Bennington Free Library

Long Range Plan

2014 - 2019

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Library Board of Directors

Adopted by the Bennington Free Library Board of Directors, November 18, 2014

Introduction

The Bennington Free Library's approaching 150th anniversary offered an opportunity to explore the community's expanding need for library services and to formalize a strategy for addressing those needs. The resulting document identifies our goals for 2014 through 2019.

From June 1st through September 15th of 2012 library staff conducted a survey of the Bennington community utilizing print and online surveys. Press releases were published in the Bennington Banner, the local radio station (WBTN) and featured on the library's homepage. News of the survey in the summer edition of the library's newsletter reached over 1000. Print versions were available in the library and online via Webmonkey, an online survey. Copies were also mailed to individuals by request. The survey was intended to gather direct input regarding the interests and needs of our community and to assist the library board and staff in developing a plan of action.

184 people responded to the survey, including 116 online and 68 in print. (See Appendix A: 1-19 for complete survey results) Not all respondents completed the survey, answering some questions and not others. Among those who answered question #3: *How often do you visit the library?*: 7.6 % visit the library daily, 47.2 % weekly, 32.06% monthly, 10.3 % yearly and 4.3% indicated this was their first visit.

Initial planning consisted of meetings with staff to develop the survey; later meetings with key staff considered survey results, suggestions from patrons to staff as well as individual staff member's recommendations.

Yearly reports submitted to the Vermont Department of Libraries annually for the years 2008 through 2012 were considered throughout the evaluation process. Statistics include annual circulation, program attendance, computer use, reference transactions, collection size, and more. (See Appendix B: pages 1-3)

Census data from the 2010 census yielded important information about our community regarding household and family characteristics, educational achievement and income.

The survey, DOL reports, census data and input from staff were used to develop a set of institutional priorities for the next five years, recognizing the limited financial resources available to the library. (See Appendix C)

In general, survey responses confirmed what staff have been hearing from patrons for many years: that the library needs to offer wireless access, expand its hours of operation, increase the number of computer terminals available, offer additional options for online circulation.

Despite these "deficiencies" circulation levels have remained consistently high with an 8.5% increase over the previous year. The number of active borrowers continues to increase steadily as does the number of computer instruction sessions each year. Use of the public access terminals declined slightly over a 4 year period but is once again on the rise, and the need for computer instruction remains high. This suggests that the library is adequately meeting community needs, though there is always room for improvement.

Community profile

Bennington offers visitors and residents a mix of natural resources, scenic attributes, cultural venues and historic attractions. The town has evolved from a mixed agricultural and manufacturing center into a community with considerable historic resources, established cultural venues, and an excellent school system.

Despite these attributes, the community is still struggling to address poverty (53.7% of school aged children in the SWVSU qualify for free or reduced lunch), engage our youthful population, develop a strong and diverse economy and foster an educated workforce during a period of shrinking local revenues.

The Library's service area population is 21,421. 4.75% of the population is under 5 years of age, 20% between the ages of 5 to 19 years, and 11.5% of the population is 70 years or older, with a median age of 39 years.

70.4 % of homes in the library's service area are owner occupied vs. 71.4% state average 26.7% of family households include children under 18 year of age. Of those, 10.35% of households are single parent households with children under the age of 18.

Home to Bennington College, Southern Vermont College and the Community College of Vermont, the higher education achievement of the service area is below the state average. 35% of the population over 25 have high school degrees (vs VT: 31.7%); however, the percentage falls below the state average for those with an Associates Degree (7.17% vs VT: 8.4%); Bachelor's degree: (15.72% vs VT 20.5%); graduate or professional degree: (12.3 vs VT: 13.3%)

The same census indicates that incomes are below average as well: the median family income is $57,888.00 ($66,340.00 Vermont:) And a per capita income of $24,024.00 ($28,376.00 Vermont). Poverty levels are above average for the state with 27.6% of residents living below the poverty level for the past 12 months, compared to the state average of 11.3%

Bennington's demographic profile presents a challenge for the library in terms of resource allocation, as staff attempt the complex task of providing basic to high end services which satisfy the needs of a diverse patron base.

