Belleville Public Library
Strategic Planning Team

Summarized Theme Notes
From All Seven Focus Groups

These are items that were heard from many of the focus groups.

1) **What are aspects of the Belleville area that are positive, that support the quality of life for area residents in general?**

   Community/Quality of Life

   - Small caring community, people know and look out for one another.
   - Senior community has a lot of support from the community.
   - Four churches in the immediate area, congregants know each other very well. Possibly because of long presence in the area.
   - Younger people moving in feel very welcome, settled here because of friendliness.
   - Community feels safe – people don't lock houses or cars. Low crime.
   - There are small town events that bring the community together.
   - Close enough to Madison to access other services.

   Services and Amenities

   - Being a small community, it still has a lot of things that larger communities have – stores, good schools, multiple churches, public pool.
   - Can access services from nearby county offices.
   - Medical facilities are near.
   - The population growth means there are more services needed now, there are still growing pains.
   - Schools are good.
   - Have a nice parks system and lake.
   - Downtown layout is good.

2) **What do you think are emerging or unmet needs for Belleville's area residents?**

   Computer literacy is increasingly important
   - Learning computer skills and how to effectively communicate with digital means is important.

- If we're talking about access to information, whether you're rich or poor, it's having readily available computer access that matters.
- Need more computers that the public can access and have assistance with the use.
- Need for more technology support, high speed internet services in rural areas.

Increasing expectations of better/more services

- Elders, disabled and economically disadvantaged have increasing needs. Transportation, social activities so not so isolated, mental health issues, etc.
- People want all the services, but also want them cheaply.
- Rural people want opportunities to help others in a respectful quiet way. Many want to volunteer.
- Seniors need a building and need ways to be included in the community.
- Difficult to attract and retain businesses.
- More non-sports activities for youth.
- More programs to celebrate and support cultural diversity.
- Need more public meeting spaces that could be used for many functions (for youth, seniors, businesses, public educational events).
- Library building and many other public buildings are not big enough.

3) And in what ways would you like to see the library help with meeting these emerging needs?

Improve access to digital information and provide resources to improve computer literacy

- The library needs more computers and good technology as many would gather to use it.
- Many users need training in what resources are available and how to access resources.
- We need to teach people how to use computers more effectively to access more information. Lessons at the library would be wonderful. This may be especially true for seniors.
- Provide a digital and paper community calendar so people know what is going on.

Library to serve as a community gathering and meeting place for classes, programs, and services

- Offer community classes of all kinds including computer usage. And with the schools out at noon every other Monday, the library could offer more programs—particularly when students aren't in session. Classes in science, technology related (smart phones, kindle, facebook, programming, apps, etc.), how to do research, and reading programs.
- What are the variety of resources that are available for youth, adults, seniors?
- Library needs nice rooms/areas that could be used for meetings for various groups. Would be good if these were flexible spaces. Ideas for groups: youth study groups, those learning

English as a second language, parenting classes, cultural festivals, business sessions – such as tax help Tuesdays, book clubs for both adults and youth, speakers including more popular speakers who would draw a larger crowd.

- Need a larger library. Don't even have room for everyone to sit if larger groups of youth or adults wish to meet.
- Would like a library that has lots of windows, fireplace, open more hours, larger spaces, and inviting look, with beverages offered - coffee, tea, hot cocoa. A place to get away to in the community and gather with others.
- The library could work with other groups to see what the community gathering needs are and the work to address some of these. The groups may be the senior center, business community, school and PTO and others.

4) Is there anything that hasn't been mentioned that you would like to share? Observations, suggestions or something else related to the library?

Physical Building

- I would like to see a new library. Could seek grants. This would give more space for greater programming capacity and create a more comfortable set of reading, working and gathering spaces.
- Create a complex – library; senior center, police department; EMT…We need a new police station too.
- It takes money to build something e.g. a new library. Not realistic; Belleville doesn't have the money. I'm happy with it the way it is.
- Take planning group to other area libraries to see what possibilities are and what happens in their libraries – to see the dream.
- If a new library is planned, perhaps it should be financed by its larger service area.

Library Services/Programs

- Make the library space more conducive to being a gathering place and for learning. Could be the center of the community. Keep the library centrally located, a hub of the community. A place where the kids can walk or bike to after school.
- Have coordination between Senior Center, school district, other entities and library.
- Provide classes, meeting spaces and activities that will help build different aspects of the community.
- The library has a great staff and offers a lot already. Would like expansion of hours.