to outside grade is located on an intermediate landing between the basement level and the first floor. The walls within this stair are painted plaster with wood wainscoting and a chair rail, except for the walls from the rear exit landing down to the basement, which have no chair rail. Both stairs are of wood construction with wood treads, risers, and landings. Each stair has wood banisters within the center of the switchback (at the carriage side). No handrail exists on the wall side.

Observations of the existing conditions of accessibility components are summarized in the following:

- Both stairs are generally in good condition. However, the stair treads and landings are in rather fair condition, showing signs of aging and wearing (Photo A/S22 & Photo A/S23).

Accessibility

- The building is generally considered to be not wheelchair accessible. The main building entrance is elevated from exterior grade by steps and the rear stair entrance is accessed at grade, but the door is not on the same elevation as the first-floor level containing the main spaces.
- The two interior switch back stairs in the building, northeast and south, have wood banister only on one side, and no handrail.
- The restroom dedicated to public use is located within the vestibule of the main entrance and it is not designated accessible.
- The building does not have drinking fountains.

Observations of the existing conditions of accessibility components are summarized in the following:

- The building lacks wheelchair accessibility due to the lack of ramp access from exterior grade to the first floor, as well as the absence of an elevator to connect the first floor to the attic, which are open to the public. Furthermore, the main entrance stair railing is not accessibly compliant, due to lack of railing extensions and compliant handrail, in addition to the absence of a middle rail for its large width (Photo A/S24).
- The interior stair handrails at the main entrance vestibule leading to the attic were observed not to be accessibly compliant. Wood banisters are provided only on one side with no compliant handrail.
- The public restroom within the vestibule does not have the adequate space to provide accessibility features and meet the necessary accessibility requirements (Photo A/S25).
- This building is missing a drinking fountain for public access.

Note:

- The team was notified by the town of an accessibility upgrade project that is planned for construction where missing accessibility elements will be added.
- Some of the factors involved in determining the required degree of accessibility compliance or possible approval of exceptions are the level of alteration/renovation performed on existing buildings, as well the historic nature of the building. (as indicate */** on Appendix A.

The total anticipated cost of the architectural/structural deficiencies that should be addressed within the next 5 years (Immediate or Category A) at the Ramsdell Library is **\$744,000** not including contingency.

HVAC

The Ramsdell Library HVAC system consists of multiple systems. There is a single 450 MBH cast iron sectional steam boiler that serves cast iron radiators throughout the building. There is a single window ac unit that serves the circulation room on the first floor. On the second floor there are two obsolete natural draft exhaust openings that appear to have been covered up when a new roof was installed.

Overall, the HVAC equipment at the Ramsdell Library is in poor condition. The boiler is approximately 30-40 years old, and the radiators appear to be original to the construction of the building. Both have exceeded their expected useful service life and is becoming increasingly unreliable. Consider a complete HVAC system upgrade, as further detailed below.

The following the most critical HVAC deficiencies that should be addressed within the next 5 years (Immediate or Category A):

- There is no mechanical ventilation for the building, and the bathrooms currently lack exhaust fans. at the minimum, the bathrooms must be equipped with mechanical exhaust. Operable windows do exist, and natural ventilation is acceptable per code, however in reality windows are typically not opened during cold or hot outdoor air temperatures. Due to this we recommend implementing a

DOAS. To integrate the DOAS system, additional ductwork will be installed to allow for direct supply and exhaust air distribution to and from each space throughout the library. This type of system will require a substantial and invasive construction project.

- We recommend implementing a long-term solution for conditioning each space by installing wall or floor mounted heat pumps as part of a new VRF heating and cooling system. This system offers numerous benefits, including better thermal control and comfort conditions and granting individual temperature control for each office. With this method, condensers are required, which can be conveniently placed in a centralized outdoor location. This new system will make the existing hydronic system obsolete and will eliminate the need to replace the boiler and other hydronic equipment. To integrate a floor mounted system, additional ductwork will be installed to allow for direct supply and return air distribution to and from each space throughout the town hall.
- Implementing this system will require a building management system (BMS) that would enable users to conveniently monitor and regulate the building's HVAC systems. In addition, the BMS will also allow the building's HVAC to be incorporated into the town's future plans for an enterprise BMS system.
At a minimum, we recommend replacing the boiler within the next 5 years.

The total anticipated cost of the HVAC that should be addressed within the next 5 years (Immediate or Category A) at the Ramsdell Library Building is **\$339,000** not including contingency.

Plumbing / Fire Protection

The Ramsdell Library currently has no sprinkler system due to the lack of requirements when the building was first built and when subsequent renovations took place.

The plumbing systems within the library all appear to be working and in fair condition for the time being. The building is served by a 1-inch potable water pipe which supplies water to the plumbing fixtures and also the domestic water heater supplying hot water to fixtures requiring it. The hot water heater appears to be a 4.5kW electric storage type. There is a natural gas connection to the building which serves the existing HVAC boiler.

Currently there are two unisex restrooms each containing a lavatory sink and a water closet. One of the sinks serves as both a lavatory sink and a kitchen sink as it's located in a kitchen area with the water closet located in a small separate room adjacent to the kitchen area. Next to the sink are hose connections for both hot and cold water located about 12-inches above the floor, mounted on the wall.

The following are more critical Plumbing deficiencies that should be addressed within the next 5 years (Immediate or Category A):

- Due to the major modifications being considered in this building and the overall square footage, a sprinkler system will be required to be installed during the renovations per M.G.L. c.148, s. 26G. This system will include a new 6-inch water service dedicated to the sprinkler system as well as the required backflow prevention, service valves and pipe distribution for a fully operable system per NFPA 13.
- The water heater is at the end of its useable life and should be replaced in the next five years. Replacing the existing water heater with a new energy efficient heat pump water heater would be a good option. With the updated water heater, a hot

water recirculation line should be added to the building to bring it up to IECC requirements.

- Currently, there are no vacuum breakers on the hose connections near the kitchen sink. They will need to be replaced immediately to comply with MA Plumbing Code.
- There was no backflow preventor observed on the potable water service to the building. If the unit is indeed missing, one will need to be installed to comply with code and to protect the public water system. A pressure reducing valve may also be required if the incoming water pressure is over 80 psi.
- The water closets and lavatory sinks, and their respective faucets and flushing mechanisms, are nearing the end of their usable life and should be updated within the next five years. This will also ensure that the flow rates meet current state standards for water consumption as well as meeting all ADA requirements for plumbing fixtures.

The total anticipated cost of the Plumbing modifications that should be addressed within the next 5 years (Immediate or Category A) at the Ramsdell Library is **\$132,000** not including contingency.

Table 2-4 provides a summary of the estimated costs by discipline for the Ramsdell Library.

Table 2-4 Summary of Estimated Costs for Ramsdell Library

Discipline	Estimated Cost for Each Action Category ⁽²⁾			
	Immediate	Cat A	Cat B	Total
Electrical	\$0	\$17,000	\$33,000	\$50,000
Structural / Architectural	\$133,000	\$611,000	\$60,000	\$804,000
HVAC	\$0	\$339,000	\$0	\$339,000
Plumbing/Fire Protection	\$7,000	\$125,000	\$0	\$132,000
Subtotal	\$140,000	\$1,092,000	\$93,000	\$1,325,000
Contingency (40%)	\$56,000	\$436,800	\$37,200	\$530,000
Total	\$196,000	\$1,528,800	\$130,200	\$1,855,000

2.3.4 Mason Library

The Mason Library is located at 231 Main Street, it was built in 1913 with a significant renovation in 2005. The building is just under 12,000 square feet. The main level is the library with a main office and conference room. The lower level has access to the outside, and includes the children's library, utility rooms, storage, and more meeting rooms. There is an elevator that serves both stories.



2023 Great
Barrington
Libraries

B. Strategic Plan

GREAT BARRINGTON
LIBRARIES
Strategic Plan 2024-2029



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Quotes in *italics* are from library survey respondents.

Governing Board Approval

This Strategic Plan for 2024-2029 for Great Barrington Libraries was approved by Board of Library Trustees on September 29, 2023.



Land Acknowledgement of the Great Barrington Libraries

Related to our mission of supporting and fostering learning through the dissemination of knowledge, the Great Barrington Libraries acknowledge that the lands on which our buildings stand are the traditional lands of the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of the Mohican People. We acknowledge the painful history of dispossession and forced removal from this territory, and we honor and respect the many diverse Indigenous peoples still connected to this land on which we gather. We honor with gratitude the land itself and the people who have stewarded it throughout the generations. We commit to continuing to learn how to become better caretakers of the land we inhabit, to understand the history and traditions of those who cared for it before us, and to learn from the successes and failures of preceding generations.

Adopted by the Library Trustees on January 18, 2022

October 1, 2023

Welcome All,

Our shared history as residents of Great Barrington runs deep and dates back to 1761 when, due to its location on a vital thoroughfare connecting Fort Orange in Albany, New York with Springfield, Massachusetts, the Town was officially incorporated. At that time, our predecessors' eyes were trained on the future and sought to create a community in which imagination and connection would be the bedrock. Looking back, it is evident they were successful.

We prospered at the dawn of the 19th century as widespread manufacturing industries brought the Housatonic Railroad to town in 1842 and facilitated construction of the Mahaiwe Theatre in 1904. Denizens of Berkshire County turned out in droves to celebrate our 250th anniversary with pomp, circumstance and one heck of a parade in July of 2011. Another momentous milestone came in 2020 when, after voters said yes to efforts proposed 15 years prior, the Berkshire Hills Regional School District's middle school was renamed in honor of Great Barrington Native Son, W.E.B. Du Bois.

More recent chapters of our collective story have brought challenges that have tested our mettle and brought our community closer as a result.

The library world changed overnight, too. Heavy, immovable furniture made social distancing difficult in the early days, and an immediate shift to technology as the dominant means of both connecting and communicating with one another created undue stress for staff members who, in the midst of balancing their own personal struggles, worked tirelessly to serve the public without interruption despite a diminution of services across the board.

In Great Barrington, the Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) system at the Mason Library began experiencing systemic failure; as of this writing, it remains only partially operational. In Housatonic, the architectural gem that is the Ramsdell Library has no ventilation system to speak of save for open windows which, while appropriate during the 1918 pandemic, is unacceptable by 21st-century health standards.

Despite these ongoing challenges, we are faced with an opportunity to focus on the road ahead and envision a future that is bright; as such, it is with a renewed sense of optimism that we move forward.

At our 2023 Annual Town Election, residents of Great Barrington cast ballots to elect a pair of new library trustees, both of whom bring new energy to their three-year term. More good news followed in June when Donna Brown was named Interim Director of the Great Barrington Libraries, bringing with her a wealth of institutional knowledge (gleaned in her previous role as Assistant Director of Operations) and dedication to guide us through a period of ongoing transition.

In an epic feat of collaboration, made possible by guidance from Donna Brown and input from the community at large, we have crafted a flexible planning document for the future;

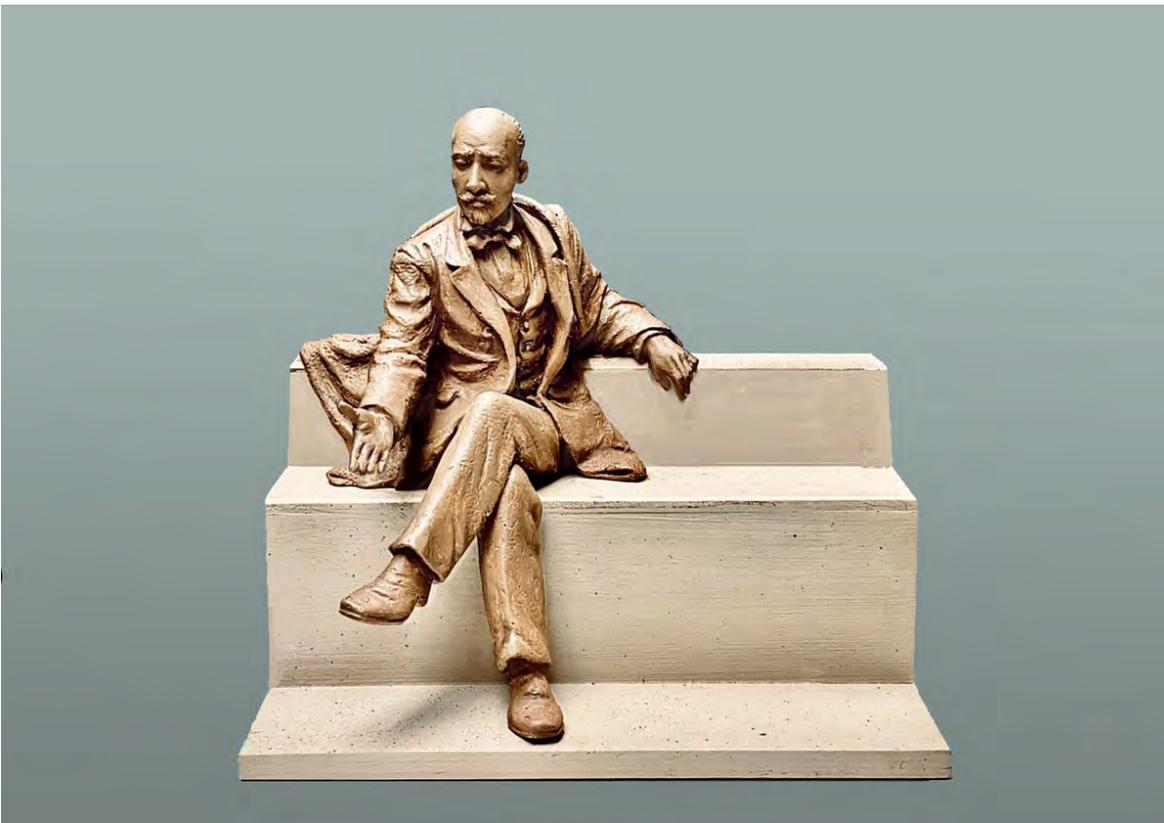
without further ado, we present the latest iteration of the Great Barrington Libraries' 2024-2029 Strategic Plan: "Reflect, Re-Imagine and Re-Connect".

As always, we welcome your feedback and support.

In the meantime, what are you waiting for? Our doors are open, and we welcome your visit to the Mason Library (231 Main Street) in downtown Great Barrington and at the Ramsdell Library (1087 Main Street) in the village of Housatonic.

With thanks and appreciation,

The Trustees, Friends, and Staff of the Great Barrington Libraries



Great Barrington Memorial to W.E.B. DuBois

*The proposed statue in front of Mason Library, Fall 2024
webduboissculpture.org*

LIBRARY OVERVIEW

The Town of Great Barrington's geographical layout is unique in boasting two epicenters of daily life in a pair of disparate locales, the historic Village of Housatonic and the thriving downtown, each with its own public library. In keeping with the current societal trend, both destinations contain far more than books (from museum passes to mobile hotspots and more). Each is uniquely poised to function as a living room of sorts for their respective communities, providing warm, safe, accessible spaces for intergenerational mingling, which suggests a welcome return to the genesis of each library.

Ramsdell Library

Located in the northeastern most corner of town, Ramsdell Library was given to the town in the will of Theodore H. Ramsdell, owner of Monument Mills, who directed his heirs to erect and equip a public library to benefit village residents. It was his son, T. Ellis Ramsdell, who entered into an agreement with Boston architects McLean & Wright, who ultimately designed this architectural gem, built in the Beaux-Arts style, which opened to the public in 1908 on the site of the first house built in Housatonic a century prior. The building's second floor, known widely as "The Great Hall", served as a thriving community space hosting concerts, dances and theater performances; an expansion, at the dawn of The Great Depression, was carried out by the Pittsfield firm of Harding & Seaver. In 2014, Ramsdell Library was placed on the National Register of Historic Places; despite scant transitional hours at the time of this writing, it remains the only public building in Housatonic poised to dramatically invigorate the surrounding area. In recent years, there has been a widespread call for the restoration of this vital space accessible to all in the Great Barrington community at large, including the next generation.

Mason Library

Designed by Blanchard & Barnes of New York City, Mason Library was dedicated July 24, 1913 during a fertile time for local library growth. The second of two public libraries to open within five years was made possible after town resident Mary A. Mason, widow of Captain Henry Hobart Mason, who summered in Great Barrington and is buried there, left a \$50,000 bequest to the Town upon her death in 1910 for the purpose of building and furnishing a new library, to replace one in a clapboard house previously on the site. Mason Library was rededicated in 2007, following extensive renovations that not only doubled its size but also made it handicapped accessible, made possible by a construction grant from the Massachusetts Libraries Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC). The library's archives, permanently on display, honor civil rights activist and scholar W.E.B. Du Bois and inventor William Stanley both of whom have deep roots in Great Barrington and ultimately changed the world with their brilliance.

Today, the two Great Barrington Libraries work together to facilitate residents' access to a large collection of books and movies; high-speed internet and hotspots; as well as a robust array of services including inter-library loan and children's programming. In 2020, Ramsdell Library ventured beyond books when its "Library of Things" was unveiled, putting everything from virtual reality headsets and podcasting kits to power tools and maker kits into the hands of library patrons, free of charge.

ABOUT THE LIBRARY

As of 2023, the Town of Great Barrington has the largest land mass (46 square miles) and population (7,172 as of the 2020 census) in Southern Berkshire County. Over the past three years, the Town has experienced a multitude of difficulties, many of which were directly related to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which have caused interruptions in both hours and services; in addition, there have been significant changes in leadership and staff during this time to the tune of seven total permanent and part-time staff members lost.

Despite this turbulence, the Great Barrington Libraries Board of Trustees has embraced the present crossroads as an opportunity to, “Reflect, Re-Imagine and Re-Connect” with our community and our priorities, as evidenced by our 2024-2029 Strategic Plan.

At this time, we are also preparing to participate in the new cycle of competitive grants from Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program in order to make much-needed improvements to the Ramsdell Library. This trajectory is propelled by two pieces of significant groundwork: a Facilities Vision Program (2018) and Archaeological Study (2021).

In order to pave the way in returning Ramsdell Library to its roots as a space for future generations, we have requested funding through the Community Preservation Act Special Round Grant of 2023 (for FY 2024) to update our Building Program as well as Conditions Assessment for the historic building. As of this writing, our community has been without the Ramsdell Library for more than two months while the building undergoes renovation for ramp construction to partially satisfy the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance as well as installation of a new boiler.

GOVERNANCE

The Great Barrington Public Libraries are governed by a Board of Trustees, consisting of six elected members serving terms of one to three years in length, tasked with determining plans, policies, and priorities for the libraries. The Library Director remains responsible for the day-to-day management of the libraries, making monthly reports to the Board of Trustees and an annual report for inclusion in the Town Report; carrying out plans, policies, and priorities as established by the Board of Trustees; and reporting to the Town Manager.

***“If the town library is stagnant, it’s reflective of how people will view the town’s future.
Vibrant library = town with a vibrant future.”***
(Survey respondent)

HOURS

The Great Barrington Public Libraries are open a total of 50 hours each week and staffed by a total of six individuals (as opposed to 13 previously). The Ramsdell Library hours remain limited due to the aforementioned construction and staffing shortages.

MASON LIBRARY		RAMSDELL LIBRARY
CLOSED	SUNDAY	1PM-4PM
CLOSED	MONDAY	1PM-6PM
10AM-6PM	TUESDAY	1PM-6PM
10AM-6PM	WEDNESDAY	1PM-6PM
10AM-6PM	THURSDAY	CLOSED
10AM-6PM	FRIDAY	CLOSED
10AM-3PM	SATURDAY	10AM-3PM



Movies at Mason Library

COLLECTIONS & SERVICES

Based on the FY24 Annual Report Information Survey (ARIS) for Mason Library

	2021	2023
Total Holdings (including downloadable audio or eBooks available through C/WMARS)	264,992	297,078
Population/Holdings per capita(1)	6996/38	7214/41
Annual Circulation/circulation per capita	148,210/21	120,612/16.7
Items Loaned to other Libraries	18,717	12,798
Items Provided by other Libraries	20,652	17,126
Total Visitors (4)	121,622	59,217
Total Number of Registered Borrowers(3)	5872	7240
Total Number of Adult Programs/attendees	141/1151	4/47
Total Number of Children's Programs/attendees	273/3844	234/3626
Quiet Room/Meeting Room Usage (Times)	1663/286	432
Computer Usage (Times)	16,687	4472
Nonresident Circulation Transactions(2)	N/A	24,222

1) As noted, the holdings per capita has gone up but the circulation per capita has gone down. This number is also somewhat inaccurate since the counter for our door to the Mason had not been functional for several weeks. Also of note is the decrease in adult programming this past year. This is partly due to insufficient ventilation in either libraries outside of the Children's area that is still waiting for remediation as well as a change in library management.

2) Of interest is non resident circulation transactions indicate 8% of use of the library are from other towns.

3) Number of registered borrowers that were residents of our municipality is 5012 out of total of 7240 registered borrowers indicate many use the library outside of our municipality or 31% are people that do not live in our town but use our library.

4) Total visits are estimates.

**Of note is our extensive Children's Programming during this period that is worth mentioning; total programming including YA, 6-11, birth to five was 234 programs and 3676 children attended these programs due to the efforts of our children's librarian.

Based on the FY24 Annual Report Information Survey (ARIS) for Ramsdell Library

Meeting Rooms/Programs held		0
Total Circulation		11,398
Total Holdings		19,120
Total Attendance		4297



Adam Gudeon, artist

MISSION AND VISION STATEMENTS

Mission Statement:

The Great Barrington Libraries provide access to information and materials for the purpose of life-long learning, enhancing diversity, building community, and supporting the enjoyment of reading for pleasure.

Vision Statement:

Libraries shall function as vibrant, safe, welcoming “third places”* for all people to gather, meet, and learn. By Reflecting and Re-Connecting with our past, we will be able to create an inspired and Re-Imagined future that is more reflective of our modern needs.

*social surroundings that are separate from home and work



Sunday afternoon at Ramsdell

OUR VALUES

Welcoming: Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Belonging (EDIB); serving people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities; everyone has a seat at the community table.

Community Focus: Recognizing and promoting what is unique about the Great Barrington communities and developing programming for all of our community members.

An Open Mind: Maintaining balance in collections, programs, and ideas that respect different viewpoints. Be respectful, open minded, and accepting.

Evidence-based: Utilizing data and research, and making library decisions that align with our resources, needs, and support systems.

Flexible and Forward Thinking: Being able to quickly adjust and be open to creative new ideas, changing times, and events using guidelines that will enable us to remain “library ready”.



Gabrielle K. Murphy @goldilocksoftheshire

COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS

Since its incorporation in 1761, the town of Great Barrington has experienced myriad claims to fame. In 1869, civil rights activist and scholar W.E.B. Du Bois was born here, as evidenced by his eponymous Boyhood Homesite — a National Historic Landmark commemorating the Native Son’s deep roots in Berkshire County. Not two decades later, inventor William Stanley used his practical transformer to literally put Great Barrington on the map when he illuminated Main Street in 1886 and, in doing so, sparked the phenomenon that is alternating current electricity.



A river runs through it, one called the Housatonic — whose moniker derives from the Algonkian word Housatunnock, and pays homage both to “a place beyond the mountain” and a group of native Mohicans, on whose ancestral lands Great Barrington was built. The town spans a sprawling 46 square miles and is bound by seven neighboring communities.

Due north of downtown proper, the Village of Housatonic is bustling with its own history — namely as a community of creatives, once populated by immigrant mill workers largely from Italy and Poland, with a water tower standing sentinel over daily life across the hamlet’s single square mile. The Housatonic Curtain Company, an offshoot of Country Curtains (founded in 1956 by Jane Fitzpatrick and her husband from their dining room table) operated from 1976-2017 as did this historic Rising Paper Mill — which, at its heyday in 1873, was the largest paper factory in the world.

In many ways, visiting Great Barrington’s little sibling is akin to stepping back in time: the former elementary school, albeit vacant for two decades, has been recently slated for affordable housing; at the corner of Pleasant and Main Streets stands a restaurant of the same name where, from 1993-2009, former state senator Jack Fitzpatrick ran his iconic Jack’s Grill where part of the allure was the model train chugging along its track above diners’ heads as they ate.

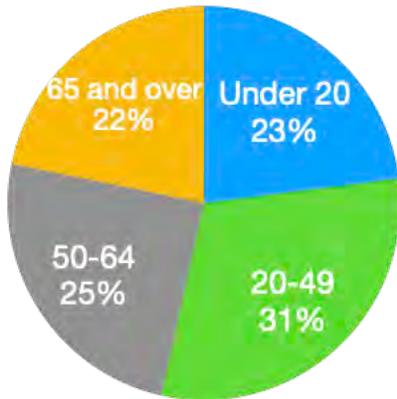
Housatonic experienced a literal, “Back to the Future” moment in early 1990 when visual effects artist and local resident Doug Trumbull took up residence in a vacant mill to design a simulator ride destined for Universal Studios (where it debuted in May 1991) employing hundreds of local residents in the process. Today, it remains a ‘simmering’ village rife with great potential.

Of further note, Great Barrington is the home of Bard College at Simon’s Rock, the nation’s first early college, and the five-star rated Critical Access Fairview Hospital which serves all of Southern Berkshire County as well as communities in Connecticut and New York.

In closing, Great Barrington might best be described as a study of contrasts. In 2012, the storied Smithsonian Magazine touted Great Barrington tops in a roundup of their Best Small Towns in America; just two years later, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts placed a designation on Housatonic, deeming it a “blighted community.” The two dichotomous locales, each with its own distinctive personality, are ultimately bound together by joint tax bills payable to the Town of Great Barrington — which, for those lucky enough to reside here, would likely agree is indeed pretty great.

Community Quick Facts

The most recent statistics published by the American Community Survey(ACS) in May 2023, the population of Great Barrington is 7214, with a change of +0.6% from 2020 of 42 people.



Age Distribution

(under 5 - 5.1%)

(over 80 - 6%)

**Of note on age distributions, comparing 1980 to 2020, the population under 18 has dropped from 1825 to 1296 persons.

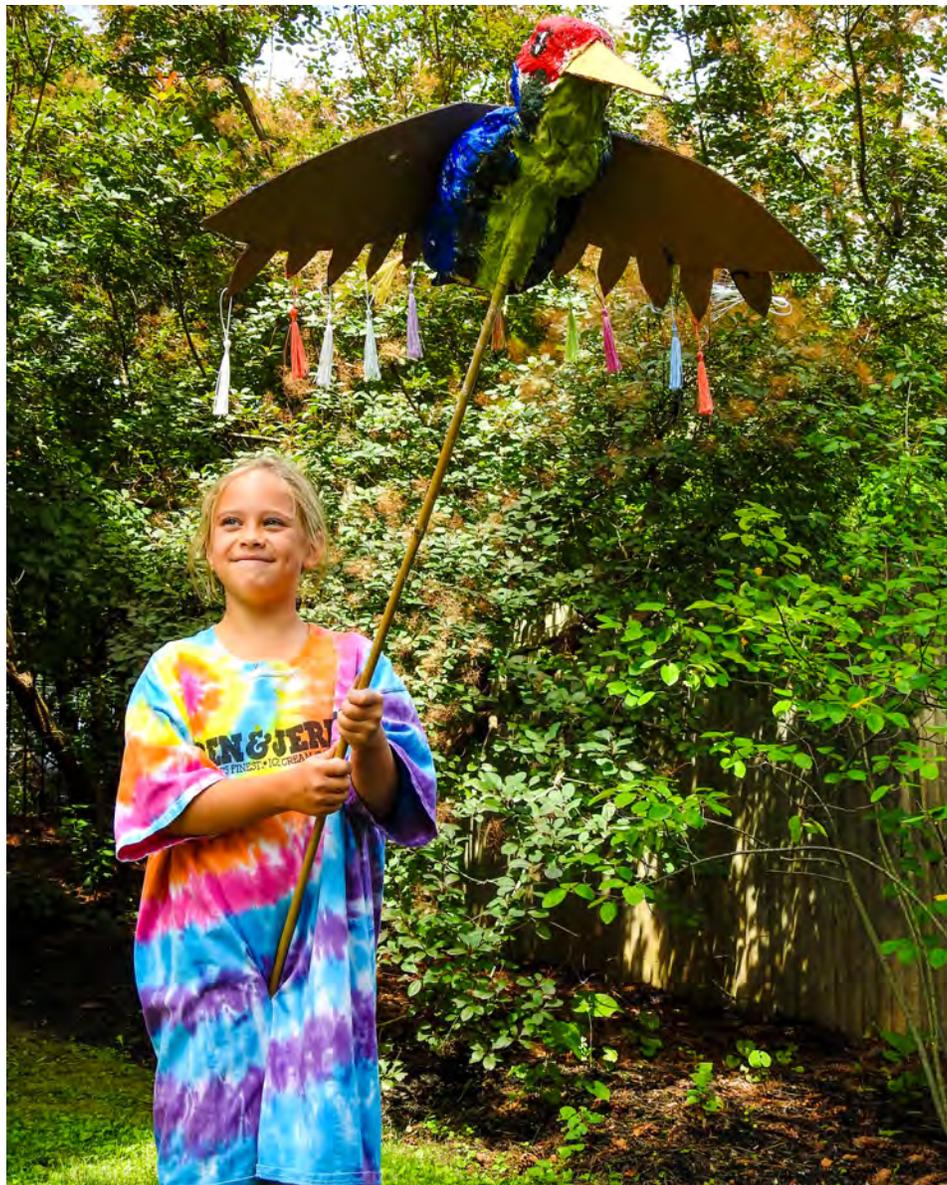
Racial Distribution**	
African American	2%
Asian	2.6%
Hispanic	3.5%
White	88.6%

**Those who speak a language other than English at home 7.9%, with 1.5% speaking English less than fluent.

- Sanctuary City designation was approved by Town Meeting in 2017. Future population growth for Great Barrington is difficult to predict. Projections show slowed growth for the State on average. Weighing in the balance is our status as a Sanctuary City and the Covid migration of remote workers to Great Barrington. Collection of official data lags behind for these current trends. According to Susan Strate of the Donahue Institute, Berkshire County has "the profile of an increasingly seasonal location."

Estimates by the Census Bureau only include residents who declare they live here the majority of the time. Like the Cape and Islands, Berkshire County is specifically defined as a "recreation" county according to the USDA.

- Total housing units show a 82.1% occupancy rate with 24.8% renter occupied. The housing stock in comparison has risen in the past 10 years by 6.3% (Massachusetts rate is 6.8%). Town of Great Barrington Housing Needs Assessment 2020 shows a gradual depletion of middle income brackets with nearly half of all households earning less than 80% of area median income. Our housing units however have steadily gone up through the efforts of many assistance programs including Great Barrington Affordable Housing Trust Fund, Berkshire Taconic Foundation, and Construct Inc. There is active planning for affordable housing throughout Great Barrington and Housatonic.
- Economically, median income is \$35,320 with less than 100% poverty level at 3.1% and 100-149% at 5.7%. Employment figures indicate 42% work in business, science or art, 25.6% are in education, healthcare, Social Assistance.
- Transportation data shows 4.5% of households do not have a vehicle.



Gabrielle K. Murphy @goldilocksoftheshire

METHODOLOGY

Widespread challenges in 2020, coupled with turnover in library leadership (in August 2022 and again in May 2023), caused the Great Barrington Libraries' Strategic Plan to lapse at the close of 2021. In accordance with the Town Charter, the Board of Trustees "shall be responsible for a long-range plan every five years, with annual updates."

A shift in perspective ultimately sparked an invaluable realization: the challenges being faced were an opportunity for evolution at the Great Barrington Libraries, as evidenced by our foundational theme: "Reflect, Re-Imagine and Re-Connect".

In the spring of 2023, the Interim Director and the Trustees committed to moving forward on the Strategic Planning process using introductory guidance from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, along with planning resources furnished by the Massachusetts Library Systems. A subcommittee, created by the Interim Director and Trustees, proceeded to take a deep dive into the process using analysis of past Great Barrington Libraries' Strategic Plans as a starting point.

In July, we commenced with seeking input from the community at large via surveys, on paper and online, available in English and Spanish, which were distributed throughout Town throughout the summer.

Heeding the advice of *Get Creative*, we aligned with the concept of *Intercept Surveys*, a research method used to gather feedback from a target audience, to pose timely and relevant questions about residents' use of the Great Barrington Libraries.

The results were surprising.

Ongoing outreach at the Town's weekly Farmers Market allowed us to connect with frequent library users; gather feedback from members of the community who do not identify as regular library patrons; and gain a unique perspective from second-home owners who provided comparative analysis with their hometown libraries.

The public's enthusiasm for our survey and appreciation for the opportunity to provide nuanced verbal responses, is likely evidence of an increased and collective desire, in today's post-pandemic landscape, to forge live, human connections.

In August 2023, Rob Cullin and Janet Nelson from *ReThinking Libraries*, a consulting firm tasked with helping libraries engage their communities, envision their future and continually evolve, facilitated training sessions for the staff and trustees. The Trustees participated in a strategic planning tool, Strength, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results (SOAR) Analysis aimed at using data about an organization's current position coupled with individuals' ideas and dreams about its future, in order to build an energizing vision toward which to strive.

Our "Takin' It To The Street" approach, designed to literally meet community members where they are, continued with one-on-one conversations and targeted focus groups throughout August/September 2023. This series of community conversations included the following groups of individuals:

- Educators
- Frequent library patrons
- Friends of the Great Barrington Libraries
- Librarians throughout the Tri-State area
- Non-Library Users
- Young families

And local nonprofit organizations:

- The Center for Peace Through Culture
- Extra Special Teas Disability Partners
- Osher Lifelong Learning Institute(OLLI)
- Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires
- Railroad Street Youth Project
- Claire Teague Senior Center
- Volunteers in Medicine Berkshires

With guidance from our team of consultants at ReThinking Libraries, we then distilled our data down to the fundamental concepts of goals and actions which provided an achievable path forward.



USER NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

As loneliness and isolation persist across America in today's world landscape, the need for belonging (outside of an individual's home and place of work) is greater than ever. In turn, folks across the country are increasingly relying upon third places (defined as physical spaces designed for gathering, connecting, and sharing resources) to build community. The social support found in third places such as public libraries has been shown to have a positive effect on long-term health and well-being. In 2023, the United States Surgeon General deemed loneliness an epidemic giving rise to urgency, within our local institutions, to address isolation and build community. In a small town like Great Barrington, the Mason and Ramsdell Libraries are poised to function as community living rooms: warm, safe, accessible spaces for intergenerational mingling.

A study by the Tufts Health Plan Foundation (which is part of the Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative) revealed several statistics relevant to our local population:

- More than 35% of those residents aged 65 and older in Great Barrington live alone (a figure that's higher than both the national and state averages)
- For individuals aged 65 and older, there is a direct correlation with depression
- An estimated 32% of residents aged 65 and older in Great Barrington suffer from depression

Our own survey revealed that our local libraries are a “lifeline,” a “safe space,” and “an asset,” but are in need of updating:

- *“Love the libraries, they provide a warm and friendly atmosphere.”*
- *“I am grateful for the library services already offered.”*
- *“Children’s section is great!”*
- *“I can get into your chairs [at the library], but I can't get out of them. You need age-friendly chairs.”*
- *“Please modernize Ramsdell now!”*

For Housatonic residents, the Claire Teague Senior Center on South Main Street in Great Barrington is nearly 14 miles round-trip which in the absence of reliable public transportation, makes this resource inaccessible to many. The Ramsdell Library is considered community accessible because it is centrally located and within walking distance for most residents.

Our survey revealed that improved communication is needed to ensure residents are aware of all we have to offer.

