

Grafton Public Library
Proposal for Historic Preservation Project
Handicapped Access to Grafton Public Library

Statement of Need

The Grafton Public Library, located in the Grafton Common Historic District, was erected on the Grafton Common in 1927 through a bequest from Jerome Wheelock. It was the first structure built in Grafton expressly for the purpose of housing a public library. Designed by architect Oscar Thayer, it is an architecturally significant structure that anchors the historic district centered on the town common. Listed in the Massachusetts Historical Commission's Survey of Historic Architectural and Cultural Resources, compiled in 1990, it is also mentioned in Grafton, Massachusetts, History in Review, which commemorated Grafton's 250th anniversary.

The Grafton Public Library was designed and built during an era when little or no consideration was given to ease of access to public buildings. The Grafton Public Library, consequently, is a rather imposing edifice that presents severe obstacles to anyone whose mobility is impaired. Most notable among these is the flight of seven granite stairs one must negotiate to enter the front doors of the library. Other entries present similar obstacles. Anyone in a wheelchair or who has difficulty climbing stairs is effectively denied use of the public library. This proposal will eliminate this barrier, making the resources of the Grafton Public Library readily available to an inadequately served segment of the community.

A complaint has been filed with Massachusetts Architectural Access Board with regard to the lack of accessibility at the Grafton Public Library. Although the board has not yet ruled on the complaint, we expect that the town will have to make the library ADL compliant in the near future. The proposed project will provide accessibility to the library and will allow the town to demonstrate that it is endeavoring to address these issues.

To provide an accessible main entrance to the library the project will:

- Create an accessible route from the sidewalk and/or designated handicapped parking space to an accessible front entrance.
- Raise the landing at the head of the existing stairs to the level of the existing front door threshold. This will incorporate a platform sufficiently deep to accommodate a patron in a wheelchair waiting for the front doors to swing open.
- Installation of automatic door opening and closing devices on the front doors, including activation switches.

A range of potential means of providing access have been considered, not only within the Board of Library Trustees, but also in discussions with the Grafton Historic District Commission and the Grafton Commission on Disability. These have included a ramp to a rear emergency exit, a multi-level lift with access through the book stack, an addition incorporating access and, for comparison, making the library fully accessible. A ramp (or equivalent means of access) and modification of the front entrance is viewed as preferable for several reasons:

- It will give greater accessibility to the greatest number of individuals and provide access to the widest array of material and services.
- Entry at some other point would be less effective in providing such access,

- It is the most cost effective way to achieve the same degree of access, excepting construction of a renovated/ expanded or new public library building
- People who can climb stairs, but only with some difficulty, may be more likely to use a ramp than a lift.
- Lifts are slower and time consuming to use.
- A lift is an electro-mechanical devise and would require maintenance and be subject to failure.

The proposed project addresses several of the Community Preservation Committee's stated objectives:

- It **enhances cultural resources** by making an important Grafton cultural institution accessible and useful to more residents (these residents represent a **currently underserved population** of the community)
- It **enhances town owned property**, by making a municipal facility, the Grafton Public Library, accessible
- It **enhances the historical function of a property** by allowing the library to reach a greater proportion of the community with its services, and by affording more of the community to experience the library's interior architectural features
- The proposed project would occur **within the Grafton Common Historic District**
- Handicapped members of the community would more easily enjoy the **Public Benefits** of library services. Additionally they would do so without incurring the cost of travel to other communities
- **Supports recreational uses** of library resources
- **Maximizes the utility of town owned property** by permitting the town's public library to carry out its mission more effectively.

The Grafton Public Library is an important municipal building, whose mission calls for it to be accessible to all in the Grafton community who can use its services. Recent restoration efforts have contributed to dramatically increased use of the library and pride Grafton residents have taken in their refurbished library. However, accessibility is essential if the library is to serve **everyone** in Grafton equally effectively. This project will be a significant step toward reaching that goal.

Project Summary

Project Work

Work to be done will include:

- Design.
- Erection of ramp
- Installation of automatic door opening/closing hardware

Project budget

Expenses

Ramp	to be determined
Door opening hardware	“
Design Consultant/ Architect fees	“
Contingencies	“
TOTAL	————— “

Funding

Private Donations	“
Community Preservation	“
TOTAL	————— “