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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF FACILITIES MASTER PLAN  
FOR  
POUDRE RIVER PUBLIC LIBRARY DISTRICT**

**June 10, 2009**

**Adopted by the  
Poudre River Public Library District Board of Trustees  
July 6, 2009**



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Poudre River Public Library District (the District) was created in 2006 as a result of a successful ballot issue. Previously, library services had been provided by the City of Fort Collins. The District is governed by a seven-member board of trustees jointly appointed by the Fort Collins City Council and the Larimer County Commissioners. The District covers a large geographic area of 1,780 square miles and has boundaries substantially the same as Poudre School District. Population of the District is approximately 170,000. Ninety percent of that population lives within the City of Fort Collins or its growth management area.

Library services are provided by the Main Library in downtown Fort Collins; the Harmony Library, a joint use facility on the Front Range Community College Larimer Campus in southwest Fort Collins; and the new Council Tree Library in southeast Fort Collins.

This facilities master plan is the result of the District's continuing long-range planning efforts. The board adopted a strategic plan in 2008 which sets service priorities through 2011. To help accomplish these service priorities, the District hired Aaron Cohen Associates to create a facilities master plan. The plan identifies the space needs of the District and recommends expanded and additional facilities needed to meet those needs. The plan also explores options to extend services to outlying areas.

Since its founding the District has worked to provide a complete range of excellent library services to residents in the limited spaces provided by its current facilities. The District offers broad collections of library materials, year-round programming for all ages, and reference services. The opening of the new Council Tree Library in March of 2009 greatly increased District services to the southeast area of the District. However the District's ability to provide adequate seating, meeting and gathering areas and comfortable spaces throughout all its facilities requires additional physical space in both the short and long term.

In 2005, the Colorado State Library, Colorado Department of Education issued its Colorado Public Library Standards. The standards use square footage per capita to define library facilities as essential, enhanced or comprehensive. The District, with 81,700 square feet of library space, or 0.5 square feet per capita, currently has the space to provide only the essential, or most basic, services as defined by the Colorado Public Library Standards. However, the District currently operates at an enhanced level by providing many services above and beyond the basic services. The higher level of services offered to the community is straining the capacity of our existing facilities and limiting the ability to fully implement our strategic plan.

The District currently lacks the necessary space to satisfy the many library needs of our residents. Current seating and study areas are limited and frequently crowded, public computing space is constrained, many collections areas are congested and less than optimal for easy browsing, and program and meeting spaces are too small to meet increasing demands. The recommendations in this plan would increase the District's facilities space by 54,625 square feet. The result would be 0.8 square feet per capita, which would bring the District's space up to the enhanced level.

The eight specific recommendations for facility enhancements and additions contained within this plan are as follows:

1. The District should adopt a more comprehensive regional library strategy that can provide services to its entire community. The strategy should include the addition of a service center.
2. The District should undertake a modest expansion and full remodel of the Main Library building while preserving and enhancing Library Park. This should be accomplished with existing financing in the near term.
3. The District should perform a library service assessment of express kiosks, book drops and materials by mail, particularly for outlying areas, and develop a comprehensive plan for optimal services throughout the District.
4. The District should centralize its service operations in a service center.
5. The District should perform an operational analysis for acquiring an automated sorting system.
6. The District's board of trustees should explore a Library Park plan by working with the City of Fort Collins and the Downtown Development Authority to integrate the Main Library and Carnegie Building into the Library Park's landscaping and flow. This may include creating a semi-enclosed plaza area and walkway between the two buildings.
7. Within the next five to ten years, the District should construct an approximately 49,000 square foot complex that would contain a regional library and service center with an option for community meeting space as part of a shared facility.
8. Harmony Library's meeting space should be expanded within the next five to ten years. The District does not own the Harmony Library building. Modifying or expanding the library will depend on cooperation between the District and Front Range Community College in all aspects of feasibility considerations, planning and potential implementation.

The total cost of the recommended improvements is approximately \$23 million; partial funding for these improvements could come from funds on hand, grants and capital fundraising efforts. However, increased revenue to pay for the majority of this cost will be needed.

During Aaron Cohen Associates' interaction with community members, the consulting team received very favorable comments about the services provided by the District. Comments were straightforward and critical concerning the need for updated and expanded facilities, but were very complementary concerning services and operations of the libraries.