Bennington Free Library
Mission Statement

The Bennington Free Library provides materials and services that will meet the educational, informational, cultural and recreational needs of the community.

It is the Library's aim to:

* stimulate use of its collections by informing the public of the resources available and by providing guidance in their use,
* provide free access to a wide range of opinions and ideas,
* develop collections and services in response to community needs, and
* cooperate with community organizations in stimulating educational and cultural activities.

The public library is a unique cultural institution within the community in that it is the only one that freely provides opportunities for educational growth and personal development throughout the individual's lifetime.

Our responsibility goes beyond providing books and information to those who are already confirmed library users. We aim to provide a dynamic library program that will advertise our services, attract non-users, and provide for and promote reading and self-development throughout the community.

Long range goals:

Increase library usage by all age groups through expanded programming and outreach.

Expand number of programs for adults which encourage personal enrichment and support life-long learning.

Proceed with repairs and upgrades to maintain facility and address aesthetic issues.

Establish a development plan to address short and long term needs of library.

Provide adequate funding in personnel budget to improve wages and benefits and provide regular training opportunities for library staff.

Bennington Free Library

Long Range Goals 2014 – 2019

Goal 1: Public Service: Increase library usage by all age groups through expanded programming and outreach.

Objectives:

1. **Expand publicity and outreach to increase public awareness of library programs and services.**

   Capitalize on upcoming 150th Anniversary to promote library
   Host Chamber Mixer in 2015 for 150th
   Participate in "Geek the Library" campaign
   Utilize Social Media: Facebook and Twitter
   Schedule monthly appearances on WBTN
   Distribute promotional materials through Chamber of Commerce to new families
   *   and social service agencies*

   Outcomes:

   1. Patron registrations will increase by 20% by 2019: recruitment will
      target new families as well as existing residents of the community

2. **Expand services and encourage collaboration with area organizations and businesses.**

   Expand library website to offer more local and research content
   Increase the number of adult programs offered throughout the year
   Promote wireless access to users of meeting rooms
   Expand E-Books and downloadable audio collections
   Offer group introductory level workshops on technology
   Reinstate Thursday and Friday morning hours of operation

   Outcomes:

   1. Attendance at library programs will increase by 5% each year
   2. Public hours will be expanded to include Friday mornings (4 hours) by 2019
   3. Circulation of all materials will increase by 5% yearly
   4. Use of meeting rooms will increase by 10% by 2019
   5. Library fundraisers will include local venues as appropriate

3. **Promote Vermont History Room and its collections.**

   Increase number of hours the room is open to the public
   Create and promote "Bennington Collection"
   Create and promote online finding aids
   Create video introduction to "Bennington Collection"

Outcomes:

1. Volunteers will be recruited to work increased hours each shift
2. Finding aids to the collections will be published online by 2017
3. Video introduction to the collection will be published online by 2019

Goal 2: Facilities: Maintain and Upgrade Facilities to preserve historic structure and ensure safety of patrons and staff.

Objectives:

1. **Develop Fire/Evacuation and Emergency/Disaster Plan.**

   Outcomes:

   1. Approved disaster plan in place by end of 2015 calendar year

2. **Address facilities issues to preserve integrity of historic building, improve its' energy efficiency and maintain safe premises.**

   Restore slate roof
   Paint and restore Union Street entrances
   Replace and upgrade 1st floor windows in Main Street building
   Investigate replacement thermostats for Main Street building
   Explore options for increased parking
   Explore treatments for Palladian Windows in Circulation area

   Outcomes:

   1. Maintenance reserve fund (1% of budget) included in yearly budget

3. **Address aesthetic issues.**

   Improve exterior and interior signage
   New bicycle rack out front
   Upgrade landscaping in the entrance and courtyard areas
   Paint meeting rooms
   Replace carpeting in meeting rooms and hallways on 1st and 2nd floors
   Replace window treatments in Reference, Quiet, YA and Children's rooms

   Outcomes:

   1. Interior signs will improve accessibility to departments and collections
   2. Exterior signs on Main Street and Main/Silver will identify library
   3. Meeting rooms will be painted by 2017 and thereafter on a rotating basis every (ten) years.
   4. Carpet will be replaced in meeting rooms and hallways by 2019
   5. Landscaping will be aesthetically pleasing but require minimal upkeep
   6. New window treatments (blinds) installed in all areas by 2018

Goal 3: Institutional Development: Financial resources will be increased to ensure the library's financial stability.

