



BOSSIER PARISH
LIBRARIES

LIBRARY FAQS

On October 22, 2020 the Library Board of Control approved plans to move forward on the construction of a new \$9.5 million Central Library & History Center. Here are answers to some of your frequently asked questions...

? WHY DO WE NEED A NEW LIBRARY? DO PEOPLE STILL USE LIBRARIES?

Not only do people still use libraries, libraries are thriving. Each year more people visit their local public library than attend NFL, NHL, NBA, Nascar, and the movie theater combined. (1) One reason for this is that libraries continually evolve to meet the needs of the world around us. In 2019, we had 313,593 visits to our libraries in Bossier Parish; issued 4,992 new library cards; and had 45,942 attendees at our programs.

Our current Central Library & History Center is actually 3 buildings that have been pieced together over the last several decades. Our current library building was built before computers were even available to the private sector and hasn't been updated in over 30 years and simply no longer meets the needs of our communities within Bossier Parish. We have been looking toward a new library for several years and have conducted community surveys and needs assessments as part of our planning process. Our new library building will feature much-needed spaces such as a large-capacity multi-functional community meeting space (which will allow even more functionality for early voting among other opportunities) 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.

\$9.5 MILLION SEEMS LIKE A LOT, WHY IS IT THAT EXPENSIVE?

We first approached this construction project in 2012. The original plan to was remodel our existing building by adding more space. The cost estimate for this design was \$20 million. We scrapped that idea and focused on other projects and services. As the years passed, our current building became less functional for our growing community and services. We worked with an architect on a brand new redesign. We knew we needed to stay in this location as it is vital for members of our community without access to personal transportation; therefore, we set out to come up with a renovation plan that was both within budget and met the needs of our community. The cost estimate for this new design was \$10 million.

Building from the ground up was the ideal option because renovations are fraught with unknowns due to existing structures and since this was three structures that had been pieced together over the years, complications were inevitable. Renovating would also mean we would have to close that library for 2 years and either place our existing materials in climate/humidity controlled storage or relocate to a temporary location. Either of these options would have added hundreds of thousands of dollars to the project cost, not to mention the service gap left behind by a closed library.

The Bossier Parish Police Jury & Bossier City officials discussed options and Bossier City offered to sell us the land on City Hall Drive directly across the street from our existing Central Library. New construction is actually cheaper than renovation and offers us the opportunity to really build a solid infrastructure that allows for growth over the next several decades.

During the planning process for this library design, we went back to our architects countless times to implement more cost saving measures. We had them change external materials and other building materials and make other changes to be as cost-effective as possible (they were probably sick of redesigning the same building by the time it was all said and done).

It's also important to remember that this \$9.5 million price tag includes the entire project start to finish; architects, contractors, materials, equipment, technological infrastructure, AND all the stuff that will go into the building when it's finished (bookshelves, desks, tables, chairs, improved technology, etc.).

HOW WILL THIS PROJECT BE FUNDED? WHY CAN'T WE USE THOSE FUNDS ELSEWHERE?

The library is funded by tax payers 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 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, stating in the Revised Statutes that, "This tax...shall be levied and assessed annually...and collected and used exclusively for the...public library." (2)

A new Central Library & History Center is a project we have been working toward for the last several years based on feedback we received through a community survey/needs assessment as the needs of our communities with Bossier Parish continue to grow and evolve. In planning, we made sure to reserve and allocate funds for this project specifically so we wouldn't need to go back to the taxpayers to ask for more money nor would we need a bond issued to complete this capital project. We would be happy to speak with you about our budget at any time.



WHY BUILD A NEW LIBRARY WHEN OUR COMMUNITY HAS OTHER NEEDS LIKE HOMELESSNESS, UNEMPLOYMENT, & ECONOMIC HARDSHIPS?

We certainly understand this question, and it is one we have struggled with ourselves. However, large-scale crises that directly impact entire communities, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, is precisely when we need libraries most. "Libraries provide a safe place for individuals of all ages and backgrounds and for difficult discussions on social issues...libraries serve all community members, including people of color, immigrants, people with disabilities, and the most vulnerable in our communities, offering services and educational resources that transform communities, open minds, and promote inclusion and diversity." (3)



The library is so much more than a book warehouse. "Public libraries provide critical and transformative services to individuals and communities that are often left behind, combating inequality by providing books, magazines, computers and laptops, classes, databases, job counseling, safe spaces to study, read quietly...for those who often cannot afford these luxuries. One of the most essential ways that libraries maintain their role as our nation's great equalizer is by providing free wireless Internet access, which gives the public unfettered pathways to information and knowledge — and hence, to power: the power of autonomy, the power of enlightenment, and the power of self-improvement." (4) A new library facility will provide the opportunity to expand these services and add staff for this purpose; for example, many libraries have social workers on staff and we would like to explore that possibility.

