

City of Wolfforth Public Library Master Plan Report

Purpose

To provide City Council with clear, data-informed options regarding the future of the Wolfforth Public Library.

These options are intended to support discussion and policy direction. No single course of action is being presented as required.

City Council retains full authority to determine whether the library:

- Maintains current operations,
- Pursues renovation or expansion at the current location, or
- Plans for a new facility.

Staff is seeking direction from Council to develop a fiscally responsible Master Plan that reflects both community needs and Council priorities.

*This is simply a recommended plan. It can be modified to meet whatever limitations the Council requests. It is a process though, and pausing at this point, after we have already significantly invested in a Master Planning process, is counter intuitive. Keeping the process moving forward helps maintain momentum and support from the community.

Current Conditions & Growth Outlook

- The library is currently operating near functional capacity.
- Collection growth is limited by available space.
- The facility experiences significant crowding during peak hours and programs.
- Wolfforth's population is projected to grow significantly, with estimates reaching over 14,000 by 2030 and continuing upward.

Based on current standards and growth projections:

- The facility is expected to fall below recommended space standards within the next 5 years.
- Collection capacity will decline to near minimum standards over the next 5 years due to space constraints.

Decision Framework

Council's decision ultimately centers on three primary pathways, with many options within:

1. Maintain Current Operations (No Expansion)
2. Renovation or Expansion of Existing Facility
3. Constructing a New Facility

The following sections outline what each approach entails, along with associated policy and financial considerations.

Cost Reduction & Planning Options

Council has multiple options to reduce the overall cost of a future library project:

Option 1 – Adopt Plan as Presented 29,000 Sq Ft ≈ \$28,000,000

- Full buildout based on projected service population
- Highest cost (not fiscally responsible)

- Maximizes long-term service capacity

Option 2 – Minimum Standards 17,000 Sq Ft ≈ \$20,000,000

- Meets baseline requirements only
- May result in earlier need for future expansion (current Master Plan only projects to 2040)
- Estimated cost reduction: approximately \$8 million

Option 3 – Hybrid Approach (Enhanced Space / Minimum Services) 18,800 Sq Ft ≈ \$22,000,000

- Builds adequate square footage for long-term growth
- Reduces initial investment in collections, furnishings, and service levels
- Estimated cost reduction: approximately \$6 million

Option 4 – Wolfforth-Only Population (Minimum Standards) 14,000 Sq Ft ≈ \$18,000,000

- Reduces facility size significantly, as population is reduced by almost 5,000
- Extends timeline slightly but does not eliminate future expansion needs
- May result in earlier need for future expansion (current Master Plan only projects to 2040)
- Estimated cost reduction: approximately \$8-10 million

Option 5 – Wolfforth-Only Population Hybrid Approach (Enhanced Space/ Minimum Services) 16,500 Sq Ft ≈ \$19,000,000

- Builds for long-term capacity while phasing in services over time
- Reduces initial investment in collections, furnishings, and service levels
- Balances fiscal responsibility with growth planning
- Estimated cost reduction: approximately \$7-9 million

Option 6 – Maintain Status Quo (No Expansion or Renovation)

- No capital investment
- Continued operation within current limitations
- Growth and space limitations will restrict services
- Seek Council directions to prepare a plan for future growth at a later time

Scenario: Maintain Current Facility (No Expansion or Renovation)

If Council elects to continue current operations without expansion:

- The library will continue operating within existing space constraints
- Collection growth will remain limited
- Programs and services may be adjusted based on available space and staffing
- Facility will fall below recommended standards within approximately 5 years
- By 2035, both space and collection capacity will be significantly constrained, and not meeting standards for public library services.

This option does not eliminate future need, but it delays it.

Staff will continue to provide the highest level of service possible within existing limitations.

*Costs are educated estimates based on the projected price per square foot. This will change based on whether it is renovation vs new build and will increase over time. Assume a 5% increase per year in construction costs.

