

Executive Summary:

The L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library opened at its present location in 1976. In the intervening 41 years, library services and customer expectations have significantly changed. Recognizing the value of a comprehensive plan to meet the evolving needs of the Eau Claire area community, the library hired Zimmerman Architectural Studios to conduct a building feasibility study and space needs analysis that would examine challenges and opportunities over the next 1-15 years. The plan takes into account the rich history of the library, including the desire to preserve and invest in the existing library building, which is a focal point of downtown Eau Claire. The analysis also factored in key themes of the library's forward-thinking strategic plan, which include promoting lifelong learning, creating collaborative spaces, and supporting open access to diverse materials and resources to enhance the quality of life in the community. The resulting report develops a vision of the future of this library, determining what spaces are needed to fulfill that vision and mission, and formulates options to meet those needs.

The study consisted of three overlapping phases. First, evaluate the existing facilities' physical condition, confirm the ability of the structure to carry another story, and judge how well those spaces meet the library's needs. Concurrently, reimagine the library's program and determine what spaces a reimagined library should include to meet its forward-looking vision. Staff and the public—through a survey—contributed to the vision. Finally, explore the benefits and challenges of several general approaches to fulfilling that vision.

Condition: The study team found that a number of the systems and finishes in the 42-year-old building need renewal over the next several years. Consultant CR-BPS lays out a capital plan to deal proactively with the most pressing issues between now and 2022. Expenses would average a little over \$1 million each year to maintain the building in its current configuration.

Structural Capacity: Harwood Engineering Consultants determined the building's structure was designed to carry an additional story. They also determined the added story could, if appropriately designed and detailed, meet current building codes, including new seismic requirements.

Current suitability: While the building has many good qualities, we found the library would benefit from more daylight and windows, more options for both quiet study and collaborative work, better meeting rooms, improved accessibility, and a layout to promote more efficient work flow.

Reimagined program: To best achieve these goals and to “promote lifelong learning, create collaborative spaces, and support open access to diverse materials and resources to enhance the quality of life in the community,” the library should be expanded to between 90,000 and 100,000 square feet. Several different approaches—an enumeration of spaces, a planning tool for libraries from the Wisconsin DPI, and a comparison of library size to population served in other Wisconsin communities—support this conclusion.

Recommended approach: The library's Request for Proposals asked that the study consider three approaches: renovation only; full replacement; or a combination of renovation, replacement and expansion. Renovation alone cannot fulfill the need. A full replacement, the costliest option, not only raises logistical issues but would be out of sync with the sustainable goals of the city.

The architects and committee therefore recommend combining renovation with expansion to reach the desired program. An additional story would provide much of the needed expansion. The remaining space could be added in one of two ways: enclosing and converting the covered parking zone at the basement level or expanding the other floors south and east (over the sunken plaza and drive) to the entry plaza and sidewalk on Eau Claire Street. These two approaches provide between 89,000 and 102,000 gross square feet (gsf). A more complete description follows later.

We estimate the *construction* costs for these addition and renovation options range between \$15.5 and \$20.0 million. *Project* costs for fees, furnishings and moveable equipment could be about 25% higher, depending on the extent to which existing furnishings and equipment is retained. If the renovation and expansion project is done in a timely manner, it would displace some of the renewal costs identified in the CR-BPS capital plan.