- *“What is a Library of Things?”*
- *“I don't know where to access programs in order to find out what is available.”*
- *“Hours are confusing.”*
- *“The reason I don't go to the library is because I think of it as only a place that offers quiet and books.”*
- *“I don't know the names of the staff, but they're nice.”*

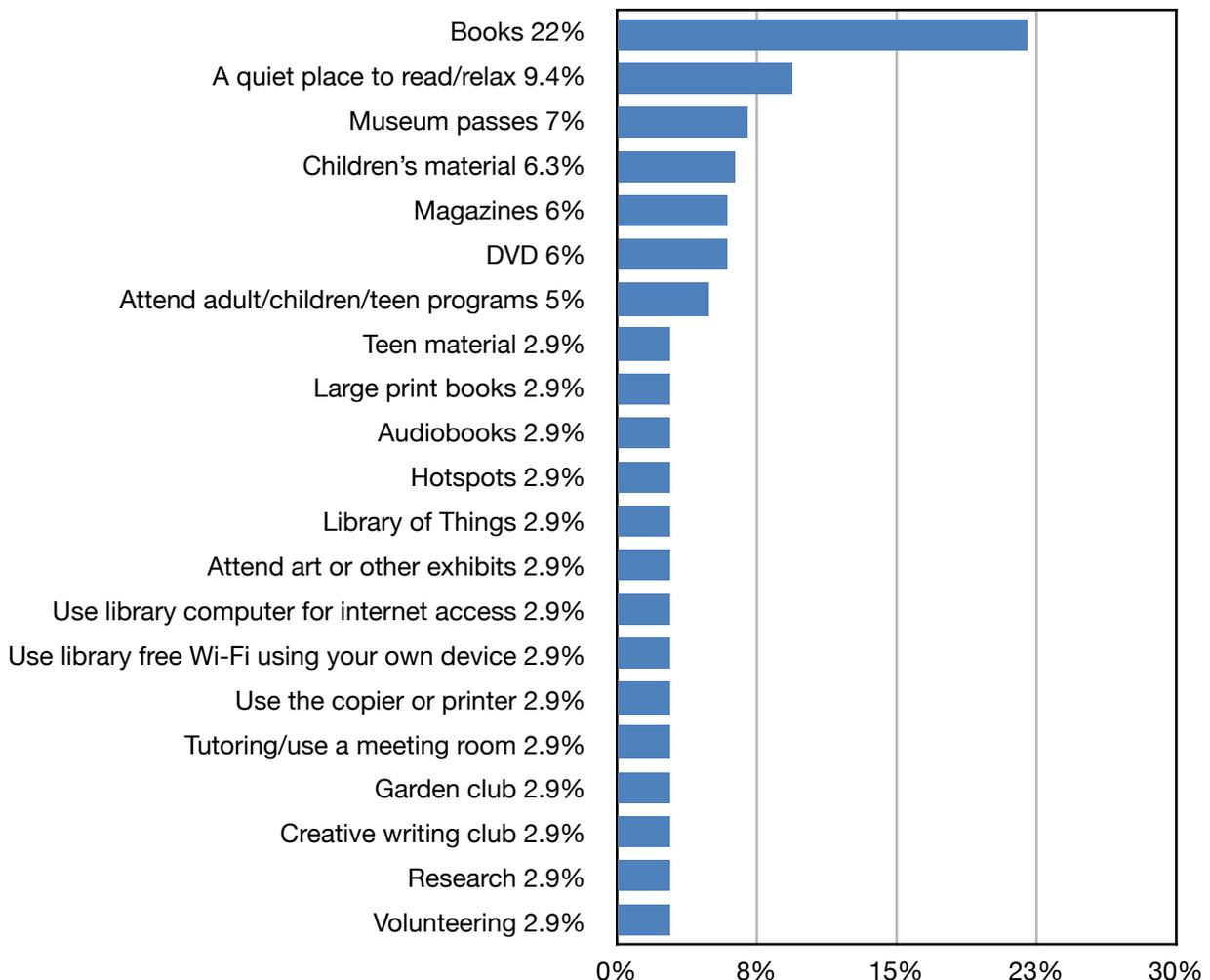
We strive to meet the needs of a diverse community (including a growing Latino population) through communication vehicles such as signage in multiple languages, a translation app, and expanded web site. Still, it is clear from the survey responses that more communication is needed, especially around awareness of our programs and offerings. All of this constructive feedback *serves as the bedrock for communication* with community members which will ultimately allow us to forge a way forward.

A young person shared, “*Aside from the Railroad Street Youth Project, the library is the only other truly safe environment in town.*” Considering the challenges facing young people today, this statement alone is testament to the power of third spaces to cultivate safety and connection, belonging and well being.

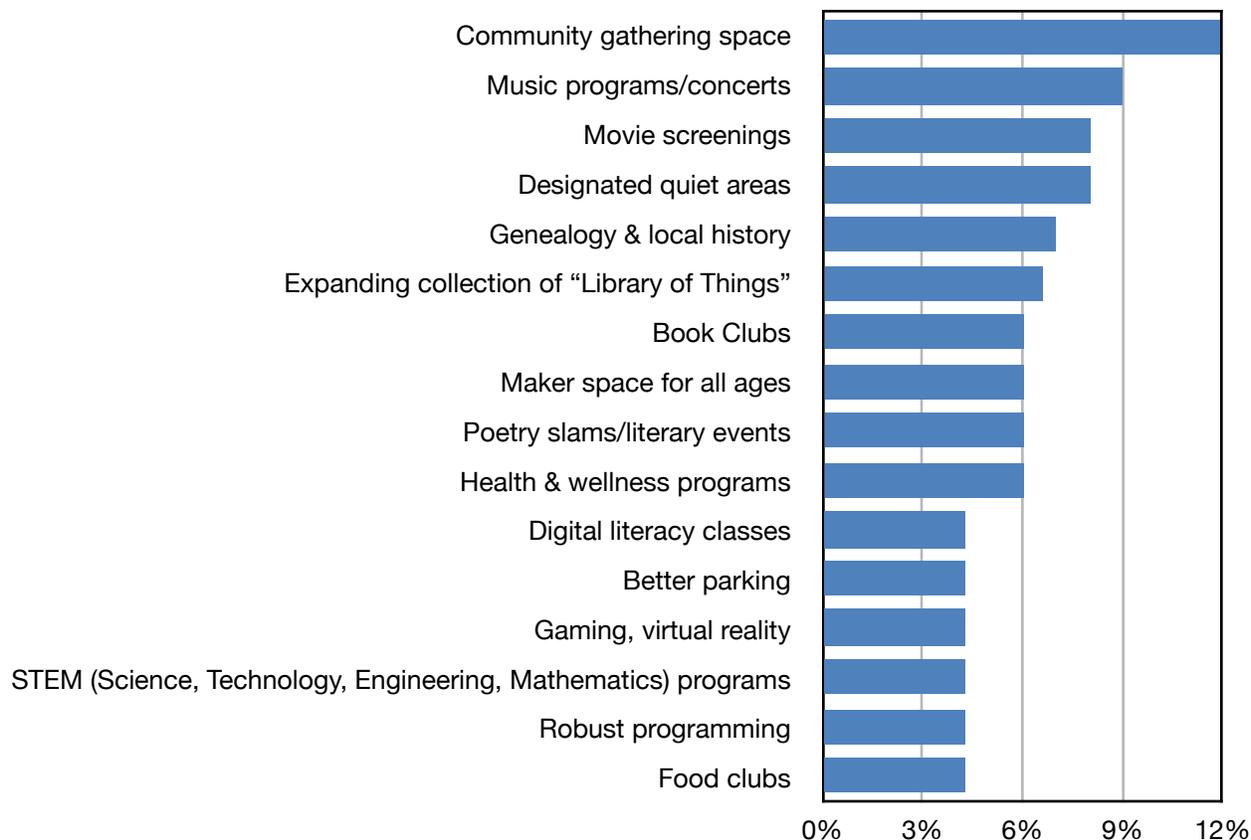
One survey respondent hit the proverbial nail on the head: “*The library is an asset to the town of Great Barrington. When the [pandemic] hit our community, the library was a lifeline. It occupied our minds and brought pleasure in a difficult time.*”

Community Survey Responses

Question 3: If you use the library, what is the reason for your typical visit?



Question 4: Which services would you like to see the library create or enhance?



Themes/Priorities

Evaluating the information we gathered in the planning process, the surveys, the community focus groups and informal conversations, several themes emerged.

Our libraries are more than books.

Not only do our community members use the library for books, children's materials, magazines, and DVDs, but a majority of our respondents desire a vibrant community gathering space.

Creating or enhancing Library Programming is essential to our community's needs and interests.

Our libraries need to be welcoming and comfortable spaces for all of our users. There is a great need for music programs, movie screenings, STEAM classes, digital literacy classes, and health and wellness programs.

Connecting and Communicating with our Library Community

Our community residents continue to express the need to be informed of what events are taking place in the library. The primary source of library news and events are through email, library website, and social media. Many have stated that they would like to see an improved monthly calendar and a seasonal calendar.

THE FINALE: THE FINAL PRIORITIES



Eclipse at Mason Library

When given the opportunity, our community members stated these are the initiative/services on which the library should focus during the next five years. Our strategic plan will emphasize and be responsive to these priorities.

- **Re-imagining our libraries as welcoming, healthy and sustainable buildings**
- **Increasing community gathering spaces**
- **Developing robust programs for all ages and interests supported by increased communication and outreach within the community**
- **Providing cutting edge technology and support for our communities.**
- **Creating spaces that emphasize creativity and innovation.**
- **Increasing quiet and work spaces.**

According to ALA (American Library Association), Design Thinking is an approach to problem solving by engaging with users early in the design process of projects. It helps people become creative problem solvers, the process encourages users to build empathy, ideate and prototype solutions, and refine those solutions by seeking additional feedback. Using this framework specific to libraries, it can be transformative in bringing power to all stakeholders. This is especially important in our small community.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, ACTIONS AND TIMELINE

Goals 2024-2029

Goal #1: Prosperous, sustainable, future-forward library system

Goal #2: Reinvigorate, reimagine, and renovate our library facilities as safe, ADA accessible, gathering spaces for the library staff and the entire community with 30 year horizon.

Goal #3: Expand outreach, partnerships, and collaborations with a focus on the underserved.

Goal # 4: Elevate programming that fosters life skills (life-long learning), economic success, creative culture, understanding our accelerated digital world and the health of our communities.

Goal# 5: Support ongoing library staff training and professional development, and advocate for staffing needs by ongoing cooperation with town leadership.

Goal# 6: Increase usage of the libraries through interesting programs and materials that support community interests.

Goal# 7: Offer a rewarding experience for our Volunteer Program.



Goal #1: Prosperous, sustainable, future-forward library system

Outcome:

- By 2029, we will have established a fund that supplements and supports our taxpayers’ investment.
- We will have a fully developed method of contact with all of our library community with an updated database.
- The newly developed foundation that supports our library system will be substantial for long range sustainability.
- We will be the center of technology needs for our community, striving for digital equity.

Objective	Actions	Timeline	By Whom
Communication	Website update with translation tools and accessibility applications.	April 2024	Library Leadership and Trustees
	Connect with community, old and new through strategic digital and hardcopy marketing.	FY24	Library Leadership
	Library Trustee Town Charter should be reviewed.	Library Trustee Charter review before January 2024.	Trustees
	“Ask Librarian” services	FY25 1st quarter	Library
Funding	Set up Foundation independent of municipality.	Fall 2023	Trustees/ Friends/ Volunteers.
	Sign Letter of Intent for technology grant LSTA.	December FY24	Library Leadership and Trustees

Objective	Actions	Timeline	By Whom
	MBLC Action Plan 12/1/23.	12/1/23	Library Leadership and Trustees
	Outreach to Selectboard and Finance Committee Nov. '23	Nov 2023	Trustees
	Apply for CPA FY25 funding	October 2023	Trustees
	Contract with fundraising consultants.	Fall 2023	Trustees
	Focus on municipal funding through line item requests	FY25	Trustees
	Set up infrastructure through Nonprofit Center of The Berkshires.	Fall 2023	Trustees/ Friends/ Volunteers.
Outreach	Community/Surveys & Discussions for Ramsdell Renovations.	Teen and Senior discussions FY24 Community Survey/Discussion for Ramsdell start in February and end May '24.	Trustees with subcommittee (to be formed)
	Friends support discussions.	December FY24	Friends
Technology	Teen Tech Discussion (LSTA) Senior Tech Discussion user needs assessment	LSTA draft preparation start end of Jan, 2024	Trustees with support from library staff.

Objective	Actions	Timeline	By Whom
	Replacement Schedule for hardware and updating software through Municipality Schedule review.	Discussion for municipality replacement schedule 10/23. Our agenda needs to be discussed as line item agenda.	Trustees with support from library staff.

***Fiscal Year 2024 is from July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024.

Goal #2: Reinvigorate, reimagine, and renovate our library facilities as safe, ADA accessible, gathering spaces for the library staff and the entire community with 30 year horizon.

Outcome:

- By 2029, age friendly spaces with maximum flexibility of use.
- Ramsdell Library design and construction will be completed to withstand the test of time for 30 year horizon.
- Buildings will be resilience hubs to serve the community.

Objective	Actions	Timeline	By Whom
Complete ADA Accessibility for Ramsdell Library.	CPA FY25 funding application for \$150,000 as requirement for MPLCP Grant*.	Fall 2023	Trustees
	Arrange for Update Building Program and Condition Assessment Study.	Winter/ Spring 2023-24 for discussion.	Trustees
	Discussion with Town about further financial obligations for this project.	Winter/ Spring 2023-24 for discussion.	Trustees
Renovate and Reimagine the libraries as a sustainable library and community gathering space.	MPLCP application for round 2023/2024.	MPLCP- May 31, 2024 pending town approval. And funding for Resiliency Hubs (both libraries) starting FY25	Trustees

Objective	Actions	Timeline	By Whom
	Set up libraries as resiliency hub with 24/7 virtual website as trusted source of information for crisis interventions as part of town initiative (Municipal Vulnerability Program)	Funding for Resiliency Hub (both libraries) starting FY25	Great Barrington Town Depts./ Libraries/ Trustees involvement.
Establish a Ramsdell Renovation AD Hoc Committee	Developing the entire process of gathering support for the building project.	Spring 2024 with multiple community discussions	Initiated by Trustees
Owner's Project Manager	As per MPLCP before signing for Grant if given	Fall 2024 at earliest.	Ramsdell Renovation Committee
Future-Forward design concept that integrates the historic building attributes with needs of future generations.	Careful selection of consultants with public input.	FY 26-27.	Ramsdell Renovation Committee
Age friendly, modular furniture to fulfill various health considerations	Design considerations with support from Library Consultants for both libraries.	FY26 onward.	Ramsdell Renovation Committee and Trustees

* Massachusetts Public Library Construction Project (MPLCP)

Goal #3: Expand outreach, partnerships, and collaborations with a focus on the underserved.

Outcomes

- By 2025, the underserved will have another welcoming place in the community.
- Newcomers will be able to have a friendly face and access to information.
- EDIB values are incorporated in our programming choices.

Objective	Action	Timeline	By Whom
Increase cultural events that involve people of various backgrounds.	Celebrate National Hispanic Heritage Month annually.	September 2024	Library
	Unveiling and celebration of the W.E.B. Du Bois Statue in front of the library.	Fall of 2024	Library and Du Bois Sculpture Project
	Signage that reflects our diverse community	ASAP	Library
	Subscribe to online interpreter services for all languages.	FY 25-26	Library
	Celebrate Jazz Month annually in April. Seek out, plan, and present music-themed programming.	April 2024 FY25	Library
Facilities for English Language Learning Programs	Engage with Literacy Volunteers of Berkshire County to have a space in South County that would be available on nights and weekends.	FY29	Volunteer Organization
Creative ways to increase our library facilities for citizens with varied needs.	Comprehensive discussion regarding expanding our Library hours to reflect our community needs.	FY 27-29 with consideration to budget and staffing.	Library Staff and Trustees
Programs that are inclusive of everyone.	Consider needs of our growing Spanish speaking population and develop focus groups for programming.	FY 24-25 and onward	Library and subcommittee
	Senior Needs with advisory programming support	FY 24-25 and onward	Library and subcommittee
	Special Needs persons with advisory group support	FY 24-25 and onward	Library and subcommittee
Delivery of materials for those who are homebound.	Continuation of this program for those in need. This would include both seniors, homebound and mothers with young children who cannot get to the library.	FY 24 onward	Volunteer pool through efforts of Library Staff.

Objective	Action	Timeline	By Whom
Pilot program for children with sensory needs	Work in consultation with Pediatric specialist and stakeholders to develop this program.	Begin planning Summer of 2025	Volunteers/ Library Staff.
Provide library information through print material, and library tours	Produce pamphlets for newcomers and visitors; ie Chamber of Commerce welcome packets.	FY 26 or sooner	Library
	Develop self guided tours and maps	FY 26 or sooner	Library

Goal # 4: Elevate programming that fosters life skills (life-long learning), economic success, creative culture, understanding our accelerated digital world and the health of our communities.

Outcomes

- By 2029, programs would exceed those of 2019, which was 250 programs a year.
- Developed online programing in a robust manner, including our YouTube Channel. We will have over 50 programs by end of 2028.
- By 2025, we will have an ongoing active digital literacy program.
- By 2026, we will have developed a closer relationship with teens and emerging adults.

Objective	Action	Timeline	By Whom
Schedule robust live and virtual programming <u>consistently</u> by the month or season.	Plan for additional adult programs per week. (Increase to our baseline goal of 2019 which was 20 programs per month.)	Nov. 2023 through Summer 2024. Increase programs thereafter.	Library Staff, supported by Trustees and Friends.
Schedule programs for Teens and emerging adults	Establish/develop committee	Fall of 2025 or sooner.	Library Staff, supported by Trustees and Friends.
	Plan for additional programs (a few per year) after consultation with Railroad Street Youth Project (RSYP)	Fall of 2025 or sooner.	Library Staff/Teen and Emerging Adult Subcommittee/ Trustees
Genealogy Programs	Set up volunteer committee to plan and establish ongoing programming	Spring of 2024	Library Staff/ committee initiative, with Trustees support if needed.

Objective	Action	Timeline	By Whom
Health and Wellness Programs	Establish volunteer committee to plan and produce ongoing programming	Fall of 2025 or sooner.	Library Staff, supported by Trustees and Friends.
Financial Literacy	Plan for at least two programs a month with SCORE Foundation and other financial mentors	Spring of 2027 or sooner	Library Staff, supported by Trustees and Friends.
Digital Literacy	Plan to coordinate with other libraries/outsources to start one program per month in each library.	Spring of 2025	Library Staff, supported by Trustees and Friends.

Goal# 5: Support ongoing library staff training and professional development, and advocate for staffing needs by ongoing cooperation with town leadership.

Outcomes

- In 2026, library staff will feel valued and supported with greater retention.
- Library staff will feel safer at their job.

Objective	Action	Timeline	By Whom
Staff retainment and higher level of job satisfaction.	Advocate for better compensation and constructive communication by going to town leadership and media.	Union contractual period is now through 6/30/26 and advocacy starts the year before around 10/1/2025.	Trustees and involved community members.
Staff will have access to training and professional development as well as resources they need to thrive as team members.	American Library Association and Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners have extensive training opportunities that would be interesting and helpful.	Great opportunity to guide all staff members, including the new hires who will need training, by Jan. 2024 or earlier.	Library Director with support from MBLC and MLS
	Encourage workshops to support staff enrichment.	Determined by Town and Library leadership FY24	Town Leadership
After hours support	Make Ramsdell Library available for after hours use by the public.	FY 2029 or earlier	TBD

Objective	Action	Timeline	By Whom
Occupational Assessment for prevention of work related injuries.	Request support from specialist in occupational health to provide assessment and support.	FY 27 Fall	Town HR

Goal# 6: Increase usage of the libraries through interesting programs and materials that support community interests.

Outcome

- By 2029, we will offer cutting edge technology training and tools.
- There will be opportunity to innovate and create within our 4 walls.
- We will have an online presence for those who cannot attend programs in person.

Objective	Action	Timeline	By Whom
Develop space for Creativity and Innovation	Develop a committee with library staff and stakeholders for this objective.	FY24 Spring and ongoing	All stakeholders including community members, Trustees and Staff
	Plan for future spaces by incorporating into building renovations.	FY24	All stakeholders including community members, Trustees and Staff
Expand Library of Things	Develop a committee to identify wants and needs and make a wish list.	FY24 and ongoing	Committee volunteers and Staff members.
	Develop sufficient space planning and usage in Ramsdell.	FY24 and ongoing	Committee volunteers and Staff members.
Entertainment programs in music, shows, movies and other programs	Restore the film series and add music performances to make robust programming for all ages.	FY 24 onwards	Library Staff/ Friends/ Volunteers
Provide cutting edge technological programming for teens and children.	Budget for funding	FY 27	Library
	Community conversations to identify technology needs.	FY 27	Library

Goal# 7: Offer a rewarding experience for our Volunteer Program.

Outcome

- By 2029, we will have a thriving volunteer program that will benefit the community as well as add another wonderful activity for people to participate and connect with.

Objective	Action	Timeline	By Whom
Develop a sustainable volunteer program	Start a dialogue with all stakeholders to develop a sustainable volunteer program.	FY 25 or sooner	Library Leadership /Trustees
	Solicit town legal advice for policy guidelines	FY 26 or sooner	Library Leadership /Trustees
	Research successful library volunteer programs	FY25 or sooner	Library Leadership /Trustees
	Implement a volunteer program with additional community conversations	FY 27 or sooner	Library Leadership /Trustees
Offer high school internships to introduce library sciences and careers at Mason and Ramsdell Libraries	Reach out to vocational departments of local schools to develop interest in this program.	FY 27 or sooner	Library Leadership /Trustees

The goals noted above reflect the work of many individuals who love our libraries and wish to provide this endearing institution the best for future generations. Some of the goals are reconnecting with our previous Strategic Plan of 2017-2021. We renew our hope in Ramsdell and Mason to continue their roles as community institutions in serving all of us in the best possible way. We wish to **Reflect, Re-Imagine and Re-Connect.**

These goals are aspirational, subject to changes in Library leadership and flexible for opportunities or challenges that may occur. To measure our progress, we will monitor our actions quarterly until further notice. Trustees will remain fully engaged and committed to bringing these goals to fruition.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Great Barrington Libraries would like to thank the following individuals for their support and feedback during the strategic planning process:

The Library Staff who took the time to participate in the focus group and share their honest and helpful feedback about the Library, particularly behind the scenes.

All the community members who responded to the Great Barrington Libraries 2023 survey.

All the focus group and interview participants were engaged in the process, thoughtful in their responses, and generous with their time. Special thanks to ReThinking Libraries, Rob Cullin and Janet Nelson.

Library Trustees

Ruby Chang
Lauren Clark
Patrick Hollenbeck (Chair)
Carol McGlinchey
Sandra Pantorno
Rob Shaeffer

Friends of the Library

Ed Abrahams
Holly Hamer

Library Staff

Donna Brown, Interim Director
Christine Warner, Interim Assistant Director
Cheryl Attarian
Fran Hernandez
Marie Blauvelt
David Lamoreux

Members of the Community

Sharon Gregory
Michelle Loubert
Margaret McLallen
Joanne Cooney
Eileen Mooney, THE NEWSletter
Center for Peace Through Culture, Andreas Engel
Extra Special Teas Disability Partners
Osher Lifelong Learning Institute
Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires, Liana Toscanini
Railroad Street Youth Project

Claire Teague Senior Center, Joan Peters
Volunteers in Medicine Berkshires, Ilana Steinhauer, FNP
Great Barrington Farmers' Market, Dennis Iodice

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Sandy Pantorno

With support from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners and the Massachusetts Library Association



Photo by Andreas Engel

Appendices

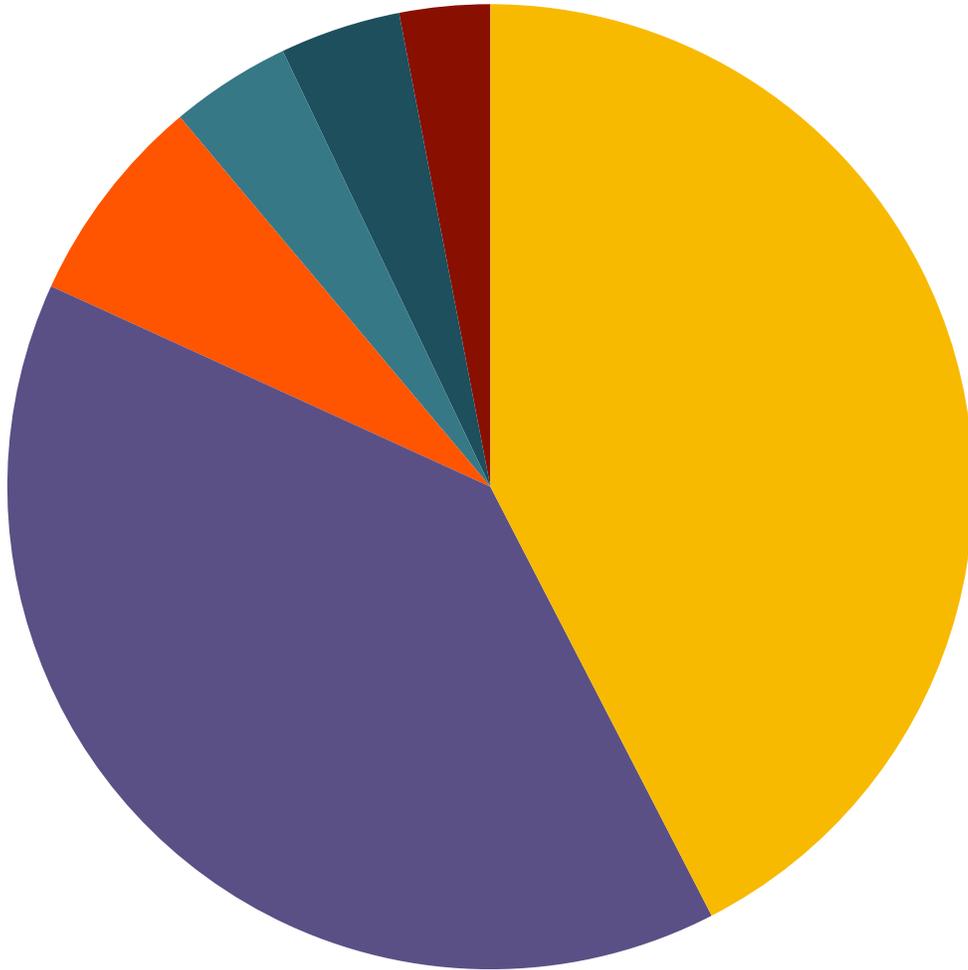


*Library booth at “Party in the Park”
Photo by Andreas Engel*

SURVEY CHARTS

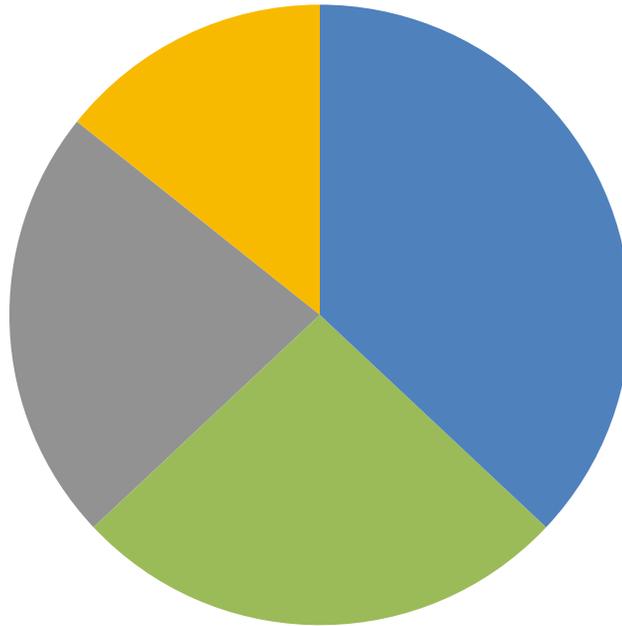
Additional Community Survey Responses

Question 7: What is your age?

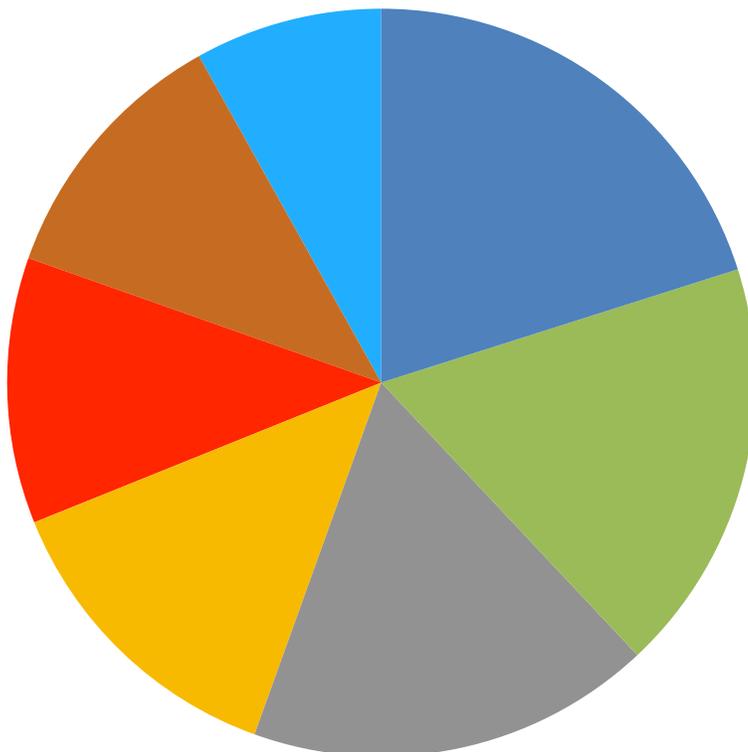


Question 8: Where do you prefer to find out about library news and events?

- Email ● Library website ● Social media ● News online/print



Question 9: Which initiatives/services do you think the libraries should focus on over the next 5 years?



- 20.1% Creating robust programming for all ages
- 17.9% Increasing community gathering spaces
- 17.5% Collaborating with other community organizations and other libraries for programs
- 13.4% Creating maker spaces for all ages
- 11.5% Expanding digital literacy classes
- 11.5% Increasing quiet study/workspaces

OLLI FOCUS GROUP RESPONSES

A Reimagined Future: What is your vision for both Mason and Ramsdell Libraries?

The library should be a major center of activities, especially for children, where they choose to go a lot.

Provide cultural events-speakers, music programs.
Place that feels comfortable and welcoming

Provide Community Services/Support for needy groups/community dinners/gathering events
Teach Access to digital media-expand users knowledge beyond the physical building.

Streamlined effective governance and funding

Buildings that work! Infrastructure, technology, HVAC, etc.

Frame thinking around our accelerating digital world.

Collaborate with other libraries in the area—yes.
Source of fun for children—learn the joy of books
Safe place for after school “loitering” and exploring.
Children have forgotten how to have fun and joy by experiencing the world on their own. This creates anxiety and dependence on the digital world more.

When Thinking of Developing a “Creative Culture,” What Comes to Mind?

Guest lectures
Exhibitions tied to GB history, etc.
Learning classes/events, ie: ceramics

Outreach

Cooperation with the school district

Offering meeting space to outside organizations

Lectures from well known authors, speakers, educators, music sponsored events, classes in topics for each age group, community pot lucks, films.

Books, (especially for kids)/programs that reflect the community’s values

Meeting spaces for education

Art exhibits-children’s work and anyone else’s

What Are Some Specific Goals Regarding Life Skills for All Ages?

Computer literacy

Reading skills

Providing programs specific to aging (some libraries even offer balancing exercise taught by a volunteer)

Opportunities to Interact with other age groups, especially children 🧒🧒🧒

Music Appreciation

Hobbies, eg, knitting

Tax and financial assistance

- Young:chores, asking questions, grooming, being helpful at home
- Teens: chores, asking questions, volunteering, being helpful at home and learning how to fix things, being aware of health and safety matters.
- Adults: social and political responsibilities; role models, volunteering
- Seniors: mentors, giving back. Asking for help

- Kids-reading/writing/social skills/storytelling
- Adolescents: listening, courses, crafts, getting into college, social skills
- Adults: technology/digital education/social media
 - Art/Music
 - Author's and education around top books/film

What Are Your Thoughts on Collaboration With Other Libraries or organizations? What Are the Benefits to Our Community?

Absolutely necessary. (Example: Lenox has music CD's that we can access in GB, other collections, services can have a specific location available to all)

We need to know more about the successful libraries in our region. How are they governed? What are the salary scales? How are they funded?(A comparative study should be done, a volunteer could do it)

Provide joint events-famous author series, social/community outreach/technology/education series/art/ concerts/theater trips/partner with town councils for key community projects

Yes, learn best practices (endorsed); event collaborations
Partnerships=accelerated success

Programming

Teen book club-run by teens, need to re-energize this group to the library!

Combining with other libraries for concerns, workshops, etc, book reads. Joint Children's events.

Technology

How to download eBooks
Computer help for tax forms, etc.

Links-push info on the library e-letter (list of Trustees), meetings
Digital literacy, digital access (computer)
Wi-Fi Access
Zoom Accounts

Tech hire/or staff

Accessibility

Accessibility means equal access regardless of personal challenges(physical and sensory such as hearing, vision sensory etc.) and to be supported in services for free education and research.

Quiet Hour for our autistic Community/headphones.

What Are Our Values As a Community?

Serving all people in community, equity in access—Yes (endorsed)

We need an ADA Knowledgeable consultant

Welcome immigrant community—ESOL Materials, bilingual books for parents of young children -Yes

Community input into library issues

Recognize and promote what is unique about GB

Respect, open minded, tolerant —Yes

Respect all people

Equal opportunity regardless of ability to pay—Yes

Creative thinking and generating new ideas

Provide Community Services to all ages—Yes (and meals)

COMMENTS FROM SURVEYS

Cultural dinners, Theater - Shakespeare acts, etc.; children acts

Experts giving wellness talks, community conversations - beginning with “welcome to my culture”, we are neighbors within neighborhoods, we are individual constellations of family/friends/common interests, marketing, needs colorful posters and cool website

What is library of things? Marketing?

If the town library is stagnant, it’s reflective of how people will view the town’s future.
Vibrant library = town with a vibrant future.

(I) miss the Boston Globe in Ramsdell. Please modernize Ramsdell now.
It’s ridiculous the town hasn’t made this a priority.

Author talks, other talks on topics of local interest, making space for community organizations, more ebooks.

Most of the reason I don’t go to the library is because I think of it as only a place that offers quiet and books. If it were a vibrant space for book launches, stimulating discussion, and professionally mediated difficult conversations, I would definitely use it more.

I use the interlibrary loan all the time. Would love to expand that to include more academic libraries/online databases and resources, or discounted access via the library to JSTOR, etc. Berkshires has many independent researchers in the community and this would be a huge value/ADD.

Need morning and evening open hours. Need more newspapers like it used to be before COVID.

GB virtual library seems like an afterthought, not updated materials online. YouTube channel for old videos.

Programs for life long learning financial planning, estate plans, investment.

Please renovate Ramsdell, I miss programs on the upper floor, user friendly hours (no mornings and no evenings presently).

Financial planning/investment programs. Activities at night in Ramsdell. Nothing to do down here in Housatonic. Please fix Ramsdell so we have a place to connect with the adult community. Handicap parking a must.

Laurie Harrison and her team in the children's room at Mason are a wonderful and vital part of our community. So grateful for how warm, welcoming, and wonderful she is.

Mason is not a very comfortable place to spend time in or do work in. It's very unwelcoming, improved the arrangement of tables/work areas. Some tables just have folding chairs, better seating.

Reading program year round.

Mason is an architectural jewel desperately in need of renovation (I don't know the Housatonic library so cannot comment). Recommend undertaking comprehensive facilities and service planning. FYI, library card question is confusing. Do you mean a card issued by a GB library or any library in Berkshire County? I assumed the former.

The Edge is best for getting library news.

Need morning hours for young families.

The hours of Ramsdell really don't fit the lifestyle of most people who live in Housatonic. High priority should be a Maker Space. We need the creativity and innovation.