Objectives:

1. Create Development Plan to meet the short and long term financial needs of the library.

Establish a Development Committee on the board

2. Adopt a systematic approach to identify and solicit funding support from area individuals.

Conduct yearly review of donor list by board members

3. Capitalize on 150th Anniversary to solicit larger donations for targeted projects.

4. Plan yearly fundraising events to generate operating income.

Featured speakers/authors
Competitions: ugly sweater
Annual book sale

5. Website to include online giving interface.

6. Update literature re: legacies and bequests: distribute to area banks and law practices.

Outcomes:

1. Increased support from local government
2. Online donation interface included on website by 2015
3. Legacy and bequest literature updated and distributed by 2015

Goal 4: Personnel Development: Wages and benefits will be upgraded. Staff will receive training and educational support in order to meet the evolving needs of the community and the demands of a changing library environment.

Objectives:

1. Salaries and benefits will be competitive with comparable public library and educational institutions in Vermont.

2. Professional Development budget will provide funding for professional staff to attend regional and national conferences.

3. Professional Development budget will provide funding for staff training in *emerging* technologies.

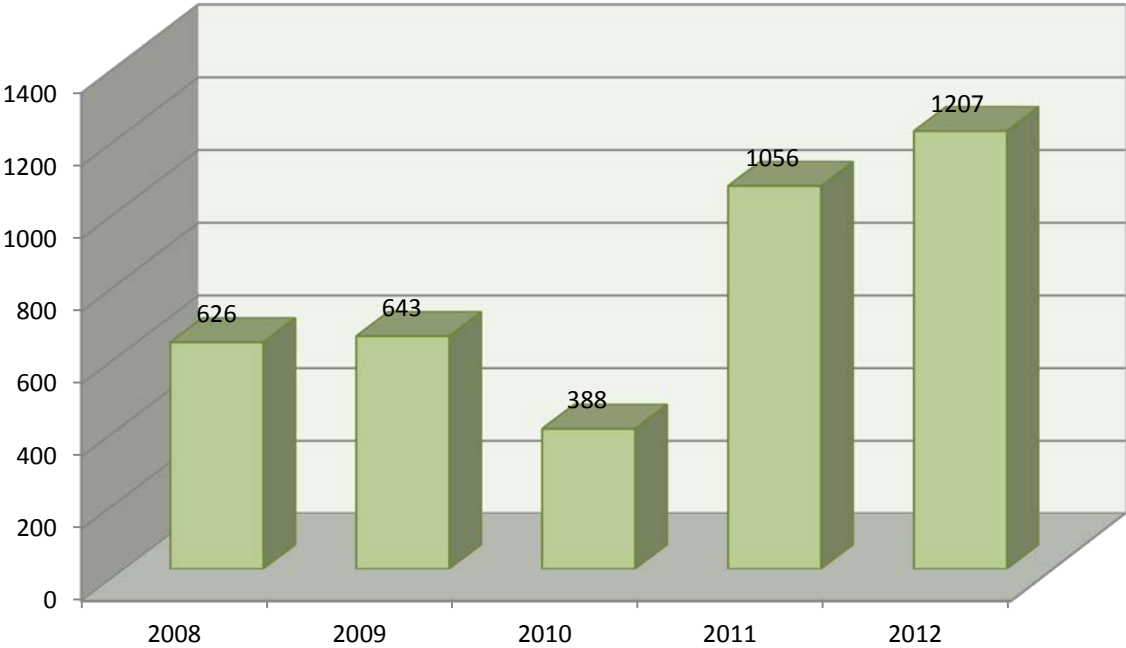**4. Budget will be increased to accommodate changes in staffing.**

