



BOSSIER PARISH LIBRARIES

On October 22, 2020 the Library Board of Control approved plans to move forward on the construction of a new **Central Library & History Center** complex. Here are answers to some of your frequently asked questions about this project...

? What will be different about the new library?

Our new library building will feature much-needed spaces such as a large-capacity multi-functional community meeting space as well as designated spaces for teens and children. We also look forward to an exciting new history center that will feature interactive exhibits highlighting Bossier history that will create a destination attraction for locals and tourists alike. We will work with the Bossier Parish Police Jury on options to repurpose our existing building for other parish and city agencies.

? Why did you decide to build a new library?

We made the decision as a direct result of feedback from the Bossier Parish community gathered through surveys and needs assessments conducted in 2017 and again in 2020. The community of today needs access to technology, meeting space, programs, and staff expertise. The previous Central Library & History Center was built at a time when libraries needed to hold large amounts of shelving and reference materials. It was also built before computers were available to the public. In short, it simply was no longer meeting the needs the Bossier Parish community.

Why did you decide to build a new library? cont'd

Building from the ground up was the ideal option because renovations can face unexpected problems. In this case, the old library was made up of three different structures that had been pieced together over three decades. Renovating would have also meant that we would have to close that library for at least 2 years and either place our existing materials in storage or relocate to a temporary location. Either of these options would have added hundreds of thousands of dollars to the project cost. This also would have left Bossier Parish residents without access to the Central Library for 2+ years.

? Will the library be at the same location?

The community felt that it was important for Central Library to stay in its previous location, as it is vital for members of our community without access to personal transportation. We set out to create a plan that retained the existing site while remaining within budget and meeting the needs of our community.

The Bossier Parish Police Jury & Bossier City officials discussed options. Bossier City offered to sell the library land on City Hall Drive directly across the street from the old Central Library. The planning team determined that new construction would be cheaper than renovation and would provide the opportunity to create a new building that would allow for growth over the next several decades.

? When did this project start?

We first approached this project in 2012. An initial design was presented to the Library Board that included three stories at a cost of just under \$20 million. The Board decided to not move forward with that design and to revisit the Central Library project at a later time. As the years passed, the Central Library building became less functional for the services needed by our growing community. In 2018, we revisited the project and began working with an architect on a brand-new redesign. See timeline for more details.

? What is the budget for this project and what is included?

The budget for the Central Library is approximately \$9.5 million, which includes architects, contractors, materials, equipment, technology infrastructure, and the furnishings and fixtures that will go into the building when it's finished (bookshelves, desks, tables, chairs, improved technological infrastructure, etc.). The planning team has made every effort to keep the cost down, including cost-saving measures such as changing materials and simplifying the design.

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"Whatever the cost of our libraries, the price is cheap compared to that of an ignorant nation."

- WALTER CRONKITE

AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION, "LIBRARIES CHANGE LIVES" CAMPAIGN

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? Where does funding for this project come from?

The library's funding comes from taxpayers through a dedicated tax millage. This millage is renewed via vote every 10 years. While the library falls under the Police Jury's purview along with other agencies such as the Highway Department, the millage structure means that funds for these departments are separate and not in the same pool. In fact, Louisiana law prohibits the reallocation of dedicated millage funds to other agencies or uses. [1] Bossier Parish Libraries were careful to reserve and allocate funds from the dedicated millage for this project so we wouldn't need to go back to the taxpayers to ask for more money.

? Do people still use libraries?

Yes! Not only do people still use libraries, but libraries are also thriving. Each year more people visit their local public library than attend NFL games, NHL games, NBA games, NASCAR races, and movie theaters combined. Libraries are very popular, in part, because they continually evolve to meet the needs of the world around them. In 2021, we had 125,911 visits to our libraries in Bossier Parish; issued 27,439 new library cards; and had 635,291 items borrowed from our collections.

? How will the library help with community needs like homelessness, unemployment, and economic hardships?

During large-scale crises that directly impact entire communities, such as the Covid-19 pandemic or economic recessions, people need libraries more than ever. Public libraries provide essential services such as books, computer access, digital resources, free wi-fi, programs that promote literacy, job and career assistance, technology training, and so much more. They also serve as community gathering places where all are welcome. A new library will provide an opportunity to expand these services and partner with other community-facing organizations that help the residents of Bossier Parish.

