

Part One: A New Snow Library Overview

Q: Why is a new library needed?

A: Originally constructed in 1954, Snow Library is almost 70 years old and showing its age in numerous ways. While the 1977 and 1992 additions provided additional space for collections, the town's population has grown significantly. The building that served approximately 2,000 users in 1954 and 5,800 in 1992, does not meet the needs of the nearly 6,500 residents (which soars to over 20,000 in the summer) of today and into the future. The current building is bursting at the seams with over 128,000 items and hundreds of programs each year. It's also noisy due to not enough enclosed rooms; energy inefficient and not a green building; lacks sufficient community and meeting space; lacks current technology infrastructure; fails to meet current building, fire, and accessibility codes; and, has a significant and growing list of maintenance issues. Thorough library planning efforts over the last decade have documented a case that it's time to provide a 21st century building for the town that will serve the community of the future.

Q: At the May 8th, 2023 Town Meeting voters approved Article 45 for a New Snow Library Feasibility Task Force and \$180,000 towards planning for a new library. What will this study do and when will it be completed?

A: The study began in October 2023, and is expected to be completed in April 2024. The Boston architectural firm Oudens Ello Architecture was awarded a contract to complete the study under the direction of the town appointed five member Task Force. The group will complete a number of planning projects, including conducting a site survey plan, a geotechnical investigation, and hazardous materials assessment, identifying an alternative for a second possible library site, a massing exercise to examine what features are needed in a new facility, research on possible zoning or regulatory hurdles, develop basic building layout concepts, and a final report. The Task Force will also make sure any other action items needed for eligibility are completed for the State MBLC grant program Snow Library intends to apply for in May 2024.

Q: What is the next step after the feasibility study is completed?

A: The Snow Library Board of Trustees and the Library Director intend to file an application for a construction grant with the State towards building a new Library. The application is due in May 2024 and a decision will be made in the late fall.

Q: What size is the current library and what size building is being proposed?

A: The current library is 16,568 square feet and the proposed new library would be around 24,000 square feet.

Q: What would a new library mean for residents and visitors? What will a new library have that it doesn't have now?

A: In addition to addressing the well-documented design and building flaws, accessibility issues and code violations, noise issues, maintenance and safety issues, and general need for space, a new building will have a lot to offer residents and visitors and be a huge improvement over the current building.

A modern facility will be fully accessible, provide a separate children's and teen's rooms, offer a quiet reading and study space for library users, climate controlled space for historical collections, considerable natural light, increased parking (64 spots when there are only 38 now), and be both green and very energy efficient. A new library will also have more staff and meeting rooms for library and community programs and will be available to town committees, local groups, volunteer, and other organizations for use throughout the day. There will also be a larger community room that can also be accessed when the library is closed. Many of these spaces would be equipped with state of the art technology that will allow teleconferencing and live streaming. The adjacent library grounds would be integrated with the Village Green with patio outdoor spaces for programming.

Q: Who is responsible for this project and are they seeking public input?

A: The seven member, elected Board of Trustees of Snow Library is responsible for the project, and is working closely with the Library Director and staff, the Select Board, other town departments, and a number of other committees as well as the recently created New Snow Library Feasibility Task Force. The Task Force public input sessions in November 2023 and January 2024. Both the Trustees and the Task Force welcome your input at any time. Please go to www.snowlibrary.org and click on the Building Our Future header on the right to learn more or send an email to tprugno@town.orleans.ma.us.

Part Two: The Finances

Q: How much will a new library cost and how will the town pay for it?

A: The new 24,000 square foot Snow Library would cost an estimated \$24 million (plus 20% for contingency costs) to build. Ideally, funding for this project will come from three different sources. First, the Library intends to apply for a state construction grant in May 2024. A limited number of grants are available to libraries and competition will be significant. Approximately 40 libraries across the state have expressed interest in applying. Between 30% and 40% of the total cost for a new library building could be covered by the grant. Second, a partnership between the Trustees and the Friends of Snow Library will undertake a major fundraising effort for some of the funding. Finally, taxpayer funding will be required to cover a portion of the building cost.

Q: What happens if we don't get the State grant?

A: Library Trustees and Town leaders would regroup to plan our next steps towards a new library. Library representatives will need to redouble their efforts to achieve a robust private fundraising campaign to lessen the funding amount that is sought from taxpayers. The Trustees are committed to this process and feel strongly that a new library is needed now.