Increase buildings and grounds position to full time with benefits
Reinstate children's room coverage by support staff on Monday mornings
Reinstate Thursday and Friday morning hours

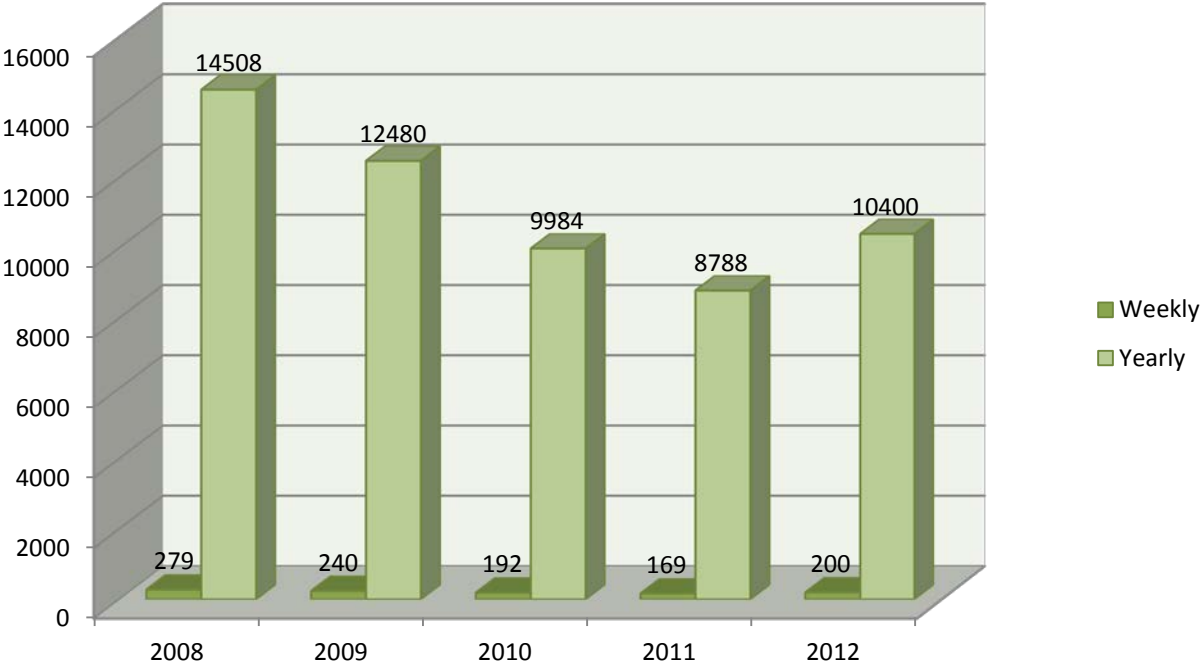**5. Staff will receive regular training in customer service principles/procedures.**

Outcomes:

1. Professional Development line will be increased 20% each year
2. Personnel budget will be increased to upgrade wages and salaries, and restore Friday morning hours by 2019
3. Customer service training will be offered yearly beginning in 2015

Computer Instruction 2008-2012

Year	Value
2008	626
2009	643
2010	388
2011	1056
2012	1207

Computer Use (# Users) Week/Year 2008-2012

Year	Weekly	Yearly
2008	279	14508
2009	240	12480
2010	192	9984
2011	169	8788
2012	200	10400

