



Irvin L. Young Memorial Library

Irvin L. Young Memorial Library Expansion Project

Frequently Asked Questions

We've been asked many questions about the proposed expansion of the library. It has been our intent to explore many different avenues to create a 21st century library that can respond to the community's changing needs and expectations. Staff and trustees appreciate your questions and interest in the future of the library.

Why is the library considering an expansion? Isn't everything digital these days?

While a library collection is a core service of a library, a library is more than just books. A library is a collection of opportunities as much as a collection of materials. We envision our library providing services and spaces that allow and encourage people to consume, create, collaborate and connect, participating in cultural and educational experiences such as:

- Computer coding workshops
- 3D printing
- English as a Second Language conversation practice
- Tutoring and online learning
- Interactive spaces for toddlers and their parents

What is the square footage of our current library and when was it built?

The current library was built in 1991, prior to the advent of the Internet and affordable video media. The library is 14,900 sq. ft in size. The children's area uses approximately 1,600 sq. ft. which is 11% of the total library space. By comparison, the children's area at Fort Atkinson's public library consists of 20% of the library's total square footage. The teen area only has 600 sq. ft. The single meeting room is approximately 1,400 sq. ft, which allows for a maximum occupancy of 70.

How big do you want the expanded or new library to be and how did you arrive at that number?

Our ideal library would be 25,000 square feet. We arrived at this number by completing a service and space needs summary created by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction which factors in population, collection space, reader seating space, staff work space, meeting



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room space, special use space and other non-assignable space like furnace rooms, restrooms, vestibules, etc. This square footage was also seconded by the architects we've worked with in the past.

Determining space needs requires these basic facilities planning concepts:

- Conventional planning timetables for library facilities planning are 20 years. Library planners have come to agree that a building designed to meet a twenty-year need will provide suitable return on the community's investment, building to meet tomorrow's needs at today's pre-inflationary construction costs. The current library is now in its 26th year of service. By designing maximum flexibility, we hope to be able to adapt to needs even beyond the 20-year mark.
- Design population is used to determine a projection of the service community's size and should accommodate or recognize the nonresident use of the library. The library's state-defined service population is 17,507 in 2015 and was projected by the library planner to be 22,737 in 20 years time, based on current usage data, for the purposes of determining a projected size to accommodate future needs. The library is a member of the Bridges Library System and serves Rock, Walworth and Jefferson counties. The library had 73,400 visits in 2016.

What are the major issues with the current library?

- We lack spaces for community meetings and group study, for families and community members to socialize, collaborate, and learn, particularly for children and teens.
- Low lighting and poor sightlines.
- Insufficient space to organize and display collections properly.
- Insufficient number of power outlets for widespread technology use.

What modifications have been made to our current library to maximize our space?

We have undertaken the following steps over the years between 2002 and 2017 to maximize our space:

- We installed glass in the Whitewater Room interior window wall to allow the doors to be shut for informal meetings and collaborations.



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- We removed the print reference collection shelving and had three outlets installed under tables to allow users to plug in their devices.
- We removed our large catalog desktop computer search stations (online public access catalogs or OPACs) and replaced them with mobile laptop stands. We then removed the large information desk and replaced it with a smaller more streamlined desk in the former OPAC area and added comfortable seating in the center of the library.
- We renovated our staff work area to provide more storage for office equipment and receiving and processing materials.
- We repurposed our 1st floor server room by moving equipment to the basement and putting the Fred Kraege scrapbook collection and university and high school yearbooks in that room to make them more accessible to users
- We repurposed our board meeting room to create a digital creation space. The board now meets in the Community Room.
- We have weeded our collection down to items used in the last two years, which exceeds the recommended evaluation of items used in the last three years in addition to considering age of material and relevance to the community.
- We eliminated our periodical back issues older than current plus one year. Previously, we kept several years of back issues for each subscription the library receives.
- We eliminated our 7 stationary desktop public use internet computers and replaced them with 15 laptops which allow us to meet the minimum public library standard of 1 public use internet computer per 1,000 population.

What would a new or expanded library space provide that the current library cannot?

Expansion would allow us to keep a current collection of materials that meets the recommended evaluation of items used in the last three years. Holding only a “skeleton” collection does not provide the full range of materials that a community of our size could reasonably expect to have access to in their home library. Expansion would allow us to have more meeting rooms of various sizes to allow for large and small groups as well as two people to work privately without disturbing others and that would allow us to have a dedicated



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children's programming room so that groups would not be competing for the use of the one room we have. Expansion would allow us to have a quiet reading space for users who wish to read or study in the library on their own. Expansion would allow us to comfortably have performers in the library for the summer reading program without resorting to standing room only.

- We plan to reduce space devoted to physical collections to improve interior sightlines, provide better flow and to allow for better display of the materials.
- We plan to create a flexible space that could double as a coffee and conversation spot that could be used for small displays and exhibits.
- We plan to create a self-service suite with provision for self-service copying and printing, reserved book retrieval, and self-service checkout.
- We plan to significantly increase the number of power outlets within the library and wherever possible, provide furniture wired for power.
- We plan to build at least two small group study rooms, and more if space allows.
- We plan to provide a quiet reading space with comfortable seating and good light with the capacity for approximately 10 readers.
- We plan to orient the children's library around a central parent's area that allows parents to supervise several children of different ages simultaneously. The Parent's Time area should have direct line of sight to children's Play Date area (100 square feet of soft surface footing) and Story Time room (enclosed group learning space for staff directed children's programs of up to 30 seated children with associated storage space for group learning and activities). This area will be coffee-friendly and optimized for mobile computing as well as conversation.
- We plan to provide a defined young adult space with good visibility, sized for approximately 10 users, that would include several flexible work surfaces perhaps including a self-contained craft table.
- We plan to have a medium-sized group meeting room for 10-15 people.