Q: If we get 30% from a State MBLC grant and vote to raise the balance to build a new library what would the impact be on taxpayers?

A: Library Trustees are working with the Town Long Range Capital Improvement Plan and the Orleans Treasurer's Office to study this issue. We expect to have public figures showing costs to the average homeowner available by the end of the New Snow Library Feasibility Task Force in April 2024.

Q: What is the MBLC? What does their library construction program do? What is the process to apply for a grant and what chance does the Snow Library have of getting a grant? Why does the Grant Program have a waiting list?

A: The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioner (MBLC) is the state agency charged with the statutory authority and responsibility to organize, develop, coordinate and improve library services throughout the Commonwealth. The library construction grants assist a municipality in securing State funding toward a renovated or new facility. Libraries have to apply through an extremely competitive process to seek a grant. This includes a letter of intent (which Snow Library has already submitted and MBLC has

accepted) and a larger application, detailing what deficiencies the current library has and why a new facility needed. As stated earlier, the grant process is very competitive. Fewer than a dozen grants are expected out of a pool of approximately 40 applicants. The MBLC creates a waiting list so that if a library that is awarded a grant cannot obtain municipal support for the project, another library can be awarded the funds instead

Part Three: Just Fix It

Q: Why can't we just fix what is broken and renovate the library?

A: Snow Library is an aging facility that has accumulated a significant backlog of expensive maintenance projects. No significant work has been done on the library since 2013 and the last major addition to the building was finished in 1994. Building codes have changed significantly since that time and the type of construction used then would not be acceptable now. Under State regulations, when a public building requires repairs that exceed 30% of the structure's total value (\$1.7 million in 2023), the municipality is required to bring the facility up to today's current State building and accessibility codes. One current library project would trigger this requirement: The library needs a new roof, significant siding repairs, and exterior painting. The roof replacement alone is estimated to cost more than \$750,000. In addition, Snow Library does not currently meet current state fire codes with no fire sprinkler system and has no emergency egress route out of the basement in case of fire or other incident. All of these building deficiencies would need to be addressed.

Q: Can't you just make the library ADA compliant and improve mobility challenged access and make the basement egress available in an emergency?

A: No. This would involve multiple significant renovations to the existing building. For example, to make it so that someone who is physically disabled can get out of the basement in an emergency when the power goes off (and elevator does not work), you would need to install a new basement exit doorway that is open to the outside which contains stairs and a secondary lift system with its own battery. This involves adding a costly new section to the basement for egress. But that would only resolve one of the accessibility issues. Another access issue exists with the book stacks that are not wide enough for someone in a wheelchair to maneuver and turn around. Currently, most of the stacks are built too closely to allow this access. Renovating the stacks would result in fewer shelving units; something that is sorely needed right now.

The new Snow Library Building will be designed to be universally accessible and accessibility is inherent in the basic design of the building. This means doorways are wider for passage of wheelchairs, ramps are at the correct grade and placement, and all levels and locations inside the library can be reached by all users at all times.

Q: What is the value of the Snow Library building and land?

A: According to the Orleans Assessing Department's information for 2023, the Library is worth \$1.3 million and the land is worth \$298,000, totaling \$1.7 million.

Q: What is going to happen with parking? Could we remove the hill behind the library to make more spots?

A: Parking is indeed a big challenge at Snow Library. There are currently 38 spaces, which is not enough. When programs are in session, the parking lot is routinely full and staff regularly receive complaints about the lack of parking.

In order to possibly obtain additional parking, the hill located behind the library is being evaluated by the architect as part of the New Snow Library Feasibility Task Force. While excavation and regrading might be possible, it would involve significant and very expensive land modifications. Increased parking is a priority and initial site designs in 2024 have shown a reconfigured lot with around 64 spaces and better access.

Q: Nauset Regional Middle School is right next to the library and students often walk to the library. Can the library partner with the Middle School on this project?

A: Snow Library has long served all youth in town and plays an active role working with the middle and elementary schools. A representative from the Nauset School District is currently participating with the New Snow Library Feasibility Task Force to explore how to improve the library relationship with the district. The Elementary School Committee has been briefed on the project as well. The architectural firm is aware of the need for a better, and fully accessible link between the school and the library and is exploring options to include in the finished study.

