

A Vision of Post-Construction Wabash Carnegie Public Library

We offer a wider range of diverse services, with external sources playing a more significant role in generating activities and programming. The library maintains a strong commitment to promoting reading and literature, with a particular emphasis on youth in our community. We offer extensive collections of both print and digital resources. Moreover, we are dedicated to delivering outstanding programs and lifelong learning opportunities for people of all ages. The new space will empower library staff to enhance their creativity and expand their offerings.

We anticipate increased foot traffic as people utilize our space for a wider array of collaborative activities, meetings, research, and studying. This includes a rise in the usage of our facilities for projects like genealogy research and small group meetings, as the new spaces are designed to better facilitate both individual and group learning and collaboration, particularly for non-profit and community-based purposes.

In addition to maintaining its collections for readers, the library has evolved into a central community hub. With the new and refurbished space, the library will transform into a central hub within Wabash, akin to institutions like the Honeywell Center and Y.M.C.A., by offering and facilitating services that go beyond the conventional scope of a library.

Background

Since its establishment in 1903, the Wabash Carnegie Public Library has been a vital resource for the City of Wabash, IN, and the surrounding communities. It owes its existence to Andrew Carnegie's philanthropic efforts, with the original letter from Carnegie's Secretary confirming the funds for the building's construction still in possession. Over the years, the library has undergone two major renovations and expansions while preserving its original Carnegie architectural character.

Like other indispensable community institutions, the library's services continue to evolve, reflecting the changing needs of the community and its patrons. In 1903, the library's space requirements differed greatly from those in 1970 and the present day. In response to these evolving needs, an expansion was completed in the early 1970s, increasing the library's total square footage to 13,500. This renovation provided essential space for youth services, programming, offices, collections, and more, enabling the library to better serve its community.

The rapid evolution of technology has significantly transformed the traditional role of libraries. Today, public libraries are no longer the primary go-to source for information in our communities, and school students are no longer frequenting the library for research papers, as online resources and the internet have taken on that function. This shift in focus presents both challenges and exciting opportunities for public libraries.

In our evolving landscape, libraries have broadened their roles in the community. They remain valuable resources for reading, especially in the realm of leisure reading and fostering a love for reading among children. Moreover, libraries continue to be essential for community members who lack access to technology resources such as computers, WiFi, printing services, and various technology tools. Libraries are also expanding their collections beyond traditional books to include items like outdoor games, seeds, and yard tools, showcasing their versatility beyond mere book repositories.

Gone are the days when libraries were seen as mere book depositories. Instead, public libraries now offer multifaceted and diverse services. They have transformed into vibrant hubs for lifelong learning, facilitating collaboration among community members and organizations, providing programs that enrich the quality of life

in the community, and inspiring a culture of learning within the communities they serve. Space is a critical element of this mission, as it plays a pivotal role in meeting the diverse needs of the community.

Over the past decade, it has become increasingly clear that the current space at the Wabash Carnegie Public Library is too restrictive for versatile use. The library's interior layout hinders collaboration among individuals or groups. There's a lack of dedicated space for teenagers or young people, no soundproof areas for independent research or study, and no well-designed multipurpose rooms for community gatherings or programming. The library staff has made commendable efforts to maximize the available space, but even at its fullest capacity, there are limitations to how creative and flexible they can be in offering lifelong learning and enrichment services and programs to our patrons and the community.

The constraint is so evident that the Library's Board of Trustees doesn't have a suitable room to conduct public meetings, forcing them to convene at an off-site location. Ideally, they would prefer to hold their meetings within the library premises. Recognizing this pressing need, the Board of Trustees has been exploring the feasibility of expanding the library's building space over the course of several years.

In 2019, the library received a generous financial donation from BettieB Wimberly. Following this, the library conducted an assessment to determine whether the combination of this donation and the funds available in its Library Improvement Reserve Fund (L.I.R.F.) would be sufficient to proceed with a construction project. The Board of Trustees made the decision to secure a General Obligation Bond in addition to the existing funds. This decision was supported by the Wabash City Council, which approved a 20-year General Obligation Bond, and the library is appreciative of their support.

A construction bid with a budget of \$4,500,000.00 was accepted, with funding being derived from the BettieB Wimberly donation, Library Improvement Reserve Funds, and the General Obligation Bond. The renovation and expansion project commenced in March 2023 and is scheduled for completion by the summer of 2024. This construction project aims to provide the much-needed additional space while preserving the library's distinctive architectural features, particularly the section built in 1903.

RATIONALE FOR THE EXPANSION AND RENOVATION OF THE WABASH CARNEGIE PUBLIC LIBRARY

The library is beginning a significant expansion and renovation of the library building in March 2023.