I don't know the names of the staff, but they're nice.

The pandemic cages at the front desk are unappealing and uninviting. Can't these be made to be less so if they are truly needed?

Community gathering spaces should not come at the expense of the library's purpose as a quiet place to read, research and gathering info.

My kids love the summer book challenges, and preferred the reading challenges that weren't online. Something about a tangible book was always great. It makes it more real to them.

LIBRARY SURVEY ENGLISH VERSION

Great Barrington Libraries Survey, July 1-August 4, 2023 via paper copies, some online Google Form Surveys, Spanish surveys slightly changed to accommodate special interest. (See addendum)

1. How often do you usually visit the Mason/Ramsdell Library or the GB Virtual Library System?

Answer Choices	Response Number	Response Percentage
At least once a week	103	34%
At least once a month	88	29%
Two to three times per year	45	15%
I only visit during summer or holidays	19	6%
Never (Please complete question 2)	44	15%

2. If you do not use the library, please tell us why?

Answer Choices	Response Number	Response Percentage
I have trouble getting there.	11	10%
I don't know what is offered.	21	20%
I satisfy my needs for books, movies, magazines, news by other means.	40	40%
There aren't any programs	7	7%
Hours of operation do not fit my schedule.	22	22%

3. If you use the library, what is the reason for your typical visit? (Please check all that apply)

Answer Choices	Response Number	Response Percentage
Books	214	22%
Children's material	61	6.3%
Teen material	17	1.7%
Large print books	15	1.5%
Magazines	57	6%

DVDs	59	6%
Audiobooks	41	4.2%
Hotspots	24	2.5%
Library of Things	38	4%
Museum passes	69	7%
A quiet place to read/relax	91	9.4%
Attend adult/ children/teen	50	5%
Attend art or other exhibits	42	4.4%
Use Library computer for internet access	26	3%
Use library free Wi-Fi using your own device	43	4.4%
Use the copier or printer	37	4%
Tutoring/use a meeting room	28	3%
Garden club	7	0.6%
Creative Writing club	6	0.6%
Research	24	2.5%
Volunteering	10	1%

4. Both libraries seek to update its services to meet our patrons' needs and interests. Which of these services would you like to see the library create or enhance? (Please check all that apply.)

Answer Choices	Response Number	Respons Percentage
Community gathering space	157	12%
Designated quiet spaces	104	8%
Collaborative work and/or meeting space	79	6%
Genealogy and local history	92	7%
Expanding our collection of Library	86	6.6%
Maker space for all ages	84	6%
Music programs/concerts	117	9%

Movie screening	107	8%
Digital literacy classes	58	4.5%
Better parking	41	3%
Book clubs	85	6%
Gaming and virtual reality	37	3%
STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) programs	64	5%
Poetry slams/literary events	84	6%
Robust programming	59	4.5%
Food clubs	43	3%
Health and wellness programs	83	6%

5. Do you feel mason and Ramsdell libraries should offer special programs/exhibits/collections INDEPENDENT of each other?

Answer Choices	Response Number	Response Percentage
Yes	189	81%
No	42	19%

6. Do you have a Great Barrington Library card?

Answer Choices	Response Number	Response Percentage
Yes	214	76%
No	65	24%

7. What is your age?

Answer Choices	Response Number	Response Percentage
Under 12	11	4%
12-18	11	4%
19-25	8	3%
26-35	20	7%
36-65	119	42%
65 or over	111	39%
Prefer not to answer	5	2%

8. Where do you prefer to find out about library news and events?

Answer Choices	Response Number	Response Percentage
Social Media such as FaceBook, Instagram, X.	93	22.7%
Library website	106	26%
Newspaper online or print	59	14.4%
Email	151	37%

9. To better connect with our strategic planning, which initiatives/services do you think the libraries should focus on over the next 5 years? (Check all that apply.)

Answer Choices	Response Number	Response Percentage
Expanding digital literacy classes	83	11.5%
Increasing community gathering spaces	129	17.9%
Developing Genealogy classes and increasing	58	8%
Creating a maker space for all ages emphasizing creativity and innovation	97	13.4%
Increasing quiet study/ workspaces	83	11.5%
Creating robust programming for all ages	144	20%
Collaborating with other community organizations and other libraries for programs.	126	17.5%

Are you interested in becoming involved in the library or joining Friends of the Library?

(Please write down your contact information...name, phone number, email, volunteer interests, etc.)

Close to 30 people replied. One Spanish speaking person also volunteered from VIM.

*** Survey by Zip Code noted that for those who answered, which was 236 out of 304 surveys, Great Barrington and Housatonic comprised 78%, Berkshire and adjacent MA county was 11.1%, Out of State and Massachusetts outside of Berkshire County was 8.6%, and the rest did not answer.

*** Question 2 had 101 people answering, but only 44 from Question 1 answered “Never.” This indicate that people do have difficulties with coming to the library though they do not belong to the “Never” group, and answered the question to indicate that difficulty.

*** Age was skewed toward those of middle to older age group due to summer vacation when the survey was conducted. We are planning to reformulate another survey for school age and the young adult population to support our initiatives toward programming and acquisitions for the future.

LIBRARY SURVEY SPANISH VERSION

Encuesta comunitaria 2023 de las bibliotecas de Great Barrington

Por favor apoye a su biblioteca con la información que tanto necesita. Actualmente se está considerando un nuevo Plan Estratégico para el sistema de bibliotecas y es esencial para el crecimiento del sistema. Favor de tener en cuenta que la encuesta vence el 4 de agosto de 2023. La encuesta en papel se puede dejar en la biblioteca Mason o Ramsdell o en el Ayuntamiento. Dado que no todas las opciones se pueden enumerar en esta breve encuesta, si tiene otros comentarios o inquietudes, agréguelos al final de la encuesta.

¿Cuál es su código postal de residencia? _____

1. ¿Con qué frecuencia suele visitar la Biblioteca Mason/Ramsdell o el Sistema de Bibliotecas Virtuales de GB?

- 1. Al menos una vez por semana.
- 2. Al menos una vez al mes.
- 3. De dos o tres veces al año.
- 4. Solo visito durante el verano o vacaciones.
- 5. Nunca (Por favor complete la pregunta 2)

2. Si no usa la biblioteca, favor de decirnos por qué.

- 1. Tengo problemas para llegar.
- 2. No sé lo que se ofrece.
- 3. Satisfago mis necesidades de libros, películas, revistas, noticias por otros medios.
- 4. No hay ningún programa que me interese.
- 5. El horario de atención no se ajusta a mi horario. (Por favor, háganos saber qué horas se prefieren en la sección de comentarios al final de la encuesta).

3. Si usa la biblioteca, ¿cuál es el motivo de su visita típica? (Por favor marque todos los que apliquen.)

- 1. Libros
- 2. Material infantil
- 3. Material juvenil
- 4. Libros con letra grande
- 5. Revistas
- 6. DVD
- 7. Audiolibros
- 8. Puntos de acceso
- 9. Biblioteca de las Cosas
- 10. Pases de museo

- o 11. Un lugar tranquilo para leer/relajarse
- o 12. Asistir a programas para adultos/niños/adolescentes
- o 13. Asistir a exhibiciones de arte u otras
- o 14. Usar la computadora de la biblioteca para acceder a Internet
- o 15. Usar el Wi-Fi gratuito de la biblioteca usando su propio dispositivo
- o 16. Usar la fotocopidora o la impresora
- o 17. Tutoría/uso de una sala de reuniones
- o 18. Club de jardinería
- o 19. Club de escritura creativa
- 20. Investigación
- o 21. Voluntariado

4. Ambas bibliotecas buscan actualizar sus servicios para satisfacer las necesidades e intereses de nuestros usuarios. ¿Cuál de estos servicios le gustaría que la biblioteca creara o mejorara? (Por favor marque todos los que apliquen.)

- o 1. estudiante de inglés
- o 2. Genealogía e historia en áreas fuera de los Estados Unidos
- o 3. Proyecciones de películas que incluyen español y portugués.
- o 4. Programas musicales/conciertos presentados en español y portugués
- o 5. Ampliación de la colección de la biblioteca en español y portugués.
- o 6. Espacio de reunión de la comunidad
- o 7. Espacios reservados designados
- o 8. Espacio para trabajo colaborativo y/o espacio de encuentro
- o 9. Ampliar nuestra colección de “Biblioteca de Cosas” como máquinas de coser, música instrumentos, electrónica, etc.)
- o 10. Clases de alfabetización digital
- o 11. Mejor estacionamiento
- o 12 Clubes de lectura
- o 13. Los videojuegos, realidad virtual
- o 14. STEM (Ciencia, Tecnología, Ingeniería, Matemáticas)
- o 15. Certamen de poesía/eventos literarios
- o 16. Programación robusta
- o 17. Clubes de comida
- o 18. Programas de salud y bienestar

5. ¿Cree que las bibliotecas de Mason y Ramsdell deberían ofrecer programas/exhibiciones/colecciones especiales INDEPENDIENTES entre sí?

- o 1. Sí
- o 2. No

6. ¿Tiene una tarjeta de biblioteca de Great Barrington?

- 1. Sí
- 2. No

7. ¿Cuál es tu edad?

- 1. Sub 12
- 2. 12-18
- 3. 19-25
- 4. 26-35
- 5. 36-65
- 6. 65 o más
- 7. Prefiero no contestar

8. ¿Dónde prefiere informarse sobre las noticias y eventos de la biblioteca?

- 1. Redes sociales como Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.
- 2. Sitio web de la biblioteca
- 3. Periódico en línea o impreso en papel
- 4. Correo electrónico

9. Para conectarse mejor con nuestra planificación estratégica, ¿en qué iniciativas/servicios cree que deberían centrarse las bibliotecas durante los próximos 5 años? (Marque todo lo que corresponda)

- 1. Ampliación de la colección de la biblioteca en español y portugués.
- 2. Expansión de las clases de alfabetización digital
- 3. Desarrollar clases de genealogía y aumentar los recursos en línea.
- 4. Aumentar los espacios de reunión de la comunidad
- 5. Aumentar los espacios de estudio/trabajos silenciosos
- 6. Crear una programación robusta para todas las edades
- 7. Colaborar con otras organizaciones comunitarias y otras bibliotecas para programas

¿Está interesado en involucrarse en la biblioteca o unirse a Amigos de la Biblioteca? Escriba su información de contacto... nombre, número de teléfono, correo electrónico, intereses de voluntariado, etc.

Muchas gracias por tomarse el tiempo para completar la encuesta. Su opinión es muy importante para lo que hacemos. Agregue cualquier otro pensamiento a continuación.



*Summer Reading Program Celebration
Sandra Pantorno, photo*



C. Community
Engagement
Materials

COMMUNITY MEETING

Reimagine Ramsdell

Preserve the Past and Inspire the Future

The Great Barrington Libraries, Library Trustees and designLAB architects invite you to join us to share your thoughts and ideas for the future of Ramsdell Library

LOCATION + TIME:

Unitarian Church – Community Room

Sunday, March 24th

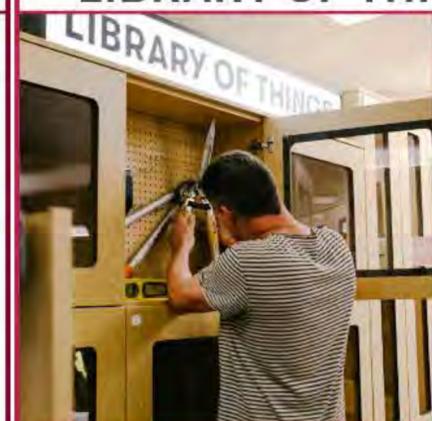
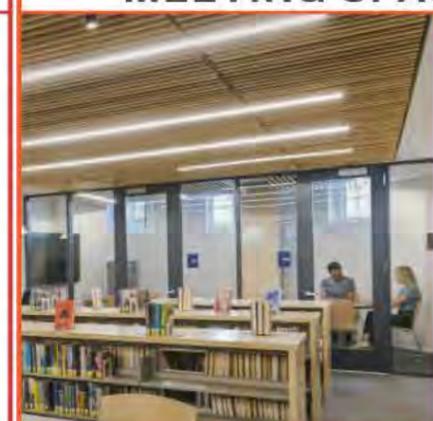
3:30 – 5:00pm

Brief presentation by designLAB architects and the Library Trustees followed by an interactive discussion with attendees

designLAB architects

GREAT BARRINGTON
LIBRARIES



<p>ART SPACE</p>  <p>gallery for local artists</p> <p>VOTE</p>	<p>COMMUNITY WORKSHOP</p>  <p>space to work on projects with a range of resources like 3D printers, tools, etc.</p> <p>VOTE</p>	<p>CHILDREN'S ROOM</p>  <p>dedicated space for children's collection, story time, arts and craft time, etc.</p> <p>VOTE</p>	<p>QUIET READING</p>  <p>a comfortable reading room with a variety of seating, quieter study area</p> <p>VOTE</p>	<p>OTHER</p> <p>DISCUSS</p>
<p>LOCAL HISTORY</p>  <p>local artifacts</p> <p>VOTE</p>	<p>COMMUNITY LIVING ROOM</p>  <p>comfortable reading and socializing room</p> <p>VOTE</p>	<p>TEEN AREA</p>  <p>dedicated space for teens to study, play games, hang out, etc.</p> <p>VOTE</p>	<p>GATHERING + EVENT</p>  <p>larger space for a variety of event types</p> <p>VOTE</p>	
<p>PERFORMANCE SPACE</p>  <p>dedicated space for music, theater, poetry, comedy performances and more</p> <p>VOTE</p>	<p>LIBRARY OF THINGS</p>  <p>items that are able to be checked out through the library like tools, video games, instruments, etc.</p> <p>VOTE</p>	<p>OUTDOOR PROGRAM</p>  <p>exterior space for story hours, events, meetings, etc.</p> <p>VOTE</p>	<p>MEETING SPACE</p>  <p>small or large spaces with technology to support online and in person meetings</p> <p>VOTE</p>	

Instructions: as the Library Building Committee considers strategies to re-imagine and renovate Ramsdell Library, we want to hear from you! The Building Committee plans to consider this feedback as we develop potential renovation strategies over the next several months. On this board, please:

1. Use (3) sticky dots to identify which types of spaces you'd like to see in a renovated Ramsdell Library. You can put all (3) sticky dots on one space, or spread them out.
2. Share thoughts on a post-it note on other types of spaces you would like to see in a renovated Ramsdell Library and why.

Or, respond online scan this code:



designLAB architects

What types of programs or events would you like to attend at Ramsdell Library?

TRIVIA GAMES book and movie-themed trivia for different age groups	VOTE	CLUB MEETINGS gardening club, book club, film club, etc	VOTE	GAMES/CARDS GATHERINGS d&d, chess, card games, board games, etc	VOTE	HOBBY NIGHTS knitting, woodworking, arts and crafts, etc.	VOTE
LITNET english language tutoring and resources	VOTE	ART SHOWS visual art installations by professional and student artists	VOTE	ARTIST WORKSHOPS collage, pottery, sketching, painting, music, makeup, etc	VOTE	COOKING CLASSES grilling, working with dough, knife skills, heatless cooking, etc. from a variety of cuisines	VOTE
OPEN MIC NIGHTS anyone can perform a story, poem, song, etc related to the event's theme	VOTE	MUSICAL PERFORMANCES songs from any genre and culture	VOTE	THEATER drama, improv, children's, comedy, etc.	VOTE	POETRY READINGS live reading of works by a single poet, or of poems related by a theme	VOTE

OTHER

DISCUSS

What types of resources would you like Ramsdell Library to offer?

3D PRINTERS resources and instructions for printing 3-dimensional plastic objects from your computer	VOTE	PUBLIC COMPUTERS computers with printing ability, internet, various softwares, etc	VOTE	TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT resources and workshops to understand different types of hardware and computer programs	VOTE	PHOTOGRAPHY EQUIPMENT slide scanners, enlargers, lights, backdrops, etc.	VOTE
BUSINESS INCUBATOR resources on how to start and run your small bussiness	VOTE	RESUME SUPPORT resources and one-on-one reviews of resume language and layout for job applications	VOTE	TAX PREP SUPPORT guidance for undstanding, completing, and submitting tax documents	VOTE	ESOL SUPPORT resources on learning English for speakers of other languages at various levels.	VOTE
EDUCATION CENTER resources for studying and tutoring available for all levels	VOTE	GAMES AND CARDS puzzles, board and card games that can be checked out with a library card	VOTE	CHILDREN'S TOYS blocks, dolls, educational games, etc.	VOTE	TOOL BORROWING hand tools, drills, hand saws, etc. that can be checked out with a library card	VOTE

OTHER

DISCUSS

Instructions: as the Library Building Committee considers strategies to re-imagine and renovate Ramsdell Library, we want to hear from you! The Building Committee plans to consider this feedback as we develop potential renovation strategies over the next several months. On this board, please:

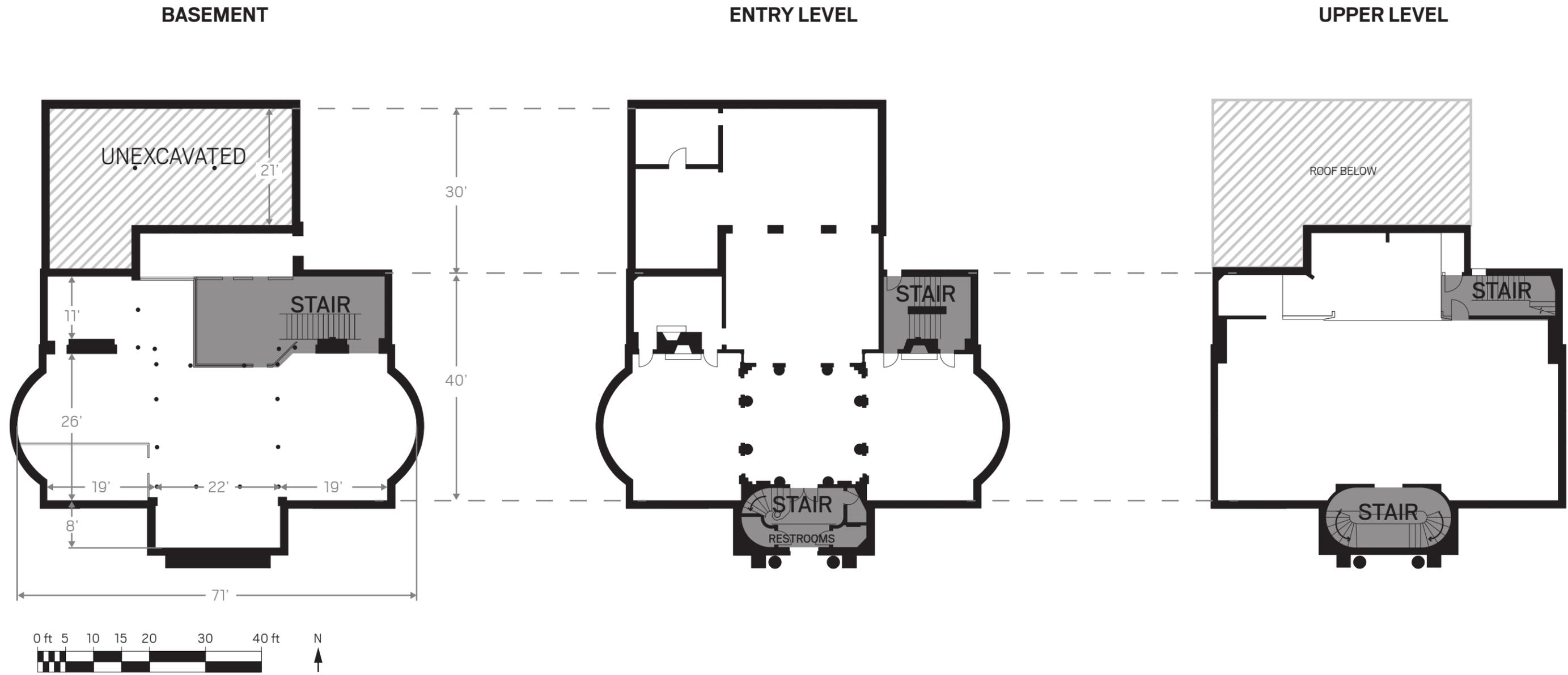
1. Use a total of (6) sticky dots to identify (3) programs or events and (3) resources you'd like to see in a renovated Ramsdell Library. You can put up to (3) sticky dots in one space, or spread them out.
2. Share thoughts on a post-it note on other types of programs, events, and resources you would like to see in a renovated Ramsdell Library and why.



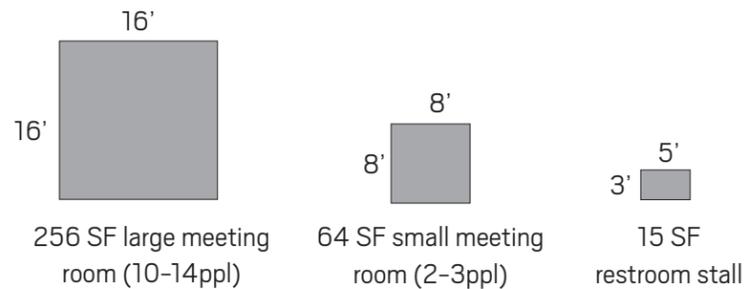
INSTRUCTIONS:

Sketch and label the layout of programs that you would want to see in a renovated Ramsdell Library in the floor plans below. You may refer to the guiding questions and list of popular library programs provided below, but you do not need to include all of the programs on the list. You may add your own program ideas as well.

You may include a single-level or multi-level addition to the building by drawing space that extends off of existing walls.



Additional scale references:



Program Spaces:

- Art Space
- Children's Room
- Community Living Room
- Community Workshop
- Gathering + Event Space
- Library of Things
- Local History Display
- Meeting Space
- Performance Space
- Quiet Reading
- Teen Area
- + feel free to add your own ideas

Guiding Questions

- Which programs are the most important for the community served by Randall Library?
- How many people would want to use a program space at one given time?
- Which programs should be next to each other? Which should not?
- Which programs should be the most visible as users move through the building?



D. Staff & Trustee
Engagement
Materials

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April 15, 2024

Ramsdell Library Feasibility Study

Library Staff Programming Questionnaire

General:

What is the average daily attendance for both Mason and Ramsdell?

Answer

How many Great Barrington Libraries registered borrowers are there?

Answer

What is the total annual circulation activity for both Mason and Ramsdell?

Answer

What is the seating capacity for both Mason and Ramsdell?

Answer

Meeting Rooms:

1. How many Group Meeting Rooms are there for both Mason and Ramsdell?

Answer

2. What is the largest capacity meeting room?

Answer

3. What is the number of individual or group study meeting rooms?

Answer

4. What is the number of times all meeting rooms were used?

Answer

Library Program Offerings:

(use bullet points where applicable)

1. Provide the circulation and relationship to community composition and holdings:
Answer
2. Provide the programming and program attendance and relationship to community composition:
Answer
3. Provide the technology usage and relationship to community composition:
Answer
4. Provide attendance and relationship to community composition:
Answer Healthy retired folks, young families new to area, Xtra Special Teas
5. Provide online usage and relationship to community composition:
Answer
6. Any special circumstances, collections, services, issues, or needs related to the library and community (e.g., archives, ESL language program, in a shared building with another department, etc.)
Answer
7. What do you think the biggest programming opportunities for Ramsdell are?
Answer

Existing Ramsdell Facility

1. What are the impediments to library operations or services due to the site?
Answer
2. Are there any health, safety and/or security issues posed by the site and/or building?
Answer
3. What are the accessibility issues posed by the site and/or building?
Answer

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186 south street

suite 601

boston, ma 02111

4. What are the impediments to staff workflow and productivity due to site and/or building?

Answer

5. Are there impediments to serving all members of the community due to the site and/or building?

Answer

6. Please share other issues regarding the site and/or building?

Answer

7. What is the public's perception of the existing building?

Answer

General Needs Assessment:

1. Are there areas (services and spaces) in which Ramsdell excels?

Answer

2. Are there areas (services and spaces) in which the Library could improve?

Answer

3. Who is Ramsdell serving well, adequately, and not well/not at all?

Answer

4. What spaces within Ramsdell are necessary and/or desired?

Answer

5. What adjacencies are necessary and/or desired?

Answer

6. What spaces do staff need to perform their roles successfully and optimally?

Answer

7. Are there any features that would create a better user experience?

Answer

8. How could technology be better integrated into each space?

Answer

9. Which public library trends are important to incorporate?

Answer

10. Which services should be retained and added?

Answer

11. What types of programming should be retained and added?

Answer

12. What partnership opportunities exist for services and programming?

Answer

13. Do you have a current Collection Management Policy? Which collection areas should be retained or reconsidered, and which require more space or less space?

Answer

14. What types of spaces should be retained and added?

Answer

15. Which special circumstances should be retained or reconsidered?

Answer

Mason:

1. Gross Square Footage and Net Square Footage of Mason?

Answer

2. When was the most recent renovation of Mason?

Answer

3. How many dedicated parking spaces are there for Mason?

Answer

END

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186 south street
suite 601
boston, ma 02111

April 15, 2024

Ramsdell Library Feasibility Study

Library Trustee + Community Leader Programming Questionnaire

General:

1. In your minds, what do you see as the Ramsdell Library's biggest assets? Or strongest attributes?

Answer

2. What are the Library's biggest challenges or liabilities?

Answer

3. Where do you see the Ramsdell Library in 10 years? 20 years? 30 years?

Answer

4. How could Ramsdell better serve the village of Housatonic, the broader Great Barrington community and the broader regional community?

Answer

Library Program Offerings:

1. What types of programs or events would you like to see and/or attend at Ramsdell Library?

Answer

2. What types of spaces would you like to see at Ramsdell Library that don't currently exist that would help facilitate these types of programs or events?

Answer

3. What types of resources would you like to see offered in the library?

Answer

4. How could the site/landscape be better leveraged to support library and community uses?

Answer

Existing Ramsdell Facility

1. What are the impediments to library operations or services due to the site?

Answer

2. Are there any health, safety and/or security issues posed by the site and/or building?

Answer

3. What are the accessibility issues posed by the site and/or building?

Answer

4. What are the impediments to staff workflow and productivity due to site and/or building?

Answer

5. Are there impediments to serving all members of the community due to the site and/or building?

Answer

6. Please share other issues regarding the site and/or building?

Answer

7. What is the public's perception of the existing building?

Answer

General Needs Assessment:

1. Are there areas (services and spaces) in which Ramsdell excels?

Answer

2. Are there areas (services and spaces) in which the Library could improve?

Answer

designLAB architects

186 south street

suite 601

boston, ma 02111

3. Who is Ramsdell serving well, adequately, and not well/not at all?

Answer

4. What spaces within Ramsdell are necessary and/or desired?

Answer

5. What adjacencies are necessary and/or desired?

Answer

6. What spaces do staff need to perform their roles successfully and optimally?

Answer

7. Are there any features that would create a better user experience?

Answer

8. How could technology be better integrated into each space?

Answer

9. Which public library trends are important to incorporate?

Answer

10. Which services should be retained and added?

Answer

END



2019
E. Archaeological
Study



**Ramsdell Public Library
Improvements Project**
Great Barrington, Massachusetts

Cultural Resources Due Diligence

December 4, 2019

Submitted to:
Kimberly Bolan and Associates, LLC
7249 Arbuckle Commons, Ste 423
Brownsburg, IN 46112

In response to a request from Kimberly Bolan and Associates, LLC on behalf of the Great Barrington Library Board of Trustees, The Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc. (PAL) has completed a cultural resources due diligence including an archaeological sensitivity assessment for the Ramsdell Public Library Improvements Project (Project) located in the Village of Housatonic in Great Barrington, Massachusetts (Figure 1). The library is an approximately 2,885 square foot structure that sits on a lot of less than one acre. The Town is considering possible renovations to the library, but a scope of work for Project has not yet been determined. Proposed improvements under consideration that could result in potential ground disturbances include an ADA accessible addition to the existing library building, creation of outdoor seating spaces, construction of a parking area, and installation of a temporary wheelchair ramp.

The Town anticipates using federal and/or state funds for the Project. The circa 1906 Ramsdell Library is also listed in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register). As such, the Project is potentially subject to review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and review by the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 9, sections 26-27C and the regulations that guide MHC review of state funded, licensed, or permitted projects (950 CMR 71).

The cultural resources due diligence was conducted to provide information about known archaeological sites and aboveground historic resources that may be affected by the Project, and to make recommendations regarding the need for consultation with the MHC and additional cultural resource management investigations. The due diligence consisted of a search of the MHC's *Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth* (MHC Inventory) and the *Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System* (MACRIS) to identify previously recorded archaeological sites and aboveground resources in the Project vicinity.

The study area established for the purposes of the due diligence effort was broadly defined to provide information on the types, nature, and distribution of resources located near the Project. As such, the study area for archaeological sites encompasses one-half mile around the Ramsdell Library property for a total radius of one mile; for aboveground resources, the study area encompasses one-quarter mile around the library for a total radius of one-half mile. The Project's Area of Potential Effects (APE) will be refined as more detailed information about the Project and its design are made available. The APE is defined based on the *potential* for effect, which may differ for archaeological sites and aboveground resources. The APE may include all areas where the ground may be disturbed, where land use patterns (traffic patterns, drainages, etc.) may change, or locations from which the



undertaking may be visible. For the archaeological sensitivity assessment, the APE was defined as the entire lot containing the Ramsdell Library.

Due Diligence Results

A total of 27 resources have been identified within the Project's defined study area: 26 aboveground resources and 1 archaeological site (Figure 2; Appendices A-1 through A-2).

Aboveground Resources

Aboveground resources consist of 3 historic areas and 23 buildings (see Figure 2; see Appendices A-1 and A-2). Of the 3 historic areas, one is currently listed in the National Register as a Historic District. Known as Monument Mills (GBR.B), the Historic District consists of a cotton mill complex along the east and west banks of the Housatonic River and was listed in the National Register in 1983. Textile manufacturing began as early as 1809 with the first damming of the upper mill privilege, and activity at the lower privilege began in 1837 with the construction of a chair manufacturing shop. Monument Mills was incorporated in 1851 following the 1850 purchase of the property by John and Asa Russell, and others, who established a new textile mill and cotton warp manufactory. The mill complex operations continued to expand during the remainder of the nineteenth century, with the addition of jacquard Marseilles bedspreads manufacturing. The mill operations ceased in the 1950s (Fitch and Parrish 1983). The other two historic areas consist of streetscapes associated with Main Street that consist of Monument Mills worker housing built during the mid- to late-nineteenth century (Parrish 1980a, 1980b).

The 23 buildings are represented by nineteenth- to early twentieth-century residential dwellings (including one used as a restaurant/tavern); late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century churches; mid-nineteenth century rail stations; late nineteenth- to early-twentieth century commercial establishments (hotel, restaurant/taverns, gas station, and commercial block); early-twentieth century municipal buildings (school and library), and mid-nineteenth to early-twentieth century buildings associated with the Monument Mills complex (mills, machine shops, business office/clubhouse, power house, warehouse, and picking and dye houses). Seven of the 23 buildings (mills, machine shops, warehouse, power house, and picking and dye houses) are contributing resources to the Monument Mills Historic District.

Two of the 23 buildings are National Register-listed individual properties: the Ramsdell Public Library (GBR.267) and the Housatonic Congregational Church (GBR.268). The library is significant on a local level for its contribution to the growth and development of Housatonic Village, as an important example of private and public efforts to improve the welfare of the town's citizens, and as a well-preserved example of an early-twentieth century, small-town, Classical Revival-style library (Roberts and Friedberg 2014). Listed in the National Register in 2014, the Ramsdell Public Library was constructed from 1906 to 1908. Once completed, the library was deeded to the Town of Great Barrington by T. Ellis Ramsdell, son of Theodore Ramsdell (Stark 2010). Theodore Ramsdell was an administrator and eventual owner of Monument Mills known for his interest in the mill workers and the betterment of Housatonic Village, and had stipulated in his will that funds be used to build the library (Roberts and Friedberg 2014). The most substantial alteration to the property consists of an addition built off the rear of the building in 1930 to extend the stack space.



The Housatonic Congregational Church is on property east of and neighboring the Ramsdell Public Library. It was constructed in 1893 to replace the original 1842 meetinghouse. A dry-laid stone wall foundation for the Church horse shed was contemporaneous with the earlier meetinghouse remains at the rear of the church property. The church is significant at the local level for its association with the development of Housatonic Village, its association with Theodore Ramsdell (manager, then owner of Monument Mills), and as a unique High, Queen Anne, and East Lake style building designed by noted architects H. Neil Wilson and Charles T. Rathbun (Parrish and Dumont 1997).

Archaeological Resources

There is one previously documented pre-contact archaeological site within the study area consisting of the Monument Mills Site (19-BK-124). No post-contact archaeological sites are documented within the study area. The Monument Mills Site is located within Housatonic Village along the west bank of the Housatonic River within the footprint of the Monument Mills complex. The documented finds from the site consist of two pestles from the Charles J. Taylor collection (MHC site files). One pestle was found during 1874 excavations for a barn for the Monument Mills. The second pestle was found by Thomas Welch in 1884.

In addition to these two pestles from the Monument Mills Site, Charles Taylor noted in *The History of Great Barrington* numerous finds of Native American burials and objects from multiple locations along the Housatonic River valley, including the remains of a stone fish weir near “the factory, south of the bridge” that could be referring to the Monument Mills (Taylor 1928:46).

Archaeological Sensitivity Assessment

Archaeological sensitivity is the potential for a given area to contain archaeological sites. PAL staff performed a desktop review and a walkover survey of the Project area to stratify it into zones of high, moderate, and low archaeological sensitivity (Figure 3). The factors considered in the development of these sensitivity rankings are summarized in Table 1. Factors affecting sensitivity in the Project area included the proximity of previously-recorded sites, the settlement and land use history of the area as documented through historic maps and town histories; proximity to water sources; topography; soil conditions; and the degree of known or inferred disturbance. No surface indications of pre- or post-contact archaeological sites were observed during the field inspection.

The library property was previously characterized as having moderate sensitivity for pre-contact archaeological resources based favorable locational criteria, and high sensitivity for post-contact resources based on the depiction of former structures in historic maps (Roberts and Friedberg 2014). PAL’s walkover survey and due diligence review of historical maps have confirmed and refined this previous assessment.

The lot containing the Ramsdell Library is situated on a mostly level floodplain terrace landform within 820 feet (250 meters) of the Housatonic River. The level portion of the library property consists of open lawn and plantings, and a wooded, steep slope is present along the north side of the property. Several soil augers were placed around the perimeter of the library building and showed a landscaped topsoil of dark brown (10YR 3/3) fine sandy silt before hitting refusal. It is possible that intact sediments are present below the topsoils.



Table 1. Archaeological Sensitivity Rankings.

Presence of Sites		Proximity to Favorable Cultural/ Environmental Characteristics			Degree of Disturbance			Sensitivity Ranking
Known	Unknown	< 150 m	≥ 150 ≤ 500 m	> 500 m	None/Minimal	Moderate	Extensive	
•		•			•			High
•		•				•		High
•		•					•	Low
•			•		•			High
•			•			•		High
•			•				•	Low
•				•	•			High
•				•		•		High
•				•			•	Low
	•	•			•			High
	•	•				•		Moderate
	•	•					•	Low
	•		•		•			Moderate
	•		•			•		Moderate
	•		•				•	Low
	•			•	•			Moderate
	•			•		•		Low
	•			•			•	Low

A review of the 1876 Beers map of Housatonic Village indicate a house attributed to J. Lang was present in the eastern edge of the lot. The 1904 Barnes and Farnham map depicts two former residences: the Mrs. N.D. Van Deusen house, and a house and outbuildings owned by H.H.B. Turner. The Turner house may be the same as the J. Lang house depicted on the 1876 Beers map. It has also been attributed as being the original 1809 Abel Sheldon house, which was the first house built in Housatonic (Roberts and Friedberg 2014).