What options have you explored for expanding the library?

Our library was designed in the late 1980s and does not have the space or infrastructure to support 21st century library patron demands.



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The library has been working on an expansion project since 2003. We've collaborated with two different architectural firms during that time, participated in several needs assessments, and have held many forums with stakeholders, community leaders and residents to learn what they wanted from an expanded library. A fundraising feasibility study was conducted in 2009. The library board has purchased four properties total next to the current library for expansion purposes. The site feasibility study that was done in conjunction with the needs assessment and schematic building program statement determined that the library would need at a minimum 28,957 square feet in area to meet proposed service goals, which would mean an additional 14,057 square feet would need to be added on at a cost of just under \$11 million.

The last conceptual design that the library board was given proposed an extension of 20,000 square feet on 1½ levels due to the steep slope of the site to the east of the current building. Part of the basement level would be aboveground allowing the library to use about half of it as "countable" space with the street-level addition at 10,000 square feet and about 5,000 square feet of usable public space in the basement or "garden" level.

According to the Department of Public Instruction's Public Library Division, current average price per square foot for new construction for libraries in Wisconsin is around \$250-\$270 per square foot. This is in comparison to the cost of new home construction which is at about \$150-\$170 per square foot. Library buildings need extensive foundational support to house collections so the cost per square foot is commensurately higher than average construction. The additional \$5.6 million over straight construction costs was for retrofitting the current facility and the cost of furnishings, fittings and equipment.

The current library was built in 1991 and does not have the infrastructure to support the technology demands of 21st century patrons. The architects noted that a less expensive option overall may be to tear down the current library building and build a new building elsewhere on the land the city owns and the library board controls on the current block.

By the numbers:

Current Building Square Footage	2003 Proposed Square Footage	2012 Proposed Square Footage	Current Proposed Square Footage
14,900	33,800	34,900	25,000



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What options are you currently exploring for expanding the library?

In August 2015, we started exploring the possibility of a mixed-used facility, meaning that a new library could be built as part of a larger development project. This is happening across the United States, in big towns and in small, with increasing frequency and with large success. We are cautiously optimistic that this option is a good one for our library and the city of Whitewater.

How much have you spent on this process to date?

The Library has had a Building Fund since 2002 to cover expenses related to the building project. We have hired a library consultant to do two space needs assessments and two building program statements. We have hired architects to do a site feasibility study and two conceptual designs. We have hired a fundraising consultant firm to do a fundraising feasibility study. We have purchased four properties. The total amount spent over the 15 year period is \$760,680.

Why have you decided to consider partnering with a developer?

Engaging in a private/public partnership with a developer would create a mixed-use facility where the library would be the anchor of the new development. A partnership like this provides multiple benefits, allowing us to minimize the public costs of the project, maximize library services to the community, and support economic growth for the city.

What are the library's responsibilities when working with a developer?

The library staff and trustees, with input from the community, take an active role in communicating the overall vision of a new library space and its services. Expectations are clearly communicated to the developer at each stage in the project.

What are a developer's responsibilities when working with the library and the city on a mixed-use facility?

The developer is required to publish its entire development plan, including the library's role within it. They need to take the proper steps required to proceed with building a development, much of which takes place within the context of the planning commission, community development authority, city council, through real estate transactions, etc. The library should be



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kept informed in every step of the process. The developer should partner with the City to engage the community to hear the hopes and concerns from residents, to learn how best they can serve the community with their development, and to answer any questions.

Has the Library Board approved the J. J. Starin historical home site as the site for a new library?

No. The developer has verbally proposed the site of the current Mercy Health Clinic to the Common Council as the site he identifies as the best one for the development. The City will review a formal proposal when it is submitted. No formal proposal has been submitted to the Library Board to date.

How does our library compare with our peer libraries and state standards?

We excel at our physical collections and the percentage of residents with library cards. Where we lag behind is in square footage per capita, visits per capita, material loans per capita, and our learning opportunities for children, teens, and adults.

The library compares favorably on two of the current Wisconsin state public library standards, achieving Enhanced and Excellent ratings (on a four-tier system of Basic, Moderate, Enhanced and Excellent) for the number of audio and video recordings held per capita but achieving Basic or Below Standard ratings on print volumes held per capita, periodical titles received per 1,000 population, collection size per capita and public internet use computers per 1,000 population. By comparison, in 2002 the library achieved Basic standard in print volumes held per capita; Moderate standard in collection size per capita; Enhanced standards in periodical titles received per 1,000 population and audio recordings held per capita; and Excellent standard in video recordings held per capita, falling only below standard in FTE staff per 1,000 population.

How can we help?

Our library has tremendous potential to offer Whitewater a whole new level of library service, to become more a “third place,” a true destination point and a hub of civic activities. The fundamental idea of library has not changed: a library is a public institution devoted to sharing resources. The real change is that the 21st century library users are sharing virtual and physical tools, participating in creative and social activities, attending events and seeking social interaction in addition to borrowing books.