

ELK RAPIDS DISTRICT LIBRARY PRE-CAMPAIGN FEASIBILITY STUDY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Elk Rapids District Library (ERDL) engaged The Breton Group to conduct a feasibility study to assess the potential for a capital campaign aimed at raising funds for a proposed \$10 million renovation and expansion project. This study, completed in June 2024, gathered crucial data from community surveys and interviews to gauge support, identify potential challenges, and outline the feasibility of achieving the fundraising goals.

PURPOSE

The primary purpose of this feasibility study was to evaluate the community's receptivity to the proposed project and determine the potential for securing \$3.5 million in private support from residents, businesses, and foundations within Elk Rapids, Milton, and Torch Lake communities. This data would guide the library's leadership in making informed decisions regarding the project's next steps.

METHODOLOGY

The study utilized a multi-faceted approach:

- Architectural Review: Evaluation of architectural plans and cost estimates for the renovation and expansion.
- Case for Support: Development of a compelling case to justify the need for the project.
- Surveys and Interviews: Electronic surveys were distributed, and 35 personal interviews were conducted with key community stakeholders.

FINDINGS

The study identified several favorable factors and challenges:

COMMUNITY SUPPORT:

- Strong community spirit with a high quality of life.
- Importance placed on supporting youth, families, and education.
- Positive reception of the library staff and current services.
- Some concerns about ongoing community campaigns and the impact of previous projects on community trust.



PROJECT PERCEPTION:

- Favorable view of the new building's location and design.
- Concerns about the project's scope and potential operational costs.
- Mixed feelings about moving from the historic Island House property.

CAMPAIGN POTENTIAL:

- Perception of strong economic conditions conducive to fundraising.
- Initial positive response to a \$3.5 million campaign target, though higher amounts were seen as ambitious.
- Notable interest in naming opportunities as incentives for donations.

CONCLUSIONS

The Breton Group concluded that a community-wide capital campaign in the range of \$2.0 to \$2.5 million is feasible, with the potential to reach \$3 million with strong local leadership and further community engagement. The study emphasized the need for a phased approach to build momentum and trust.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Key recommendations include:

- Accepting the study's findings and informing stakeholders.
- Considering the use of outside campaign counsel.
- Developing a phased project plan with an initial scope of \$4-6 million.
- Expanding the library's name to reflect broader community impact.
- Implementing a detailed communication and education plan to garner community support.
- Establishing a structured campaign plan with clear leadership roles and volunteer engagement.

The feasibility study's comprehensive analysis provides a strategic roadmap for the Elk Rapids District Library to successfully launch a capital campaign, addressing community needs and enhancing its capacity to serve the region effectively.