[1] The revised statutes state that, "This tax...shall be levied and assessed annually...and collected and used exclusively for the...public library."

**BECAUSE THE LIBRARY
IS SO MUCH MORE
THAN A
BOOK WAREHOUSE**

**LIBRARIES
TRANSFORM**



What are some features of the new library and how will they contribute to the quality of life in Bossier Parish?

The new library will support schools, educators, and students. Larger spaces are designed explicitly for children and teens. Field trips will introduce this demographic to a safe space to meet with friends, study, and research. The new facility will offer better and more efficient tutoring spaces. The expansion of our technological infrastructure provides opportunities to bring in state-of-the-art technologies such as 3D printers that most students wouldn't otherwise be able to access. The addition of a makerspace will provide opportunities to learn new technologies such as animation, film production, and more.

A larger facility offers the opportunity for growth. We allow space to grow and house staff and significantly develop our adult literacy and adult education services. The new library will help the unemployed. Training space will enable us to host classes that will increase individuals' employability, such as computer skills, language skills, professional development, and certifications. The training space provides an opportunity to host resume-building and career counseling classes. The new library will serve the homeless. Providing a safe space and more extensive computer lab allows more access to computers for government aid and social services applications.

More square footage offers room to implement more services and staff as we continue to grow. The meeting space offers partnership opportunities with local organizations and businesses. We will be better equipped to serve the elderly and homebound, including training spaces and providing specialized computer classes for an elderly demographic. The open floor plan makes the area more accessible to those with mobility issues.

Our new library will welcome military families. It can be challenging to adjust to new places and faces. Libraries are perfect locations for helping military families feel at home in a new city. Anyone with an unexpired military ID (active duty or dependent) is eligible to receive a library card. Provision of technology, be it by computer lab or by hotspots and laptops, offer families the opportunity to video-chat with deployed loved ones. Databases such as Libby and Hoopla allow military members to continue using digital library services while deployed.

The new library will support the local business community as we are proud members of the Bossier Chamber of Commerce. A new large-capacity multi-purpose meeting room will allow hosting seminars, lectures, and presentations, among other uses.



**LIBRARIES = STRONG
COMMUNITIES**

ALA American Library Association **LIBRARIES
TRANSFORM**



Questions?

We would be happy to speak with you about the Central Library & History Center project, or any other library-related questions.

- **Heather McEntee**, Director of Libraries – hmcentee@bossierlibrary.org – 318.746.8072
- **Anne Madison**, Associate Director of Public Services – amadison@bossierlibrary.org – 318.746.8072
- **Mandi Johnson**, Associate Director of Community Engagement – mjohnson@bossierlibrary.org – 318.746.8072



Timeline of the Central Library & History Center Building Project

2011

Assessment of Central Library completed in relation to *Standards for Louisiana Public Libraries*

2012

Initial design presented to the Library Board was just under \$20 million and included three stories; Library Board decided to not move forward with that design and to revisit it at a later time

2015

Focused efforts on allocating funds for this specific capital project

2016

Library Board resumed discussion of renovation and expansion

2017

Library Board hired a consultant to conduct community needs assessment, focus groups, and an evaluation of facilities and staffing; they determined the needs of the community, how current library facilities were meeting those needs, potential growth of the community, and what would be needed to serve the community over the next two decades

2018

Began work with architect to design new library but experienced delays due to limitations of existing structure

2019

Renovations presented to the Library Board and Bossier Parish Police Jury (BPPJ) for review; discussed benefits and drawbacks of renovating the current building vs. building new; BPPJ facilitated purchase of land to build a new library; design on a new library began

2020

JAN/FEB - Design presented to the Library Board but they voted to not move forward due to cost; the library and architect reworked the plans to bring the cost down; plans made to put the project out for bid late spring/early summer 2020 and start construction later that year

MAR - COVID pandemic hit, causing plans to be paused

JUN - Cost was lowered by \$1 million thanks to reworking of plans

SEP - Design reviewed to ensure feasibility in a post-pandemic world

OCT - Board approved design and agreed to move forward with the project

2021

Bid process completed and project began with a groundbreaking on November 2, 2021

2022

JAN-APR - Dirt work and plumbing are completed

MAY - Foundation is poured

Project will continue throughout 2022