Appendix B: 3

Program Attendance: 2008-2012

Children:
- 2008: 12714
- 2009: 13598
- 2010: 12272
- 2011: 15439
- 2012: 13223

Adult:
- 2008: 450
- 2009: 325
- 2010: 489
- 2011: 312
- 2012: 331

Total:
- 2008: 13164
- 2009: 13923
- 2010: 12761
- 2011: 15751
- 2012: 13554

Legend: children, adult, total
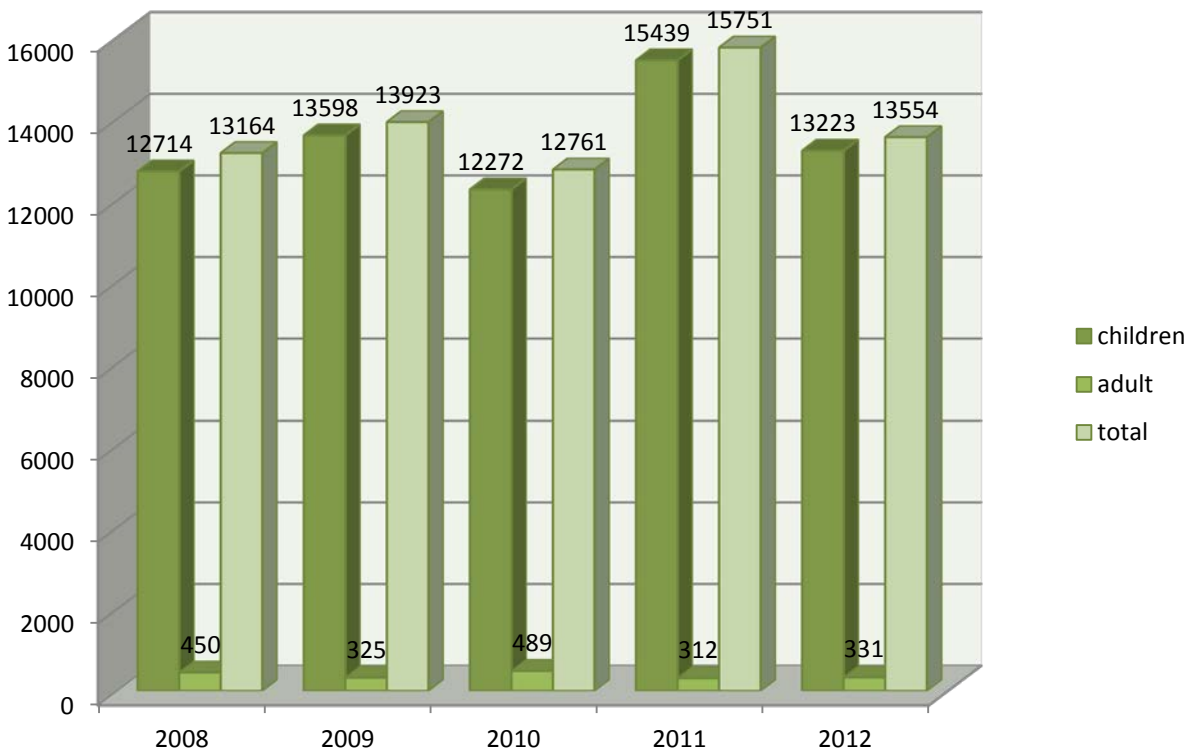
Reference Transactions: Week/Year 2008-2012

