

Executive Summary

This Master Plan provides the New Orleans Public Library (NOPL) with a road map to build a world-class library system for the citizens of New Orleans and its region, as well as the city's visitors. In the world of library service, customers usually judge the quality of a library based on their answers to the following questions:

1. Does the library have the materials that I need for education or entertainment?
2. Is the library conveniently located near where I live or work?
3. Is the library open when I need to use it?
4. Is the library building welcoming and designed to support my library needs?
5. Does the library provide programs that supplement and complement the printed and audio/visual materials in its collection?
6. How does my library compare to others in similar cities?

If the answers to these six questions are positive, chances are residents will feel that the library cares about and is responsive to their needs. If fully implemented, the recommendations in this Master Plan will create the world-class library that the NOPL Board of Directors envisions, and will enable residents of New Orleans to answer a resounding yes to all of these questions.

The Central Links of a World-Class Library System

A library system has four central links:

1. The people served.
2. The services that will be provided to the residents.
3. The money it takes to pay the staff and build, open, operate, and maintain the buildings.
4. The places where services, materials, and programs will be provided to the residents and visitors.

As with any chain, a library system is only as strong as its weakest link. After the devastation of Katrina, all of these links were severely weakened.

People

Like any business, the library system uses the number of people it serves to help it decide the number of print and non-print items, seats, computers, programs, meeting rooms, and parking spaces for each library. The number of citizens living in New Orleans before Katrina is estimated to be 484,684. After Katrina, the New Orleans population decreased by 55% to 264,969. For the purposes of planning the new library system, this Master Plan is using a population projection, provided by the Regional Planning Commission, of 409,056 by the year 2030. This is 16% less than pre-Katrina.

Services

The NOPL was under-resourced even before 2005. In 2004, the Library's print holdings placed it below the 25th percentile in relation to its peer libraries in other cities. The number of volumes per capita—1.69 at the time—was below the lower quarter measure of 1.90, and well below the peer average of 2.80. Put simply, New Orleanians have had far fewer books from which to choose than have citizens of most peer cities.

This Master Plan recommends an increase in print items per capita to 2.97 or 1,214,896 total items—a 45% increase over 2004 that would bring NOPL up to about the peer average. Non-print items would shift from 5.95% of print (23rd percentile) to 11.0%, placing NOPL in the 60th percentile.

Libraries must have enough staff to serve customers well and to keep libraries open when needed, including evenings and weekends. Immediately before Katrina, there were 216 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff members, or one staff member per 1,142 square feet of library space, or 0.55 FTE per 1,000 people served. After plunging to 20 employees immediately after Katrina, NOPL staff will reach 96 FTE employees by the end of 2008. This Master Plan recommends an ultimate staff size of approximately 250 FTE (150 for branches, 4 for the Foundation, and 96 for the Main Library). This level allows the libraries to remain open every day, for an average of 69 hours per week.

Achieving these objectives—increased collection size, expanded staff, and greater service hours—are among the steps necessary to achieve other key goals: an increase in per capita circulation from 2.97 items per capita per year to 6.20, and an increase in gate count (customers through the doors) from 3.73 visits per capita per year to 6.10. Improved circulation and gate count will be important indicators of the success of the Master Plan.

Money

Operating Budgets

In 2004, NOPL's budget was approximately \$18.45 per capita—placing it among the lowest of its peer libraries, at the 16th percentile. When fully realized in 2030, this Master Plan would require an annual budget of \$16,579,120 (expressed in 2008 dollars) or \$40.53 per capita—above the peer average of \$34.68 per capita. In fact, NOPL would be in the upper quartile of its peers. Driving this increase are personnel costs, which would more than double—a dramatic increase necessary for world-class service and operating hours.