Q: With declining student enrollment, could Orleans use either the Elementary or Middle School for a new library?

A: The Nauset Regional Middle School is a property owned and managed by the three town (Orleans, Brewster, and Eastham) regional school district. It's student population was 528 students in 2022. Nauset Regional Middle School is the property of the Nauset School District and not the town. The Elementary School, which has 142 students, is on

town property. It is overseen by the Elementary School Committee (made up of five elected members), which is tasked with the primary responsibility of providing a school for students in grades K through 5. Neighter property would be a good fit for the goals established for a New Snow Library.

Q: Technology is changing so fast...are people still going to the library?

A: Yes, libraries are popular places! In 2023, Orleans patrons borrowed 155,298 items and another 19,000 through inter-library loans. This represents a 56% increase over 2022. Snow library also loaned 11,000 items from its collection to other libraries in the region. Total attendance at Snow Library in 2023 was 77,732, an increase of 17% over 2022. Programming for children and their families throughout the year, book groups and book sales, as well as the Lifetime Learning Program demonstrated the vital role the library plays in the Orleans community.

Many significant changes have occurred in libraries over the last two decades, including the advent of electronic books. Snow Library has adjusted to this with services to provide electronic books and E-readers to access them. Surprisingly, more books were purchased nationally in 2022 than ever before and the demand for physical materials is very high. Libraries everywhere are hubs of community activities and the vast majority of users like physical materials. A good part of the demand at Snow Library is for more rooms for people to meet, more social spaces, and more book and other materials storage.

Part Four: Snow Library Looking Ahead

Q: What other towns on the Cape have built a new library recently?

A: Eastham's new \$10 million library was completed in 2016. The town was successful in obtaining a State Grant in 2011. The project added 18,000 square feet to the existing historic 1898 library front. As part of the new facility, a 1980s era addition was demolished. Sitting on a hillside overlooking Depot Pond, the new two level facility features high ceilings and offers natural light throughout, multiple meeting rooms, wide open interior spaces, and multiple dedicated children's rooms. After Eastham built a new library, staff measured a significant increase in circulation and visitation. More rooms can be booked for group events and more children's programming was added. The facility was also designed to permit after hours access to the largest meeting space for events. The architect for the Eastham library, Oudens Ello, is also working with the

New Snow Library Feasibility Task Force. Oudens Ello has also recently designed new libraries in Webster, Norwell, Scituate, and other locations throughout the state.

Q: How can I get involved to support a new Snow Library?

A: We'd be happy to have you join us as we undertake this critical and historic endeavor! Snow Library is the town's library and you can help the Trustees, the Task Force, and the Friends of Snow Library as they work to make this project a reality. Please go to www.snowlibrary.org and click on the Building Our Future header on the right to learn more or send an email to tprugno@town.orleans.ma.us.

Q: How would the library stay in operation during construction?

A: The New Snow Library Task Force is studying this issue. They are considering a number of options to make sure library materials can be accessed and events can be hosted. It's clear that patrons need to be able to check in/out books and participate in programming. This might involve the library creating a second temporary Snow Library by renting a downtown space or setting up a series of mobile trailers, which has been done by other libraries under construction.

Q: Is there a list of review criteria provided by the State MBLC for the grant award?

A: The MBLC criteria can be viewed here: <https://answers.mblc.state.ma.us/faq/162256>

Q: The preliminary New Snow Library design shows the possibility of at least a partial second floor. Are the designers considering three floors like the existing library has now?

A: While it's still early in the process, the architectural firm working on the feasibility report is exploring several options for up to a three-story building (basement, 1st, and 2nd floors). The architect is charged with designing a building that incorporates all of the space needs identified by the town.

Q: Will a new Snow Library be a net zero building or LEED certified?

A: The Select Board has charged the New Snow Library Task Force to explore this as part of the feasibility study. The Trustees are committed to designing the highest performing building possible and the actual design phase for this project will explore all options.

Q: The public likes the idea of a social gathering area inside the Library and a dedicated book sale space. Is this possible?

A: Both these ideas are being considered in the initial library designs. These spaces would be on the first floor and adjacent to one another.

Questions? Comments? Please go to www.snowlibrary.org and click on the Building Our Future header on the right to learn more or send an email to tprugno@town.orleans.ma.us.