Weekly:
- 2008: 321
- 2009: 281
- 2010: 234
- 2011: 196
- 2012: 216

Yearly:
- 2008: 16692
- 2009: 14612
- 2010: 12168
- 2011: 10192
- 2012: 11232

Legend: weekly, Yearly

Appendix B: 2
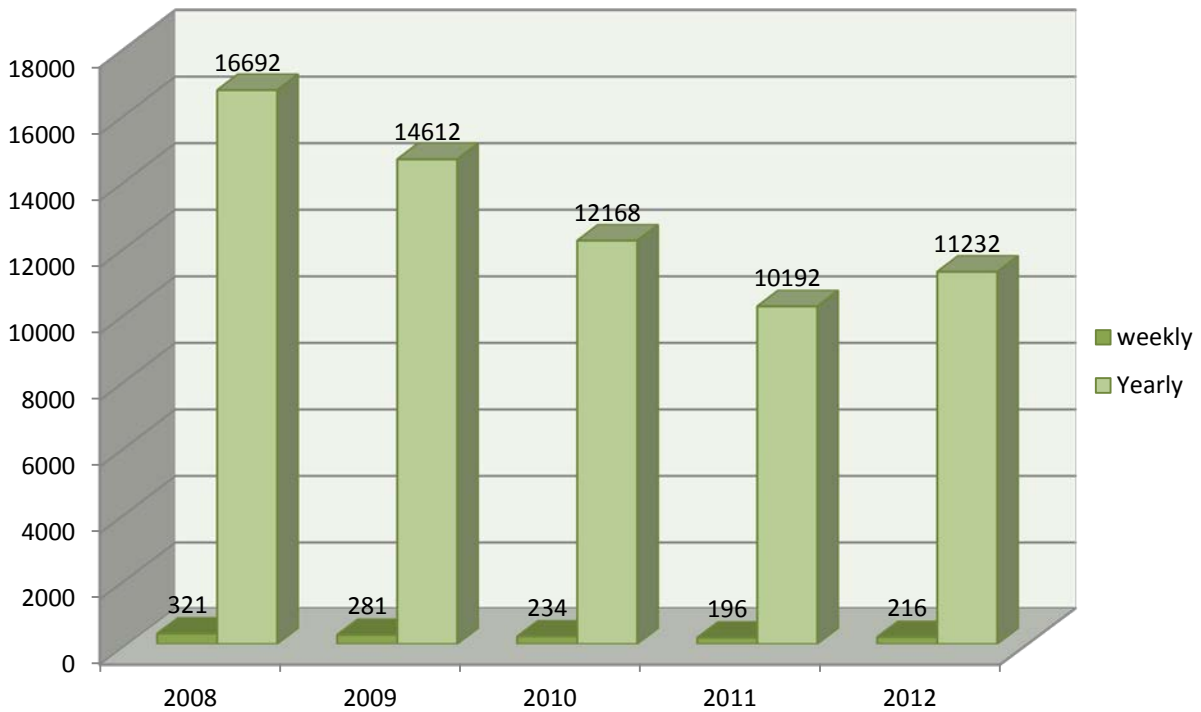
Active Borrowers: All 2008-2012

	children	adult	total
2008	1116	4239	5355
2009	1404	4787	6191
2010	1631	5370	7001
2011	1822	5824	7647
2012	2142	6234	8376
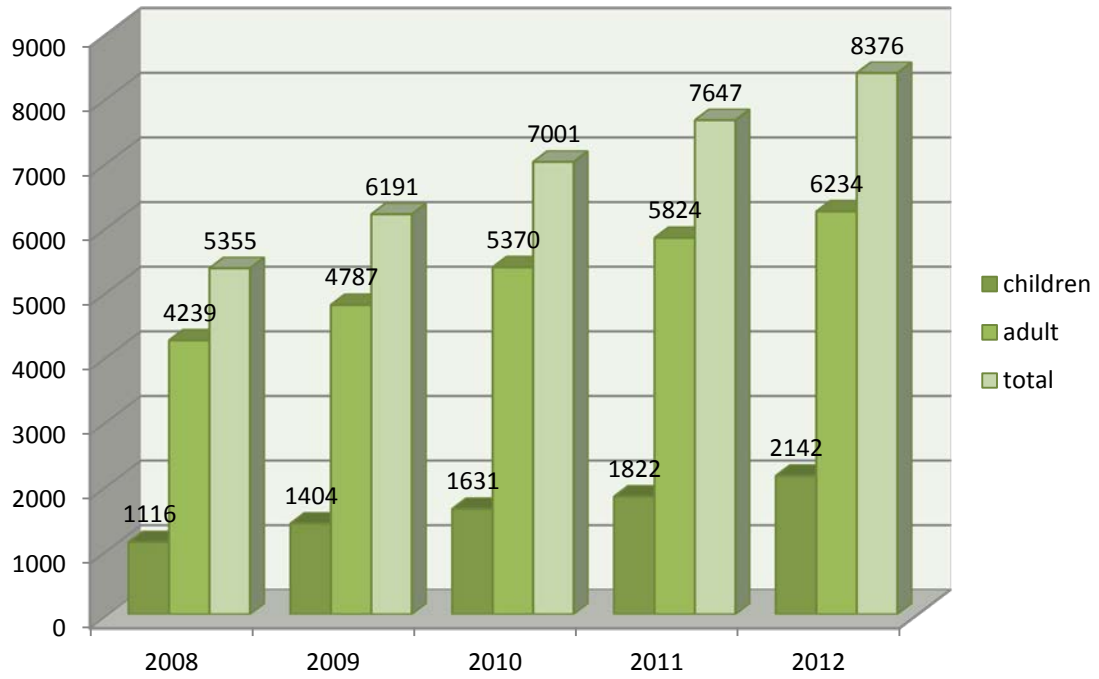
Circulation All borrowers 2008-2012