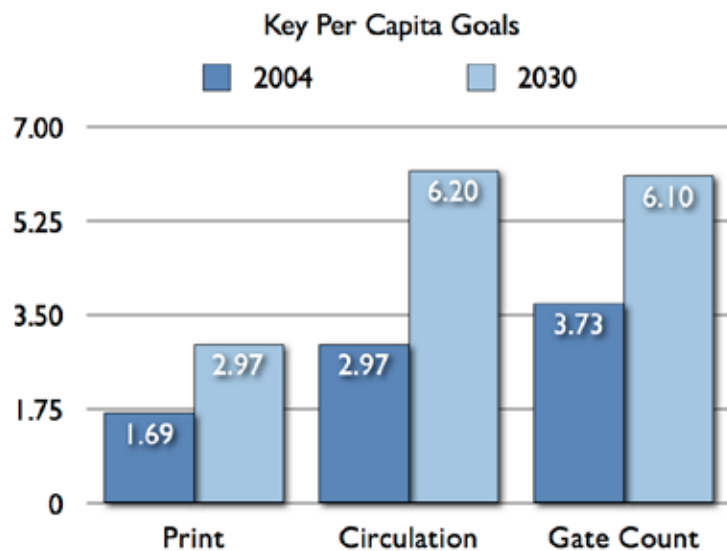


Figure 1

Capital Budgets

As described further below, NOPL has long functioned with libraries smaller than its peers. This Master Plan recommends repairs, renovation, and new construction that will create a world-class library system—not merely to replace what flooding destroyed. The proposed total capital cost for the new and renovated branch libraries in 2008 dollars is \$199,211,191. This total is distributed as follows:

Branch Type	Capital Cost/Type	# of Buildings	Total Capital Cost
Main Library	\$87,950,193	1	\$87,950,193
Louisiana Collection	\$28,853,563	1	\$28,853,563
Storefront	\$951,530	1	\$951,530
Neighborhood	\$3,003,692	2	\$6,007,384
Community	\$6,227,961	4	\$24,911,845
District	\$8,899,532	1	\$8,899,532
Regional	\$12,361,915	3	\$37,085,744
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>\$148,248,385</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>\$194,659,791</i>
Branch Renovations		4	\$4,551,400
Grand Total	\$152,799,785	17	\$199,211,191

Figure 2

This total of \$199,211,191 (in 2008 dollars), escalated over time for the start of construction dates for each proposed library, will total \$276,545,483. All renovations and library building are proposed to be completed by the year 2022. It is noted that the Main Library project budget does not include a structured parking garage. If the selected site requires a purpose-built parking garage, the overall project budget will increase by approximately \$16 million for an 800-car parking structure.

Places

Before Katrina, there were 12 branches plus the Main Library serving a total of 484,684 people. The system had a total of 242,096 gross square feet or about 0.50 square feet per capita. This placed New Orleans in the bottom quartile of peer cities. This Master Plan recommends a total of 380,833 square feet for a projected population of 409,056, or about 0.96 square feet per capita. Accomplishing this expansion would nearly double the per capita space NOPL can offer New Orleansians for reading, computer use, educational programs, and community meetings. This expansion would move NOPL from the lower quartile to the 90th percentile among its peer cities.

2030 Profile of Complete System

Number	Type	Location(s)
New Libraries		
1	Storefront	Central City
2	Neighborhood	Cita Dennis Hubbell and Norman Mayer
4	Community	Downriver, Robert E. Smith, Tremé, and Upriver
1	District	Pontilly
3	Regional	Algiers Regional, Carrollton, East New Orleans Regional
1	Main Library	Downtown
Renovated Libraries		
1	Neighborhood	Alvar Street
1	Community	Martin Luther King
Repurposed Existing Libraries		
2		Milton H. Latter, Rosa Keller

Figure 3

Convenient locations are as important as size for public libraries. This Master Plan defines “convenient” as no more than 2 miles from a residence to the branch, with the exception of the East New Orleans Regional Library. To meet this goal, conform to the Unified New Orleans Plan, and reflect the Regional Planning Commission’s projected population redistribution, the Master Plan recommends a network of a main library and branches as described below.

Main Library

The current Main Library should be replaced with a new landmark civic building that is a dynamic, resource-rich, and a unique and an important downtown destination that complements the mission and purpose of the Library and the city. It is also recommended that this important modern building be saved and preserved but with a new, as yet undetermined, purpose. A detailed analysis of the rationale is contained in this report on pages 69 and on page 2 of Appendix F. The highlights include:

- » The basement and sub-basement space are not suitable for the Louisiana Collection
- » The land available to add on to the building is inadequate—forcing any addition to be inefficient and expensive
- » The building structure was not designed to support the code-required load capacity of a library.
- » The buildings systems, over 40 years old, are completely worn-out.
- » The cost to renovate and add on to the building is approximately \$500,000 more than building new.
- » There is no adjacent land to provide the critically important parking for an urban library to be customer friendly.