Based on the results of the due diligence, approximately 70% of the Project APE is assessed as having high archaeological sensitivity, and 30% is assessed as having low archaeological sensitivity (Table 2; see Figure 3). The archaeologically sensitive portion of the Project area has the potential to contain significant pre-contact resources associate with Native American occupation of the Housatonic River Valley and/or post-contact resources associated with nineteenth-century homesteads or residences. The portion of the Project area assessed as having low archaeological sensitivity is characterized by a steep slope.



Table 2. Archaeological Sensitivity, Ramsdell Public Library Improvements Project.

Sensitivity	Acres	Percent of APE
High	0.53	70%
Low	0.22	30%
Total	0.75	100.0%

Recommendations

The due diligence indicates that a portion of the Project area is sensitive for cultural resources and could potentially contain significant archaeological deposits. PAL recommends consultation with the MHC on the potential for the Project to affect historic properties, including archaeological sites.

References

- Barnes & Farnham
1904 *Atlas of Berkshire County, Massachusetts*. Barnes & Farnham, Pittsfield, MA.
- Beers, F.W.
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1980b *Main Street Streetscape II*. Massachusetts Historical Commission Form-G.
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1980 *Housatonic Congregational Church*. Massachusetts Historical Commission Form-B.
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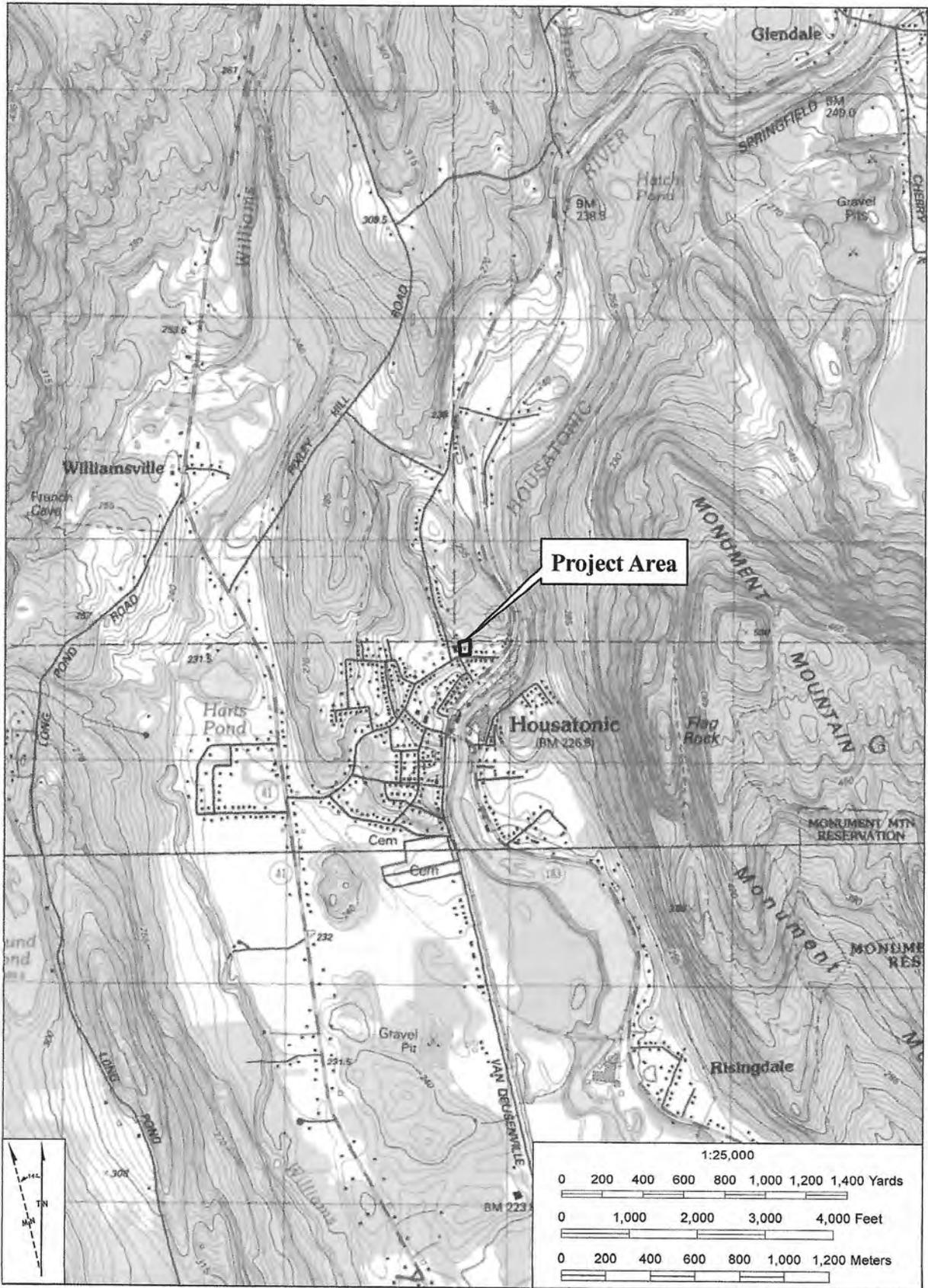


Figure 1. Location of the Ramsdell Public Library Improvements Project on the Stockbridge USGS topographic quadrangle.

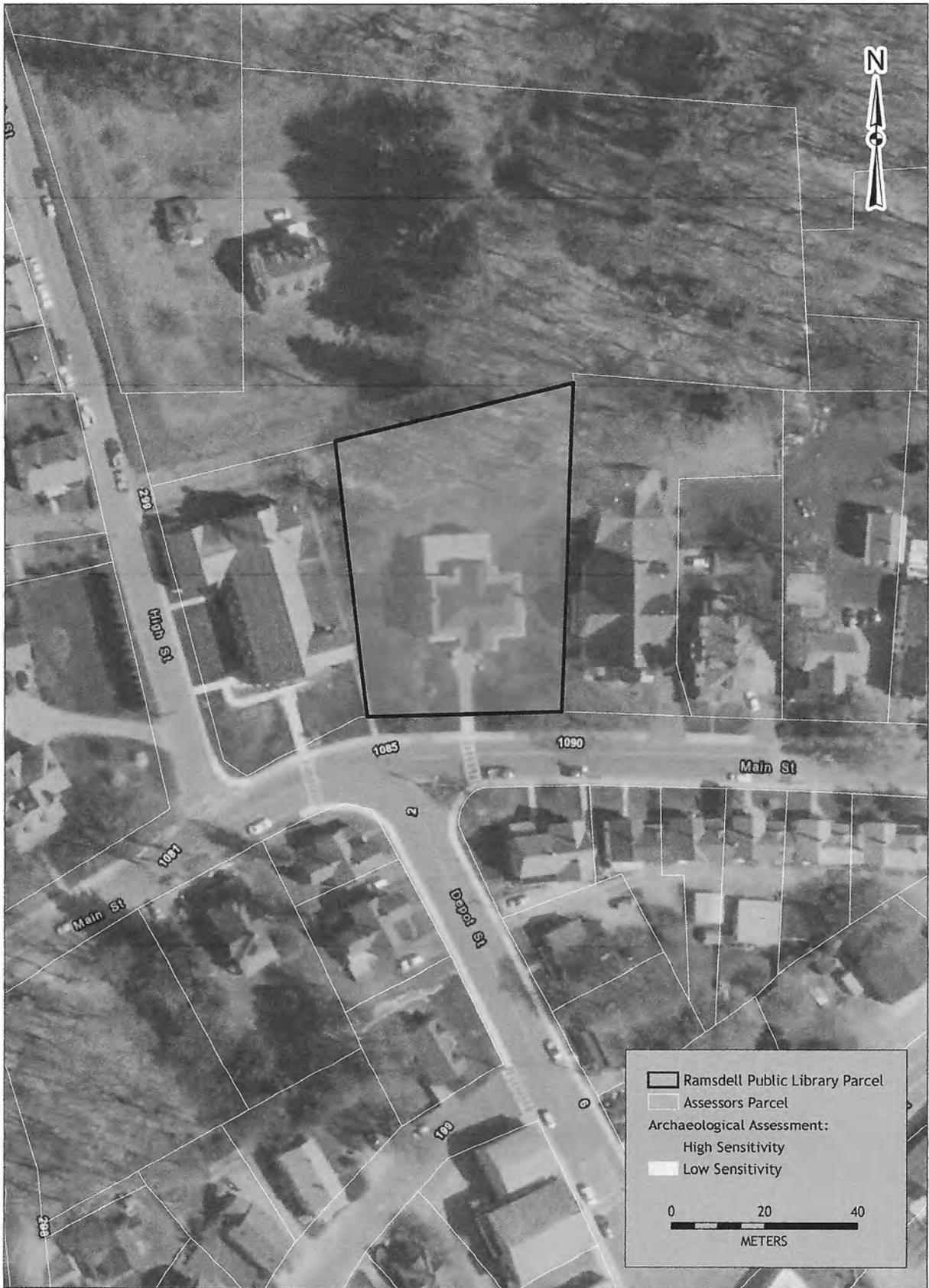


Figure 3. Aerial overview of the Ramsdell Public Library Project showing archaeological sensitivity.

Appendix A-1. Historic Areas Within One-Quarter Mile of the Project Study Area.

Area Name	Town/City	MHC #	Status	Area Type
Monument Mills	Great Barrington	GBR.B	National Register District	Industrial Complex or District; Other Industrial; Textile Mill Cotton
Main Streetscape	Great Barrington	GBR.F		Other Residential; Workers Housing
Main Streetscape II	Great Barrington	GBR.G		Other Residential; Workers Housing

Appendix A-2. Individual Aboveground Resources Within One-Quarter Mile of the Project Study Area.

Resource Name	Town/City	MHC #	Resource Type	Status	Historic Use
Wawbeek - Monument Mills Mill No. 2	Great Barrington	GBR.1	Building	National Register District	Other Manufacturing; Textile Mill Cotton
Monument Mills Repair and Machine Shops	Great Barrington	GBR.2	Building	National Register District	Machine Shop; Warehouse
Wool's Garage	Great Barrington	GBR.256	Building	Unevaluated	Gas Station or Service Station
Shurfelt Block	Great Barrington	GBR.258	Building	Unevaluated	Commercial Block
	Great Barrington	GBR.260	Building	Unevaluated	Single Family Dwelling House
Housatonic Railroad Passenger Station	Great Barrington	GBR.261	Building	Unevaluated	Rail Station
N.Y., N.H. and H. Freight Depot	Great Barrington	GBR.262	Building	Unevaluated	Other Rail Related; Rail Station
	Great Barrington	GBR.263	Building	Unevaluated	Single Family Dwelling House
Monument Mills Workers Cottage	Great Barrington	GBR.264	Building	Unevaluated	Single Family Dwelling House; Workers Housing
	Great Barrington	GBR.265	Building	Unevaluated	Single Family Dwelling House
Fuller, B. Lester House	Great Barrington	GBR.266	Building	Unevaluated	Multiple Family Dwelling House; Restaurant; Single Family Dwelling House; Tavern
Ramsdell Public Library	Great Barrington	GBR.267	Building	National Register-Individual Property	Library; Meeting Hall; Museum

Resource Name	Town/City	MHC #	Resource Type	Status	Historic Use
Housatonic Congregational Church	Great Barrington	GBR.268	Building	National Register-Individual Property	Church; Church Hall
Monument Mills Office	Great Barrington	GBR.270	Building	Unevaluated	Business Office; Clubhouse
Ramsdell, Theodore H. House	Great Barrington	GBR.271	Building	Unevaluated	Single Family Dwelling House
Monument Mills Power House	Great Barrington	GBR.3	Building	National Register District	Boiler or Engine Room; Power House
Monument Mills Cotton Warehouse	Great Barrington	GBR.4	Building	National Register District	Warehouse
Housatonic Grammar School	Great Barrington	GBR.427	Building	Unevaluated	Administration Office; Public School
Saint Bridget's - Corpus Christi Roman Catholic Church	Great Barrington	GBR.452	Building	Unevaluated	Chapel; Church
Macano Inn	Great Barrington	GBR.454	Building	Unevaluated	Hotel or Inn; Restaurant; Tavern
Monument Mills Picking House	Great Barrington	GBR.5	Building	National Register District	Textile Mill Cotton
Monument Mills Dye and Dry House	Great Barrington	GBR.6	Building	National Register District	Textile Mill Cotton
Monument Mills Cotton Mill No. 1	Great Barrington	GBR.7	Building	National Register District	Textile Mill Cotton

*Aboveground resource in bold within Project area.



PUBLIC ARCHAEOLOGY LABORATORY

- COST PROPOSAL -

PREPARED FOR **Kimberly Bolan & Associates**
 DATE **December 9, 2019**
 PROJECT **Ramsdell Library**
 SERVICES **Intensive (Locational) Archaeological Survey**

PERSONNEL	TASK	HOURS	RATE	COST
Principal Investigator	Consultation/Coordination	4	119.12	476
	Permit Application	2	119.12	238
	Field Survey	18	119.12	2,144
	Technical Report	30	119.12	3,574
Archaeologist	Field Survey	18	56.19	1,011
Laboratory Manager	Laboratory Coordination	1	85.41	85
Laboratory Analyst	Data Entry/Cataloguing	3	74.17	223
Laboratory Assistant	Processing/Curation	6	56.19	337
Publication Specialist	Formatting/Editing	5	85.41	427
GIS Specialist	Technical Maps	2	85.41	171
CAD Specialist	Technical Graphics	2	67.43	135
TOTAL PERSONNEL COSTS		91		8,822

OTHER EXPENSES	DESCRIPTION	COST
Reproduction	Report Copying + Graphics	150
Communication	Express Mail	35
Expendable Supplies	Archival Paper + Field Supplies	25
Curation Supplies	0.25 Boxes @ \$	85.00
Mileage	375 Miles @ \$	0.580
Per Diem Lodging	2 Nights @ \$	165.00
Per Diem Meals	4 Days @ \$	50.00
Consultants		0
TOTAL OTHER EXPENSES		979

TOTAL PAL COST PROPOSAL 9,800

** This quote is valid for 120 days from date listed above.*

6 Heberts Drive
Gt. Barrington MA 01230
October 30, 2020

To the Community Preservation Committee,

Greetings. I hope that you look favorably on the Ramsdell Library application for it's 2nd stage archeological study. The attempts to install a handicap ramp at Ramsdell have been going on since I became a Library Trustee over 8 years ago.

The money for the 2nd stage application will help to move forward a much needed temporary ramp for the library which will in turn assist the older patrons of the library, allow the building to be used for town committee meetings, and other events.

Thank you for your consideration.

Regards,

Kathy Plungis, Trustee

To: Tom Blauvelt, Chair of the Community Preservation Committee
Re: Ramsdell Library application for funds to complete archeological study

Dear Mr. Blauvelt,

As Chair of the Great Barrington Libraries Trustees, I enthusiastically support the Ramsdell Library application for funding to complete phase two of the archeological study that commenced last year.

Ramsdell's historic designation requires due diligence by the Department of Interior and oversight by the Massachusetts Historical Commission. Phase 1 occurred as part of the building program which was completed in early 2020. This is a prerequisite to be eligible for State Library building funds in the future. The CPC has received the building program in its entirety previously, which includes the extensive due diligence report by a reputable firm recommended by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners.

Ramsdell cannot move forward without completing this archeological study. I respectfully ask on behalf of the Housatonic community that you support this modest request.

Thank you for your consideration and be well,

Patrick Hollenbeck
Chair
Great Barrington Libraries Trustees

Christopher Tucci

Library Trustee

366 Park St.

Housatonic, MA 01236

Tom Blauvelt

Chair

Great Barrington Community Preservation Committee

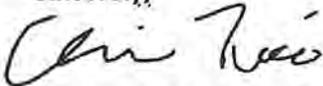
Dear Great Barrington Community Preservation Committee,

I am writing in support of Phase 2 for the Ramsdell Library archeological survey.

This next step is crucial for any work on Ramsdell and serves to preserve the archeological and historical record for Housatonic and the continued importance of Ramsdell to the town.

Most importantly, Phase 2 is a necessary step in becoming accessible to all citizens. No amount of remediation and conservation supersedes the need for Great Barrington to serve all of its citizens.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Tucci". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Christopher Tucci

Library Trustee



2021
F. Archaeological
Study

CONTAINS CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION - NOT FOR PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION

TECHNICAL REPORT

**INTENSIVE (LOCATIONAL) ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY
RAMSDALL PUBLIC LIBRARY IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT**

Great Barrington, Massachusetts

Ora Elquist

Submitted to:

Town of Great Barrington
231 Main Street
Great Barrington, Massachusetts 01230

Submitted by:

The Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc.
26 Main Street
Pawtucket, Rhode Island 02860



PAL PUBLICATIONS

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GIS SPECIALIST
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GAIL M. VAN DYKE

MANAGEMENT ABSTRACT

The Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc. (PAL) completed an intensive (locational) archaeological survey for the Ramsdell Public Library Improvements Project (the Project) in the village of Housatonic, Great Barrington, Massachusetts. The ca. 1906 Ramsdell Library is an approximately 2,885-square foot structure on a parcel of less than 1 acre that is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Proposed improvements being considered include constructing an ADA accessible addition and separate temporary wheelchair ramp to the existing library building, constructing a parking area, and creating outdoor seating spaces

Twelve 50-x-50-centimeter test pits were excavated within the archaeologically sensitive areas of the library parcel along two 10-meter interval transects and as four judgmentally placed test pits. A total of 416 pieces of post-contact material were recovered: 47 pieces of glass, 37 pieces of brick, 13 building stone fragments, 215 ceramic sherds, 4 pieces of coal or coal ash, 1 knife, 6 pieces of faunal material, 2 pieces of mortar, 73 nails, 2 screws, 5 ball clay smoking pipestem or pipe bowl fragments, 1 terracotta tile, and 10 other miscellaneous pieces of metal hardware or unidentified metal. The post-contact materials include items with late eighteenth- to twentieth-century manufacturing date ranges. They were found in plowed or disturbed deposits lacking integrity and represent agricultural field scatter or materials redeposited or incorporated into landscaped A and fill strata deposited during and/or after construction of the 1906 library. No pre-contact or post-contact archaeological sites or features were found during the intensive survey. In addition to the post-contact material, 27 temporally unassigned items (unmodified shell, mammal bone, and a deer tooth) were recovered. The recovered materials are not recommended as significant archaeological resources, and no further archaeological investigations are recommended.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of an intensive (locational) archaeological survey conducted by The Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc. (PAL) for the proposed Ramsdell Public Library Improvements Project (the Project) in the village of Housatonic, Great Barrington, Massachusetts, under contract to the Town of Great Barrington.

Project Description

The Town of Great Barrington is proposing upgrades to the circa (ca.) 1906 Ramsdell Library on Main Street in Housatonic Village as part of the Ramsdell Public Library Improvement Project (Project) (Figure 1-1). The Ramsdell Library is an approximately 2,885-square foot structure that is listed in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) on a parcel of less than 1 acre. It is recorded in the Massachusetts Historical Commission Inventory of the Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth (MHC Inventory) as GBR.267. Project plans are not yet finalized, but proposed improvements under consideration that could result in potential ground disturbances and include constructing an ADA accessible addition and separate temporary wheelchair ramp to the existing library building, constructing a parking area, and creating outdoor seating spaces.

Authority

Funding for the Project includes a Community Preservation Act grant. The Project is subject to review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (54 USC 306108), and its implementing regulations (36 CFR 800) and by the MHC in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 9, sections 26–27C (950 CMR 70–71).

History of Cultural Resource Services

In 2019, at the request of Kimberly Bolan and Associates, LLC on behalf of the Great Barrington Library Board of Trustees, PAL completed a cultural resources due diligence and archaeological assessment that indicated portions of the library parcel are sensitive for containing cultural resources based on favorable environmental settings and proximity to previously recorded archaeological sites (PAL 2019; Figure 1-2). The Town of Great Barrington subsequently requested that PAL conduct an intensive survey of the library parcel for the Project in 2021.

PAL Scope

The goal of the intensive survey was to identify any archaeological resources within the Project’s Area of Potential Effects (APE) that are potentially eligible for listing in the National Register and to provide recommendations regarding the need for additional archaeological testing. The APE is “the geographic area or areas within which an undertaking may directly or indirectly cause alterations in the character or use of historic properties, if any such properties exist” (36CFR 800.16[d]). The proposed Project improvements under consideration are not yet finalized and could result in ground disturbances anywhere within the parcel containing the Ramsdell Library. For the intensive (locational) archaeological survey, the APE is considered commensurate with the entire library property parcel.

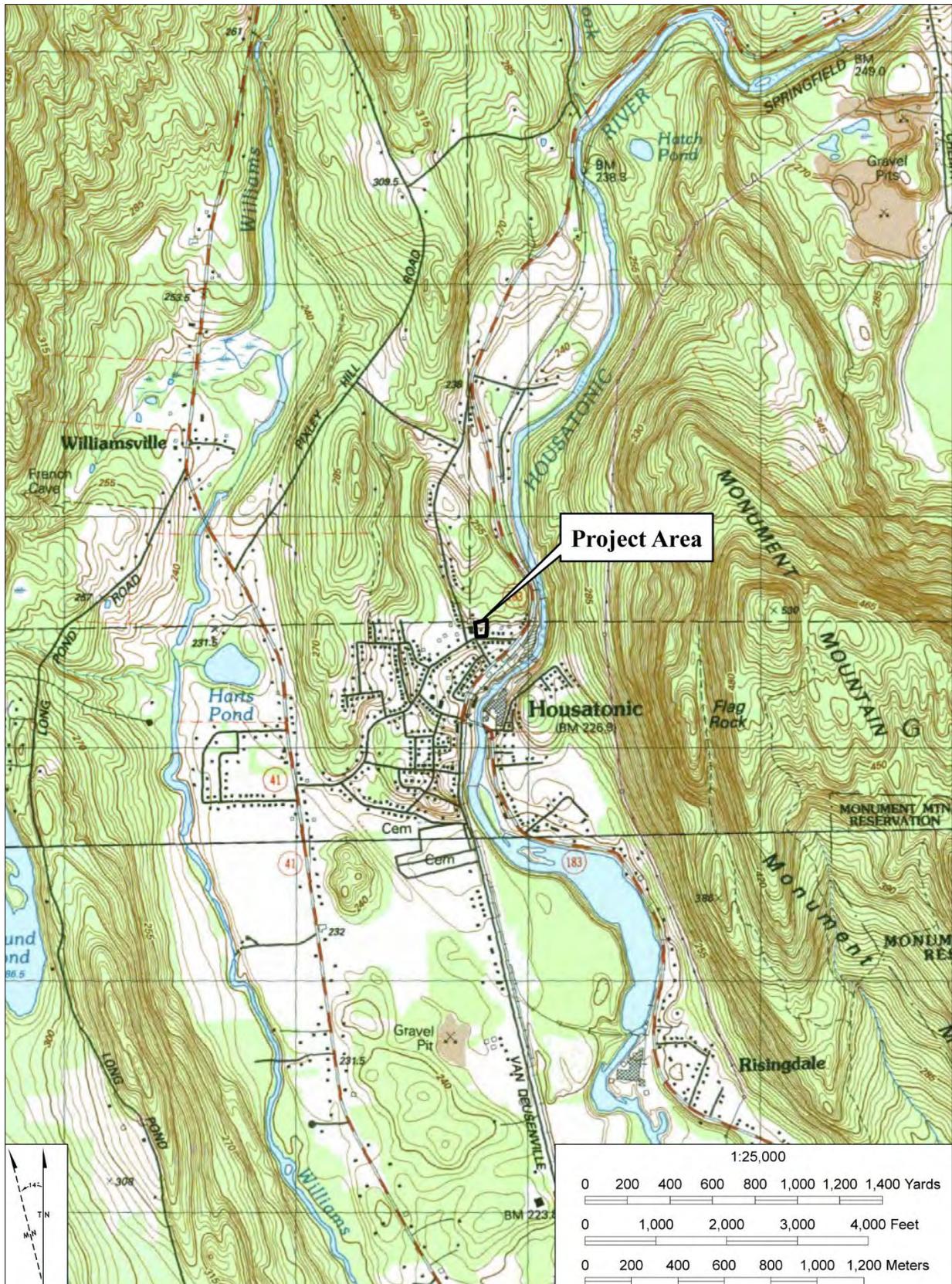


Figure 1-1. Location of the Ramsdell Public Library Improvements Project area on the Stockbridge, MA, USGS topographic quadrangle, 7.5-minute series.

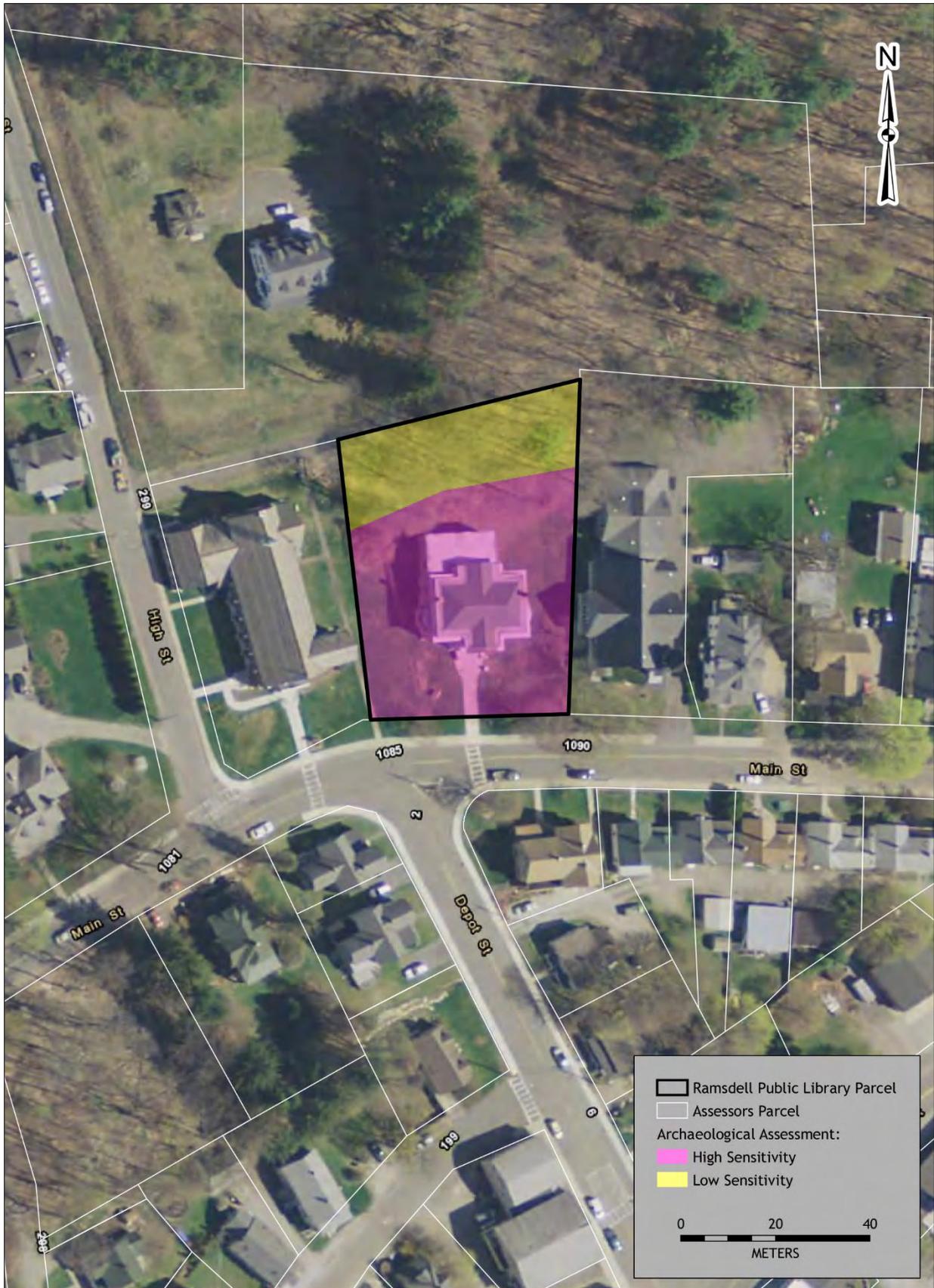


Figure 1-2. Aerial overview of the Ramsdell Library Project APE showing archaeological sensitivity (source: PAL 2019).

All tasks associated with the intensive survey were conducted under State Archaeologist's Permit No. 4137, issued by the MHC on October 14, 2021, in accordance with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation* (48 FR 44716–44742) and the MHC's (1979) *Public Planning and Environmental Review: Archeology and Historic Preservation*. Key PAL personnel involved in the survey meet the *Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards* (36 CFR Appendix A to Part 61) and the MHC's *Professional Qualifications* (950 CMR 70.10).

Personnel

PAL staff involved in the intensive survey were Ora Elquist (principal investigator) and Ben Kelsey (archaeologist). Fieldwork for the Project was conducted in October 2021. All laboratory work was supervised by Heather Olson (laboratory manager).

Disposition of Project Materials

All documentation and materials for the intensive survey, including field forms, maps, photographs, and cultural materials, are on file at PAL, 26 Main Street, Pawtucket, Rhode Island. PAL serves as a temporary curation facility until a permanent repository is designated.

CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH DESIGN AND FIELDWORK METHODS

The goal of the intensive (locational) archaeological survey for the Ramsdell Library Project was to identify any pre-contact and/or post-contact archaeological resources that may be potentially eligible for listing in the State or National Registers. Three research strategies were used:

- archival research, including a review of historical literature and maps;
- field investigations, consisting of subsurface archaeological testing; and
- laboratory processing and analyses of recovered cultural materials.

The archival research provided the information necessary to develop environmental and historic contexts for the Project area. Subsurface archaeological testing was conducted in areas assigned high or moderate sensitivity for containing archaeological deposits based on the results of PAL's previous due diligence review and archaeological sensitivity assessment (PAL 2019). Cultural materials recovered during the survey were processed in the laboratory and analyzed to interpret the nature of past human activities they represent. The artifact analyses were correlated with the subsurface testing and other field survey data and the resulting information was interpreted within the environmental and historic contexts developed for the Project area. The result was an assessment of potentially significant archaeological resources and their eligibility for listing in the National Register, the official federal list of properties that have been studied and found worthy of preservation.

Significance and Historic Contexts

The different phases of archaeological investigation (reconnaissance survey, intensive [locational] survey, site examination, and data recovery) reflect preservation planning standards for the identification, evaluation, registration, and treatment of archaeological resources (National Park Service [NPS] 1983). An essential component of this planning structure is the identification of archaeological and traditional cultural properties that are eligible for inclusion in the National Register. Archaeological properties can be a district, site, building, structure, or object, but are most often sites and districts (Little et al. 2000). Traditional cultural properties are defined generally as ones that are eligible for inclusion in the National Register because of their association with cultural practices or beliefs of a living community that (a) are rooted in that community's history, and (b) are important in maintaining the continuing cultural identity of the community (Parker and King 1998). The results of professional surveys and consultation with Native American or other ethnic communities are used to make recommendations about the significance and eligibility of archaeological and traditional cultural properties.

An archaeological property may be pre-contact, post-contact, or contain components from both periods. Pre-contact (or what is often termed "prehistoric") archaeology focuses on the remains of indigenous American societies as they existed before substantial contact with Europeans and the resulting written records (Little et al. 2000). In accordance with the NPS guidelines, "pre-contact" is used, unless directly quoting materials that use "prehistoric." There is no single year that marks the transition from pre-contact to post-contact.

Post-contact (or what is often termed "historical") archaeology is the archaeology of sites and structures dating from time periods since significant contact between Native Americans and Europeans. Documentary

records and oral traditions can be used to better understand these properties and their inhabitants (Little et al. 2000). Again, for reasons of consistency with the NPS guidelines, “post-contact” is used when referring to archaeology of this period, unless directly quoting materials that use “historical.”

The NPS has established four criteria for listing significant cultural properties in the National Register (36 CFR 60). The criteria are broadly defined to include the wide range of properties that are significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture. The quality of significance may be present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The criteria (known by the letters A–D) allow for the listing of properties

- A. that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. that are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C. that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important to prehistory or history.

Archaeological and traditional cultural properties can be determined eligible for listing in the National Register under all four criteria, but must meet at least one (Little et al. 2000; Parker and King 1998). Archaeological properties listed under Criteria A or B must have a demonstrated ability to convey their associations with events, persons, or patterns significant to our history. Criterion C is intended to recognize properties that are significant expressions of culture or technology (especially architecture, artistic value, landscape architecture, and engineering) (Little et al. 2000:26). Under Criterion C, an archaeological property must have remains that are well-preserved and clearly illustrate the design and construction of a building or structure (Little et al. 2000:27).

For Criterion D, under which most archaeological properties are determined eligible for listing in the National Register, only the potential to yield important information is required (Little et al. 2000:22). However, it is important to consider whether the data derived from a site are unique or redundant, and how they relate to the current state of knowledge relating to the research topic(s). A defensible argument must establish that a property “has important legitimate associations and/or information value based upon existing knowledge and interpretations that have been made, evaluated, and accepted” (McManamon 1990:15).

Another critical component in assessing the significance of a historic property is an evaluation of its integrity. Historic properties either retain integrity (i.e., convey their significance) or they do not. The National Register criteria recognize seven aspects or qualities that, in various combinations, define integrity:

- *location*, the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred;
- *design*, the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property;
- *setting*, the physical environment of a historic property;
- *materials*, the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property;

- *workmanship*, the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory;
- *feeling*, a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time; and
- *association*, the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.

To retain historic integrity, a property will always possess several, and usually most, of these qualities. The retention of specific aspects of integrity is paramount for a property to convey its significance. Determining which of these aspects or qualities are most important to a particular property requires knowing why, where, and when the property is significant (NPS 2002).

The criteria are applied in relation to the historic contexts, defined as

a body of thematically, geographically, and temporally linked information. For an archaeological property, the historic context is the analytical framework within which the property's importance can be understood and to which an archaeological study is likely to contribute important information (Little et al. 2000).

For traditional cultural properties, a historic context is further defined as

an organization of available information about, among other things, the cultural history of the area to be investigated, that identifies "the broad patterns of development in an area that may be represented by historic properties" (48 FR 44717). The traditions and lifeways of a planning area may represent such "broad patterns," so information about them should be used as a basis for historic context development. Based on federal standards and guidelines, groups that may ascribe traditional cultural values to an area's historic properties should be contacted and asked to assist in organizing information on the area (Parker and King 1998).

The formulation of historic contexts is a logical first step in the design of an archaeological investigation and is crucial to the evaluation of archaeological and traditional cultural properties in the absence of a comprehensive survey of a region (NPS 1983). Historic contexts provide an organizational framework that groups information about related historic properties based on a theme, geographic limits, and chronological periods. A historic context should identify gaps in data and knowledge to help determine what significant information may be obtained from the resource. Each historic context is related to the developmental history of an area, region, or theme (e.g., agriculture, transportation, and waterpower), and identifies the significant patterns of which a particular resource may be an element. Only those contexts important to understanding and justifying the significance of the property need be discussed.

Historic contexts are developed by

- identifying the concept, time period, and geographic limits for the context;
- collecting and assessing existing information about these time periods;
- identifying locational patterns and current conditions of the associated property types;
- synthesizing the information in a written narrative; and
- identifying information needs.

“Property types” are groupings of individual sites or properties based on common physical and associative characteristics. They serve to link the concepts presented in the historic contexts with properties illustrating those ideas (NPS 1983, 48 FR 44719).

The following historic research contexts have been developed to organize the data relating to the archaeological resources identified within the Project area:

1. Pre-contact Native American land use and settlement in the Housatonic River drainage circa (ca.) 12,500 to 450 years before present (B.P.); and
2. Post-contact land use and settlement patterns in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, ca. A.D. 1620 to present.

