

LELAND TOWNSHIP PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Case for an Expanded Library

Introduction

The Leland Township Public Library is one of Leland’s treasures, an essential part of our thriving community that connects, engages, informs, educates, and enriches residents and visitors of all ages. Every day, the library meets its civic mission of “providing equal and open access to its materials, resources and services,” while also reimagining its traditional role—as technology, the digital age, and the pandemic have created new needs and opportunities.

To continue its leadership role and to meet these needs and opportunities, the Library’s Board of Directors embarked on a strategic planning process (begun in 2018 and reaffirmed in 2022). The Strategic Planning Committee and the Board adopted these priorities, affirming that the library will:

- Be responsible and transparent in its use of our community’s resources and committed to fiscal sustainability.
- Engage with all stakeholders of the community to improve the quality of their lives, work collaboratively with other organizations, and strive to make all aware of the valuable resources it provides.
- Be a community resource for digital literacy, providing access, equipment, and education for residents and visitors.
- Continue to provide a sense of place for the community, serving as a safe and welcoming hub for meetings, gatherings, and programs for all ages and abilities.

The Board next commissioned Quinn Evans Architects, a highly respected firm with extensive experience in library design, to prepare a comprehensive assessment to incorporate the objectives of the Strategic Plan.

A Growing Library...

Our data—reviewed by Quinn Evans (2017 through 2022, including Pandemic years) confirm the dramatic growth in the library’s work:

- Physical items circulated have increased by 15%
- Registered patrons have grown by 32%
- Children’s programs have increased by 112%, *and*
- Attendance at children’s programs has more than doubled
- Wi-Fi sessions are up by 60%

Our Emerging Needs...and Opportunities

The library is thriving, but we have outgrown our 47-year-old building. While the library and its systems are in good condition, **every inch is in use**. As a result:

- We have limited space for public programs. In 2022, 266 community groups, totaling 2,370 people, used the Munnecke Meeting Room, making scheduling for library specific programming difficult
- The spaces we use for children and teen activities are inadequate
- Original design elements of the building are obsolete and now adversely affect its functionality: staff interaction with users, utilization of display spaces, location of public access computers and printers, flow of foot traffic, are all affected by the outdated facility
- We have no rooms for quiet study or small-group meetings
- The restrooms are inadequate, do not meet current ADA requirements, and need to be upgraded.

An Expanded and Reimagined Library

After considering reworking the existing structure versus construction of an expanded facility, the Board concluded that an addition would be the best solution for the library's future.

In January 2020, the Board engaged HopkinsBurns Design Studio in Ann Arbor to design the expansion. Funded by the Friends of Leland Township Public Library, Hopkins Burns has designed a creative and practical addition that will enable the library to meet its expanding programmatic needs and modernize its infrastructure—while maintaining and enhancing the beauty of the original building.

The new addition will add 3,000 square feet—with these key features:

- A program/meeting room with space for 30-50 participants
- Newly configured space for youth and children's programs
- A beautiful quiet reading room with views to the Leland River
- A new patio, adjoining the reading room, also with river views
- Two study rooms
- Redesigned shelving to better accommodate the extensive collection of books
- A newly designed business center
- A reconfigured office for the Director and staff—with improved access to patrons
- A kitchenette, which will also be accessed by the adjoining Munnecke Room
- Additional storage areas
- An additional restroom (for a total of three)
- New, highly efficient HVAC systems, utilizing geothermal and solar energy

We estimate that the project will cost \$3,500,000. It is important to note that, while the library is part of a larger structure owned by Leland Township and its operations are funded by taxpayers via a millage approved in 2016, construction of the library and all its physical improvements have been funded by private support. Thus, this effort will require new fundraising from individuals and foundations.

Anticipating a capital campaign to fund the construction, the Library and the Friends have accumulated a “nucleus fund” of \$500,000. This is a critical and encouraging early beginning to our campaign, and we believe that this goal is attainable given the broad-based past support for the library, the widely recognized need for expanded library services, and the community’s generous support of other local nonprofits as they have undertaken civic improvement projects.

The Friends of the Leland Township Library and its dedicated volunteers will lead the campaign. Raising the remaining \$3 million is a daunting task but given the opportunity to undertake a once in a generation project for the community, we are determined to succeed and excited about the possibilities ahead.