

## A Building Program for Greensburg

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The process of rebuilding the library in Greensburg, Kansas, following the devastating tornado in May 2007, has presented some extremely unique challenges during the programming phase. The tornado completely destroyed the library building and the days of rain that followed rendered all of the contents unusable. The home of the librarian, Debby Allison, was also destroyed, as were all of their vehicles including two restored trucks. The remainder of the town's residents was similarly affected with the loss of jobs, homes and transportation.



The challenge of planning a new library is compounded by many factors; there is no existing collection to plan for and the population and demographics of the new community are unknown. The city was not growing much before the tornado. However, some residents saw great opportunity with the new town; it could

be built entirely green which could potentially attract many new residents and a high quality of life in the future. Other residents, overwhelmed by the task ahead, did not want to compound the process of rebuilding with all green building standards and wanted to take a more efficient route. We did not have definitive answers to the direction the future town would take. Money to rebuild the library was another factor, how much would be available through government assistance and private donations, and what would the future tax base be to add to the funds and provide an operating budget?



Without an existing book collection we had to look towards other mid-western communities of similar size to estimate what its size and composition might be. With so much of the town destroyed, we also knew there would be little need for old technology such as video and audiocassettes. The new demographics are unknown as well. Would a majority of the residents

be young people willing to rebuild for their futures or older residents who had long called the town home and were unwilling to locate in a new community?

Greensburg has a challenge that few of us can even imagine. In response to that challenge, our company volunteered to help with the programming phase at no charge. The desire to produce the best program we could was extremely important in order to make as much difference as possible. With all the unknown factors, we felt the best solution was to write a program based on the town's past and look at similar towns like Hallam, Nebraska, and the aftermath of



the destruction they encountered. Additionally, we needed to plan for new uses and attitudes towards all public libraries. Above all, we needed to write a program that would be preliminary and continue to work with the town as they had more information about the future of their community. The town of Greensburg has a long road ahead to their recovery. We urge everyone who reached out to help them immediately after the tornado to not forget that their struggle will go on for years and to continue to offer the help they can.