Archival Research

PAL supplemented the research completed during the due diligence review for the Project (see PAL 2019) by reviewing primary and secondary documentary sources. These sources were examined for information about past and current environmental conditions and documented/recorded sites in the general Project area to assist in developing contexts for interpreting any identified archaeological deposits.

State Site Files and Cultural Resource Management Reports

PAL reviewed the location of all pre-contact and post-contact archaeological sites within 0.5 miles of the Project area using the GIS-based Massachusetts Cultural Resources Information System (MACRIS). The resource records in MACRIS include those listed or eligible for listing in the National Register. PAL also reviewed cultural resource management (CRM) reports for investigations conducted near the Project area in the Housatonic drainage for relevant archaeological context. These reports included intensive surveys conducted at Skatehook in Sheffield (Nicholas and Mulholland 1987); for the Lee Bikeway Project in Lee (Mair and Jeremiah 2019); and for the Burning Tree Subdivision in Great Barrington (Donta et al. 1995).

Histories and Maps

Primary and secondary histories and historical maps and atlases were examined to assess changes in land use, to locate any documented structures, and to trace the development of transportation networks (an important variable in the location of post-contact archaeological sites). Town, county, and regional histories (Burt 1829; Strong 1829; Taylor 1882, 1928) and historical maps and atlases (Barnes and Farnham 1904; Beers 1876; Sanborn 1912) were consulted to locate possible post-contact sites within and close to the Project area.

Environmental Studies

Bedrock and surficial geological studies provided information about the region’s physical structure and about geological resources near the Project area. The United States Department of Agriculture–Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA–NRCS 2021) web soil survey for Middlesex County, Massachusetts, supplied information about soil types and surficial deposits within the Project area and the general categories of flora and fauna that these soil types support. In addition, studies of past environmental settings of New England were consulted.

Subsurface Testing

Twelve 50-x-50-centimeter (cm) test pits were excavated within archaeologically sensitive portions of the Project APE along 10-meter (m) interval transects and as judgmentally placed test pits (JTPs). All test pits

were excavated by shovel in 10-cm levels to a maximum of 102 cm below surface (cmbs) or to sterile subsoils, whichever came first. Excavated soil was hand-screened through ¼-inch hardware cloth. Any cultural material remaining in the screen was bagged and tagged by level within each test pit, and the count and type of all recovered cultural materials were noted on standard PAL Test Pit Profile forms. Soil profiles, including depths of soil strata and horizons, colors, and textures, were recorded for each test pit. All test pits were filled, and the ground surface was restored to its original contour following excavation. Digital photographs were taken to document the general Project area and representative test pit profiles. A record of digital images was maintained on standard PAL Photograph Log forms. A daily record of observations and procedures was maintained by the principal investigator.

Laboratory Processing and Analyses

Processing

All cultural materials recovered from the Project area during the archaeological investigations were organized by provenience, recorded, and checked in on a weekly basis. Cultural materials were sorted by type and either dry brushed or cleaned with tap water depending on the material or artifact type and condition.

Cataloging and Analyses

All cultural materials were cataloged using a customized relational database, which provides the flexibility needed when cataloging archaeological collections that often contain disparate cultural materials such as stone, ceramics, and/or glass. Artifacts with similar morphological attributes were grouped into lots, which allows for efficient cataloging. The artifacts were placed in 2-mil-thick polyethylene resealable bags with acid-free tags containing provenience identification information. These bags were placed in acid-free boxes that are labeled and stored in PAL's curatorial facility in accordance with current state and federal curation standards.

Post-contact artifacts were cataloged by material (e.g., ceramic, glass, and coal), form (e.g., bottle, jar, plate, nail, and brick), and function. Ceramic sherds and bottle glass were examined for distinguishing attributes that provide more precise date ranges of manufacture and use, including maker's marks, decorative patterns, and embossed or raised lettering. Chronological dating of post-contact archaeological resources was performed using standardized and published artifact descriptions such as Jones and Sullivan (1989), Miller (1980, 1991, 2000), Noël Hume (1969, 2001), and South (1977).

Curation

Following laboratory processing, cataloging, and analyses, all recovered cultural materials were stored in acid-free Hollinger boxes with box content lists and labels printed on acid-free paper. The cataloged artifacts and associated Project documentation are stored at PAL, 26 Main Street, Pawtucket, Rhode Island, in accordance with the *Secretary of the Interior's Curation of Federally-Owned and Administered Archeological Collections* (36 CFR 79) and the MHC's *State Archaeologist Permit Regulations* (950 CMR 70) until a permanent repository is designated.

CHAPTER THREE

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT

Environmental factors were important variables influencing pre-contact Native American and post-contact Euro-American settlement, subsistence strategies, and resources exploitation throughout New England. Natural features and resources such as bedrock geology, soil drainage, vegetation, and location relative to major drainage systems and coastal bodies all affected past human settlement location, type, and density, and the frequency of resettlement within a geographic area. Knowledge of environmental conditions contributes to a clearer understanding of what natural resources were available to human groups and how the Project area vicinity appeared in the past. These data assist archaeologists in predicting the potential for an area to contain cultural resources and in interpreting any identified archaeological resources.

Physiography, Geology, and Soils

The Project area is along the western edge of the New England Upland physiographic region near the south end of the Green Mountains physiographic region (Figure 3-1). The Project area is on a broad elevated terrace west of the Housatonic River nestled between steep valley walls forming the flanks of the Tom Ball Mountain to the west and Monument Mountain to the east. Tom Ball (at about 590 meters above sea level [m asl]) and Monument (about 590 m asl) mountains are the highest landforms in the Project area vicinity, while the Project area on the valley floor is at about 230 m asl. The Project area is underlain by bedrock associated with the Lower Ordovician to Lower Cambrian-aged Stockbridge Formation consisting of massive to finely laminated calcitic dolomite marble with a prominent zone of white quartz nodules near the top (Zen et al. 1983).

The character of today's topography in the general vicinity of the Project area is largely the result of glacial and postglacial erosion and deposition. During the Wisconsin Period, approximately 17,500 years ago, the advance and final retreat of a large continental ice mass eroded and picked up bedrock, realigned drainages, and deposited till, erratics, and other glacial material along its course. The slow retreat of the ice sheet, estimated to have been about 2 miles thick at

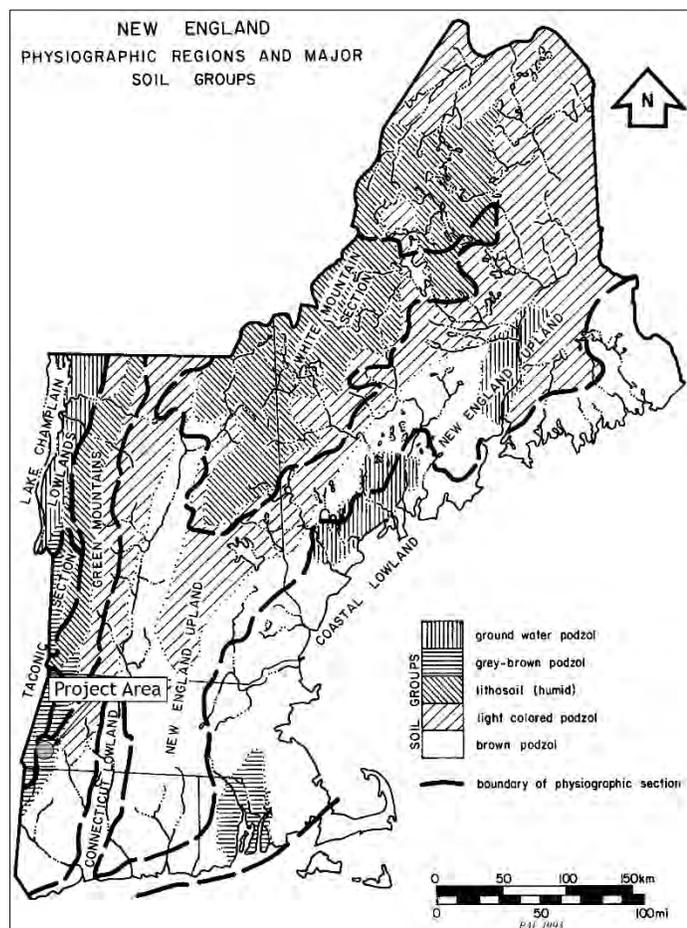


Figure 3-1. Physiographic regions of New England showing the approximate location of the Project area (source: Fenneman 1938).

its maximum stage in this region, depressed, shaped, and scoured the landscape, leaving widespread glacial deposits. This resulted in a moderately thick veneer of ice-deposited glacial till, a heterogeneous mix of clay, silt, sand, gravel, and boulders. The surficial geologic deposits in the Project area resulting from these processes are mapped as coarse, glacial melt out deposits of sand and gravel (Stone et al. 2018). These coarse deposits are common along the river valley at the base of high mountains and ridges (Stone et al. 2018). Soils in the Project area are mapped as Urban land (map unit 602), which represents anthropogenic disturbed soils or soils obscured by urban development (USDA–NRCS 2021).

Hydrology

The Project area is within the Housatonic River drainage basin less than 0.25 miles west of the Housatonic River. The Housatonic basin drains a nearly 2,000-square mile area and extends approximately 149 miles from its source in the Berkshires south into Connecticut before emptying into Long Island Sound. Major tributaries to the Housatonic River include the Green, Konkapot, and Williams rivers (Housatonic Valley Association 2021). Williams River is west of the Project area and parallels the Housatonic River in the northern part of Great Barrington.

Existing Conditions

The Project area includes the Ramsdell Public Library building, which is between two churches. The surrounding grounds of the library parcel consist of a maintained lawn and ornamental plantings and trees (Figure 3-2). The lawn area is at a slightly higher elevation than the adjacent grassy areas in the neighboring church parcels. The portion of the parcel at the rear of the library is a wooded, steep slope fronted by a narrow, level strip of lawn and overgrown brush (Figure 3-3).



Figure 3-2. Overview of the Ramsdell Library parcel, view north.



Figure 3-3. Overview of area at rear of library building, view west.

CHAPTER FOUR

CULTURAL CONTEXT

To understand the history of human occupation of an area, it is necessary to understand the regional pre-contact and post-contact human settlement, technology, and subsistence practices. This chapter provides an overview of the pre-contact Native American settlement and land use in southern New England with specific reference to the Housatonic drainage and the post-contact development of Great Barrington. The pre-contact temporal periods described below are distinguished by diagnostic artifact types, patterns of land use, resource exploitation and, in some instances, by other social indicators such as burial practices.

Pre-Contact Period Native American Land Use and Settlement

PaleoIndian Period (12,500–10,000 Years Before Present [B.P.]¹)

The PaleoIndian Period represents the earliest known human settlement in southern New England. The region was populated by bands of mobile hunters and foragers following the retreat of glacial ice between 21,000 and 16,000 years ago. Traditional interpretations of PaleoIndian settlement and subsistence systems are that mobile hunters exploited large migratory game such as mastodon, caribou, bison, or elk (Dragoo 1976; Kelly and Todd 1988; Meltzer and Smith 1986; Snow 1980; Spiess et al. 1998; Stothers 1996; Waguespack and Surovell 2003). Other regional research has indicated that PaleoIndians may have had more generalized subsistence strategies, opportunistically exploiting a variety of animal and plant species (Dincauze 1990, 1993; Kuehn 1998). Jones and Forrest (2003) argued that the higher number of small PaleoIndian encampments in the region relative to larger base camps may reflect mobile foragers adjusting to resource unpredictability. Diagnostic PaleoIndian artifacts include fluted, Clovis-like (Bull Brook, Neponset, or Nicholas type) and lanceolate Eden-like projectile points. Other stone tools associated with this period include steep-edged scrapers, graters, and drills. Lithic assemblages often include non-local lithic materials (e.g., chert and jasper) and extra-regionally available rhyolites.

Little is known about the PaleoIndian Period in the upper Housatonic River drainage and the greater Berkshire Hills region. Use of the upper Housatonic drainage during the early Holocene may have been minimal, given the more diverse and productive environments near glacial lakes such as Lake Falls Village, or Lake Hitchcock in the Connecticut River Valley. A possible fluted point has been recovered from the Bear Den Rockshelter in Sheffield to the south (near glacial Lake Falls Village) by local avocational archaeologists.

Early Archaic Period (10,000–8000 B.P.)

The Early Archaic Period was characterized by changing environmental conditions and cultural adaptations reflecting a broader subsistence base that included hunting a wide variety of game and harvesting woodland and wetland vegetation and nuts (Dumont 1981; Forrest 1999; Kuehn 1998; Meltzer and Smith 1986; Nicholas 1987). The association of Early Archaic sites with glacial lake basins suggests that wetland resources were important (Jones and Forrest 2003; Nicholas 1987). Bifurcate-base, Kirk, and Dalton

¹ Pre-Contact Period date ranges represent radiocarbon years before present (B.P.), with the present defined as A.D. 1950.

projectile point types are diagnostic of the period and assemblages may include ground-stone tools, drills, anvil stones, choppers, and scrapers (Snow 1980).

Much like PaleoIndian sites, Early Archaic sites are scarce in the upper Housatonic drainage and greater Berkshire Hills region. Three bifurcate-base projectile points have been recovered from the Bear Den Rockshelter in Sheffield. Although additional Early Archaic find spots have been recorded throughout Massachusetts and eastern New York, the information obtained from many of these sites is limited.

Middle Archaic Period (8000–5000 B.P.)

Sites dating to the Middle Archaic Period are more common than those dating to previous periods in southern New England and often occur around waterfalls, river rapids, major river drainages, wetlands, and coastal settings (Bunker 1992; Dincauze 1976; Doucette 2005; Doucette and Cross 1997; Jones 1999; Maymon and Bolian 1992). Smaller logistical camps and exploitation sites supplemented the base camps, indicating that a multi-site seasonal settlement system was firmly established by this time. Task-specific sites and temporary camps were in various microenvironments, including open sites and rockshelters. Subsistence included the harvesting of anadromous fish, hunting, and foraging. Diagnostic Middle Archaic artifacts include Neville, Neville-Variant, Stark, and Merrimack style projectile points (Dincauze 1976; Dincauze and Mulholland 1977). Adzes, gouges, and axes suggest heavy woodworking and possibly the appearance of dugout canoes. Lithic assemblages typically show a preference for local and regionally available lithic raw materials that may indicate the establishment of territories within major river drainages (Dincauze 1976). The scheduling of subsistence activities such as the seasonal harvesting of anadromous fish may have developed in response to territoriality (Dincauze and Mulholland 1977).

Documented Middle Archaic sites in the upper Housatonic drainage are uncommon. The Wendall Collection contains projectile points recovered from several locations around Onota Lake in Pittsfield and include Stark projectile points (Shaw et al. 1987). Middle Archaic projectile points are more frequently reported from portions of Berkshire County south of Pittsfield and from the lower Housatonic drainage in northeastern Connecticut (Nicholas 1985; Shaw et al. 1987). The Charles J. Taylor collection reportedly contains Middle Archaic material from the Taylor Hill/Great Hollow Site (19-BK-107) in Great Barrington.

Late Archaic (5000–3000 B.P.) and Transitional Archaic (3600–2500 B.P.) Periods

The Late Archaic Period includes three major cultural traditions: the Laurentian, Small Stemmed, and Susquehanna. The Laurentian tradition is the earliest and is represented by the presence of diagnostic Normanskill, Vosburg, Otter Creek, Brewerton projectile point types. The abundance of these point types in New York State suggests contact with groups in the Hudson River valley and places farther west (Bernstein and Savulis 1988). The distribution of Laurentian tradition sites is frequently oriented to interior riverine and upland settings (Dincauze 1974; Ritchie 1980).

The Small Stemmed tradition likely evolved within New England from the Middle Archaic Neville-Stark sequence and is associated with the development and persistence of cobble quartz-based lithic manufacture (McBride 1984). The use of diagnostic Small Stemmed point types such as Lamoka, Wading River, and Squibnocket Triangle extended into the Early Woodland Period. Many Small Stemmed occupations were in a wide variety of settings, reflecting the broad-based foraging strategies used during the period. This patterning of sites has been interpreted as reflecting a dense population intensively exploiting a broad spectrum of resources (Dincauze 1974; Ritchie 1985). However, recovery of Small Stemmed projectile points in association with contexts radiocarbon dated to the later Early Woodland Period suggests that many Small Stemmed deposits have been misidentified as Late Archaic sites.

The Susquehanna tradition is associated with the Transitional Archaic Period, which bridges the Archaic and Woodland periods and is associated with extensive trade networks, increased burial ceremonialism, and technologies markedly different from the Laurentian and Small Stemmed traditions. Susquehanna tradition materials include steatite vessels, broad-bladed tool forms (Atlantic, Susquehanna, and Coburn projectile points), and Orient Fishtail projectile points or knives. The manufacture and use of heavy steatite vessels may imply a trend toward increased sedentism, though the predominance of non-local lithic materials at Susquehanna tradition sites could imply a somewhat mobile settlement strategy. Settlement was mainly oriented toward coastal or riverine settings with subsistence focused on the acquisition of riverine or estuarine flora and fauna, including fish, nuts, and small to medium-sized mammals (Pagoulatos 1988). The distinct burial ceremonialism of the Susquehanna tradition is best known from regional cremation cemetery complexes such as the Vincent, Watertown Arsenal, and Millbury III sites in Massachusetts (Dincauze 1968; Leveillee 2002).

Several Late and Transitional Archaic sites have been reported throughout the Berkshire region and the upper Housatonic River drainage. Several diagnostic projectile points, including Lamoka, Otter Creek, Brewerton, Small Stemmed, Normanskill, Snook Kill, and Orient Fishtail types, were recovered in Stockbridge at the Chassell 2 and Kamposoa bog sites (Johnson 1994). Late Archaic components reported from the area reflect contact with areas to the west in eastern New York (Funk 1976). Similarities between the upper Housatonic and eastern New York are evident in the recovery of Otter Creek, Vosburg, and Brewerton projectile points and the identification of common lithic raw materials (e.g., a variety of cherts from source areas in eastern New York) used for the manufacture of chipped-stone tools (Thomas 1979). Site 19-BK-99 near the mouth of Pontoosuc Lake yielded a high percentage of Onondaga chert (from New York state sources) as well as Lamoka (Small Stemmed) and possible Vosburg projectile point types (Collamer 1983).

A Late Archaic component was identified after the recovery of a Normanskill projectile point type at the Woodleigh Site in the Route 7 corridor, during CRM investigations for the Route 7 bypass in Pittsfield (Bernstein and Savulis 1988). Otter Creek, Vosburg, Brewerton, Small Stemmed, Squibnocket Triangle, Normanskill, Susquehanna and Orient Fishtail projectile point types have been identified in the Wendall Collection from the Onotoa Lake area in Pittsfield (Shaw et al. 1987). Late and Transitional Archaic materials in the Charles J. Taylor collection have also been reported from five sites (19-BK-25, 19-BK-107, 19-BK-110, 19-BK-113, and 19-BK-115) in Great Barrington, many of which are clustered along the Green River. Small Stemmed points and Susquehanna tradition Atlantic points were found at the Leining Site (19-BK-163) in Sheffield (Nicholas and Mulholland 1987).

Early Woodland Period (3000–2000 B.P.)

Early Woodland sites are typically characterized by the presence of Meadowood, Lagoon, and Rossville type projectile points, as well as grit-tempered, cord-marked Vinette I ceramics. Early Woodland sites are underrepresented in the region, leading some to hypothesize a population decline possibly linked to climate change, sociocultural change, or epidemic disease (Dincauze 1974; Fiedel 2001; Lavin 1988). However, the rarity of Early Woodland sites may be related to the difficulty in determining what constitutes diagnostic artifact assemblages for the period (Juli and McBride 1984). The association of Small Stemmed points with dated Early Woodland contexts indicates that some Small Stemmed deposits are being misidentified as older Late Archaic materials.

Few sites containing diagnostic Early Woodland artifacts have been documented in the upper Housatonic River drainage. Fiegal (1975) reported the presence of Meadowood projectile points in Richmond. The Pontoosuc 2 Site yielded a Meadowood projectile point type, indicating the presence of an Early Woodland component (Bernstein and Savulis 1988). Overall, sites with Early Woodland components are more numerous in the Connecticut and Hudson River valleys to the east and west, respectively. Most Early

Woodland finds in Great Barrington are those in the Charles J. Taylor collections associated with sites 19-BK-107, 19-BK-110, 19-BK-113, 19-BK-115, and 19-BK-122 (MHC site files).

Middle Woodland Period (2000–1000 B.P.)

Middle Woodland Period sites within interior regions are typically found along major river bends and confluences. Diagnostic artifacts include Jack's Reef Pentagonal and Corner-Notched, and Fox Creek (Steubenville) type projectile points and rocker and dentate-stamped ceramics. Middle Woodland sites are commonly marked by exotic lithic materials such as Pennsylvania jasper, Ramah chert, Kineo felsite, and Lockatong argillite (Luedtke 1987; Mahlstedt 1985) that imply the existence of long-distance exchange networks extending from Labrador to Pennsylvania and beyond (Dragoo 1976; Fitting 1978; Snow 1980). The earliest evidence of domesticated agricultural products in New England dates to ca. A.D. 1000, coincident with the end of the Middle Woodland Period (Bendremer and Dewar 1993), though more recent analyses of food residues from cooking pots suggest that maize and squash were present in the Finger Lakes region of New York as early as A.D. 650 (Hart et al. 2003).

Fox Creek (Steubenville) projectile points have been identified in the Wendall Collection from the Onota Lake area of Pittsfield (Shaw et al. 1987). Middle Woodland materials are also reported from Sites 19-BK-111, 19-BK-113, 19-BK-115, and 19-BK-122 associated with the Charles J. Taylor collections.

Late Woodland Period (1000–450 B.P.)

The Late Woodland Period is associated with triangular Madison and Levanna type projectile points and cord-wrapped, stick-impressed, and incised collared ceramic vessels. Late Woodland archaeological deposits are common within coastal environments, around interior freshwater ponds and wetlands, and adjacent to large tributary streams and rivers. Occupation types included specialized exploitation sites (shell middens, hunting and processing camps, lithic workshops, etc.), small domestic sites, and larger hamlets or villages. Social complexity, the formation of political alliances, and the establishment of tribal territories appear to have developed during the period (Mulholland 1988). Maize horticulture became increasingly important concomitant with an increased reliance on stationary storage facilities. The degree of reliance on horticulture continues to be debated, and hunting and gathering likely continued to make up a large part of subsistence (Bendremer 1993; Bendremer and Dewar 1993; McBride and Dewar 1987).

Levanna and Madison projectile point types have been identified in the Wendall Collection (Shaw et al. 1987). Fiegal (1975) reported the recovery of Late Woodland ceramic types from the vicinity of Onota Lake. The Caldwell Site (19-BK-137), between South Mountain Road and Wampenum Brook, appears to date to the Late Woodland and/or Contact periods. The Late Woodland component at the Chassell 2 Site in Stockbridge is represented by a Levanna projectile point associated with evidence of hunting, collecting, and resource processing activities (Johnson 1994). The Canoe Meadows Site (19-BK-13), at the confluence of Housatonic River and Sackett Brook, is mentioned in local histories and may have contained human burials possibly dating to the Late Woodland or Contact periods (Smith 1869; Strong 1829). Late Woodland finds from Sites 19-BK-108 and 19-BK-11 are in the Charles J. Taylor collection. In addition to the pestles and triangular point found at the Mt. Peter Site (19-BK-108), burials were found during quarrying for St. James Church in Great Barrington in 1856 (MHC site files).

Contact and Post-Contact Period Land Use and Settlement

During the **Contact Period (1500–1620)**, before European settlement of the area, the part of western Massachusetts containing Great Barrington was occupied by Native Americans known as Mahicans, or by the English term Stockbridge. Euro-American settlement of the area occurred later than in other parts of Massachusetts. The area's Native inhabitants could have had early contact with Dutch traders along the

Hudson River to the west during the seventeenth century. Though the region was comparatively quiet during King Philip's War (1675–1676)—at the end of the **Plantation Period (1620–1675)** and the beginning of the **Colonial Period (1675–1775)**—Native Americans fleeing west from the English into the area were pursued by Major John Talcot, who attacked their encampment on the west bank of the Housatonic near the end of the war (Field and Dewey 1829; Taylor 1882).

By the time of European settlement, few Native Americans remained in the area (Field and Dewey 1829; Taylor 1882). Native populations may have been decimated by diseases introduced by Europeans. Evidence of one Native settlement (the “Great Wigwam”) and burials have been reported along the Housatonic River within present-day Great Barrington, which was first settled by English colonists in the 1720s. Another settlement called “Skatekook” was reportedly where four or five Native American families resided along the Green River. The “Great Wigwam” settlement was believed to have been abandoned at some point before 1734 (Burt 1829). It was reportedly at a fordway along the Housatonic River and appeared “abandoned” or unoccupied when the Reverend Benjamin Wadsworth passed through in 1694 (Taylor 1882). About the time of the earliest Euro-American settlement in Great Barrington, an “Indian Mission” was established by the Reverend John Sargeant in Great Barrington before being moved to Stockbridge in 1736 (Taylor 1882).

New York originally claimed the portion of Massachusetts west of the Connecticut River. The area that became Great Barrington was originally part of the Patent of Westenhook granted to traders at Albany, New York, in 1705 (Taylor 1882). The patent included large portions of the towns of Sheffield, Great Barrington, Stockbridge, West Stockbridge, Mount Washington, Egremont, and Alford. During the 1720s, conflicting claims to lands by settlers at Great Barrington and Sheffield and Dutch Westenhook patentees led to the arrest and incarceration of Massachusetts settlers at Albany. The ongoing disputes between New York and Massachusetts claimants would eventually be resolved by the establishment of the current boundary between the communities in 1773 (Taylor 1882).

Great Barrington is within Berkshire County, which was set aside from the original county of Hampshire that encompassed western Massachusetts in 1761. Previously, Great Barrington was part of an area associated with a 1722 petition to the General Court by Joseph Parsons, Thomas White, and over 170 others to establish two townships along the Housatonic River at the southwest corner of the Massachusetts Patent. The petition was granted and became known as the Upper and Lower Housatonic Townships. By 1731, lot boundaries had been surveyed and settlers began to arrive. In 1733, the lower township was incorporated as Sheffield; the upper township became the North Parish of Sheffield in 1742. The North Parish was incorporated as the town of Great Barrington in 1761 (Hyde and Hyde 1878). By 1773, a portion of Great Barrington would be set off as the town of Alford (Taylor 1882).

The earliest settlers arrived in the Great Barrington area ca. 1726 and, despite Dutch claims, most were English. House lots were laid out along the Housatonic River valley between Sheffield and Monument Mountain, with a few settlements established west of the Green River. The settlers were largely unaffected by the conflicts during the French and Indian wars, though attacks at neighboring Stockbridge in 1745 alarmed residents, and many fled to forts in Sheffield. The economy was agrarian, though two taverns, a sawmill and gristmill, and iron works were established by the 1740s, a lime kiln by 1749, and a brick kiln by the 1760s (Taylor 1882). The town's center of commerce was concentrated near the Great Bridge, the main crossing built across the river near the old fordway (Taylor 1882).

Soon after the town's incorporation, additional mill sites were established along the Housatonic by Israel Dewey, the town's jailer or prison keeper, following a grant of water privileges from the town in 1762 that gave him control of all the waterpower south of the Great Bridge. During the **Federal Period (1775–1830)**, the privileges were purchased by Thomas Ingersoll and Moses Hopkins, who would eventually abandon the Dewey mills in the 1790s, build a new dam, and erect new grist and sawmills (Taylor 1882). Other mills

were also established along tributaries in the town during the Federal Period, though agriculture continued to be an economic mainstay because of the fertile alluvial plains along the Housatonic River that made the export of agricultural goods to Hudson and Albany possible.

Ca. 1780–1800 (after the Revolutionary War), new residents (mostly from Connecticut) moved to the more fertile agricultural lands in the Housatonic valley. Within 10 years, the first settlements at the current village of Housatonic were established on the west side of the river. The earliest dwelling house at Housatonic was built in 1809 by Abel Sherman, who with Stephen Sibley built a dam and sawmill that same year. By 1810, a road was laid out through the village (Taylor 1882).

Most of Great Barrington remained forested into the early nineteenth century. By 1818, the town had at least 14 sawmills producing lumber products for New York markets. A spinning wheel manufactory was established that year in Housatonic Village between the sawmill and dam constructed by Sherman and Sibley in 1809. The plentiful timber also led to the manufacture of potash, which became one of the staple products of the town. Some industries first established in the 1760s expanded during the Federal Period and included fulling mills, shoe making, a tannery, hatters, and blacksmiths (Taylor 1882). Ca. 1801, the former Ingeroll and Hopkins mills were under the new ownership of Ives & Woodworth, who added the grinding of plaster and carding of wool to the operations that then became known as “The Union Mills.” A trip hammer and scythe manufactory were also associated with the mill complex by 1812, and machinery for rolling leather was added to part of the trip hammer ca. 1820.

By the start of the **Early Industrial Period (1830–1870)**, the Ives & Woodworth mills were taken over by Charles Taylor and David Ives, who continued mill operations and opened a clay bed and brick works. The mill works were occupied by the Berkshire Woolen Company by 1836; it expanded and consolidated all the mills and manufactories along the river, established a large stone factory and machine shop by 1858–1859, and converted the former gristmill to a flouring mill. Industry also expanded along the Green River and at Seekonk Village. In addition to the mills established at Seekonk, a large addition was built at the gristmill in 1838 by Connecticut proprietors, and a gin and whiskey distillery was operating by 1840. The original Kellog Mill dressing works established along the Green River in 1760 was expanded in 1835 to include woolen machinery and satinnet production as the Green River Manufacturing Company, before being converted to a gristmill in the late nineteenth century (Taylor 1882). The 1842 completion of the Housatonic, or Berkshire Railroad from the Connecticut border to West Stockbridge contributed much to the economic growth and prosperity of the town by providing a faster and more reliable means of transporting goods to markets in New York.

In Housatonic Village, the original Sherman and Sibley dam, sawmill, and waterpower privilege was owned by Sprowell Dean and Perlet D. Whitmore in 1827. They began manufacturing cotton goods and built a row of tenements and a store, and the village became known as “Deansville.” By 1835, Dean’s and Whitmore’s business was taken over by the Housatonic Manufacturing Company, which produced printing cloths until 1848. Other industries included a shoe last manufactory established at the site of the spinning wheel shop by the Selkirk brothers; shops to produce carpentry tools and chairs; a cotton twine; and a carpet yarn manufactory.

The failure of the Housatonic Manufacturing Company in the late 1840s led to an economic decline in the village, with shoe last making the only industry remaining. In 1851, however, Monument Mills was established at the former Housatonic Manufacturing Company cotton warp works after the 1850 purchase of the property by John and Asa Russell. By 1858, a bridge was built across the river at Housatonic village, and the cotton warp operations were expanded in 1864 at the lower privilege. Two years later the lower privilege was purchased by Wawbeek Mills, which built a brick factory at the east end of the bridge. By 1870, Wawbeek Mills expanded its operations to produce jacquard Marseilles bedspreads. The following year, the operations were acquired by Monument Mills, which expanded its operations during the remainder

of the nineteenth century and lasted until the 1950s (Fitch and Parrish 1983). Other mill enterprises included a paper mill built in 1856 that under the operation of the Owen Paper Company became known for its fine writing paper (Taylor 1882; Figure 4-1).

During the **Late Industrial Period (1870–1915)**, Great Barrington was the location of a single phase alternating current (AC) electrical power system experiment set up in 1886 by William Stanley. The experiment was an important milestone in the “War of the Currents” during the development of electrical power systems. Stanley, who worked for Westinghouse, had devised what was essentially the first modern transformers that allowed high voltage electricity to travel long distances with minimal loss to become a safe lower voltage for use in homes and businesses. On March 6, 1886, Stanley’s experimental system successfully electrified street lamps and businesses in Great Barrington. Stanley would later establish the Stanley Electric Company in Pittsfield that built and sold the first transformers. His company, bought by General Electric in 1903, would become the basis of the company’s transformer and capacitor business (Whelan et al. 2014).

The Monument Mills complex in Housatonic remained the principal driver of economic and civic growth and development in the village during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Monument Mills is associated with the construction of mill worker housing as well as civic buildings for the benefit of the public. Such buildings include the Ramsdell Library and adjacent Housatonic Congregational Church. Listed in the National Register in 2014, the Ramsdell Public Library was constructed from 1906 to 1908 and deeded upon completion to the town by T. Ellis Ramsdell, son of Theodore Ramsdell (Stark 2010). Theodore Ramsdell (administrator and eventual owner of Monument Mills) was known for his interest in the mill workers and betterment of Housatonic village and had stipulated in his will that funds be used to build the library.

Operations at the Monument Mills continued into the **Early Modern Period (1915–1940)** and the beginning of the **Mid-Century Modern Period (1940–1970)** before shutting down in the 1950s. As the economic importance of industry declined, it was replaced by tourism. Beginning in the late nineteenth century as the Berkshires became popular with visitors, Great Barrington began to develop into a resort community for those seeking a retreat from the cities, and several “estates” and grand “Berkshire Cottages” were built. The Massachusetts Turnpike, built in 1957 during the **Mid-Century Modern Period (1940–1970)**, was a contributing factor in the continued development of recreational tourism. During the **Contemporary Period (1970–Present)**, Great Barrington continued to be popular for both summer and winter recreation, and the town is home to the Ski Butternut ski resort, art galleries, and a shopping district.

Expected Archaeological Resources

No previously documented pre-contact or post-contact archaeological sites are within the Ramsdell Public Library parcel. Only one previously documented pre-contact archaeological site (the Monument Mills Site [19-BK-124]) is within 1 mile of the Project area; it is within Housatonic Village along the west bank of the Housatonic River within the footprint of the Monument Mills complex. Reported finds from the site consist of two pestles from the Charles J. Taylor collection (MHC site files): one found during 1874 excavations for a barn for the Monument Mills and the other found by Thomas Welch in 1884. In *The History of Great Barrington*, Charles Taylor (1928:46) noted numerous finds of Native American burials and objects from multiple locations along the Housatonic River valley, including the remains of a stone fish weir near “the factory, south of the bridge,” which could refer to the Monument Mills. Many of the previously recorded pre-contact sites in Great Barrington consist of finds from the Charles Taylor collection that were found near the Green and Housatonic rivers in the southern part of the town.