Membership & County Funding Considerations

Council may evaluate policy options related to non-resident access and funding:

Option 1 – Maintain Current Model

- Continuing free access for Wolfforth, Lubbock, and surrounding counties
- Continue receiving County funding from Lubbock County

Option 2 – Restrict to Wolfforth Residents

- Discontinue County funding, closing free services to Lubbock County and surrounding communities
- Limit services to city residents only

Option 3 – Implement Non-Resident Fees to surrounding counties

- Charge users outside defined service areas.
- Define service area as Wolfforth and Lubbock County
- Adjust policy and define a fee for non-residents

Key Considerations

- Revenue from non-resident fees is unlikely to offset the loss of County funding
- Participation in statewide programs (e.g., TexShare) limits the effectiveness of user fees
- Charging non-residents does not significantly reduce facility demand or space needs

Staff can implement any option at Council's direction.

Service Population Considerations

The library's adjusted service population is based on:

- City of Wolfforth population, and a proportional allocation of County population (per state methodology)
- We used a multiplier of 1.2 to reflect the "adjusted service population" to reflect the Lubbock County area that is considered the library's "legal service area"

Using Wolfforth-only projections:

- Reduces facility size by approximately 2,800–5,000 square feet
- May extend the timeline for expansion by 2-3 years
- Does not eliminate long-term space needs

Timeline Considerations

- The current facility is projected to fall below recommended standards within 5 years, both with the adjusted service population and using only Wolfforth
- Planning, design, and construction of a new facility or major renovation typically requires 3–5 years
- We will not proceed to Phase 2 (Concept Design) until the Council is fully ready to do so.
- The current draft of the Master Plan is only looking 15 years out, instead of the original plan to look at 20 years. We might need to consider expanding the revision to 2045 to better plan, knowing we likely will not start anything for 3-5 years.

Early directions from Council will allow for proactive planning rather than reactive response.

Accreditation & Service Impact

Maintaining accreditation with the Texas State Library system ensures:

- Eligibility for state and federal grant funding
- Access to shared resources (databases, interlibrary loan, eBooks)
- Participation in statewide programs (TexShare)
- Operational accountability and professional standards

Accreditation is not the sole objective, but it supports the library's ability to deliver consistent, high-quality service to the community. Our goal is to continue serving our residents to the very best of our ability and continue to support making Wolfforth the "place to be".

Community Impact

The library functions as more than a traditional library:

- Serves as a community gathering space (a "third space")
- Supports literacy, education, and workforce development
- Attracts residents and contributes to local economic activity
- Enhances quality of life and community identity

With over 31,000 annual visits, the library plays a measurable role in community engagement, economic development, and growth.

Staff Perspective

From a planning standpoint, a phased approach (Option E) provides a balanced path forward by:

- Building sufficient space for long-term growth
- Allowing services and collections to increase over time with population growth
- Avoiding the need for additional expansion within the next 20+ years
- It is a more fiscally responsible option that meets the needs of our growing city for a longer period.

This approach supports fiscal responsibility while positioning the City for continued growth.

Staff will proceed in alignment with Council's direction.

Requested Direction from City Council

To move forward with a Master Plan, staff requests guidance on the following:

1. Preferred service level (Minimum or Hybrid)
2. Population basis for planning (Wolfforth-only vs. adjusted service area)
3. Policy direction on non-resident access and County funding
4. Desired timeline for implementation
5. Preference for renovation & expansion, or new construction

This direction will allow staff to return with a refined Master Plan aligned with Council priorities and community needs.

Questions and Answers:

“Why do we need to do anything at all right now?”

Answer:

We do not have to take immediate action.

What the data shows is that the current facility is expected to fall below recommended service levels within approximately five years. Since planning and construction can take 3–5 years, early direction allows us to plan proactively rather than respond later under more pressure and likely higher costs.

This is about planning ahead, not committing to construction or funding.

“Why is this so expensive?”