• **Public Library Contributions to Economic Development** (5)

- Early literacy services are contributing to long-term economic success.
- Library employment and career resources are preparing workers with new technologies.
- Small business resources and programs are lowering barriers to market entry.
- Public library buildings are catalysts for physical development.
- Public library facilities are versatile, attractive components in a wide variety of developments – downtown, residential, mixed-use, commercial, and joint-use service sites.
- Public libraries in mixed-use and residential developments contribute to safety and quality of life.
- Long-term tenancy of public libraries reduces some of the financial risk associated with building mixed-use developments.
- Public libraries attract foot traffic and can serve the anchor tenant function in commercial areas without directly competing with local businesses.



"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





HOW WILL THE LIBRARY & A NEW LIBRARY FACILITY CONTRIBUTE TO THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN BOSSIER PARISH?

- **By supporting schools, educators, and students**
 - Larger spaces specifically designed for children & teens accommodate field trips and give this demographic 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 offers opportunities to bring in state-of-the-art technologies such as 3D printers 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 provides the opportunity for growth, which will allow us the option of exploring adding an education coordinator on staff which will greatly expand our adult literacy and adult education services.
- **By assisting the unemployed**
 - A large training space allows us the opportunity to host classes that will increase individuals' employable skillset such as computer skills, language skills, professional development, & certifications.
 - Training space provides the opportunity to host résumé building and career counseling classes.
- **By serving the homeless**
 - Providing a safe space.
 - A larger computer lab allows more access to computers for government aid and social services applications.
 - More space provides growth opportunities to implement more services such as the possibility of adding a social worker to connect those in need with available resources.
 - Large multi-purpose meeting space offers opportunity for partnership opportunities with local organizations such as United Way.
- **By serving the elderly & homebound**
 - Training space allows us to provide specialized computer classes for an elderly demographic.
 - The open floor plan makes the space more accessible to those with mobility issues.
- **By welcoming military families**
 - It can be difficult to adjust to new places and faces. Libraries are perfect locations for helping military families feel at home in a new city. (6)
 - 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 OverDrive & Hoopla allow military members to continue to use digital library services while deployed.
- **By supporting the local business community**
 - We are proud members of the Bossier Chamber of Commerce and continue to support our local business community.
 - A new large-capacity, multi-purpose meeting room will allow for hosting business seminars, among other uses.

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

**LIBRARIES
TRANSFORM**



TIMELINE OF CENTRAL LIBRARY & HISTORY CENTER BUILDING PROJECT

2011	Assessment of Central Library completed in relation to <i>Standards for Louisiana Public Libraries</i>
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	Efforts were focused on allocating funds for this specific capital project
2016	Library Board began serious discussion again of renovation and expansion
2017	Library Board hired a consultant to conduct community needs assessment, focus groups, and an evaluation of facilities and staffing to determine (1) the needs of the community and (2) how current facilities and staff are meeting those needs; consultant also focused on feasibility and projecting potential growth over the next 20 years
2018	Began work with architect to design renovation/expansion but experienced delays due to limitations of existing structure
2019	Renovations presented to the Library Board and Bossier Parish Police Jury (BBPJ) for review and there were discussions regarding renovating the current building vs. building new; BBPJ facilitated purchase of land to build a new library; land was purchased from Bossier City and design on new construction began
2020	<p>JAN - Design presented to the Library Board but they voted to not move forward due to the cost being over budget; once the architect reworked the plans to bring the cost down, the plan was to put the project out for bid late spring/early summer and start construction the latter part of 2020</p> <p>MAR - COVID pandemic and plans were paused</p> <p>JUN - Library Board was advised that the architect was able to rework the plans to bring the cost down saving an estimated \$1 million</p> <p>SEP - Design was reevaluated to determine feasibility of new library to function in a post-COVID world and potential future pandemics</p> <p>OCT - Design presented to the Library Board and they approved to move forward with the project</p>
2021	Projected bid process to start in 1st quarter

QUESTIONS? NEED MORE INFORMATION?

We would be happy to speak with you about our budget, use of funds, our new Central Library & History Center project, or any other questions or concerns at any time.

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RESOURCES

1. Every Library - www.libraries2020.org
2. Louisiana State Legislature Revised Statutes - http://legis.la.gov/legis/Laws_Toc.aspx?folder=99&title=25
3. Libraries Transform - <http://www.ilovelibraries.org/librariestransform/library-not-just-resource-its-community>
4. Can Libraries Save America - Carnegie Corp - <https://www.carnegie.org/news/articles/can-libraries-save-america/>
5. Making Cities Stronger: Public Library Contributions to Local Economic Impact - Urban Libraries Council - <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/46006/1001075-Making-Cities-Stronger.PDF>
6. Military Families & Public Libraries - Every Library - <https://medium.com/everylibrary/military-families-and-public-libraries-7046dcf141bd>