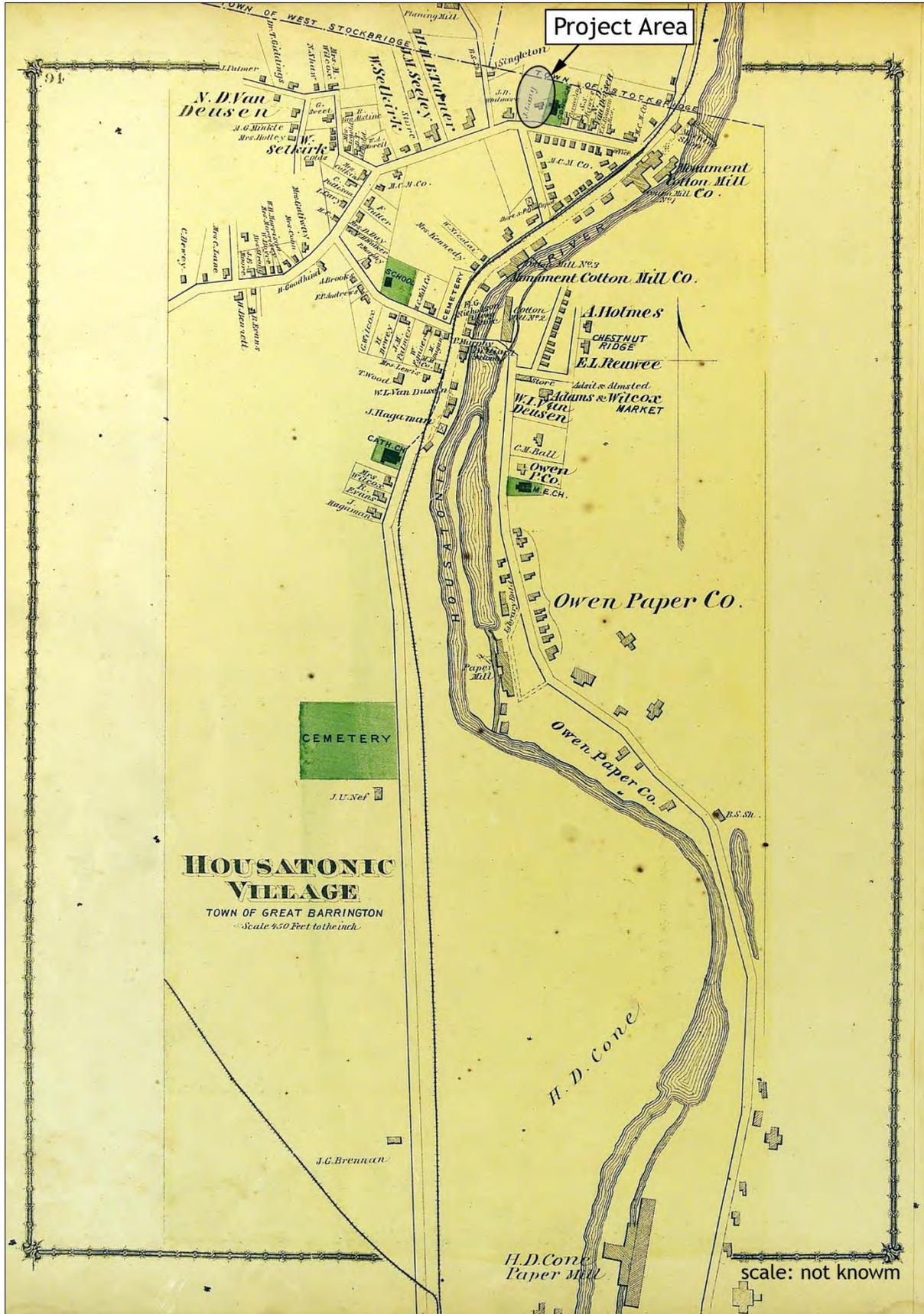


Figure 4-1. 1876 (Beers) map showing the location of the Ramsdell Library Project APE.

The Ramsdell Library parcel was previously assessed as having moderate sensitivity for pre-contact archaeological resources based on favorable locational criteria, and high sensitivity for post-contact resources based on the depiction of former structures on historical maps (Roberts and Friedberg 2014). The library parcel is on elevated terrain at the northern end of a broad floodplain along the western banks of the Housatonic River. Pre-contact archaeological resources within the library parcel could include find spots, campsites, or more substantial habitation sites associated with Native American settlement along the river and could date to any time from the PaleoIndian to Contact periods, though most previously recorded sites in Great Barrington date from the Middle Archaic to Late Woodland periods.

In addition to materials associated with the construction and use of the library and adjacent church properties, expected post-contact resources could consist of the remains of earlier former residences depicted on historical maps. An 1876 map of Housatonic Village indicates a house attributed to J. Lang was once within the library lot (see Figure 4-1). A 1904 map depicts two former residences: the Mrs. N. D. VanDeusen house and a house and outbuildings owned by H. H. B. Turner (Figure 4-2). The Turner house may be the same as the J. Lang house (depicted in Figure 4-1) that has also been considered the original 1809 house of Abel Sheldon (believed to be the same as Abel Sherman in Taylor's 1882 *History of Great Barrington*), which was the first dwelling built in Housatonic Village (Roberts and Friedberg 2014).

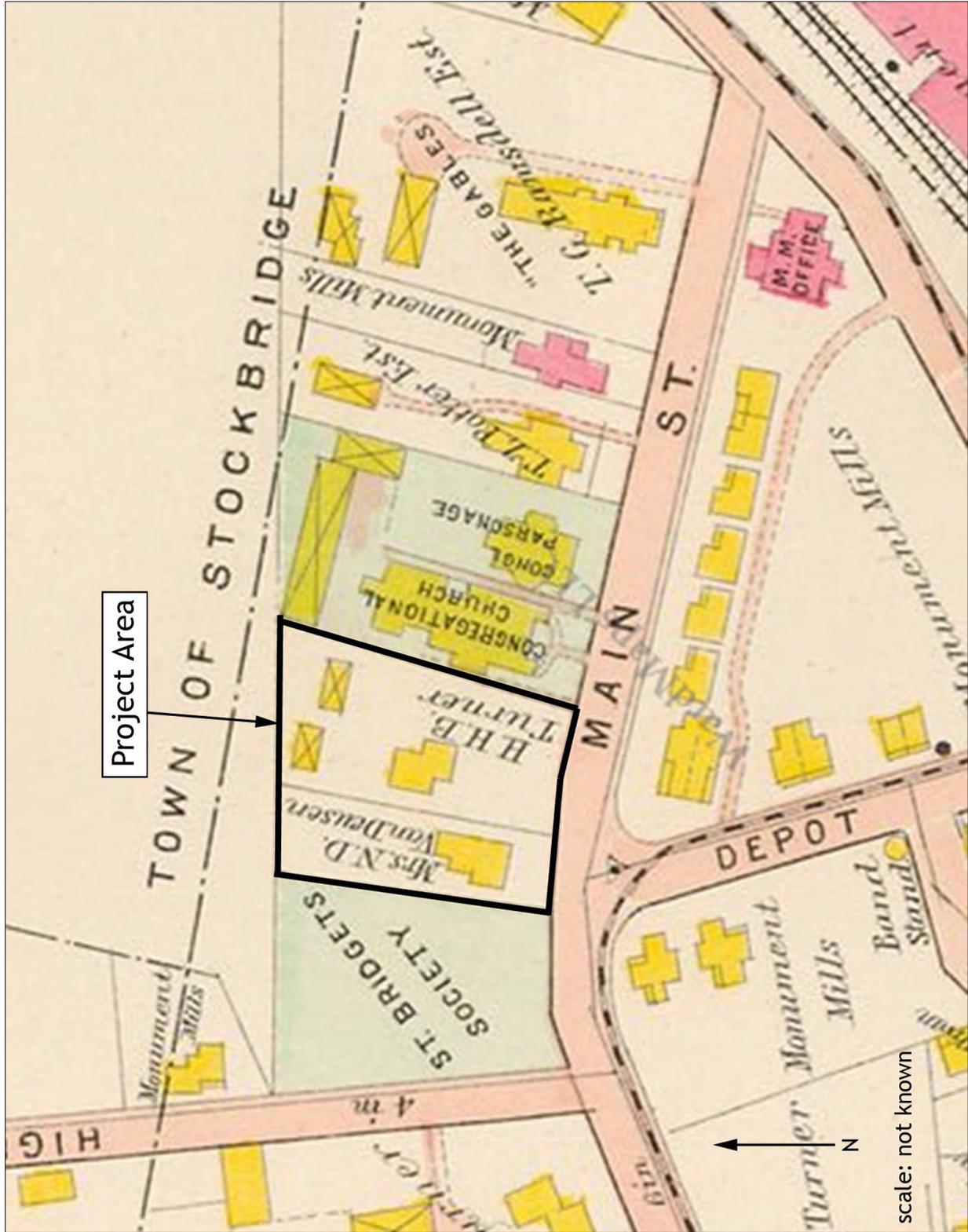


Figure 4-2. 1904 (Barnes and Farnham) map showing the location of the Ramsdell Library Project APE.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS OF FIELDWORK AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A total of 443 pieces of non-site post-contact and temporally unassigned materials were recovered from all twelve 50-x-50-cm test pits excavated in the archaeologically sensitive areas of the Ramsdell Library Project APE (Figure 5-1). The test pits were excavated along Transect A (TA-01 to TA-04) and Transect B (TB-01 to TB-04) and as JTP-01 to JTP-04. No testing was conducted along the non-archaeologically sensitive steep slope at the rear or the library parcel. A catalog of the recovered cultural materials is provided as Appendix A.

Subsurface Testing

The subsurface testing indicated consistent stratigraphy throughout the Project area. Test pits profiles showed a landscaped A surface stratum of very dark brown (10YR 2/2) medium sandy silt with gravel or very dark gray (2.5Y 3/1) silty fine sand with gravel underlain by two fill strata that extended as deep as 100 cmbs (Figure 5-2). In several test pits, these strata overlay a deeply buried plow zone (A_{pz}) stratum and/or truncated subsoils. The A_{pz} consists of a brown (10YR 4/3) medium-coarse sandy silt with gravel and cobbles. The subsoils underlying the A_{pz} or Fill 2 strata consisted of a dark yellowish brown (10YR 4/6) silty fine-medium sand B_1 horizon with gravel and/or a B_2 horizon of yellowish brown (10YR 5/4) coarse sandy silt with gravel (see Figure 5-2). Some of the landscaped A or fill soils may represent ejecta deposited during the ca. 1906 excavation of the basement level of the existing library.

No pre-contact or post-contact archaeological sites were identified during the intensive survey, and no features representing potential former residences or associated structures were found. A total of 416 pieces of post-contact material and 27 temporally unassigned items were recovered from landscaped A, Fill, A_{pz} , or disturbed B contexts from 0 to 90 cmbs (Table 5-1). The temporally unassigned items consist of unmodified faunal materials: 13 pieces of quahog or hard clam shell, 13 pieces of animal bone, and 1 deer tooth. Though temporally unassigned, they most likely date to the Post-Contact Period based on their recovery from fill or landscaped A strata and their state of preservation.

The 416 recovered post-contact materials consist of 47 pieces of glass, 37 pieces of brick, 13 fragments of building stone, 215 ceramic sherds, 4 pieces of coal or coal ash, 1 knife, 6 pieces of faunal material, 2 pieces of mortar, 73 nails, 2 screws, 5 ball clay smoking pipestem or pipe bowl fragments, 1 terracotta tile, and 10 other miscellaneous pieces of metal hardware or unidentified metal (see Table 5-1). The glass includes fragments of bottles and tableware. Ceramic sherd types include American stoneware, creamware, ironstone, pearlware, redware, earthenware, whiteware, and yellow ware. The post-contact faunal material consists of food refuse that includes butchered/sawn pieces of cow bone and teeth from a domesticated pig. Brick types include machine-made brick, fire brick and clinker brick; the nail assemblage includes hand-wrought, machine-cut, and wire nails. The structural materials also included tailings and cut pieces of marble building stone that likely represent the remains of marble processed on site for use in facing the exterior and interior surfaces of the library building.

Most of the recovered material (94%) was recovered from landscaped A (19%), Fill 1 (52%), Fill 2 (22%), or disturbed B (1%) strata that lack contextual integrity. The material from the landscaped A and fill strata deposited during or after the early twentieth-century construction of the library include items with late

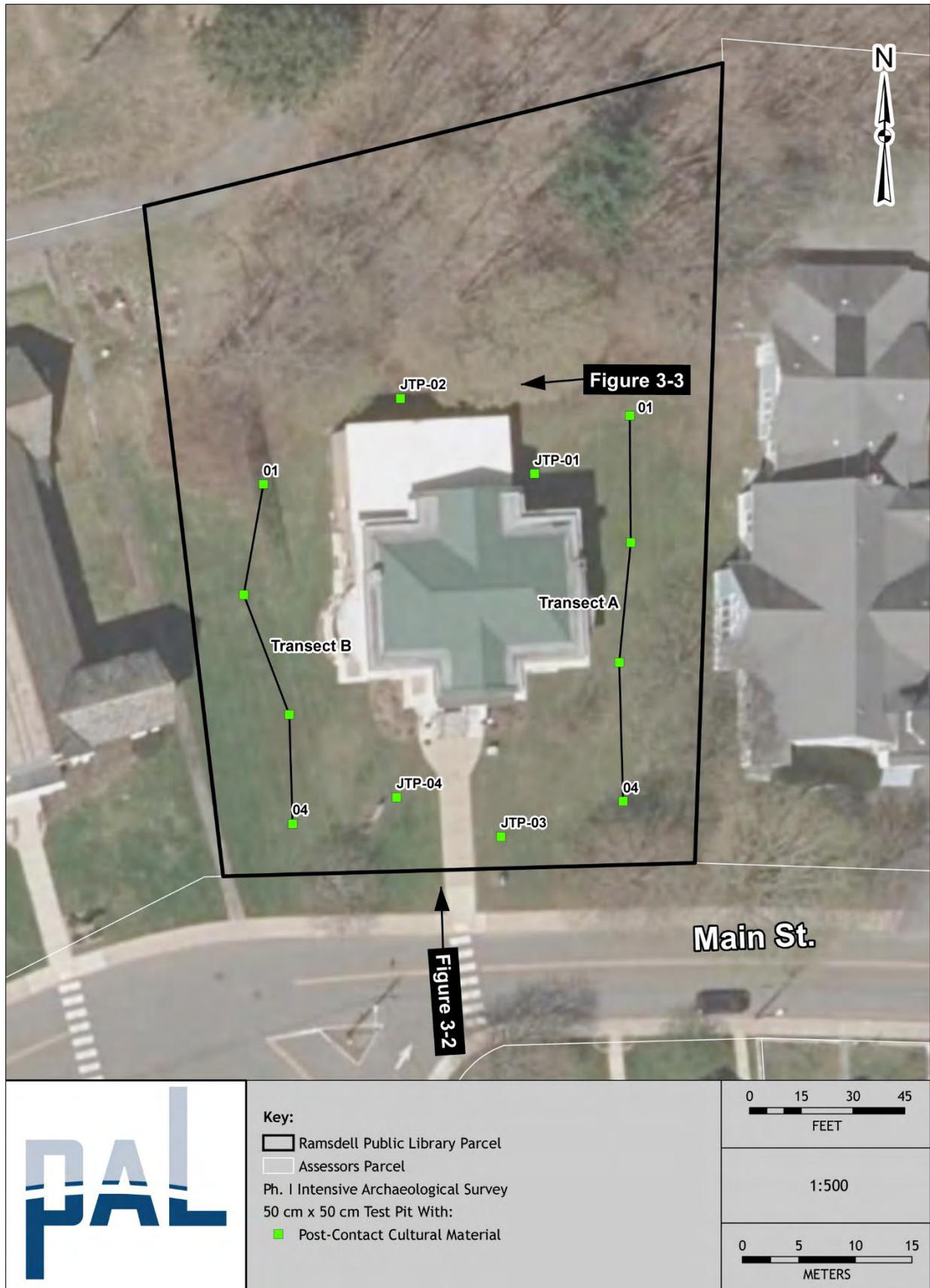


Figure 5-1. Location of subsurface archaeological testing in the Ramsdell Library Project APE.

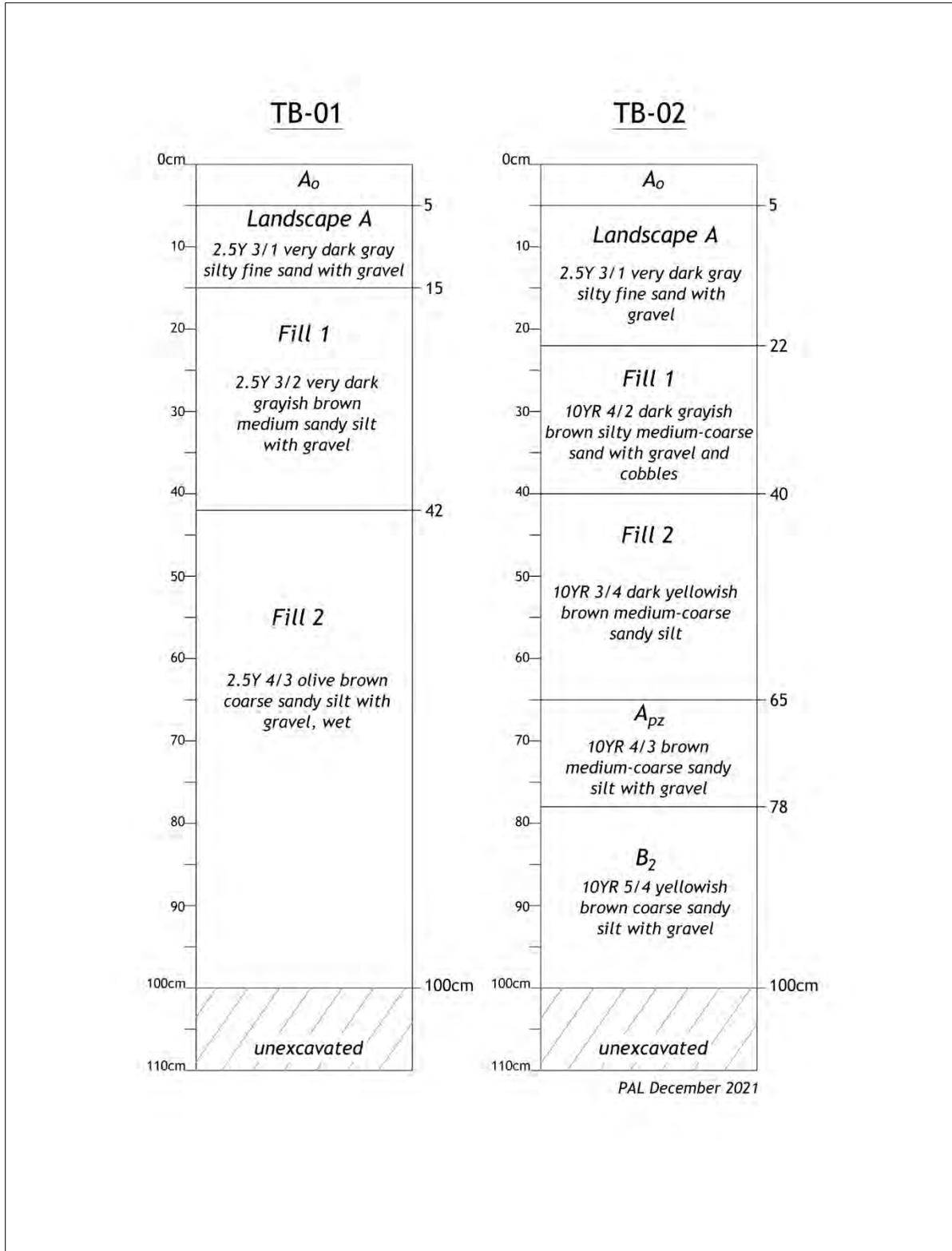


Figure 5-2. Representative test pit soil profiles, Ramsdell Library Project area.

Table 5-1. Cultural Materials by Stratum, Ramsdell Library Project Area.

Object	Stratum					Total
	Landscape A	Fill 1	Fill 2	Apz	Disturbed B	
Shell	5	4	3	1		13
Bottle/Jar Glass	3	6	4			13
Brick	6	20	11			37
Building Stone (Marble)	4	6	3			13
Earthenware		4				4
American Stoneware		1	2			3
Cream Colored Ware		1	2			3
Creamware	3					3
Ironstone		10	3			13
Pearlware	18	41	17	6	1	83
Porcelaneous				1		1
Redware	16	30	13	3		62
Unidentified Refined Earthenware	2	2				4
Whiteware	5	16	10	2		33
Yellow ware	1	2	1			4
Coal		2				2
Coal Ash		2				2
Curved Glass		5				5
Window Glass	1	19	2	1		23
Flower Pot (Redware)		2				2
Vessel Glass		2	1		3	6
Knife		1				1
Mammal Bone	2	8	4	1		15
Mammal Teeth	1	1		1		3
Miscellaneous Metal Hardware	1	2	3			6
Miscellaneous Household	1					1
Mortar		2				2
Nail	14	35	14	9	1	73
Screw	1	1				2
Metal Sheet Fragment		1				1
Smoking Pipe		5				5
Terracotta Tile	1					1
Metal Tube		1				1
Unidentified Animal Bone	1					1
Unidentified			2			2
Total	86	232	95	25	5	443

eighteenth- through twentieth-century manufacturing age ranges. The material recovered from disturbed B soils (1 pearlware, 3 vessel glass, and 1 machine-cut nail) were found directly below Fill 2 and likely reflect intrusive material derived from the overlying fill deposit.

Only 6% of the recovered materials were recovered from A_{pz} soils, reflecting the former land surface pre-dating the 1906 library. The materials recovered from the A_{pz} include pearlware, redware, whiteware, and nails (1 hand-wrought, 3 machine-cut, and 2 wire) that collectively indicate nineteenth-century activity within the library parcel.

Recommendations

No structural remains of the J. Lang residence (depicted on an 1876 map) or of the structures associated with Mrs. N. D. VanDeusen or H. H. B. Turner (depicted on a 1904 map) were found within the library parcel during the intensive survey. These structures were likely destroyed during the ca. 1906 construction of the library, and intact remnants are unlikely to be present. The recovered materials represent agricultural field scatter or materials redeposited or incorporated into landscaped A and fill strata deposited during and/or after construction of the library and lack integrity. The recovered materials are not recommended as significant archaeological resources, and no further archaeological investigations are recommended.

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APPENDIX A
CATALOG OF CULTURAL MATERIALS

APPENDIX B

MHC ARCHAEOLOGICAL PERMIT



G. Great Barrington
2013 Master
Plan Excerpts

Community Master Plan

Town of Great Barrington, MA

Approved by the Planning Board and Board of Selectmen

October 10, 2013



This Master Plan was prepared in accordance with Massachusetts General Law Ch. 41, sec. 81D, and approved by the Great Barrington Planning Board and Board of Selectmen on October 10, 2013.

On the Cover:

The graphic on the cover was developed free of charge by Hussey Graphics for the exclusive purpose of the Great Barrington Master Plan. The graphic represents the historic villages of Housatonic and Great Barrington, linked, as they have been for generations, by the central spine of the Housatonic River and the Housatonic Railroad. They are surrounded and framed by the rural landscapes and natural beauty of the Berkshires.

- Real estate market demands are changing. Locally and nationally, people increasingly want to live in or near downtown locations.
- To encourage core development while preserving and promoting the countryside, nearly every public workshop identified better public transportation, including passenger railroad service, and fiber-optic service, along with agriculture and small business development as the keys to our future economic health.
- Climate change, which could bring warmer weather and more extreme storms, means land use plans must anticipate risks of flood and drought.
- Growing interest in local renewable energy, particularly solar, could compete with the interest in retaining farm land and scenic vistas. Clear regulations or standards will be needed to forestall potential land use conflicts between solar energy arrays, agricultural lands, and aesthetic concerns.

Opportunities to address these issues and to fulfill our community's vision include:

- Overwhelming agreement from participants in this planning process, that these are the key issues to address, has created a consensus on the issues facing us which is a major step towards developing solutions.
- Protections already in place limit development in sensitive and scenic areas.
- Infrastructure capacity to support economic growth is already located in areas that are suitable for compact development.
- An existing stock of residential and commercial buildings can be repurposed for mixed use, both improving the tax base and preserving historic structures.
- Initiatives like the Massachusetts Broadband Initiative, discussions of restoring passenger rail service, and substantial private-sector interest in redeveloping historic buildings already are moving development in the right direction.
- Great Barrington's tax base and strong credit rating can support borrowing, if needed, for major projects.
- Dedicated local business owners, who volunteer for and contribute to community causes and care greatly about the future of the town, will be key players.
- Dedicated Boards and Commissions, and professional staff will implement the recommendations of this Master Plan.

Land Use Vision

The land use vision map on page 6 identifies areas where the Town envisions future conservation, growth, and reinvestment.

Great Barrington's vision includes protecting and enhancing our compact village centers, historic treasures, natural resources, farms, and open spaces, all of which contribute to Great Barrington's distinctive character. Our goals include directing development and growth into the village centers, supporting existing residential neighborhoods, and ensuring that new developments in resource areas are sited and built in a way that sustains our rural countryside and agricultural areas. Our zoning and other land use regulations should implement this vision and these goals, not simply cement existing land use patterns.

The planning and zoning recommendations that follow respect the unique attributes, challenges and opportunities inherent in the different places of our town. These recommendations will help implement the Land Use vision.

Goal LU 1: Support a compact, thriving, mixed-use village in Housatonic.

The small scale, dense development pattern, and existing streets and sidewalks in Housatonic evoke a village atmosphere valued by long time and new residents alike. History, culture, and wilderness are within walking distance. These assets, coupled with underutilized infrastructure, including the mill buildings, can support redevelopment and boost the town's tax base. Redevelopment must be accomplished responsibly, respecting the historical character and scale of the village and the river that runs through it. The current village zoning was instituted in 1960 with little regard to the density, pattern and mix of uses. Nonconformities, mixed use barriers, and parking requirements could all present obstacles to redevelopment. The regulations need to be reexamined and revised in order to achieve this land use goal.

- **Strategy LU H.1:** Redevelop the mills, supporting where possible the coordinated efforts of building owners, particularly when it involves access to the river and shared parking.
- **Strategy LU H.2:** Revitalize the school campus, attending to the concerns and opportunities outlined in the Task Force Report, and recognizing that the market is not currently interested in the school building.
- **Strategy LU H.3:** Rezone the village core, updating dimensional and use regulations that will promote village scale development, allow mixed uses, shared parking, and a variety of housing and employment options without requiring special permits;
- **Strategy LU H.4:** Improve village quality of life, by calming traffic, providing safe and convenient transportation options, and implement the Housatonic Walkability Report.
- **Strategy LU H.5:** Improve the school park and the streetscape, especially Front Street and in front of the School, with new playground equipment, plantings, benches, and lighting.
- **Strategy LU H.6:** Evolve Ramsdell Library to serve 21st Century needs, using the grant-funded accessibility designs as a starting point, and recognizing that the library may take the place of the school as the village's civic space.
- **Strategy LU H.7:** Connect neighborhoods with the village core and open spaces including Old Maid's swimming hole, Greenlawn Cemetery, Flag Rock, the Housatonic River, and Rising Pond.

Goal LU 2: Support Downtown so that it continues to prosper as a regional hub of business, employment, entertainment, and civic life.

Downtown Great Barrington is a year-round, 24-hour per day employment, cultural, and historic hub of South County. Businesses and residents thrive here. During the week, retail stores and restaurants are buttressed by the professional service and government sectors. On weekends, Main Street / Route 7 traffic delivers a constant stream of activity and customers. The Main Street Reconstruction project, beginning in the spring of 2014, will ensure excellent infrastructure, landscape, and walkability long into the future. Redevelopment can support new businesses, residents, and historical and cultural offerings, and increase the tax base. But a few persistent issues like parking and blighted properties should be addressed, and several opportunities realized.

- **Strategy LU D.1:** Redevelop blighted properties and support ongoing efforts at the former Searles School, St. James Place, and the New England Log Homes site.
- **Strategy LU D.2:** Enhance landscaping, particularly of parking lots, and maintain the new landscaping and trees being installed by the Main Street project.
- **Strategy LU D.3:** Protect historic character, by expanding and promoting the historic district. An enforceable demolition pause (except in emergencies) might be considered.

8. HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Great Barrington's historic legacy and cultural resources are important contributors to our quality of life and economy. They are an important basis of our downtown tourism and essential to our small town feeling and sense of place. Our history helps to shape our identity and inspires our arts and culture.

Great Barrington can boast an impressive array of cultural venues and programs, which range from music and film festivals to outdoor sculpture to performing arts centers and libraries. These are an important aspect of the regional economy. The Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center in downtown Great Barrington estimates that it spends \$5 million in the local economy and draws 40,000 people to Great Barrington annually. These venues and festivals attract new businesses and residents who want to enjoy these historical and cultural resources.

Successfully preserving our historic and cultural resources will advance a number of this master plan's Core Initiatives—protecting our community character, enhancing our neighborhoods, and promoting redevelopment in our village centers.

Historic resource preservation will also help Great Barrington be a more sustainable community. It creates jobs and increases property tax revenue and tourism. It preserves important educational opportunities and resources. It reuses existing buildings and directs growth pressures to locations where infrastructure already exists, allowing for the conservation of important landscapes.

We are justifiably proud of our local historic and cultural preservation successes, including the renovation of the Mahaiwe Theater, recognition of the W.E.B. Du Bois home site and birthplace, the Housatonic River Walk, and the popular 250th Anniversary celebrations in 2011. Local organizations are striving to ensure that residents and tourists are more aware of these resources and our town's rich history. The goals and strategies in this plan capitalize on recent efforts and provide a new impetus for embracing historic and cultural resources as integral to our community's past, present, and future.

Goal HC 1: Preserve existing historical and cultural assets.

Many of Great Barrington's historic and cultural resources face uncertain futures. Restoration and reuse of the Housatonic mills and the Fairgrounds are top priorities. There is a clear consensus that these sites should be protected and reused; however, the future of the Housatonic School has been the source of much disagreement.

A long-range plan is needed for historic preservation, with assigned priorities, responsible parties, timelines, goals and specific objectives. The Great Barrington Historical Commission, in cooperation with the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC), local committees and organizations, including cultural organizations, should undertake a long range, three-phase program to identify, evaluate and protect the town's historic resources. The Plan should follow three principal steps:

1. **Identification** would review the existing inventory of historic and archaeological places on MHC Inventory forms (Area, Buildings, Objects, Prehistoric and Archaeological Sites, Structures, Parks and Landscapes). The purpose of the inventory is to identify, describe and document the historic resources in the town. It creates the big picture, a context for considering which sites are the most significant.
2. **Evaluation** of properties for the National Register of Historic Places: The National Register is the federal government's official list of historic properties worthy of preservation. Buildings, districts, structures, sites and objects can be listed, either through individual nomination or, if appropriate, through National Register District nominations.

3. Protection of historic resources: the Historical and Historic District Commissions, Historical Society and other pertinent town boards should undertake a program of protecting historic resources.
- **Strategy HC 1.1:** Educate property owners about the benefits of historic designation. Clearly address potential development constraints, costs or legal ramifications that designation would have, if any.
 - **Strategy HC 1.2:** Develop and adopt a clearly defined historic preservation action plan, with a timeline and responsible parties. The plan should include identification, evaluation, and protection of historic properties and cultural resources, recommend National Register listings, and prioritize preservation projects. A map should list all identified assets. The plan could be funded with Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds and state historic preservation funds and/or as part of a cooperative regional effort.
 - **Strategy HC 1.3:** Coordinate the local historic preservation plan with regional preservation studies. Collaborate on methods and identification techniques, and in prioritization of projects. Doing so can help pool historic preservation efforts, leveraging local volunteer time and local funds.
 - **Strategy HC 1.4:** Raise funds for historic and cultural preservation. Use the Community Preservation Act to leverage other public funds and private donations to protect, preserve, and list historic properties identified.
 - **Strategy HC 1.5:** Concentrate preservation funds on properties that also include other community objectives such as creating or preserving affordable housing and jobs.
 - **Strategy HC 1.6:** Complete an inventory of artistic and cultural assets, including buildings, exhibits, galleries, monuments, and sites. Make the inventory available to the public, as a brochure, or by sponsoring signage (see below).
 - **Strategy HC 1.7:** Consider requiring a demolition delay, except in the case of emergency, in the town bylaws.

Goal HC 2: Promote historical and cultural assets.

Education, organization, and promotion will help preserve historic and cultural resources for future generations, in part by nurturing a preservation ethic. Recent successes like the 250th Anniversary, Bryant School renovations, and the adoption of the Community Preservation Act show that appreciation of our historic heritage already enjoys substantial support.

Many organizations are involved in preservation matters, and their differing powers and jurisdictions can be confusing. But memberships on these bodies and on open space and advocacy groups often overlap, which should make it easier for them to collaborate. Working together, the Historical Commission, Historic District Commission and Society, along with partners like Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area (UHVNHA) should develop programs that enhance the history and preservation literacy of the town, to build support for historic districts and other preservation regulations.

- **Strategy HC 2.1:** Continue and expand the oral history programs and walking tours that highlight our historical and cultural assets and educate people, both locals and tourists. The downtown walking tours and the work of the Historical Commission that successfully developed a walking tour “app” for smart phones, with assistance of the UHVNHA is a model in this regard. Post information, brochures, maps, and photos on the town website, and share them with partners like the Chamber of Commerce.
- **Strategy HC 2.2:** Extend similar programs to Housatonic Village. Develop a historic walking tour of Housatonic Village as well as an accompanying brochure, signage, and promotional materials

11. SERVICES AND FACILITIES

The scope and nature of the services provided in Great Barrington—police and fire departments, inspection and regulation, health care, libraries, courts—are more like those of a small city than a small town, and Great Barrington’s budget reflects that. Some of the infrastructure related to these services, notably for schools and utilities, is now dated and in need of repair, replacement, repurposing or upgrading. Some difficult decisions are now upon us.

The town police station, on South Main Street, is staffed with 17 officers. A new state of the art fire station on State Road and a small branch fire station in Housatonic are manned by volunteers, directed by full time fire chief. The sewer system was built in 1970; the network is sound, but the plant needs updating. The Department of Public Works is responsible for town roadways and bridges, the Transfer Station and Recycling Center, and some 15 town buildings. The town still owns its two former grammar schools. The Dewey School in Great Barrington is leased to the Southern Berkshire District Court, but the Housatonic school is vacant. Two libraries, Mason in Great Barrington and Ramsdell in Housatonic, are well equipped and staffed and offer comprehensive programs. The Claire Teague Senior Center, which serves as a social outlet and a health and information resources center, is run by a full time director, a part time assistant, and many volunteers.

Some public services are not provided by the town government directly. Two separate entities handle water supply. Public education is offered by regional school system, to which Great Barrington supplies most of the students and most of the funding. Berkshire South Community Center, a fitness and community facility, is also a partner for open space and conservation programs.

Health care services comprise a significant part of the local economy. Fairview Hospital in Great Barrington is a federally designated Critical Access Hospital, serving the town and region. Southern Berkshire Volunteer Ambulance Service is based there. Two organizations in Great Barrington, Volunteers in Medicine and the Community Health Program, provide affordable healthcare. Three long and short term care facilities are among the town’s largest employers.

The 2014-2019 Capital Improvement Plan for repairs and upgrades of roads, buildings and other items is over \$21 million. This does not include two major pending projects. One involves the water and sewer system, which must be upgraded to meet current regulatory requirements; the cost for the wastewater treatment plant project is over \$20 million. The other is the high school, which is 50 years old. The regional school district is planning its renovation, and Great Barrington’s share of the cost could be another \$20 million. These costs are on top of the regular need to replace equipment such as snowplows, police cruisers, and fire trucks.

And there will be further demands. As the population ages, more investment may be required to deal with the health, housing, social, and transportation needs of seniors. As the regional economy shifts toward lower-paying jobs in tourism and retail trade, investment will be needed in affordable housing and better public transportation. Attracting and retaining higher-paying jobs and promoting emerging sectors will call for investments in communications technology, marketing and promotion, and rehabilitation and reuse of historic buildings. As the climate warms and storm events are increasingly random and severe, investment will be needed to strengthen roads and bridges against the threat of flooding.

Taxes are already high, compared to the rest of Berkshire County. (On the other hand, to people who come here from major metropolitan areas our taxes seem relatively low.) Citizens want continued high quality services, but they also do not want to increase their taxes further. Yet the town’s population is unlikely to grow. To deal with these challenges, the town must decide how to shift services, adapt to a changing world, and control its budget.

Some combination of new sources of revenue and expenditure reductions is in order. Reducing expenditures could mean disposing of town buildings with historic and emotional appeal or reducing services to which we have grown accustomed. There will be more demands for volunteers, and more emphasis on partnerships that deliver effective services to citizens at the lowest possible cost.

Goal SF 1: Maintain existing Town services, facilities, and programs.

The town provides a wide range of services, to its residents and business owners, and also to thousands of shoppers, tourists, and other visitors, many of them coming from neighboring towns. The Police Department responds to over 13,000 calls per year. It dispatches emergency 911 responses. It recently instituted a K-9 patrol, with the help of donations, and a bike patrol for the summer tourist season. A paid Fire Chief maintains the training and morale of the otherwise volunteer fire department, and coordinates first responders at over 500 calls per year. Fire and health inspections maintain the safety of restaurants, hotels, and other businesses. The senior center provides front line and support services to our seniors, relying on a small staff and volunteers. The library staff, along with an invigorated board and friends group, provides diverse educational experiences and information to our evolving community.