Answer:

The cost is driven primarily by square footage and long-term capacity. Unfortunately, construction costs will continue to rise.

That’s why multiple options have been presented—ranging from minimum standards to hybrid approaches—to allow Council to choose a level of investment that aligns with priorities and budget considerations.

We are not locked into a single cost scenario, and welcome other options from Council.

“Why can’t we just stay where we are and make it work?”

Answer:

That is absolutely an option, and it is included as one of the scenarios.

If that direction is chosen, we will continue operating within current limitations. However, based on growth projections, we will face increasing constraints in space, programming capacity, and collection growth within the next five years.

That option defers the need—it does not eliminate it.

“Why are we building for people who don’t live in Wolfforth?”

Answer:

That is a policy decision for Council.

We currently receive County funding, and, under state guidelines, that contributes to our assigned service population.

Council can choose to plan based solely on Wolfforth residents, which would reduce the size of the facility, or continue planning for the broader service area.

Both options are outlined for your consideration.

“Why don’t we just charge non-residents?”

Answer:

That is also an option Council can choose.

Based on current data, revenue from non-resident fees would likely not offset the loss of County funding, and participation in statewide programs such as TexShare limits the effectiveness of those fees.

Additionally, charging non-residents does not significantly reduce demand for space.

Staff can implement any policy direction Council prefers.

“Your numbers about County usage aren’t complete—how can we trust them?”

Answer:

That’s a fair question.

We are able to track circulation and membership by location, which is reflected in the data presented. Other services—such as programs, computer use, and in-building visits—are not tied to residency data in our current systems.

Tracking detailed demographic data for all visitors would represent a significant shift from the public library service model and would require significant policy changes, operational changes, and additional staffing to implement.

What we can say with confidence is that overall usage continues to increase across all service areas, and that will continue as Wolfforth grows, even if we close free memberships to exclude Lubbock and surrounding communities.

“Why not just cut services instead of expanding?”

Answer:

That is an available option.

Reducing programs, hours, or services may help manage capacity in the short term. However, population growth will continue regardless of service levels, and space limitations will still become a constraint. We are fortunate to have an incredible staff who love our community and love what they do to improve the quality of life for our residents.

Reductions address operational pressure, but not long-term facility needs.

“Why are we planning for 15-20 years? That seems excessive.”

Answer:

Library facilities are typically planned on a 20–30-year lifecycle due to the scale of investment.

Planning for a shorter timeframe can reduce initial cost, but often results in needing another expansion sooner, which can increase long-term costs.

Council has options to balance upfront investment with long-term planning.

“This sounds like you’re asking for a new building.”

Answer:

We are not currently requesting approval for a specific project or funding. We are asking for help in creating a Master Plan that is approved by council, solely for planning purposes, which does include renovations to our existing building or a new building, but that is based on the continued growth of Wolfforth and the limitations we are starting to face, and will continue to, in our current facility.

We are presenting options, including maintaining the current facility and continuing to operate in it, and requesting direction and recommendations from Council on how you would like us to proceed with planning for the future.

“Why should we prioritize the library over other city needs?”

Answer:

That is ultimately a policy decision for Council.

Our community values the Wolfforth Library. The library supports multiple city priorities simultaneously, including education, workforce development, economic development, and community engagement, while serving over 31,000 visitors last fiscal year, and more in the current.

This presentation is intended to provide the information needed to weigh those alongside other priorities.

“What happens if we wait 5–10 years?”

Answer:

Waiting is an option.

The primary impacts would be:

- Increased strain on the current facility
- Continued limitations on programs and services
- Potentially higher construction costs over time

The need does not go away, it shifts to a later point, potentially with fewer options and higher costs.

“Are you saying we will fail accreditation?”

Answer:

Not immediately.

However, as space and service limitations increase over time, it becomes more difficult to meet recommended standards.

Accreditation is one factor, but the larger issue is the library’s ability to meet community needs effectively.

