

1. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The County of Watauga has authorized the construction of a new County Library. In 1994 the County Commissioners purchased a 2.64 acre rectangular lot in downtown Boone at the corner of Queen and Depot Streets for \$400,000.00. The Downtown Boone Business Association (DBBA) and the Town of Boone contributed funds to the property purchase. The property is entirely paid for as of this date. Following the property purchase, the County Commissioners authorized \$1,500,000.00 to be spent by the County for constructing the Library; they also authorized the County Library Board to hire a library building consultant to prepare a building program. Phil Barton completed a building program for a one-story building of 22,000 square feet. In November 1994, the Appalachian Regional Library, with the consensus of the Watauga County Board of Commissioners, submitted a proposal for \$500,000.00 to the State Library of North Carolina as part of the statewide library legislative package.

Early in 1995 a Library Building Committee was formed consisting of the seven county library board members (one of whom is the County Commission Chair) and six other county residents representing: (1) The Friends of the Library, (2) the Chamber of Commerce, (3) the Downtown Boone Business Association, (4) the Town of Boone, (5) the eastern end of Watauga County, (6) the Western end of Watauga County, and (7) the County Manager. The Committee began to familiarize themselves with the building program and have the architect present ideas to them.

In the meantime a Fund-raising Committee, chaired by David Edmisten, a Library Board member, also began to meet to hear presentations from local experts from both the ASU and the county hospital staff. In May 1995 they set a goal to raise \$500,000.00 over the three ensuing years. They planned brochures, prepared lists of possible contributors, etc., and embarked on a kick-off starting in July for three-year pledges beginning at \$500.00 and reaching up to \$50,000.00.

Late in June when the Library Board was informed that there would be no state construction grant, they met with the architect to cut the 22,000 square feet down approximately \$500,000.00 worth. At that time it was decided to meet the library needs of Watauga County in two phases. Phase 1 will be 16,000 square feet in order to meet the needs of the County for the turn of the century. Phase 2 could be added to Phase 1 when needed without significant changes to the original building, closings, or a major shrinking of the much-needed parking lot. Phase 1 has exactly 16,143 square feet. Phase 2 can be 6,000 to 9,000 additional square feet.

Since the cutback from 22,000 to 16,000 square feet reduced stack and seating space--the least expensive type of library space per square foot--the Library Board decided that it was even more important to raise at least \$500,000.00 for the project over three years from sources other than the Watauga County government.

Shortly before August 1, 1995 the Building Committee was informed that the architect could not proceed with working drawings until the "bricks and mortar" money was actually cash in hand. This news telescoped the various fund-raising campaigns into one! There was a very important reason for

this swift change in strategy. If the working drawings aren't started in October 1995, construction can't start in May 1996; and if the construction starts later than early summer, the building may not be "under roof" for the winter of 1996-97 which means that weather delays resulting in cost overruns could be experienced.

Overnight the Building Committee and the Fund-raising Committee blended together. About twenty-five people were rushing headlong into presentations to groups, speaking and working on benefits, kicking off a Buy-a-Brick campaign for \$100.00 givers, and all the while preserving the Library's integrity with those who had pledged earlier for a three-year-period. About October 15th the architects will begin to do the working drawings for a 16,000 square foot building on one floor.

The recently completed long-range plan for Watauga County Public Library (enclosed) has ten goals. The tenth one reads as follows:

The Library implements its building and facilities plan by. . .

- 1) Obtaining construction funds before November 1995.
- 2) Moving into a new building early in 1997.
- 3) Exploring the addition of a mobile unit once the new building is completed.

The 6,300 square feet, which the present library occupies, is on four different levels. It consists of a u-shaped service area with six small rooms and closets coming off the "u". The sloping parking area right outside the entrances have room for 5 cars including the one marked for "handicapped only". Across the street and up the hill on Queen Street, are 14 other designated spaces down the center of Queen marked "library only". Usually at least three of these spaces must be used by staff. The 1920s style building has County offices on the second floor. The library floor is not air-conditioned and not properly ventilated.

The books per capita owned by the Watauga County Public Library is very low (1.35). Yet library usage is quite high (5.0) for a largely rural county. The new building will be one floor with few partitions and walls; all non-fiction will be shelved in one section. This has worked well in other parts of the country as long as the non-fiction section is located conveniently for both children and adults and the entire library is on one floor. (Phase 2 of the Watauga County Library building is planned to be an extension on the same floor.) The total circulation for Watauga County Public Library for 1994-95 was 188,238; 161,714 occurred at the main library (6,300 square feet). Almost 50% of the books circulated from the main building were to people ages 14 and under. While we estimate that the entire library usage will double once we have moved into the new building, we anticipate an even greater spurt in the usage by adults. Creature comforts such as chairs, uncrowded aisles, air conditioning, and ease in parking affect adults much more than they do children!

The Appalachian Regional Library is requesting \$300,000.00 in LSCA Title II funds to help build the new Watauga County Public Library. Watauga County has never received any state or federal money for library construction. The people of Watauga County are not wealthy. Their annual

per capita income is far below the state's average:

1993 State Average

\$18,670

1993 Watauga County

\$15,090

There are no large corporations in the County. ASU is the largest employer. Yet everyone is working hard to raise the necessary funds. In the event the full \$300,000.00 request is not received, the Fund-raising Committee will kick off a 1996 campaign for furniture and equipment. In the meantime 15 state and national foundations are being contacted for donations to the collection, computer equipment, or furnishing for the new building. The library staff is well aware they may have to move into the new building without all the new furnishings and equipment.

The retrospective conversion and OPACs will be completed at least nine months before the move and patrons will have online access to 185,000 ARL items as well as 500,000 ASU items by the summer of 1996.

Besides the residents in the tri-county ARL, people from Alexander, Burke, Caldwell and Catawba Counties are able to check out materials from Watauga County Library. We hope to enter into a reciprocal borrowing agreement with Avery, Mitchell, Yancey Regional Library very soon. In other words residents from ten counties will be able to check out materials from the new facility!

Elizabeth Mueller
September 25, 1995

John

F A C T S H E E T

WATAUGA COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

MAY, 1995

Total Population for Watauga County: 38,652

Number of Cardholders: 15,000

The Library is averaging almost 19,000 check-outs per month, including the branch and service to the homebound.