The new Main Library will house the world-renowned Louisiana Division, NOPL administrative offices, and core collection, serving the residents, businesses, and government agencies in the Central Business District (CBD), French Quarter, Warehouse District, and adjacent neighborhoods. This plan recommends that construction of a new, secure, above-ground archival facility for the Louisiana Division be constructed in central New Orleans. Given the vulnerability of the collection, now housed below ground, it is imperative that construction begin as soon as possible but no later than 2010. This archival facility would be the first phase of the completely new Main Library, to be under construction by no later than 2016. By phasing the project, the at-risk collection can be housed in a safe environment as soon as possible. The first phase of the Louisiana Collection will require a total of

Disposition of Remaining Existing Library Buildings

Cita Dennis Hubbell	2,7320 sf, preserve, possibly convert into community center
Nix	2,940 sf, closed
Children's Resource Center	2,014 sf, preserve, disposition unknown at this time
Existing Main Library	138,380 sf, preserve, disposition unknown at this time
Nora Navra	2,500 sf, closed

Figure 4

\$28,853,563. The second phase, the remainder of the Main Library, will require \$84,950,193. Construction of both phases is projected to cost \$113,803,156 (in 2008 dollars). An allocation of \$3,000,000 is also recommended for new materials in the Main Library. The cost of phasing the work is included in these dollar amounts.

Branches

A healthy community is served by both a central and equitably distributed branch libraries. The branch libraries serve their communities with convenient access to meeting rooms, collaborative and individual workspaces, books and other materials, and computers. While it might be ideal to place a library branch on nearly every corner, it is not realistic. This Master Plan addresses the issues of access and convenience by establishing five prototype branches. In every case, the sites for these branches should be sufficiently large to support expansion in the future if conditions warrant. The prototypes are:

1. Storefront
size: 2,838 square feet
readers' seats: 12
computers: 10
This small branch would be located within leased retail space. Its primary purpose is to provide quick access to computers and a limited collection and for pick-up of reserve materials. It might be considered a test branch for neighborhoods that may merit a permanent, free-standing branch in the future. Use of storefronts allows NOPL to minimize capital costs, while honoring its commitment to serve all of the citizens.
2. Neighborhood
size: 6,100 square feet
readers' seats: 24
computers: 10
meeting room seats: 30
This branch type is the smallest, purpose-built library prototype. It would house a basic array of collection materials, reader seats, computers, and one meeting room.

3. Community
size: 12,991 square feet
readers' seats: 30
computers: 24
meeting room seats: 30
other areas: children's area program space
This prototype expands on the services offered in the neighborhood model by increasing the collection size, more than doubling the number of computers, and providing more staff to assist with technology.
4. District
size: 18,849 square feet
readers' seats: 60
computers: 30
meeting room seats: 60
other areas: 30-seat story time area
This prototype significantly adds collection, seating, and meeting room space and adds a dedicated space for children's story time.
5. Regional
size: 27,762 square feet
readers' seats: 100
computers: 36
meeting room seats: 150
other areas: 30-seat story time area
The largest prototype would support a collection five times the size a neighborhood branch, several meeting rooms, and an increased staff for circulation, reference and children's services.

Locating the Branches

Branch libraries serve both practical and symbolic purposes. On a practical level, they allow local residents quick access to reading materials or reference resources, a place for children to meet and learn together, and a gateway to the world of information through access to computers. Increasingly important is the role they play as community centers. The devastation wrought by Katrina altered each New Orleans community's access to library services and in many cases eradicated the local community library. The branch libraries that remained after the storm became even more important symbols and centers of access.

This report makes specific recommendations regarding the size (type) of branches that should serve communities, as well as general locations, but does not recom-

mend actual sites for new branches. Recommendations are based on projected population recovery by planning district. Described below, in alphabetical order, are the recommendations for repair and renovation of existing branches and for construction of new branches.

