

Elk Rapids District Library Improvement Project Frequently Asked Questions

FAQ 1: Are the architects being paid with taxpayer money?

A: No, we are using the Heffer funds to pay for this phase of the project.

FAQ 2: How much of the island will an expanded building cover?

A: If we make the footprint approximately double what it is now the building will cover not quite 4% of the island property

FAQ 3: Why can't the library expand into the lower level?

A: The Book Cellar is the only book store in this community, and the revenue it generates for the Friends provides many enhancements to library services. The space occupied by The Book Cellar is not functional as Library space.

FAQ 4: Why can't the current meeting room and the technical services area be combined into a larger meeting room?

A: The wall separating the two areas is a 16" thick brick, load bearing wall. It used to be an exterior wall of the building. Taking that wall out is not feasible. Also, the ceiling is too low for a room of that size, and it would need two exits to meet fire code. We would then need to find a new space for our technical services.

FAQ 5: Will the walking path (historic carriage path) be impacted?

A: No.

FAQ 6: Why do we need a new program room when there are so many other places in the Village the library can hold programs?

A: The Library does use other places in the Village to hold some of the larger programs such as Summer Reading, author programs, and more, however there are few appropriate places that the Library can use at little or no charge. The need for a program room at the library is not just about available space. Programs are offered primarily to bring people into the library. Once someone is inside the library, the hope is that they will stay to use other library services. This is an important and critical method for creating lifelong library lovers and patrons.

FAQ 7: Who owns the building and do they have a say in what is done to the building?

A: The building is owned by the Village of Elk Rapids. The Village Council, as the elected representatives of the Village - in other words, owner representatives - have the final say of what happens to the building. The Village Council unanimously approved the Library Board to explore ideas for improving and expanding the library. The Library Board will again need the approval of the Village Council to move forward to the next phase.

FAQ 8: Who pays for the operations and maintenance of the library?

A: The operations of the library are primarily paid for by the taxpayers in the Library District, which includes the Village and Township of Elk Rapids and Milton Township. We contract with Torch Lake Township for services so receive a small amount from them. According to the lease we have with the village, they are responsible for all exterior maintenance and repair, and the library is responsible for the inside. For example, when we needed a new furnace we paid for that. All of the improvements like shelving, carpet and floor covering, and the technical services area were paid for with library funds. When the building needed new siding, windows, and roof, the village did not have the money in their budget so the library paid a significant portion of all of those improvements as well. All of the district library partners have an investment in the Island House.

FAQ 9: What is the cost of operating the Library?

A: The operating budget for FY 2018-2019 is \$336,019. We expect to receive \$127,814 from residents in the Village and Township of Elk Rapids, and \$165,085 from the residents of Milton Township. The remainder comes from other sources.

FAQ 10: Is there a need for expansion and how was that determined?

A: When the library received the bequest from the Charles Heffer estate, the Library Board commissioned the library consulting firm of Hartzell-Mika to help formulate a strategic plan. Part of that process compared Elk Rapids' peer libraries considering basic library services. Combining this information with surveys, interviews and community meetings, they concluded that the Elk Rapids District Library was underserving its community. The Design Team, which has extensive library planning and design experience, read the strategic plan and citizen comments and determined that the primary needs were an expanded children's area, teen area, seating, program room and computers, and that approximately 7000 square feet of additional space is needed to meet the needs of the community.

FAQ 11: Won't we lose our historic status if we add on to the footprint of the building?

A: No, as long as any work on the building is done per The Secretary of the Interior Guidelines the building will not lose its historic status. The Secretary of the Interior Guidelines allow for adding onto historic buildings. The addition must be distinguishable from the original so it can be understood what is new and what is old and take its own place in the continuum of time. The Design Team has extensive experience using the Guidelines, working with the State Historic Preservation Office and adding onto historic buildings. SHPO approved the plan for a 6,300 sq. ft. addition.

FAQ 12: Did the library explore other ways of increasing space elsewhere?

A: Yes, the library board discussed other options. Moving to another location was deemed not feasible because 1) no suitable locations were available; 2) people made it very clear they did not want us to move from this location; and 3) building a new library is cost prohibitive. We considered opening a branch library somewhere but again could not identify a suitable location for a branch, and staffing a separate building increases our budget beyond what our current millage will support.

FAQ 13: Will the reading porch change?

A: The stakeholders and the community spoke up loud and clear that the reading porch is sacred. The only potential change being considered is to create a door at the west end into the library to enhance circulation.

FAQ 14: Is there a need for additional parking on the library site and how was it determined?

A: While parking is desperately needed at times, we are not planning any additional parking at this time. We are exploring 4 dedicated staff parking spaces near the lower level entrance to free up spaces in the parking lot.

FAQ 15: Will the addition have a similar look on the exterior?

A: The Design Team believes that the most appropriate design solution for the Elk Rapids community is an addition that is designed to be very contextual to the existing building. In essence, the addition would be designed such that one could distinguish old from new (especially by using a very glassy connection between existing building and the addition) but the overall design character, although subtly different would appear similar.

FAQ 16: Why do we need a Teen Room?

A: It is important and part of the mission of the library to provide a welcoming space for all members of the community. Each child will become a teen, each teen will become a young adult, and each young adult will eventually become a senior. To keep the child coming back to the library throughout his/her life, distinctive space and collections appropriate to that age need to be offered.

FAQ 17: Are there usage statistics for the library?

A: Our service population is 5,432 according to the 2010 Census. In FY 2017-2018:

- 45,125 people visited the Library
- The computers were used 1,239 times, and WiFi was used 12,819 times
- 56,070 items were circulated. Circulation has increased approximately 14% since 2014
- 1,203 adults and 1,346 kids attended 106 programs
- 2,933 residents currently have library cards.