

# Our Vision for the Future of the Casco Public Library

## *With Your Support*

### **Project Description**

To provide additional services and more diverse types of spaces to accommodate the needs of patrons wanting quieter and more private areas in the Library, additional staff areas, and our growing use of the Library by children up through early adolescence. Our plan is to build a 1,000 square foot (sf) addition focusing on people typically working from home, to rebuild our existing staff area, and to rebuild and expand the footprint of the non-fiction room.

### **Background Information**

The Casco Public Library (CPL) has been an integral part of the community since its inception almost 75 years ago. Starting as a tiny operation out of a closet in the junior high school, it has grown over the years to a 6,000 square foot facility today. It opened in its own building in 1952, became incorporated in the State of Maine in 1957, and received its official nonprofit, 501(c)(3) status from the IRS in 1982. Over those years, it has also grown from just a book-lending Library to an important community gathering place, where people meet over shared interests, attend an informational lecture or a hands-on learning workshop, drop in for a chat with the friendly Library staff, or spend an afternoon working remotely.

Casco has many of the same concerns as other rural regions throughout the state – social isolation, income limitations, lack of business support services, and few in-person learning and social opportunities for adults as well as children and youth outside of school time. The Library, Casco Community Center, and the public schools are the primary institutions serving the local population. Thus, *free* community programs and services offered by the Library play an important role in supporting growth and development for all ages.

### **Strategic Direction**

The Library started its most recent and on-going strategic planning work in 2021. Our overall strategic planning goal is to *increase the resilience and sustainability of the Library to ensure the long-term delivery of relevant and engaging programs that serve all community members*. Vital aspects of this overarching goal are 1) the adequacy of our built infrastructure, 2) the breadth of our program and service offerings, 3) our staff capacity, and 4) our long-term financial condition. Our current work is focused on the first and second of these initiatives.

As a result of the strategic planning work, the CPL Trustees established a Facilities Committee in 2022 to assess the Library's infrastructure in terms of programming capacity, accessibility, structural integrity, operating costs, carbon footprint and overall infrastructure resiliency. To date they have identified and initiated a number of renovations, repairs, and upgrades to ensure our space is safe, fully functional and sustainable. We refer to these activities as **Phase I** of our multi-year Infrastructure Improvements Project.

Through our building inspection we also identified major structural problems in our current staff room and our non-fiction room. Our plan is to rebuild the staff room on a smaller footprint, rebuild the nonfiction room on a larger footprint for added accessibility improvements, and add a new 1,000 sf space to the front of our building. We refer to these efforts as **Phase II** of the Library's multi-year infrastructure work.

## **Project Details**

Because of the increased activity in other parts of the Library, especially by children under the age of 12, the larger 1,000 sf addition will provide spaces dedicated to people needing a quiet place for reading, working, studying or contemplation. The new space would be flexibly designed and geared toward serving the needs of remote workers and home-based business entrepreneurs, among others. It would also include some much-needed storage space. The placement of the addition creates a small outdoor courtyard that already has exterior electrical outlets and can provide a quiet area in the fresh air and sunshine.

Currently our Library provides faxing, scanning and printing as well as fast reliable Wi-Fi, which has assisted students, remote workers, job seekers and small business people. A number of seasonal residents and visitors continue to work at their jobs while they visit the area and bring their laptops into the Library to take advantage of the fast reliable Wi-Fi. We have solicited input from these patrons as well as others to guide how we would arrange and outfit this area. While this planning is still on-going we've heard that it would be important to include a small reservable sound-proof room (useful for virtual meetings, interviews, academic testing, work training etc.), a larger room that could be used by multiple people at the same time, and adjustable chairs and workstations available for use.

The space would have a dedicated printer/copier/scanner, charging station, headphones and other technology identified through community feedback. The Library has a 3-D printer obtained through an educational grant that could be used in the space as well. New purchases would include comfortable chairs as well as additional laptops or other new technology.

We believe it is important to maintain the same welcoming, friendly, home-like atmosphere in this quiet work space as in the rest of the Library, so we would also take into consideration natural lighting, color, furnishings and decor. The recently retired Fine Arts Coordinator for the local school district has volunteered to facilitate collaboration with local students on art for the space, potentially in the form of a rotating exhibit.

## **Budget and Fundraising**

In 2022-3, the Governor's Office and the Maine State Library announced their desire to attract and support out-of-state remote workers by offering grants to libraries to enable them to provide the space and services those workers would need. Since this opportunity dovetailed nicely with our strategic direction, Casco Public Library applied for and received a \$100,000 grant.

We estimate that the total cost of Phase II - rebuilding the current multi-use and non-fiction rooms, building and furnishing the new room and landscaping the courtyard - will be approximately \$548,000. Of the \$360,000 the Library has secured thus far for both Phase I and II, \$162,000 has been earmarked for Phase II. Our plan to raise the remaining \$386,000 is to solicit donations from grantors, private family foundations, major donors, individuals and businesses.

Fundraising for this project will continue over the next 12 to 18 months. With your generous support, we anticipate starting the construction for Phase II in June 2025 with completion and outfitting occurring by the end of 1Q26.