The scope of the town's services is summarized by this listing of principal offices, bodies and officials:

- A. General Government Services
 - a. Agricultural Commission
 - b. Assessor's Office
 - c. Conservation Commission
 - d. Historical Commission
 - e. Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, and Community Development
 - f. Town Accountant / Financial Coordinator
 - g. Town Clerk and Registrar
 - h. Town Manager and Board of Selectmen
 - i. Treasurer and Revenue Collections
- B. Public Safety and Public Health
 - a. Animal Control and Inspections
 - b. Building Inspections
 - c. Communications and Emergency Management
 - d. Fire Department
 - e. Health Inspections
 - f. Police
- C. Community, Cultural, and Recreation Services
 - a. Senior services (Council on Aging)
 - b. Grants and aid
 - c. Libraries
 - d. Parks
 - e. Veteran's Affairs
- D. Public Works
 - a. Highways (including drainage, roads, sidewalks, and winter maintenance)
 - b. Public Buildings
 - c. Transfer Station and Recycling
 - d. Cemeteries/Parks maintenance
 - e. Wastewater Treatment

Education is a regional function. Great Barrington the largest of the three towns that have joined into the Southern Berkshire Regional School District.

- **Strategy SF 1.1:** Maintain police, fire, senior center and library services. Increase where recommended by the Master Plan and/or by Department Heads.
- **Strategy SF 1.2:** Continue regular coordination with the School Committee in developing town and school district budgets, recognizing that Great Barrington, of the three member towns, provides most of the students and bears most of the budget burden.

Goal SF 2: Be fiscally prudent by increasing partnerships and cooperation.

The total town budget for the current fiscal year is over \$26 million. Nearly half of that total (\$12 million, or 46 percent) is allocated to the Berkshire Hills Regional School District. Approximately \$14 million, or 54 percent, is spent on town services. The town has been prudent in its finances. Based on sound financial management and strong reserves, it enjoys an excellent AA+, bond rating.

Property tax bills are high and increasing. Average tax bills in Great Barrington increased over the decade 2003-2013 by about 39 percent, from \$3,022 in 2003 to \$4,942 in 2013. (Assessed values increased even more during that period of real estate boom, or bubble; the average assessed value for a single family residence in 2003 was \$193,496, and that increased 49 percent by 2013, to \$376,078). By comparison, the average single family tax bill in the county in FY 2013 is \$3,125. Out of Berkshire County's 32 municipalities, only Williamstown has a higher average single family tax bill. (The housing chapter of the Appendix includes more information about property taxes in the County.)

- **Strategy SF 2.1:** Minimize reliance on property taxes to fund existing services and facilities by seeking public/private partnerships.
- **Strategy SF 2.2:** Consider memberships, cafés, business incubators, and other innovative methods to generate revenue from after-hours or special use of town facilities. Buildings like the Housatonic Community Center, the libraries, and parks could be considered. Taxpayers rightly deserve access to town facilities, but frequent special events and after-hours staff time can burden operational budgets.
- **Strategy SF 2.3:** Improve communication and access to information about all the events, resources, and local talent that exist already. Before considering expansion of facilities, like the Senior Center, maximize the use of existing facilities first, and enhance programs, publicity, and awareness.
- **Strategy SF 2.4:** Coordinate resources. Have regular meetings of service and program directors in order to coordinate programs and avoid duplications. The South County resource list is a great example in this regard. It will be updated twice yearly.
- **Strategy SF 2.5:** Be more proactive in recruiting volunteers for services and for government service. In particular, work with the local colleges and schools to develop internship and community service programs. Establish a calendar for volunteers, and/or a list, database, or 311 phone information service for volunteers to learn about opportunities and respond. The town website could be a home for these lists and bulletin boards. Consider social media as venues for public announcements.

Goal SF 3: Optimize the use of Town facilities.

- **Strategy SF 3.1:** Formalize building use policies. Working with appropriate departments and volunteers, develop policies to govern the use of town buildings for regular programming, and for special events. The policy should address fees, cleaning and maintenance, marketing, and the types of events allowed.

- **Strategy SF 3.2:** Make accessibility improvements to the Ramsdell Library. Because of the cost of these improvements, grant funding will be required. This is a medium to long term priority. If funding is limited, consider a partnership with private non-profit agencies.
- **Strategy SF 3.3:** In concert with the resolution of the Housatonic School (see 4.1 below), consider improving the Housatonic Community Center with a community room on the southern or eastern sides. Either this building or an improved and accessible Ramsdell library would be logical locations if senior services demands required program space in Housatonic.

Goal SF 4: Reuse or dispose of redundant town buildings.

Two buildings in Housatonic, the now-closed elementary school and the Ramsdell Library, present the most difficult choices. A third building, the old fire station on Castle Street, is in the process of being transferred to private ownership.

The future of Ramsdell Library deserves serious debate. As a stand-alone library, it is underused, according to data about visitation. With over 8,000 square feet, it is a substantial facility. Closing Ramsdell could save approximately \$140,000 of the library budget, \$37,000 in annual building operational costs, and allow library staff to concentrate efforts, funds, and thus programs on the Mason Library. But the Ramsdell library is much loved by the dedicated patrons who use its services. It allows the town to maintain a larger overall collection. Dating from 1908, it is a beautiful, historic fixture in Housatonic. And it can serve as a public meeting space.

Thus Ramsdell should be retained for community use in some fashion, especially if the Housatonic school is not retained. The library could be transformed to include space for a café, meeting rooms, performances, or office spaces. Development of a strategic plan for the building should include village and town residents, the Library Board, the Planning Board, the Historical Commission, and the Historical Society. Such a strategic plan would be a prerequisite for getting grant funds to support renovation.

The building needs improvements, to allow it to be used by a wider audience and make it viable in the long term. It is not universally accessible. There is no ramp, and the front doors are too narrow to meet current accessibility standards. The second floor, which has a stage and could be a wonderful performance space, is reached only by narrow staircases. Because it thus cannot be used for public meetings, it now serves as a storage room for the historical society's collection. In 2010, the town applied part of Community Development Block Grant to develop a construction-ready set of plans to make the library handicapped accessible. The plans call for the addition of an elevator to the north east corner of the building, new restrooms, and an improved interior layout including wider aisles. It also included full access to both the basement and the second floor. The projected cost would be over \$2 million. It is not programmed until 2016. It is hoped the state will pay for a portion of the costs. The town should continue to plan for the improvements and seek funds to complete the work. The building would become a tremendous community resource if these plans could be accomplished.

Consideration of the future of the former Housatonic School should be included in planning about the Ramsdell Library. The full building has been heated and maintained in order to house one tenant, a non-profit organization that uses two ground floor classrooms. The building is now mothballed, which will save the town up to \$50,000 in annual heating and utility costs.

The status of the School and Ramsdell Library should be determined not later than the end of 2014. Spending town funds to maintain surplus buildings cannot be justified indefinitely. If both can be saved and reused, then the village and the Town will be spared a difficult and emotional decision. But if scenarios for new uses are not feasible, the town must be prepared to divest or demolish one or the other.

- **Strategy SF 4.1:** Resolve the status of the Housatonic School. Costs for demolition are estimated to be \$500,000 and costs for rehabilitation are estimated to be between \$2 million to \$4 million. A Task Force

presented the Board of Selectmen with recommendations in 2011, including the preference to keep the site in public ownership (i.e., do not sell it or the land). It is now vacant and mothballed, pending decision.

- **Strategy SF 4.2:** Keep the District Court at the former Dewey School. The town owns the building and leases it to the state. A multi-year lease agreement is in the works. Nevertheless, a reuse or disposition plan should be considered in case the court vacates the building in the future. The discussion should include the formalization of the grounds as a town park, and should accommodate the possibility of using the building for the Southern Berkshire Registry of Deeds.

Goal SF 5: Consolidate facilities and operations where possible.

The Building and Health inspectors' offices will need to move. The offices are now housed in the Castle Street Fire House, which the town is selling for a historic rehabilitation. When the building is redeveloped, the Inspections staff may have to move. Their new location should be convenient to the public and to the staff with whom they work.

DPW equipment is housed in three locations, the Highway Garage on East Street, the transfer station on Stockbridge Road, and the ground floor of the Castle Street Fire House. When the old Fire House is sold and rehabilitated, DPW equipment stored on the ground floor will need to be relocated. Since space at the Highway Garage is already limited, and the equipment needs to be in an efficient location (i.e., not remote, like the transfer station), consider locations such as a cemetery, or a lease or partnership for space with the Fire District, National Grid, Verizon or other business or industrial location near to downtown.

- **Strategy SF 5.1:** If Inspectional Services must relocate from the old Fire House, co-locate them with other town facilities and staff.
- **Strategy SF 5.2:** Relocate DPW equipment now at the Castle Street Fire House. Consider locations such as a cemetery, or a lease or partnership for space with the Fire District, National Grid, Verizon or other business or industrial location near to downtown.
- **Strategy SF 5.3:** If expansion of senior services to Housatonic is required, co-locate them at an improved Ramsdell Library, Housatonic School or Housatonic Community Center.

The town, through the CTSC, provides services to seniors throughout South County. The Collins Center, using Based data collected by the CTSC, estimated that at least 25 percent of the CTSC users are from outside of Great Barrington. Applying this percentage to the total operating cost of the CTSC (but not including capital costs), the Collins Center estimated that the town is providing services to non-residents valued at approximately \$32,159. The Collins Center recommended that Great Barrington consider assessing some portion of the costs associated with operating the CTSC to the towns in the region with seniors who utilize the CTSC.

Transportation is a key service for seniors. Many seniors are transported to the CTSC as well as to various other locations in the region and through on-call van services provided by the Southern Berkshire Elderly Transportation Corporation (SBETC) on a fee-for-service basis. Though more expensive (\$7.00 per round trip to Housatonic with \$2.00 for each additional stop) SBETC is a more flexible route than the Berkshire Regional Transit Authority bus. It also provides door-to-door service, so seniors do not have to worry about getting from their house to the bus stop.

Great Barrington must assess how best to continue senior transportation service. Currently the town heavily subsidizes the SBETC, though Great Barrington riders represent about 75 percent of the 12,500 riders each year. The town also commits over \$71,000 per year to SBETC, or just under the 75 percent of the total cost. The town's funding is provided from three sources, as follows: \$45,000 general fund, \$11,700 from a formula grant, and \$15,000 from an incentive grant. The Collins Center did estimate the potential costs and benefits of the town providing its own transportation service, but the cost analysis was inconclusive. Depending on the data included in the calculation, the analysis could support either in-house town-specific transportation, or continued outsourcing to SBETC. The town should continue to work closely with SBETC to determine how best to continue transportation service. The Council on Aging should also work to formalize its network of volunteer drivers to provide free trips for seniors within established guidelines.

The CTSC is a small building by state standards, but expansion is not recommended at this time. The Massachusetts State Department of Elder Affairs recommends that senior facilities be constructed to accommodate a benchmark of six square feet per senior. At this rate, with over 2,000 seniors (residents age 60 and older), the town would need a 12,000 square foot facility. The existing CTSC is only 5,800 square feet, and some of that space is occupied by SBETC. Neither the Council on Aging nor the town recommends expanding the building at this time. Rather, improvements and efficiencies can help maximize the existing space. Partnerships with other facilities like the regional schools, hospitals, and health centers can help maximize program delivery without significant costs to the existing facility.

Nevertheless, there are some desired improvements to the CTSC. The town is now looking to enlarge and install automatic doors on the entries and the bathrooms for seniors with ambulatory issues. New flooring is desired in the entry halls, and an awning over the entry is desired. Leveling and repaving of the parking lot is needed. The door and paving is included in the upcoming budget. Rooftop solar to offset some energy use is also being considered on the sunny, south-facing roof. The Energy Committee, with DPW, is weighing this option and investigating grant funds to pay for it.

Improvements to the grounds are also desired. When the parking lot is improved, strong consideration should be given to making the entry from South Main Street more inviting. This could include relocating the winter salt/sand pit, installing shade trees and landscaping, and decorative lighting. It should be noted that small garden plots have been installed, and will be improved to handicapped accessibility, with the use of small amounts of grant funds (secured by dedicated volunteer grant writers). The CTSC would be a natural southern terminus of the Housatonic River Greenway, the extension of the River Walk from downtown through the Searles Castle property, Olympian Meadows, and the Fairgrounds (using or paralleling the existing sewer easement. Landscaping and a kiosk would be installed at the CTSC for this purpose. Also, future access to the river bank should be explored. Seniors would like to be able to sit near the river for relaxation, bird watching, painting, or other passive recreation.

Libraries

Great Barrington's libraries are a popular and extremely well regarded resource. Over 4,010 residents hold library cards, and the libraries' circulation is approximately 138,000 materials (including books, tapes, newspapers and magazines) annually and growing every year. The library collections are extensive with over 80,000 items and the library provides 500 programs per year. On average, 9,000-13,000 patrons visit Mason Library each month. Only 700-800 visit Ramsdell each month. The Great Barrington libraries are a member of the CWMARS (Central/Western Massachusetts Automated Resource Sharing) inter-library loan system. A total of 155 member libraries in the CWMARS system circulate over nine million items annually. This consortium also provides an online computer system for cataloging and information sharing with technical support.

The libraries are well-equipped and offer comprehensive programs. The libraries provide adult and children's programs throughout the year. There is an increase in the use of the computers, the use of wireless internet, and the private study rooms. Music, classes, talks, and films are offered throughout the year at both libraries. Mason Library holds extensive historical and genealogical collections, and both are in historic buildings. Mason Library is designated in the Local Historic District. Ramsdell, the first building dedicated as a library in Great Barrington, is not yet officially designated but its National Register nomination form was completed in 2013.

The Mason Library is a central hub of activity and information. The building is approximately 10,000 square feet and was renovated in 2005. It is accessible and has modern facilities including meeting and study rooms. Judging by its visitation statistics, its importance and popularity is obvious. It serves as a cultural and information center for all of Great Barrington and for many surrounding towns who have smaller facilities. As a downtown fixture, it is a frequent stop for tourists seeking information about the town, the town's services, as well as activities, businesses, and events in town. It is open longer hours and on Saturdays at times convenient to working families (more hours, in fact, than is required by the state).

The future of Ramsdell Library deserves serious debate. Based on the visitation statistics, it is hard to justify keeping the building open as a stand-alone library. Closing Ramsdell could save approximately \$140,000 of the library budget, \$37,000 in annual building operational costs, and allow staff to concentrate efforts and funds on Mason to offer more programs. However, Ramsdell is much loved by the dedicated patrons who use its services, allows for a larger overall collection in town, serves as a public meeting space, and is a historical fixture in Housatonic.

Ramsdell should be retained for community use. It is 8,200 square feet and is an architectural gem, opened in 1908. However, building and program improvements are needed to allow it to be used by a wider audience and make the building viable in the long term. The library could be transformed to include space for a café, meeting rooms, performances, or office spaces. A strategic planning session is needed, and it should include village and town residents, the Library Board, the Historical Commission, and the Historical Society. A good strategic plan will be crucial to the town's competitiveness for receiving grant funds for renovating the library.

Ramsdell is not handicapped accessible, but renovation plans are at the ready. Currently, there is no handicapped ramp, and the front doors are too narrow. The second floor of Ramsdell is a wonderful space that has an old stage and performance space, but it is not accessible. As a result it now only serves as a storage room for the historical society's collection. However, in 2010, the town utilized a portion of Community Development Block Grant to develop a construction-ready set of plans to make the library handicapped accessible. The plans call for the addition of an elevator to the north east corner of the building, new restrooms, and improved interior layout including wide aisles. It also included full access to both the basement and the second floor. The building would become a tremendous community resource if these plans could be accomplished. The plans are projected to cost over \$2 million, and it is not programmed until 2016. It is hoped the state will pay for a portion of the costs. The town should continue to plan for the improvements and seek funds to complete the work.

A discussion of the future of Ramsdell Library should include consideration of the Housatonic School as well. At this time, ***the former Housatonic School costs the town approximately \$50,000 annually and full renovations are expected to cost between \$2 and \$4 million.*** The full building is still being conditioned to house one tenant, a non-profit organization that uses two ground floor classrooms. The status of the 21,700-square foot building is discussed in more detail in the Historical Resources section of this plan. This Master Plan recommends rehabilitation and reuse of the building; however, this plan also recognizes that the town can ill-afford to keep its surplus buildings for too much longer.

This Master Plan recommends that the status of the School and Ramsdell Library be determined not later than the end of 2014. Continued use of town funds for surplus buildings can be justified for only so much longer. If both can be saved and reused, then the village and the town will be spared a difficult and emotional decision. However, the town must be prepared to dispose of or demolish one or the other if new use scenarios are not feasible.

Parks and Recreation

More than half of Great Barrington's residents live within one-half mile, a ten minute walk, to a park or recreational resource. These resources include parks with swing sets and playgrounds, baseball fields, ball courts, and benches and picnic tables. The Parks Commission oversees most of these resources, and the Department of Public Works is responsible for maintaining them. The Parks Commission, through an annual contract with Berkshire South Community Center, provides monitors in the summer at the Memorial Field Skate Park and Housatonic Playground, as well as lifeguards and swimming lessons at Lake Mansfield.

MASTER PLAN

“OFFICE HOURS”

Great Barrington Town Planner Chris Rembold will be at Ramsdell Library on
Wednesday September 11 and September 18, from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM.

Stop by during that time and chat with Chris
about the recently released Master Plan.

A copy of the Master Plan is at the library, and online at www.townofgb.org.





National Register
of Historic Places

H. Record

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



446

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name Ramsdell Public Library

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 1087 Main Street not for publication

city or town Great Barrington (Village of Housatonic) vicinity

state Massachusetts code MA county Berkshire code 003 zip code 01236

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Brona Simon June 2, 2014
Signature of certifying official/Title Brona Simon, SHPO, MHC Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official _____ Date _____

Title _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register removed from the National Register
- other (explain.) _____

Jon Edson H. Beall 7-25-14
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property
 (Check as many boxes as apply.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

Category of Property
 (Check only one box.)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
 (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
	1	objects
1	1	Total 2

Name of related multiple property listing
 (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing) N/A

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register
 N/A

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

public library

Current Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

public library

7. Description

Architectural Classification
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

Classical Revival

Materials
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: stone (1906) and concrete (1928-30)

walls: Roman brick

trim: marble

asphalt shingle and rubber membrane;

roof: metal

other:

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

The Ramsdell Public Library is located in Berkshire County, in the village of Housatonic within the town of Great Barrington. The property consists of the library itself and a metal library sign on the front lawn that is less than 50 years old, and thus noncontributing. The library sits on Main Street about a block west of MA Route 183, which roughly follows the Housatonic River in a north-south direction between Lenox on the north and Great Barrington on the south. The Ramsdell Library faces south on the north side of the street between the Housatonic Congregational Church (NRIND, 2002) on the east and Blessed Theresa Catholic church on the west. It is set back approximately 50 feet from the sidewalk, consistent with the setbacks of the two flanking churches. Main Street is both residential and institutional between its intersection with Front Street next to the Housatonic River on the east and High Street on the west. It is lined with boulevard trees, sidewalks, and mostly single-family houses on the south side of the street. The library is located on a roughly rectangular lot of three quarters of an acre whose elevation, like adjacent lots on the north side of Main Street, rises steeply at the rear (or north) to a wooded area. Existing buildings on this block of Main Street represent popular mid to late 19th-century residential styles, and extend to the early 20th-century Classical Revival style, of which the library is the outstanding institutional example. It is a 1½-story building with Roman brick walls and marble trim dominated by a central, projecting portico, with an entry flanked by two tall Ionic columns. This medium-sized masonry building represents a sedate and dignified example of a small-town, turn-of-the-century library.

Narrative Description

The story of building the Ramsdell Library starts with an agreement signed August 2, 1905, between T. Ellis Ramsdell and McLean & Wright, architects, of Boston, MA. T. Ellis Ramsdell was the son of Theodore H. Ramsdell (1833-1903), a New Hampshire native who came to Housatonic in 1864 as superintendent of the Monument Mills and eventually became its owner. As a wealthy industrialist and resident of Housatonic, Ramsdell's will directed his heirs to erect and equip a public library to benefit the residents of the village. He left a widow and four grown children, and it was his son, T. Ellis Ramsdell, who signed the agreement in 1905 with the two Boston architects to design the library building.

They chose the Classical Revival style and designed a 1½-story building, including a raised basement, with a half-story second floor containing a large meeting room (Photo #1) and several small storage rooms. The overall dimensions of the library building were 65 feet deep by 48 feet wide. As is typical of the style, the symmetrical front façade has a ceremonial flight of stairs leading up to a large, central pedimented projecting portico and entrance that was supported by giant, smooth-marble Ionic columns flanking the double doors. These two columns are flanked, in turn, by projecting undecorated pilasters supporting a marble lintel inscribed "The Ramsdell Public Library" above the entrance. Above the front entrance is a marble semicircular light with keystone flanked by the upper portions of the two columns. The tall, double oak doors at the entrance are each divided into two lights. These doors are surrounded by molded marble trim, a plain, flat frieze above, and a molded marble sill on which rests a foliated cartouche fronting a semicircular light surrounded by flat marble molding topped by a marble keystone. The projecting pediment above has a frieze and horizontal cornice with a course of large dentils, which extends the length of the front facade above the frieze. A tympanum, also dentillated, is decorated with a foliate design surrounding an open book. The raking cornice has a split fillet.

The side walls of the main entrance stairway are topped with two large, fluted, iron lamp standards with opaque round globes. The steps leading to the front doors have wrought-iron railings that were not original to the building. The corners

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of the walls at the projecting portico are decorated with a course of large marble quoins that contrast with the yellow-brick walls and draw the eye to the entire front portico. The roof is a low-pitched deck style and barely visible behind the tall plain parapet. At the east and west rear ends of the roof are two brick chimneys topped by molded stone copings and trim.

Exterior walls are light-yellow Roman brick trimmed with marble at the raised basement, portico, windows, cornice, and stairs. Befitting the style, the expanses of brick wall are punctuated only by the fenestration above the raised basement. Marble window lintels on the first story are jack-arched with decorative keystones, tying together the three-part windows. On each of the side elevations at the first story is a projecting curved-glass bay window, with continuous wooden cornices decorated with a dentil course and continuous marble window sills in the bays (photo 2). These two identical windows light the original west and east reading rooms, the east room now used as the children's reading room. Low three-part windows also decorate the frieze below the dentillated cornice, providing light to the second-story meeting room. The raised basement itself is faced in marble blocks topped with a slightly projecting stone molding forming a watertable. A date block, "A.D. 1906" is located on this watertable to the right (east) of the front entrance. The raised basement is punctuated by raised windows and a side access hatch on the east exterior leading to the basement.

At the rear of the building is an addition measuring 29 feet deep by 59 1/2 feet wide (Photo #2). It does not quite cover the entire rear or north original wall and is only flush with the original west wall. This addition was designed by the firm of Harding and Seaver of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, in 1928 and completed in 1930, largely for additional stack area to accommodate an additional 10,000 volumes as well as other updates. It was designed to extend the old stack room (originally the back of the building) to make a continuous stack space (Photo #3; fig. 1). To the west of the stacks in the new addition is an enlargement to the west reading room, behind which is a reference room, 14 by 17 feet, and a study room measuring 10 by 14 feet. The study room is separated from the reference room by a transomed glass-and-oak door flanked by two fixed-light interior windows.

The interior of the building opens to an anteroom with a stairway wrapping around the exterior walls and leading upstairs to the second-floor meeting room. This opens into the rotunda (Photo #4), which functions as a circular lobby and leads straight back to the circulation desk and stacks beyond, or into the west reading room (Photo #5), or into the east reading room, now used for children's books and activities. Each opening in the lobby is flanked by unfluted columns with Doric capitals flanking oak and glass doors with glass transoms. The floor is ceramic tile in red and black on a white background in a Greek meander pattern. The column finishes, which appear to be marble, are actually multi-colored scagliola resembling stone. This process allows plaster to imitate stone and is done by mixing marble dust, sizing, and various pigments in decorative patterns or designs. In the case of the Ramsdell Library, the scagliola imitates a rich marbled look and gives richness and depth to the columns in the lobby.

The interior finishes are consistent throughout. Walls and ceilings are plaster. Floors are oak, window and door trim is oak, all windows on the main floor have window transoms, and all interior doors are single-paneled. The central three-part windows in the first-floor bay windows and at the front and rear walls are 1/1 lights (Photo #5). All window transoms have fixed lights, and door transoms are moveable. Fireplaces in the reading rooms are oak with console supports under the mantels and decorative brick around the fireboxes (Photo #6). Oak fireplace moldings are beaded or molded for added texture and interest. The east reading room fireplace surround is wine-colored glazed tile, and the west reading-room surround is tan Roman brick.

The second floor is accessible from the front entrance via a stairway or by the back service stairs. It contains some small storage rooms and a large meeting room, known as "Library Hall," with plaster walls, oak floors, a raised stage at the rear or north end of the building, and a skylight, now enclosed (Photo #7). Because of the low ceiling, the east and west walls of the meeting room are knee walls tucked under the roof. The low three-part windows at the cornice level provide some natural light. What are thought to have been the original wooden chairs in the meeting room were removed in November 2012 and are now located in the basement. The room is used for occasional meetings and for storage of old newspapers from the Ramsdell Library, as well as Great Barrington Historical Society and Historical Commission files, artifacts, documents, records, and photographs.

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The raised basement is accessed from the first floor by an east staircase. It is unfinished, and has four paneled-oak doors, concrete floors, and rubblestone foundation walls. The staircase leading to the first floor is in the original basement and is sheathed in vertical, wooden beadboard. The 1928-1930 rear addition has an excavated basement, as well as brick and fireproof-tile walls and flooring on the first floor, and is supported by concrete pillars. The original front of the basement is supported by metal posts. There is a small toilet in the east wing at the rear of the basement. Basement floors are concrete throughout, and the heating system is newer.

Alterations and Updates:

The largest change to the library building was a rear addition completed in 1930 with some other attendant changes. Harding and Seaver, a Pittsfield architectural firm, designed the addition in 1928. The library was closed from August to early December, 1930 while construction took place. The objective (fig. 1) was to enlarge the reference room behind the west-side reading room by removing the rear wall of the original building, thus doubling the size of the reference area and adding a new rear workroom for the library staff behind the enlarged reference room. East of this in the new addition, room was provided for six additional book stacks. The 1930 changes included improvements to lighting and storage. The shelving in the new stack room was steel shelving. Behind the east reading room in the original building, an additional private one-stall lavatory was added. The new addition had oak floors to match the originals. On the second floor, "Library Hall," used for community meetings, was re-plastered and repainted and the woodwork varnished. A new double Ideal boiler was installed in the basement, and a new coalbin was built. New electric lighting was installed throughout. The cost of these renovations totaled \$12,500 (*The Berkshire Courier*, March 13, 1958; the *Sunday Union and Republican*, December 7, 1930).

Other changes to the building have come in the form of routine maintenance, wear and tear, or updating. For example, when the library roof had a small leak in 2002, routine repairs were made by the Department of Public Works through Fairview Roofing Company, contractor, which consisted of replacing the asphalt-shingled half of the main roof, and repairing the rubber-coated half and repairing portions of the rear roofing (Neville, *The Berkshire Record*, March 22, 2002). According to Gary Leveille, Historical Society archivist, six or seven years ago the former roof was left uncovered while being repaired. While it was open, the second floor was damaged by a major rain storm. The water damage required repairs including patching, re-plastering, and painting the walls in Library Hall. The original 1906 roof was slate. The latest roof, not visible from the lawn, is metal, according to Leveille. The glass inserts in the exterior double front doors were originally solid oak. About 25 years ago, the oak panels were removed and the current glass was installed, according again to Leveille.

In 2010, the Board of Trustees began talks on constructing an elevator and addressing other accessibility items, according to James Stark (Form B updated March 2010 for GBR.0267). Around June 2012, the circulation desk was moved forward, partially projecting into the rotunda. Earlier, at an unknown date, some stacks had been removed from the original stack area to make room for a long work table (Photo #3).

Archaeological Description

While no ancient Native American sites have been identified on the library property, sites may be present. One site is recorded in the general area (within one mile). That site, the Monument Mills Site (19-BK-124), is located less than 1,000 feet from the nominated property on the west bank of the Housatonic River. Documented Native resources in the vicinity of the Congregational Church on the east side of the Ramsdell Library lot have demonstrated the potential for ancient resources to survive in areas with similar locational characteristics (slope, soil drainage, proximity to wetlands) as the library and in the overall general area. Environmental characteristics of the property also indicate the presence of several locational criteria (slope, soil drainage, distance to wetlands) that are favorable for the presence of ancient sites. The library is located on a well-drained, sloping, riverine terrace within 1,000 feet of the Housatonic River. The library lot has a natural rise of about ten feet to the rear of the property and is wooded and hilly. Given the above information,

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the small size of the lot (less than one acre) and impacts associated with library construction dating from 1906, a moderate potential exists for locating ancient Native American resources on the library property.

There is a high potential for locating historic archaeological sites on the library property. According to the Barnes and Farnham map of 1904, the Ramsdell Library Lot 3 contained two private houses and associated outbuildings. At the east side of the present lot was the original 1809 Abel Sheldon House, later owned by H.H.B. Turner, with two outbuildings at the rear of the lot up against the hill. The house was moved to West Stockbridge, freeing up the lot for the Ramsdell Library. Structural evidence may survive for the Sheldon and Turner homes and related barns, stables, and outbuildings for the farmsteads. Occupational-related features (trash pits, privies, wells) may also survive related to both occupations of the property. Historic trash areas or middens may survive in and around the library lot, either associated with Sheldon or with Turner, who bought the property when he moved to Housatonic in 1876. To the west of the Turner House lot was the home of Mrs. N. D. VanDeusen, torn down to make way for two subsequent Catholic buildings. All told, these occupations (including the Ramsdell Library occupation) reduce the potential for finding undisturbed ancient Native American or historic archeological sites on the library lot today. However, scattered historic artifacts and below-ground historic features may survive. While it is possible that structural evidence of outbuildings, archaeological features, and artifact distributions associated with the operation and maintenance of the library are present, no evidence to support their existence has yet to be identified.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Community Planning and Development

Social History

Architecture

Period of Significance

1906-1964

Significant Dates

1906 (date block) to 1908 (given to the town)

1928-30 (rear addition)

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

1906: McLean, William H. & Wright, Albert Hayden (Boston architects); 1928-30: Harding, George C. & Seaver, Henry M. (Pittsfield architects); Edward Hoyt Shaw, 1906 contractor.

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Period of Significance (justification)

The Period of Significance extends from construction of the library, which began in 1906, to 1964, the standard fifty-year cutoff for National Register eligibility.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)
None.

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The Ramdell Public Library, Great Barrington, MA, meets Criteria A and C for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, and is significant on the local level. Under Criterion A, it is eligible under Community Planning and Development for its contribution to the design, growth, and development of the village of Housatonic in Great Barrington in the early 20th century, and under Social History as an important part of the private and public efforts to promote the welfare and enhance the lives of the town's citizens. The library meets Criterion C on a local level as a well-designed and finely wrought example of an early 20th century, small-town, Classical Revival-style library, designed by two well-known architectural firms: the Boston firm of William H. McLean and Albert Hayden Wright, architects of the original building, and the locally admired Pittsfield architectural firm of Harding and Seaver, who designed a sympathetic rear addition in 1928-1930.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

Criterion A:

Housatonic History:

The history of civic improvements, including the construction of a library, follows the settlement and growth of industries and population in Housatonic, a village in Great Barrington, MA. Great Barrington was established as a town in 1761, but the lands on both sides of the Housatonic River at the village of Housatonic were part of the "Equalizing" land, which the proprietors in 1749 decreed should be laid out in a manner to equalize the home lots of the original settlers. These lands were not subdivided until 1770. The village of Housatonic, now within the incorporated boundaries of Great Barrington, was not settled until 1809. It was situated five miles north of Great Barrington, at a place where the Housatonic River furnished abundant waterpower with a drop of 76 feet in the three miles upstream of the village. In its early history, the settlement of Housatonic lay entirely on the west side of the river. Industrial development occurred in 1809 on the upper water privilege, with the damming of the river. By 1818, the small settlement was known as "Babylon," and Eber Stone established a mill manufacturing spinning wheels. In 1825, Ransom Whitmore of East Haddam, Connecticut, began operating his own cotton mill on the site of Stone's spinning-wheel operation by taking the mill site and associated riparian rights. In 1827, "Babylon" became "Deansville" after Sprowell Dean and a partner, Perley D. Whitmore, purchased the mill. In 1835, Whitmore's mill became the Housatonic Manufacturing Company, when Wells Laflin purchased the primary ownership. At that time, the name of the village changed again, this time permanently, to "Housatonic." Failing in 1848, the company was incorporated in 1850 as Monument Mills. Subsequently, this upper privilege became the location of Monument Mills Mill No. 1. At the lower water privilege, a shop making chairs was begun, followed by a shoe-last factory in 1837 known as Wawbeek Mills, which continued until 1856. The Wawbeek Mill building eventually became part of Monument Mills Mill No. 2.

Two significant events happened in 1850. The village of Housatonic was boosted by the arrival, in January 1850, of the Housatonic Railroad, which opened a line from Van Deusenville through Lee to Pittsfield, going through Housatonic village. This little town with its waterpower was made doubly attractive by the addition of available and efficient rail

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service. In May 1850, Monument Mills was incorporated by John C. and Asa C. Russell and John H. Coffing, beginning a long period of successful cotton manufacturing. First, under the direction of John M. Seeley, and after 1865, under the control of Theodore G. Ramsdell, Monument Mills became the largest manufacturer of jacquard woven cotton bedspreads in the United States. By 1885, Child's Berkshire County history noted that Monument Mills had a huge operation with 68 jacquard looms and 1,800 spindles, and employed 350 hands, who turned out 330,000 quilts and 2.7 million pounds of plain, fancy, double-twisted cotton warps per year. It operated continuously in Housatonic until it closed in 1956.

Theodore Ramsdell (1833-1903), long associated with the Monument Mills, arrived in Housatonic in 1864. In 1865, Ramsdell became Superintendent, a post he held for 22 years. Subsequently, Ramsdell was promoted to Agent, then General Manager, then Vice-President, and finally owner. He served until his death in March 1903. He was succeeded by his sons T. Ellis Ramsdell and Thomas S. Ramsdell. Theodore was well-known for his interest in the mill workers and in the betterment of the village. His will left a bequest of \$25,000 to erect and equip a public library to be built on the lot adjacent to the 1893-1894 Congregational Church, of which Ramsdell was a member, and to which his wife Mary Spencer Ramsdell of West Stockbridge, eventually bequeathed money.

T. Ellis Ramsdell carried on his father's wishes for a Housatonic Library, starting in 1905 when architects were hired and plans were drawn up. The Theodore Ramsdell bequest paid for the lot and the building, as well as its accouterments and books. Construction began in 1906, and was completed in 1908 as a private enterprise of the Ramsdell family. It became the Ramsdell Public Library when it was formally deeded to the Town of Great Barrington in accordance with the elder Ramsdell's wishes on June 26, 1908. T. Ellis Ramsdell was acting Treasurer of the Library in 1908, and continued his activity throughout the first decades of its existence, serving as a library trustees for 47 years.

The construction of a library building in Housatonic was a watershed event, coming slightly before the 1909 100th anniversary of the settlement of the village. When the library building was formally given to the town of Great Barrington in 1908, the population of Housatonic was around 3,000, and it was lost on no one in town that the new library represented culture and progress and a considerable public improvement.