	children	adult	total
2008	30699	57219	87918
2009	32291	56030	88321
2010	33486	55251	88737
2011	30901	56414	87315
2012	29211	66252	95463

Appendix B: 1
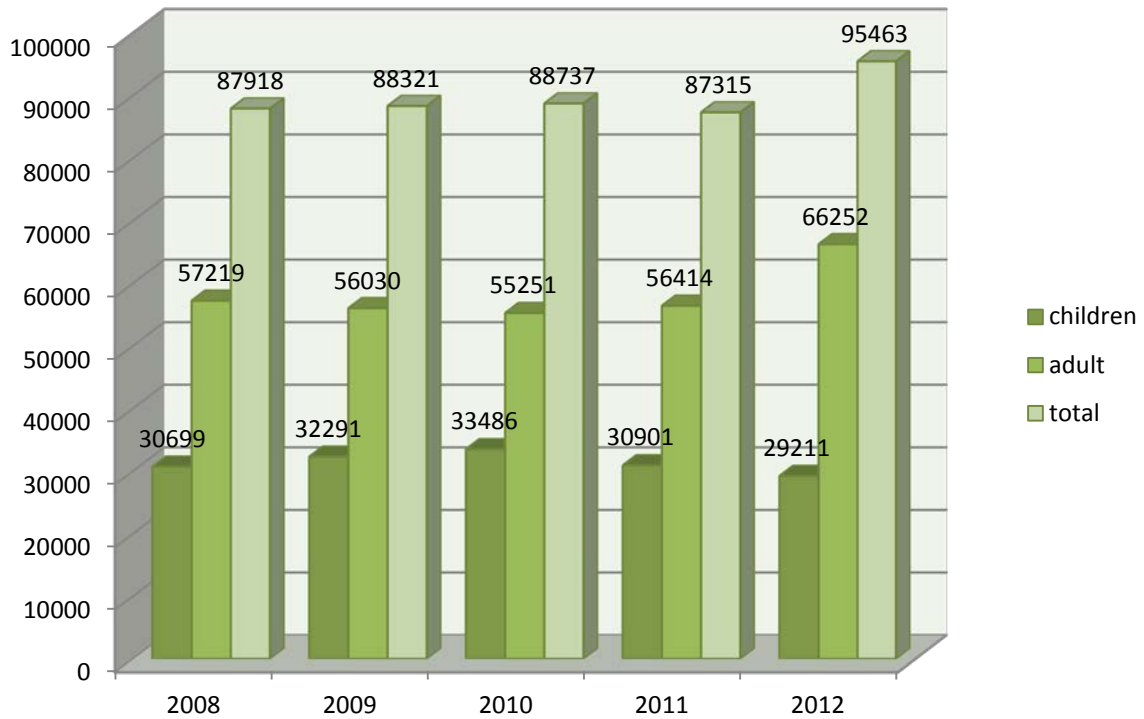
Per Capita Tax Support 2008-2012
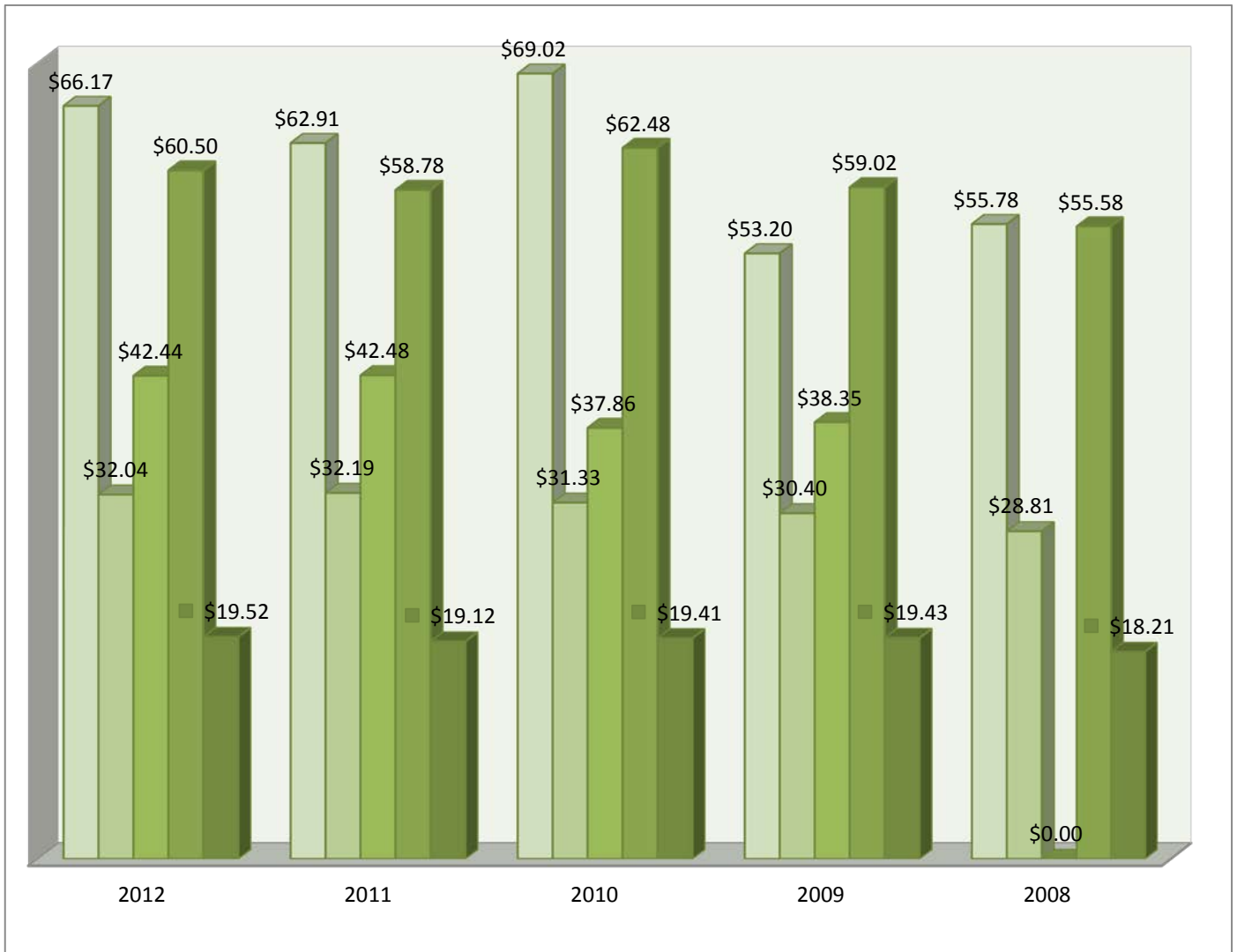
	Bennington	Brattleboro	Burlington	Rutland	Springfield
2008	$18.21	$55.58	n/a	$28.81	$55.78
2009	$19.43	$59.02	$38.35	$30.40	$53.20
2010	$19.41	$62.48	$37.86	$31.33	$69.02
2011	$19.12	$58.78	$42.48	$32.19	$62.91
2012	$19.52	$60.50	$42.44	$32.04	$66.17

Appendix C