



**Bennington Free  
Library  
Established 1865**

## **Building the future, preserving the past**

Libraries are the third room in their respective communities: neither home nor school, they provide opportunities for personal enrichment, learning and growth unlike any other institution. For more than 150 years the Bennington Free Library has been a pioneering educational and social organization in our community.

Located in the historic district of Bennington, the library serves as an anchor destination of the business center, last year attracting over 93,000 individuals downtown to use library facilities. Patrons checked out 76,719 items and 12,716 patrons participated in 176 programs sponsored by the library and local organizations. While downtown those same individuals, shop, bank, dine at local establishments and otherwise contribute to the vitality of our business center.

The current library bears little resemblance to its origins: established as a reading room on the heels of the Civil War in 1865, it has evolved to meet the ever changing needs of our community: offering programs, training, technology access and resources which entertain, teach and sustain individuals' intellectual and cultural interests throughout their lives. It is a role unique to libraries and one at which our library excels.

Library programs and services have evolved and embraced the information needs of our 21<sup>st</sup> century population but the library structure has remained largely unimproved. The original Main Street building housed the library and commercial enterprises until 1936 when descendants of the original donors gifted a new building, now the Silver Street wing. In time the library outgrew that space and in 1986 the original 1865 Main Street and the 1936 Silver Street structures were joined.

These have served the community well over the years but aging buildings require ongoing maintenance at significant cost. Over the past decade, library board and staff members have utilized grant and private funding to replace chimneys and ancient boilers, improve efficiency through lighting and structural improvements, repair crumbling brickwork and much more. As with any aging structure, there is always more to be done. In order to maintain the integrity of the building and provide a safe environment for our patrons and visitors, it is critical that we continue to address ongoing structural issues in an organized fashion.

In 2015 the Library board consulted with a local architectural firm and identified the roof as the most critical structural element in need of restoration. Slate on all areas of the roof have outlived their useful life by decades. Water damage, falling tiles and structural deterioration confirm the need to address this issue immediately.

Through the generosity of our patrons, individual donors and local businesses, funding for work on the Main Street section of the roof has been secured (\$108,303.00) and will commence in the fall of 2016. Phase II of the project (2018) will involve replacement of the Silver Street and connecting section roofs for a projected cost of \$169,072.00.

Phase III priorities (2020-21) include replacement of the original exterior wooden doors (\$5,000), replacement of flooring in the Main Street building's meeting rooms and offices as well as the Children's Room. (\$49,955.00) and upgrades to the heating system (\$20,000.00). This phase of the project will continue our work to increase the efficiency of the library structure as well as address safety and health issues.

Future needs include replacement of first floor windows in in the Main Street structure, replacement of existing "dumbwaiter" in the stacks with a safe and efficient model, restoration of the historic "Library Sign" on the Main Street building and replacement of the entrance steps on the Main Street face of the building, all to be addressed as funding becomes available.

The Library has made great progress in the preservation of the building over the past decade utilizing grant and private funding. It has funding in hand for the first part of a major restoration of the roof, but will need considerable community support to realize additional preservation measures. Phases II and III of our capital improvement plan are projected to cost \$250,000 and we will be seeking support from corporate sponsors as well as from our local government, preservation grants and private individuals.

Project details are included as a supplement to this document.

9/20/2016

Bennington Free Librar  
Capital Improvement Plan  
2016 - 2021

Description	Cost Estimates	Project Timeline	Notes
Roof replacement: Main Street	\$98,458.00	Fall 2016	
10% contingency	\$9,845.00		
<b>Total Phase I:</b>	<b>\$108,303.00</b>		
Roof replacement: Silver Street and Connector	\$153,702.00	Fall 2018	
10% contingency	\$15,370.00		
<b>Total Phase II:</b>	<b>\$169,072.00</b>		
Replace existing exterior doors on Silver Street			
Reference, stacks, basement, original entrances (5)	<b>\$5,000.00</b>	Spring/summer 2020	
Replace heating system controls in Main Street Building	<b>\$20,000 (est)</b>	Spring/summer 2020	
Replace flooring: upstairs Main Street (meeting rooms,hall, offices)		Spring/summer 2021	
vinyl plank (includes lifetime warranty)	<b>\$32,157.00</b>		
Replace flooring: children's room and downstairs halls		Spring/summer 2021	
vinyl plank (lifetime warranty)	<b>\$17,798.00</b>		
<b>Total Phase III:</b>	<b>\$75,000.00</b>		
<b>Extended projections (ranked in order of priority)</b>			
Replace dumbwaiter in Reference area			
Replace windows on first floor: children's, offices, etc.			
Replace/Remove/Restore Main Street steps			
Restore historic "Library" sign on Main Street building			
Approved 9/20/2016			