

North Grenville Example



As part of the planning work for the Almonte Branch - Mississippi Mills Library - the North Grenville Library located in Kemptville was contacted. Rachel Brown, current CEO of that facility was most helpful with information, and also with making the connection to Jim Armour, long-time library Board member. Mr. Armour, past Chair and long-time member of the Library Board was credited with helping lead the fund-raising process and also in inspiring broad community and municipal council support for this significant capital project for North Grenville.

Mr. Armour helped develop and coach the Library's Friends' group to work as an effective organization for garnering community support and investment in the new North Grenville library. In the early years, Jim encouraged the "Friends" to play an advocacy role, coaching the group on how to be more strategic and, when necessary, political. Lesson one came when the Municipality threatened to cut the Library budget. In response, the Friends circulated a petition which "got a lot of community support and encouraged the Council to rethink the proposed cut". (Jim Armour July 2020 interview)

To further quote Mr. Armour, "That early coaching set the tone for a very focused Friends' group. We developed good work habits from the beginning" With his advice and support, the Friends of the Library was instrumental in laying the groundwork for substantial community support of a new library, according to CEO, Rachel Brown. For his work Jim Armour was presented with a **"Star of the Library Award"** for his dedication and commitment to the community's library project.

Lessons Learned and Relevancy to the Almonte Library: There are a number of lessons and effective strategies to be learned from the North Grenville Library project that have relevancy for the Almonte Library Expansion Project.

Mr. Armour indicated that when Kemptville amalgamated into the municipality of North Grenville in 2000, the existing four small libraries were faced with a need to rethink and re-organize. Two of the existing libraries had been built as libraries, two were in buildings adapted to be a library.

Initially the plan was for the North Grenville Library to be part of the new municipal complex at the outskirts of Kemptville. This did not materialize, which initially was devastating to those advocating for a new library facility, however Mr. Armour indicated that this decision was indeed a blessing.

The challenge in locating the new library downtown was that the site chosen as the optimal location was not owned by the municipality. The cost of land purchase had to be added to a sizeable projected budget. Undaunted, Mr. Armour and the Library's Friends group forged ahead with ultimate success.

Here are **Ten Top Strategies** from the North Grenville Library case example that have relevancy to the Almonte Library Branch's potential fund-raising campaign, as follows:

1. ***Positioned the new Library as part of A Downtown Revitalization program:*** "We did a lot of investigation into this and eventually presented the new Library as a key part of Kemptville's downtown revitalization and as an economic development contributor. This was not a "cultural" project only, but a part of the municipality's community development process that had important economic spin-offs.
2. ***Engaged In Conversations With The Business Community :*** Mr. Armour and the Friends group engaged the business community early on, and continually, to promote the economic case for the new library
3. ***The Friends Developed a Capital Plan:*** The preferred site was identified, a visual representation of the proposed library was created and made public, and targeted timelines for completion were established.
4. ***Developed A Cost-Shared Budget:*** The Friends and Library staff put together an ambitious budget that was based on a cost-shared model with funding to be sourced from existing federal and provincial programs. A target of raising one million dollars locally was established to match the prospective external funds
5. ***Aggressively Went After Existing Government Funding:*** As noted above, the Library project tapped into the Build Canada fund which was cost-shared 1/3 commitment from all 3 levels – federal, provincial and municipal partners . Mr. Armour indicated that the Municipality had to be convinced. "It took a lot to get them to the starting line, but we persevered." The municipal election at the time saw councillors run on the platform of community revitalization which dovetailed with the goals of the Library project.

6. **Importance Of Having Prominent Chairs.** Mr. Armour emphasized the importance of having well-regarded, respected community members on the fund-raising team. The North Grenville Library project had two Honorary Co-chairs – The Fishers – in their 90's, who were highly known and had inter-generational connections. This couple were instrumental in building support. The Friends also brought many others into the project from a cross-section of the community, of diverse ages and backgrounds – all united in working towards the same goal.
7. **Make A Compelling Case To The Community:** With the fund-raising team, the capital plan and budget in place, the new Library project team crafted a well-articulated and compelling case and messages to the community to build awareness and support , and their efforts kept the project highly visible in the eyes of the public.
8. **Be Aware of Other Campaigns:** As in all communities, there are multiple projects happening concurrently. For example, Mr. Armour indicated that the Library project faced competition for community dollars from the hospital fund-raising campaign, not unlike Almonte. They worked around this parallel campaign in order not to divide loyalties in the community and made efforts not to schedule events and fundraising campaigns simultaneously.
9. **Hold Events to Raise Profile And Funds:** The Friends of North Grenville Public Library held many fund-raising events during the capital campaign that engaged the community at all age levels and backgrounds to support the new library project. The Friends remain robustly active at present and continue to generate funds for the ongoing programs of the Library. The scope and activities of the Friends group can be appreciated here:
<https://ngpl.ca/support-the-library/friends-of-ngpl/>
10. **Naming Opportunities:** The Friends fund-raising campaign took the ambitious and bold approach for their fundraising efforts by creating naming opportunities for the proposed rooms in the new facility. For example, naming rights to the building generated one hundred and fifty thousand dollars and was sponsored by the Norenberg family. The facility still is known as the North Grenville Public Library, but the building which houses the library is the Norenberg Building.



Members of the Norenberg family present a donation of \$150,000 to the honorary chair of the Room to Read Campaign, George Fisher. Left to right are: Christa, Julie and Eric Norenberg, George Fisher and Margret Norenberg. - J. Morin Photo/Advance Staff (Inside Ottawa Valley News Apr 26, 2011)

Mr. Armour indicated that twenty-five thousand dollars per year was the minimum “ask”, and the Friends created a hierarchy of sponsorship and donations levels. Mr. Armour’s advice – do not be reticent about asking and create a program of recognition to honour the donors.

Concluding Remarks: The North Grenville Public Library opened in June 2011. At the time of opening, the Friends group had 125 members, and had identified 39 local residents as lifetime members for their support and contributions to the success of the North Grenville Public Library.

Mr. Armour indicated during his interview that he would be glad to assist the Almonte Library project further with any advice required and would welcome being contacted.