The period around the turn of the 20th century, particularly its first decade, was a time of significant growth and prosperity in the village. In 1899, the uncompleted new Owen Mill Building was bought by the American Writing Paper Company and the highway past Housatonic was raised and improved. In 1904, the old burying ground was abolished and the remains were moved from a location in the vicinity of the river at a railroad grade crossing to the new Greenlawn Cemetery on the Van Deusenville road. Front Street was then laid out and an improved sewage system was introduced in 1906. In 1907, Owen Park, a new park, was constructed. In 1907, Monument Mills bought the Glendale woolen mill and erected the second largest power plant on the Housatonic River. A year after the Ramsdell Library was deeded to Great Barrington on June 26th, 1908, Monument Mills built a large addition to its mill and built a number of tenements for its employees. In 1911, the Housatonic Water Company became profitable and in 1912 a new concrete bridge was built across the Housatonic River just below Monument Mills, which was shared with the Berkshire Street Railway, who built their car barns in Housatonic in 1913.

The location chosen for the new library gave it a certain validation and significance in Housatonic. It was close to Monument Mills for the convenience of its employees, to the home of its major benefactor and owner of the mills, and to the two main churches in the village. The lot selected for the new library had been the location of the first pioneer house built in Housatonic, in 1809, by Abel Sherman. According to Taylor's *History of Great Barrington, Part I*, pp. 267-368, Sherman was an early settler from Rhode Island and went into business with Stephen Sibley, a clockmaker, building the first dam where the upper dam of the later Monument Mills was eventually located. The house, now the Ramsdell Library lot, was eventually sold to Harvey H. B. Turner. The Barnes and Farnham 1904 map shows a house and two rear sheds belonging to "H.H.B. Turner" immediately west and adjacent to the Congregational Church. The Turner family was in New Haven, CT, by 1630, and their descendants were among the earliest settlers of Great Barrington. H.H.B. Turner moved to Housatonic in 1876 and died in 1907. He was an early Prohibitionist, a librarian for 20 years, an assessor, and

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vice president of the Great Barrington Savings Bank. Turner's house came into possession of the Ramsdell family, and the house was "moved up High Street over the West Stockbridge line" (Berkshire Courier, Taylor, ed., *History*, footnote, p. 368).

The new library site was only five lots west of Theodore G. Ramsdell's house, "The Gables" (1099 Main Street North), which he built in the late 19th century at the east end of Main Street, and which, in turn, was just across the street from the Monument Mills office (extant) at the corner of Main Street and Front Street (Route 183). In short, the library was built some 550 feet west of the Monument Mills complex (NR 1983), which is along Front Street at the intersection of Main Street. Finally, the library was prominently located between the Roman Catholic St. Bridget's Society property on the west and the 1893 Housatonic Congregational Church (NR 2002). The St. Bridget's Society property became the site of the Corpus Christ Roman Catholic Church (now Blessed Theresa Church).

The construction of Great Barrington's first dedicated library building in 1906-1908, the Ramsdell Public Library in Housatonic, and the 1913 new library building in Great Barrington, the Mason Library, were prime examples of the type of philanthropy that shaped the faces of many towns in western Massachusetts in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Ramsdell Public Library in Housatonic was Great Barrington's first building to be designed exclusively for library purposes, although there had been earlier libraries housed in various locations in both Great Barrington and Housatonic. According to Taylor's history of Great Barrington, there was a so-called "Union Library" in the Great Barrington store of Samuel Whiting in 1800, housing a small collection of books, which functioned until the books were sold at public sale in January 1823. In 1861, the Great Barrington Library Association was formed as a stock company, capitalized at \$650. This group joined with two other early libraries in town, the Agricultural Library and the library of the Hope Fire Company, in 1881 under the name "Great Barrington Free Library" with a combined 1,030 books housed in one room in the town hall. It expanded to two rooms in 1887. In 1897, the town voted to spend \$12,000 on a private home to house the library, which was then moved out of the town hall.

Meanwhile, the arrangement for a library in Housatonic prior to the Ramsdell Library was in the private hands of Henry D. Cone, manager of the Owen Paper Company, and his wife. Cone started the free library in 1869-1870 in a brick storehouse on Owen Paper Company land on the east side of the Housatonic River. This library was designed to especially benefit Cone's employees, although it was free to all in town. With his wife, Cone maintained and supplied new books to a library and reading room, and the collection grew. By 1895, it had 4,000 books and a circulation of 10,000. But Mr. Cone's business went bankrupt in 1894, and the library closed upon his death in 1896. It was then that Theodore G. Ramsdell stepped in and expressed a desire to build and equip the village with a modern library. When he died in 1903, it was found that his will set aside \$25,000 for a library. After the Ramsdell Library was completed, it was given to the town of Great Barrington in 1908.

Five years after the Ramsdell Library was given to the town, the Mason Library was completed and dedicated on July 13, 1913. It, too, was a bequest: Mary A. Mason, of New York, a summer resident, gave \$50,000 in 1910 to the town of Great Barrington for a library. It was named for her husband, Capt. Henry Hobart Mason, and was designed by Blanchard and Barnes of New York in the Colonial Revival style and built of brick with white marble trim.

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Because the Ramsdell Library was not turned over to the Town of Great Barrington until 1908, the private planning and construction of the library were not particularly well covered in the local press. The contract between T. Ellis Ramsdell and the architects, McLean and Wright, was signed on August 2, 1905. Eight months later, on April 7, 1906, after plans had been drawn up and designs approved, *The Berkshire Daily Press* noted that the two large marble pillars designed to flank the front entrance were "about completed." They had been cut by hand from square blocks, each about 15 feet long. By June 16th, the *Press* reported that the library pillars were ready to stand at the entrance of the new library and would be placed during the week by Foreman Smith and his men. In addition, the metal cornice was almost all installed and the public would soon be able to see how the exterior would look when completed. Eleven days later on June 27th, the *Press*

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noted that the pillars were now in place at the entrance, and the outside stonework was about finished. The extra-heavy roof timbers were almost ready to receive the slate roofing. By July 5th, the stonecutters were working on the new building and the roofers were putting on the slate, a job that would take them another two weeks to complete. The date block on the raised-basement watertable reads "A.D. 1906," and it is known that by October 31, 1907, *The Berkshire Courier* advertised that the new library was offering an entertainment as part of the "Library Course" in the new building, so the library was open to the public by late 1907. In the January 2, 1908, *Courier*, readers learned that a "Miss Woodin was engaged in cataloguing the new books for the Ramsdell Library."

The library building officially became the property of Great Barrington on June 26, 1908, when the deed was transferred to the town and recorded in the registry. The deed formally conveyed the site, building, books, and equipment, all funded by Ramsdell's bequest of \$25,000, and an additional sum, making the total cost \$40,000. The contractor was E. H. Shaw.

During its early decades the library was managed by Miss Lydia Fuller, its first librarian, who served for seventeen years until she was "forced to resign in 1925 because of poor eyesight." She was succeeded by her assistant of several years, Miss Helen G. Brown, and her newly appointed assistant, Mrs. Eleanor Busby. On June 26, 1928, the 20th anniversary of the date that the Ramsdell Library officially became the property of the town of Great Barrington, a newspaper article noted that the number of books and periodicals in circulation had steadily increased to 26,590 by 1927, and the number of books in the library had increased to 12,000.

In addition to conventional library use, there have been a number of social uses for the library building, as is common in small towns. The top floor of the library has a stage and was used for plays, readings, and dances for many decades. In addition, residents had free use of a loom owned by the library. A knitting group has met in the library, and various meetings are scheduled there, such as the May "Cleanup Day" (*The Berkshire Eagle*, March 6, 2008). The upper floor was used for meetings of the historical society and the Great Barrington Historical Commission beginning in 1975. This floor also became archive storage, and it houses the Society's museum collections of historical art and artifacts, as well as an extensive photograph collection. Currently, the upper library room houses both the society's and the commission's archives, according to Historical Society archivist Gary Leveille.

Criterion C:

Architecture:

The Ramsdell Public Library is significant on a local level as a fine example of a small, early 20th-century Classical Revival-style library. Its original architects were the Boston firm of William H. McLean and Albert Hayden Wright. The building was designed, beginning in 1905, and construction was completed in 1908. It appears to have been a design reused by the architects in at least two later small-town libraries: the ca. 1909-1910 Shedd-Porter Memorial Library in Alstead, NH, and the ca. 1912 Weeks Memorial Library in Lancaster, NH.

The Ramsdell Library displays excellent historical physical integrity both inside and out. A one-story addition with raised basement was added to the rear of the building in 1928-1930 by the well-known Pittsfield firm of Harding and Seaver. The interior alterations to the library building are minor and the building retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

The integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association is tied to the north side of Main Street and the immediate area, and to the lives of the Ramsdell family itself. The library is flanked by two churches, the 1893-1894 Housatonic Congregational Church (NR 2002) on the east at 1089 Main St., and the St. Bridget, now St. Theresa, Roman Catholic Church on the west. The library is in keeping with the mixed-use institutional and residential function of Main Street. At the east end of Main Street, across the railroad tracks, is Monument Mills itself, and at the south side of Main Street is the former office of Monument Mills at 1100 Main Street. Across from that stands the house of the library's benefactor Theodore Ramsdell, owner of Monument Mills. On the south side of Main Street, across from the library, are the

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Monument Mills Workers Cottages. Theodore Ramsdell and his wife Mary were also active members of the congregational church, which received Mrs. Ramsdell's bequest when she died. Their sons, T. Ellis and Thomas S., were involved individually in both the church and the library.

The Classical Revival style became popular around 1895 in American architecture for private and public buildings alike. It followed various 19th-century revival styles, and its closest predecessor was the Colonial Revival style, beginning in the 1880s, with which it occasionally overlapped. Classical Revival was also a smaller-scaled example of the Neo-Classical Revival, beginning around 1895, but on a more monumental scale and used for important American buildings, especially museums, courthouses, memorials, and federal buildings. Classical Revival style harked back to the beginnings of American democracy and its roots in Greek and Roman thought, which were celebrated in 1876 at the Centennial International Exhibition in Philadelphia. The Classical Revival-style Ramsdell Library was designed with a front ceremonial set of stairs leading up to a two-story, front-centered portico. Detailing was Greek inspired. The Classical Revival was a dignified, quiet, and substantial style that was a perfect fit for small-town libraries and their role in American life. Following the World's Columbian Exhibition in Chicago in 1893, it became a very popular choice for architects throughout the United States at the turn of the century.

The design, workmanship, and materials of the library building are of high quality and measure favorably with a number of other small libraries in smaller towns in the region. The original architects, William Herbert McLean and Albert Hayden Wright, displayed a keen sense of function and design. Since the Ramsdell design was used for at least two other libraries, the architects seem to have been pleased with their Housatonic design. The materials and workmanship of the Ramsdell Library are notable. The exterior stone trim is marble, and the two giant Ionic columns at the front entrance were each cut out of a single stone and brought to the site, possibly from the marble quarries around Stockbridge, although there is no historical documentation on this. The tile floor design in the rotunda is well executed in a lovely multi-colored Greek meander pattern, and the architectural detail in the architrave and frieze of the rotunda is carefully designed and executed and topped by large dentils drawing the eye upward. This architrave is also supported by columns finished in scagliola, to imitate a multi-colored rich marbleized finish. The oak woodwork throughout retains its original finish, and lends quality and substance to the interior.

William Herbert McLean

William H. McLean was born in Boston, grew up in Newton, and attended the Massachusetts College of Art. According to his obituary in the *Middleboro Gazette* (Jan. 15, 1943), he spent more than 25 years maintaining an office in Tremont Temple, Boston, and residences at 78 Washington Avenue and in Nahant. He designed more than 60 schools and 40 libraries, mostly in New England. He drew up the plans for the Vermont and New Hampshire statehouses at the Eastern States Farmers Exposition in West Springfield, MA. His obituary also mentions the Provincetown High School, the North Attleboro Public Library, Bellows Free Academy at St. Albans, Vt., and the Middleborough Memorial Senior High School in Middleboro, MA. McLean is buried in Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, MA.

McLean's first known library design appears to have been the Richards Memorial Library in North Attleborough, built in 1894 in Colonial Revival style. The Richards family actually selected the Providence, RI, architectural firm of Gould, Angell and Swift, but the plans were drawn up by William H. McLean. Ramsdell Public Library seems to have set a pattern in the next two library designs by this firm. An extremely similar library design by McLean and Wright is the Shedd-Porter Memorial Library in Alsted, NH, designed and completed in 1909-1910 in the Beaux-Arts or Classical Revival style. It, too, was a gift to the town from private benefactors. The massing and overall size is similar to Ramsdell, with a projecting pedimented portico, Ionic columns, and a staircase leading to the front entrance, similar iron lamp standards, a raised basement, Classical detailing, three-part windows, and the same overall feeling as Ramsdell. McLean and Wright designed another small town library after this in Lancaster, NH, around 1912, which bears a close resemblance to the Ramsdell Library design. It is one story over a raised basement, with a deck roof, quoins, and stone trim, three-part windows, a grand stairway leading to the front entrance and pedimented portico, and a similar curved bay windows in the lateral side reading room.

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The entire corpus of McLean's building designs and architectural contracts is unknown. The Massachusetts Cultural Resources Information System (MACRIS) currently lists only nine properties designed by McLean in the state. Of these, only three in Massachusetts are dated before 1905 when McLean was given the contract for the Ramsdell Library; and one of these, the Needham First Baptist Church (1865), was built before McLean was born in 1871, so he perhaps did an alteration there. He is listed as having done some rowhouses at 408-410 Hanover Street in Boston in 1893 and the Richards Memorial Library in North Attleborough in 1894, before his Housatonic commission. The MACRIS database lists seven commissions between 1917 and 1926 in Massachusetts, five schools and two churches, all in and around towns surrounding Boston.

Albert Hayden Wright

The particulars of Albert Hayden Wright's life are not well known. The Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS) lists sixteen buildings he designed in Quincy; the first two in 1896, and the last two in 1917. The two 1896 buildings were Quincy schools: the Massachusetts Fields School (NR 1990) in Renaissance Revival style with architects Stephen O. Moxon and Schweinfurth and Craig, and the Gridley Bryant Elementary School. The 1900 Cranch Elementary School in Renaissance Revival style was designed by Wright with Anderson-Nichols and Company, and may have been his largest commission before the Ramsdell contract of 1905. Wright is described in Quincy as having worked either by himself or with McLean on his commissions. The other known schools and houses he designed in Quincy were done after McLean and Wright were hired in 1905 to design the Ramsdell Public Library.

Edward Hoyt Shaw, contractor

The contractor was Edward Hoyt Shaw (1849-1931). According to local historian Bernard Drew, Shaw's Great Barrington work included the masonry and brickwork on the Mahaiwe Theater (NRIND 2008), the Brewer Block, and an "elevated stone wall in front of Edward F. Searles' Barrington House." He most likely worked with other local contractors on the Ramsdell Library, since *The Berkshire Daily Press* mentions a Freeman Smith and his men working on the pillars and metal cornice on June 16, 1906, and a contractor named Fitzgerald working on the library on September 20, 1906.

The 1928-1930 addition was designed by the well-known Pittsfield architectural firm of Harding and Seaver. It was designed primarily to provide additional stack area at the rear of the original building for another 10,000 books. Their first-known sketch of the addition is dated January 12, 1928.

George C. Harding and Henry M. Seaver

When the Ramsdell Library needed more space in 1928, the Town of Great Barrington turned to the Pittsfield architectural firm of Harding and Seaver. Harding and Seaver happened to be working on designing a new parish house or social hall for the Housatonic Congregational Church next door to the library. The finished plans for this parish house were dated April 26, 1928, so the Pittsfield firm was conveniently "in the area." The preliminary plans for an "Addition to the Library Housatonic Mass." show a rear addition with a reference area, study, new lavatory, and expansion of the stacks behind the old stack room designed to hold an additional 10,000 volumes. The new rear addition included reinforced-concrete basement walls, a new coalbin in the basement, repositioning a new pad for a new boiler, tuck-pointing the stone foundation of the original structure, new concrete steps, a new hatchway from the basement to the outside on the east lateral wall, and particular care to reuse and reset windows and sills from the back of the original building into the back and sides of the new addition so as to match the architecture. The Roman brick courses of the new rear addition matched perfectly the Roman brick courses laid in the original exterior walls. The firm was known for this type of attention to detail. A new composition roof was put on the rear addition and new copper flashing installed to match the original. In final plans dated April 17, 1930, interior plaster walls and oak trim were matched to the original to make a seamless alteration and expansion. In short, Harding and Seaver lived up to their reputation as sensitive and competent architects in the design and execution of the rear addition to Ramsdell Public Library.

Both men had plenty of experience with important commissions and clients. By the time they were hired in the late 1920s to design the addition to Ramsdell Library, the Harding and Seaver firm had done other visible commissions in Berkshire County including the Lenox Town Hall (1903), the Museum of Natural History and Art in Pittsfield (1907),

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and the YMCA building on North Street in Pittsfield (1908). They also designed Lathrop Hall (1905) and Memorial Chapel (1914) at Colgate University in Hamilton, NY, and Colby Academy at New London, NH, and a host of Dalton buildings, including family residences, workers' housing, Crane offices, and mill buildings for the Crane Paper Company, all during the early 20th century. They seem to have been a particular favorite with the Crane family and the corporation they ran.

The senior partner of Harding and Sever was George C. Harding (1867-1921), a graduate of M.I.T., who became active professionally in 1896. He was in partnership with another Pittsfield architect, Charles Rathbun, briefly, but the firm dissolved in 1899. After working for a time, he formed a partnership with Henry M. Seaver in 1902, after which the Harding and Seaver firm built a wide and successful practice and executed many Colonial Revival and other revival-style commissions. Following the death of Harding in 1921, Seaver continued alone until 1933, still under the name of Harding and Seaver.

Archaeological Significance:

Since patterns of ancient Native American settlement in Great Barrington are poorly understood, any surviving sites could be significant. Ancient sites on the library property may contribute information for a greater understanding of Native American settlement and subsistence patterns in the uplands of western Massachusetts in general and inland portions of the Housatonic Drainage. Ancient sites in this area can improve our knowledge of Native people along the Housatonic River drainage, and their relationships with other Native socio/political groups to the south in the Connecticut area, to the west towards the Hudson River drainage in New York, or eastward to the Connecticut River locale. Ancient sites in this area may also be important in the study of Native American exchange systems and the role they played in the spread of technologies, ideas, and material goods between the areas noted above and eastern and southern coastal regions. Documented Native resources in the vicinity of the library have demonstrated the potential for ancient resources to survive in areas with similar locational characteristics as the library, and in the overall general area.

With the full knowledge that the Ramsdell Library building replaces previous occupations at this site in 1905-1908, and again in 1928 and 1930, it is unlikely that large-scale architectural or structural remains survive. However, historic archaeological resources associated with the VanDeusen or Turner houses on the library lot have the potential to provide information on the social, cultural, and economic characteristics that typified a segment of the Housatonic population that evolved from a rural agricultural settlement to a center for manufacturing and commerce in the 19th century. This may particularly true of the east side of the lot where the buildings associated with H.H.B. Turner stood. Turner's lot was the location of the first pioneer house built in Housatonic in 1809, so that it goes back to the very beginnings of permanent settlement in Housatonic. Any artifacts or structural evidence of the previous buildings or evidence of occupational-related features here have the potential to yield important cultural, social, or economic information on the early European history of Housatonic up to 1904. Any archaeological evidence of outbuildings or artifact distributions associated with the library's occupation of the property after 1904 could contain important information related to the operation and maintenance of the library, details of library construction, and activities conducted on library grounds.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: _____

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Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): GBR.267

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

Lat/Long 42.258143 -73.365918

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	18	634822	4679731	3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2				4			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary of the nominated property is shown on the Town of Great Barrington's (Village of Housatonic) Assessors' Sheet 2 as Lot 3.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nomination consists of the entire parcel historically associated with the Ramsdell Public Library.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Norene Roberts with Betsy Friedberg, National Register Director
organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date May 2014
street & number 220 Morrissey Boulevard telephone (617) 727-8470
city or town Boston state MA zip code 02125
e-mail betsy.friedberg@sec.state.ma.us

Ramsdell Public Library
Name of Property

Berkshire MA
County and State

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Ramsdell Public Library
City or Vicinity: Great Barrington (Village of Housatonic)
County: Berkshire **State:** MA
Photographer: Norene A. Roberts
Date Photographed: April 5, 2012 for photos # 1-7; Photo # 8 taken November 8, 2012.

1. View facing north of front facade
2. View facing northeast
3. View facing north from original stacks to newer 1928-30 stacks
4. View facing northeast from rotunda toward east reading room
5. View facing west from rotunda to west reading room
6. View facing northwest from west reading room toward original reference room to the north
7. View facing north toward the stage on second floor meeting room
8. View facing south at original building's rear wall (left) and east wall of 1928-30 addition (right)

Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Town of Great Barrington
street & number 334 Main Street telephone 413-528-1619
city or town Town of Great Barrington state MA zip code 01230

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

S T O C K B R I D G E



THE TOWN OF GREAT BARRINGTON
 ASSESSOR'S OFFICE USES A BASE MAP
 FOR EACH PAGE OF ITS TAX MAP FILE
 THAT ARE UPDATED ANNUALLY. WE DO NOT
 HAVE A SIMILAR MAP FROM A SPECIFIC
 HISTORICAL YEAR THAT REPRESENTS
 INDIVIDUAL PARCEL CONFIGURATIONS.

Chris

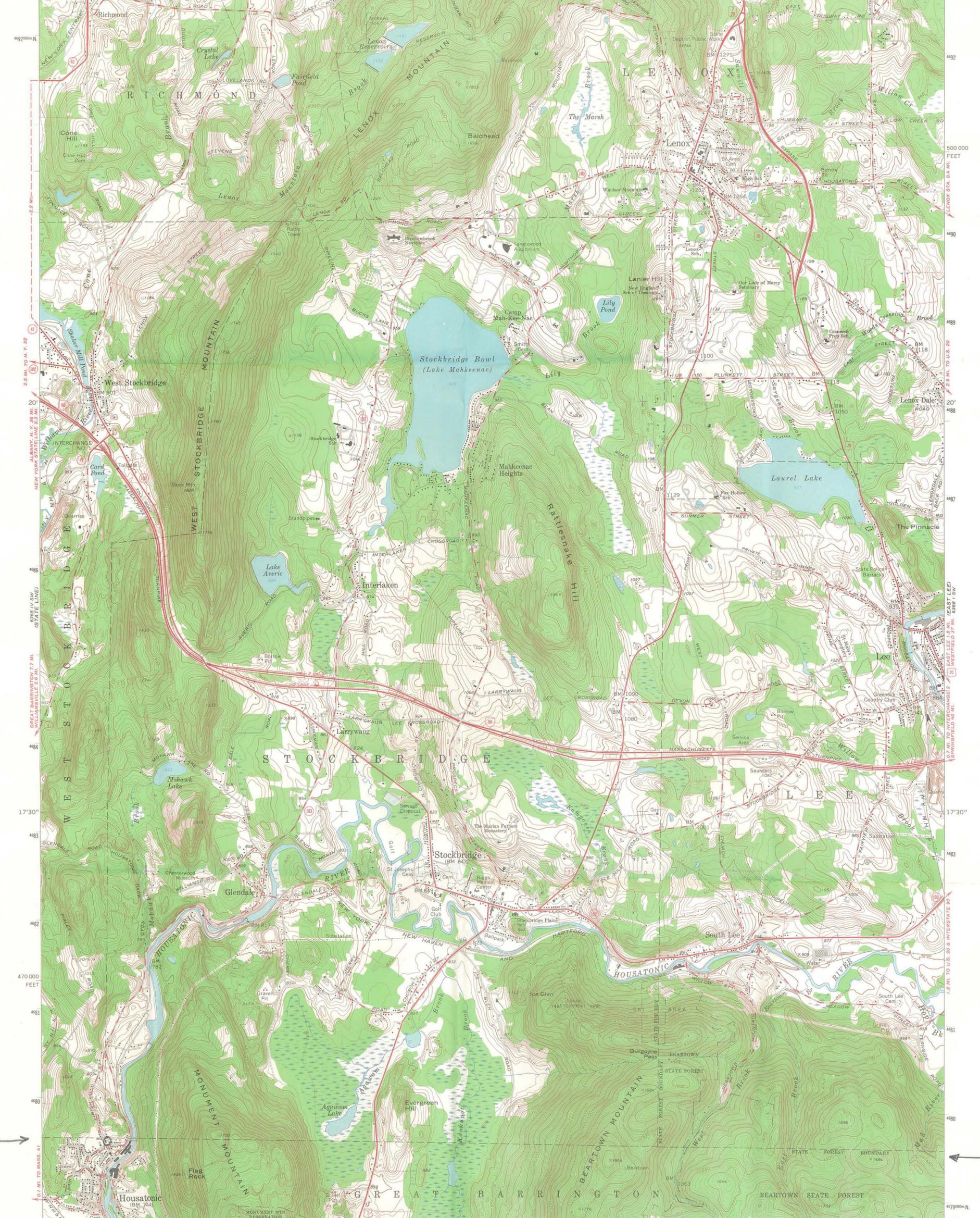
8-9-2012

CHRISTOPHER J. LAMARRE
 PRINCIPAL ASSESSOR

NOTE
 These Maps Are Not Intended
 For Use In Conveyancing

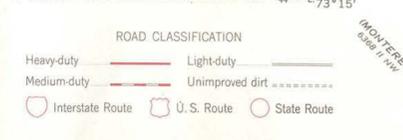
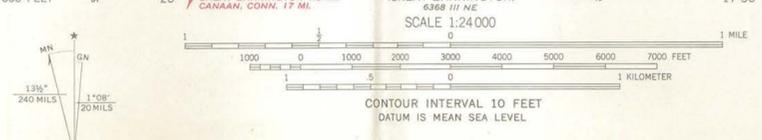
GREAT BARRINGTON	
SCALE	SHEET NO.
1" = 100'	2
GORDON E. AINSWORTH ASSOCIATES <small>Survey - Engineering - Landmark Architecture DEERFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS</small>	

73° 22' 30" 73° 22' 30" 73° 22' 30" WEST PITTSFIELD 4.9 MI. 437 20' 438 (PITTSFIELD WEST) 440 17' 30" 441 PITTSFIELD 5.3 MI. 1120 000 FEET 443 73° 15' 42' 22' 30"



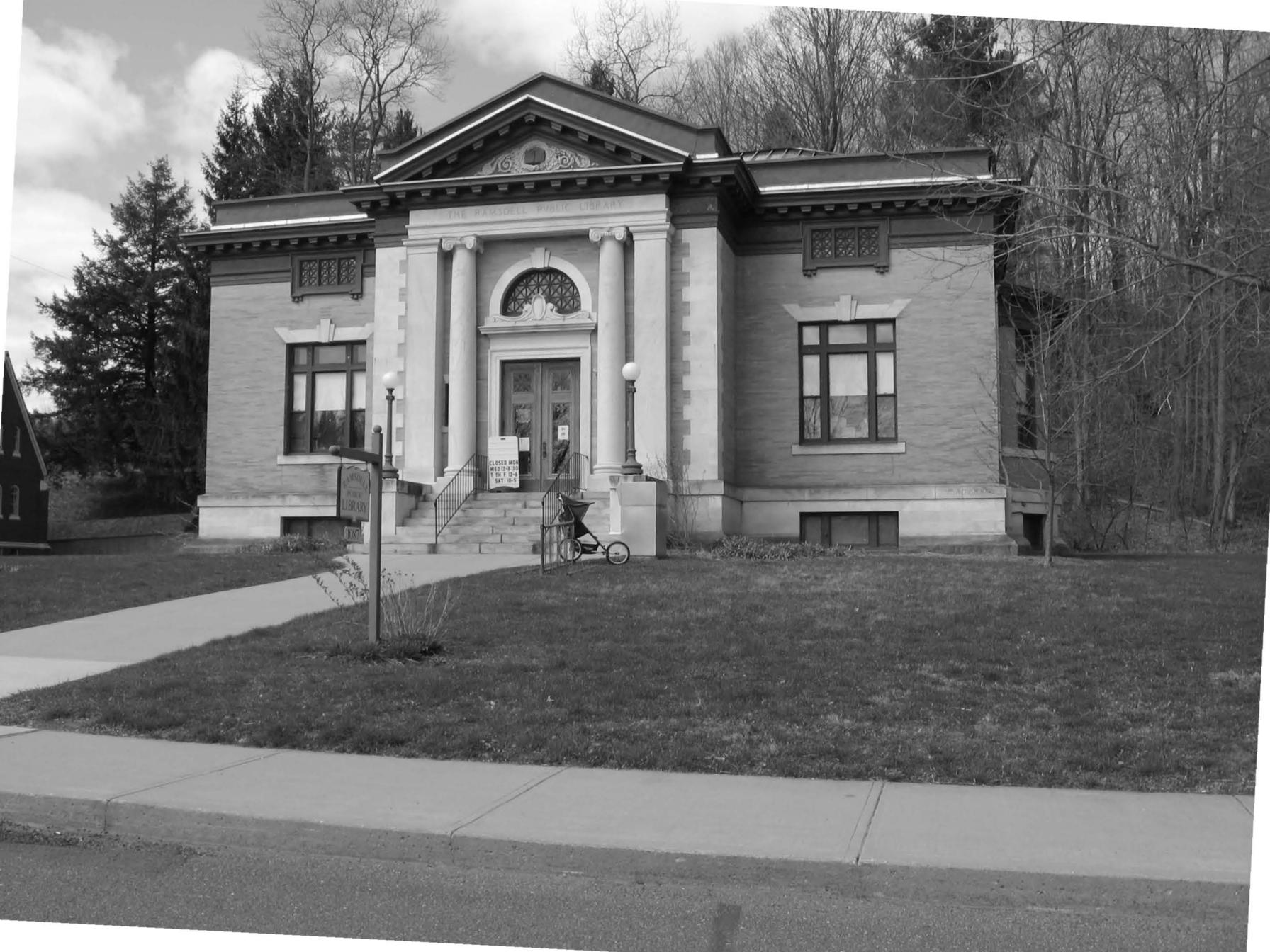
zone 18
E - 634822
N - 4679727

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey Control by USGS, USC&GS, Massachusetts Geodetic Survey, and Massachusetts Harbor and Land Commission
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1942. Field checked 1944. Revised 1959
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Massachusetts coordinate system, mainland zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 18, shown in blue
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked



THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242 A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

STOCKBRIDGE, MASS. N4215-W7315/7.5 1959 AMS 6368 IV SE-SERIES V814



THE RAMSDELL PUBLIC LIBRARY

CLOSED MON
WED 12-2:30
THUR 10-6
SAT 10-5

RAMSDELL
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

WINTER







EXIT



DEBATING IN GAIT
SCHWEL KAN AN SPYLLIG

Small table with a stool holding a display of books or pamphlets.



SEATINGS FOR
MATHS
SCIENCE AND ART
SUPPLIES



Y A B
& G F

THE
MELROSE
CENTER





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Ramsdell Public Library
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MASSACHUSETTS, Berkshire

DATE RECEIVED: 6/10/14 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 7/02/14
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 7/17/14 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 7/27/14
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 14000440

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 7-25-14 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

Massachusetts Historical Commission Digital Image Submission Form

Please submit one form for each group of digital images

About your digital files:

Camera Used (make, model): Canon PowerShot A540

Resolution of original image capture (camera setting including resolution and file format):
True BTW - .JPEG converted to .TIFF - 6MP

File name(s) (attach additional sheets if necessary) check here to refer to attached photo log:

MA - Great Barrington (Berkshire County) - Ramsdell Library BTW

About your prints:

Printer make and model: HP Photosmart D7360

Paper: brand & type (i.e., Epson Premium Glossy Photo)
HP Premium Photo - glossy

Ink: HP Vivera

Signature: (By signing below you agree that the information provided here is true and accurate.)

Signature: Deane A Roberts

Date: Nov. 15, 2012

Photo Log

Ramsdell Public Library, 1087 Main Street, Great Barrington (Village of Housatonic), Berkshire County, MA

Photo Number	Date	Subject	Facing
MA_Great Barrington (Berkshire County)_Ramsdell1.tif	5 Apr 2012	View facing north	N
MA_Great Barrington (Berkshire County)_Ramsdell2.tif	5 Apr 2012	View facing northeast	NE
MA_Great Barrington (Berkshire County)_Ramsdell3.tif	5 Apr 2012	View facing north from original stack area to newer 1928-1930 stacks	N
MA_Great Barrington (Berkshire County)_Ramsdell4.tif	5 Apr 2012	View facing northeast from rotunda toward east reading room	NE
MA_Great Barrington (Berkshire County)_Ramsdell5.tif	5 Apr 2012	View facing west from rotunda to west reading room	W
MA_Great Barrington (Berkshire County)_Ramsdell6.tif	5 Apr 2012	View facing northwest from west reading room toward original reference room to the north	NW
MA_Great Barrington (Berkshire County)_Ramsdell7.tif	5 Apr 2012	Second floor meeting room facing north toward the stage	N
MA_Great Barrington (Berkshire County)_Ramsdell8.tif	8 Nov 2012	View facing south at original building's rear (north) wall (left) and east wall of 1928-30 addition (right)	S

Kevin O' Donnell
Town Manager

E-mail: kodonnell@townofgb.org
www.townofgb.org



Town Hall, 334 Main Street
Great Barrington, MA 01230
Telephone: (413) 528-1619 x2
Fax: (413) 528-2290

Handwritten initials and signature in the top right corner.

TOWN OF GREAT BARRINGTON
MASSACHUSETTS

OFFICE OF THE TOWN MANAGER

RECEIVED

MAR 25 2013

MASS. HIST. COMM

March 14, 2013

Massachusetts Historical Commission
Massachusetts Archives Building
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, MA 02125

RE: Application for Ramsdell Public Library

To Whom It May Concern:

The Great Barrington Board of Selectmen at its meeting of March 13, 2012, with enthusiasm renewed its commitment in endorsing the application of the Ramsdell Public Library for nomination on the National Register of Historic Places.

Thank you for your consideration of the application.

Sincerely,

Kevin O'Donnell
Town Manager

KO/hk

Cc: Board of Selectmen
Library Director
Library Trustees
James Stark
Norene Roberts

NR plg BT



RECEIVED

APR 22 2013

MASS. HIST. COMM

March 22, 2013

Massachusetts Historical Commission
Massachusetts Archives Building
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, MA 02125

Re: Application for Ramsdell Public Library, Housatonic MA

Dear Commission Members:

The Great Barrington Libraries Board of Trustees strongly endorse the application for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places by Ramsdell Library. At our meeting on March 21 we renewed our commitment to preserving and maintaining this wonderful example of turn of the century architecture.

We believe that historic designation will help insure that our building will continue to be protected and cherished as an important community asset of the village of Housatonic.

Thank you for your consideration of the application.

Sincerely,

Great Barrington Board of Library Trustees

Holly Hamer, President

Edward Abrahams
MaryPat Akers
Kathy Plungis
Hilda Banks Shapiro
Emily Shaw



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth
Massachusetts Historical Commission

June 2, 2014

Mr. J. Paul Loether
National Register of Historic Places
Department of the Interior
National Park Service
1201 Eye Street, NW, 8th floor
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Mr. Loether:

Enclosed please find the following nomination form:

Ramsdell Public Library, 1087 Main Street, Great Barrington (Berkshire), MA

The nomination has been voted eligible by the State Review Board and has been signed by the State Historic Preservation Officer. The owners of the property were notified of pending State Review Board consideration 30 to 45 days before the meeting and were afforded the opportunity to comment.

Two letters of support have been received.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Betsy Friedberg".

Betsy Friedberg
National Register Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission

enclosure

cc: Norene Roberts, consultant
Paul Ivory, Great Barrington Historical Commission
Sean Stanton, Great Barrington Board of Selectmen
Holly Hamer, Great Barrington Libraries Board of Trustees
Jonathan Hankin, Great Barrington Planning Board
Kevin O'Donnell, Great Barrington Town Manager



Ramsdell Library
1087 Main Street
Housatonic, MA 01236
gblibraries.org