Algiers Regional	Replace with new Regional prototype branch by 2010-2012.
Alvar Street (Bywater)	Already renovated, this small branch can continue to serve Bywater and adjacent neighborhoods until recovery warrants a new, larger branch.
Carrollton	A new Regional prototype—one of three with Algiers and East New Orleans—to be located in the Carrollton Recovery Zone (vicinity of Carrollton Avenue and I-10) and started by 2012.
Central City	A Storefront prototype to be located in the Recovery Zone along Oretha Castle Haley Blvd. and opened by 2010-2012.
Children’s Resource Center (Uptown)	Complete exterior repairs to this small historic branch and maintain use until about 2016, when it should be replaced by new Downriver and Upriver branches and become available for new purposes.
Cita Dennis Hubbell (Algiers Point)	Repair structure immediately and maintain use until 2020. This small branch will be replaced at that time with a new Neighborhood prototype branch in the vicinity to better serve Algiers Point and adjacent areas. The Cita Dennis Hubbell Branch will be available for new purpose.
Cita Dennis Hubbell (new)	A Neighborhood prototype to replace the existing and historic Cita Dennis Hubbell Branch by 2022.
Downriver	A Community prototype branch to be established by 2020 in the Uptown area downriver of Napoleon Avenue. This branch will replace a portion of the service provided by the Milton Latter branch.

East New Orleans	Replace with new District prototype branch by 2014, in the general vicinity of I-10 and Read Blvd. This building will be expanded to a Regional type by 2022.
Martin Luther King (Lower Ninth Ward)	Already renovated, maintain use as a community branch serving the neighborhood and the charter school in which it is housed.
Mid-City	Maintain this Storefront branch, one of six temporary branches, until 2012, when its services can be replaced by the larger Carrollton Regional branch and a new Smith branch in Lakeview.
Milton Letter	Complete exterior repairs immediately and maintain present use until 2025. Repurpose and renovate for greater use as a center for Library support organizations, community meetings, and cultural programs. Replace with two new Community branch prototypes in 2025-2030. (See Downriver and Upriver.)
Nix	This small branch will be very difficult to renovate to meet current standards. Replace after 2016 with Rosa Keller Neighborhood branch and Carrollton Regional branch, and after 2020 by new Downriver and Upriver branches.
Nora Navra	This small heavily damaged branch will be replaced by services of the Pontilly, new Norman Mayer, and Treme branches.
Norman Mayer (Gentilly)	This heavily-damaged branch on a small site should be replaced soon by a Storefront prototype and eventually by a larger Neighborhood prototype by 2014.
Pontilly	A District prototype branch to be established by 2012 in the general vicinity Elysian Fields Avenue and Robert E. Lee Blvd. This branch will support recovery of the Gentilly community and will serve Lakeview, Treme, and East New Orleans while their branches are being built.

Robert E. Smith (Lakeview)	Maintain modular or Storefront branch until replaced by 2018 with a new Community prototype branch.
Rosa Keller (Broadmoor)	Renovate and reopen 2010-2012. Note: Consistent application of this Master Plan's standards and principles would call for replacement of this under-sized, significantly damaged branch. The recommendation to renovate is made in view of the Rosa Keller branch's central position in the neighborhood's recovery plan and the commitment of public and private funds to implement this plan.
Tremé	Establish a Storefront branch by 2010 in the St. Bernard Recovery Zone. Replace by 2022 with a Community prototype branch.
Upriver	A Community prototype branch to be established by about 2020 in the Uptown area upriver of Henry Clay Avenue. This branch will replace a portion of the service provided by the Milton Latter branch.

First Phase Recommendations

To summarize the first phase of recommendations:

- » Repair Children's Resource Center, Cita Dennis Hubbell, and Milton Latter branches to preserve buildings and permit continuing uses.
- » Renovate Rosa Keller Neighborhood branch.
- » Construct new Pontilly District prototype branch.
- » Construct new Algiers Regional prototype branch.
- » Undertake detailed planning and site selection for new Louisiana Division archival facility and Main Library.