Purpose: The original building, constructed in 1903, along with the 1972 addition, has been a valuable asset to the Wabash Community. The proposed project aims to secure the structural integrity and safety of these facilities for many decades to come. Furthermore, it seeks to transform the existing spaces into a more contemporary and user-friendly environment by implementing essential upgrades.

Additionally, the project intends to not only improve existing services but also introduce new services that the library has been unable to offer due to space constraints. Ultimately, it will create a more versatile and adaptable space for library patrons to meet their information and community needs effectively.

Needs Met:

Spaces for collaboration and partnership at the individual, organizational, and community levels.

The new space will incorporate various enclosed areas, meeting rooms, and open lounge spaces to cater to the diverse needs of our community. Additionally, exterior spaces will undergo renovation. These refurbished and new rooms are designed to accommodate both small groups (ranging from 1 to 4 individuals) and larger

gatherings (with capacities of up to 50) for purposes such as studying, collaborative projects, and discussions without causing disruption to others, and ensuring some level of privacy.

Organizations, including the library's Board of Trustees, will have access to the larger meeting room, while the two smaller meeting rooms are ideal for small group study sessions. Open areas, particularly beneath the Dome, will offer people a place to congregate, read, and engage in conversations with others. This space is intended to facilitate communication and problem-solving, whether through planned or spontaneous interactions.

Spaces for additional life-enriching programs.

The library staff excels in providing diverse programs for all age groups within our community. However, the previous Program Room had limitations due to the presence of three supporting beams. Our library team is known for its creativity in programming, and the renovated space will further enhance their capabilities. The renovation includes two main rooms designed for programming: one located upstairs near the Dome and another within the new Children's Room area. Both of these spaces are designed with versatility in mind, enabling a wide range of programming possibilities.

Additionally, if the area beneath the Dome is free from bookshelves and open, it can also serve as an available program space, expanding the library's capacity for hosting events and activities.

We will maintain a substantial collection of resources for both leisure reading and information purposes.

The library's book and literature collection for patrons will remain robust. Our reader's advisory service and the library's collection represent some of the library's greatest strengths, and they will persist in both the renovated and new spaces.

A designated area for teenagers or students at the senior and junior high levels.

Our library has never had a space that adequately caters to teenagers or students in senior and junior high school. This age group deserves a place they can truly call their own, rather than an extension of another area. The new space will address these needs more effectively. While not enclosed, it will be clearly designated for this age group, providing a defined space that encourages meaningful interaction between library staff and these young patrons. This is an improvement over our previous layout, where such interactions were limited. The dedicated area will make the library more appealing to this specific age group.

We're creating a circulation area that's easier to manage, ensuring smoother transactions.

The new circulation desk will be more compact, making it simpler for both library staff and patrons to navigate. It will be positioned in front of the Circulation Manager and Director's offices, which will improve the efficiency of the Adult Services Manager in addressing issues and concerns. Furthermore, removing the previous large circulation desk will create a smoother path from one end of the building to the other.

Enclosed area for genealogy and local history collections and research

Genealogy and local history are integral components of our library services, and a new space will be dedicated to these purposes. This space will house the current genealogy and local history collection, as well as the library's microfilm machine. It is designed to be a designated area for information gathering and research, ensuring minimal disruption for other library patrons. Additionally, it can double as a meeting room, especially

for genealogy-focused groups. The enclosed setting also offers enhanced protection for items within the collection.

Enhanced capabilities for the children's area and programming.

Our children's services are a notable strength, encompassing staff, collections, and programming. The new space will further bolster all these aspects of children's services. Additionally, it will include a dedicated program area for children's activities while still accommodating other meetings or programs elsewhere in the building.

We aim to create a more contemporary and well-lit ambiance through our choice of furniture, decor, and other elements.

The interior of the library will adopt a modern, colorful, and brighter decor, departing from the traditional style. It will be designed to be more inviting and engaging while still preserving significant architectural elements like the pillars and Dome, paying homage to its historical roots.

We will upgrade systems such as HVAC and lighting, among others.

As is the case with any building of our library's historical significance, internal facility systems, including HVAC and the roof, require periodic improvements. The renovation and expansion project will bring these systems up to date, ensuring their durability for several more decades. These structural enhancements will also serve to prevent issues like water leaks and mold growth, which often accompany aging infrastructure.

Furniture and equipment that fulfill the technology needs and preferences of library patrons and visitors.

The furniture and equipment in use for library patrons and customers will be designed to accommodate their personal technology tools and devices, such as laptops and cell phones. Meeting rooms will be equipped with technology to support both virtual and in-person collaboration and partnerships. Seating will include built-in charging options, and we will strategically add more power outlets throughout the library, including floors, tables, and walls, to maximize their accessibility for patrons and visitors.

This vision has evolved over the course of several years and could not have become a reality without the dedication and hard work of our outstanding Board of Trustees and staff. To each and every one of you, we extend our heartfelt thanks!