

Frequently Asked Questions

- **How big is the library district? What are the district boundaries?**

The Plainfield Public Library District is over 36 square miles, with irregular boundaries that do not match those of any other government body. It includes the Village of Plainfield, unincorporated areas of Plainfield and Wheatland townships, and portions of the Village of Bolingbrook and the Village of Romeoville. Its boundaries span as far north as just past Boughton Road, east to Kings Road and Gaylord Road, west past Ridge Road and south to Caton Farm Road.

- **How many people really use the library?**

Over 26,000 residents have active library cards and more than 500,000 items are checked out of the library each year. More than 56,000 people attended a library program last year.

- **How big is the library building now?**

The library is 27,160 square feet. It was expanded in 1991 and built out in 1997, to serve a population of 25,000.

- **Can't you make do with what you have now?**

The library is undersized by about 60% today. The Library cannot meet the demand for service in the current facility. Children's programs are restricted to residents only and still have wait lists. Public use of meeting rooms is hampered by lack of availability. The collection is approximately 1/3 the size it should be to meet the community's needs.

- **Can anything be done to rework the current space?**

In 2004, the library underwent an interior remodeling to maximize the use of space inside the building. Every space is shared – from the Library Director's Office that houses a large format printer and doubles as a conference room to the Outreach Services office with two workstations for five staff members.

- **What is the current population of the library district? What is the projected population?**

The current population is over 66,000. By 2030, the library district is anticipated to serve over 124,000.

- **How much space is needed to serve the current population? How much is needed to serve the projected population?**

Today, the library needs approximately 70,000 square feet. Projections place space need for 2030 at 134,000 square feet.

- **How have needs changed since the current library was built?**

Apart from the booming population, the library was not designed for the intensive use of technology common to today's libraries. When the current building opened its doors in 1991, only three public use computers accessed the online library catalog. Now there are more than 50 public use computers with access to the catalog, Internet, subscription databases, and downloadable audio and video.

- **What will the proposed facility (or facilities) cost?**

Until the planning process is complete, an accurate cost estimate is difficult to make. However, the Library's Board of Trustees is determined to create an affordable, no-frills plan that will meet the community's needs well now and in the future.

- **When was the last time the library asked for a tax increase?**

The library district has asked for a tax increase three times in its history: a failed building bond referendum in 1989, a successful building bond referendum in 1990, and a failed operating tax rate increase in 1993. The library building bonds passed in 1990 will be paid off in 2010. The library operates at under the statutory minimum operating tax rate to establish a library district.

- **How much does the average homeowner pay in library taxes today? What is the library's tax rate now?**

The average homeowner in Plainfield paid \$175 last year in property tax to the library, about 2.4% of their total property tax bill (\$7,182). The library's total tax rate is 0.1479 mils.

- **Where will the proposed facility (or facilities) be located?**

The Site Feasibility Committee, comprised of representatives from the library, park district and Village of Plainfield, unanimously recommended the library retain and enlarge its downtown facility. Geographic size of the district and the limitations of the downtown site dictate that at least one other facility will be needed. The Committee's initial analysis indicates a site in the northwest quadrant of the library district's service area as most beneficial. However, further analysis is needed before any additional site is selected.

- **Will there be enough parking for the proposed facility (or facilities)?**

Adequate parking is a priority issue for the downtown site in particular. The library district is working closely with the Village of Plainfield on the parking issue, as much of the parking surrounding the current facility is actually owned by the Village. Throughout the Site Feasibility Study, Healy Bender Architects ensured that all site use scenarios included parking that met all applicable ordinances and zoning requirements.

- **How can I share my ideas for library expansion with the Board of Trustees?**

A telephone town hall meeting was held in July. Other means of gathering community input are TBA. As always, the meetings of the Board of Trustees are open to the public. Email and suggestion box submissions are welcome! The library's website, plainfield.lib.il.us includes lots of good information about the library's history, documents of the planning process and updates on what's happening in the near future. The Library Director's blog can be found at plainfieldlibrarydirector.blogspot.com with links to the documents and website.

- **Can't you just use an existing building to expand the library, like the old Police Station?**

Use of an existing building has not been ruled out. However, many buildings cannot accommodate the live load of 150 pounds per square foot needed for book stacks. Retrofitting an existing building to meet this requirement can be cost prohibitive. Any existing building would need to meet the needs of the community for size, location, and access, as well as being cost-effective to remodel.

- **What are the next steps in expansion planning?**

The next step is creating a building program, which is a set of instructions to the architect about what the library needs in each area and how different areas should be located in relation to one another. For example, the technical services workroom needs a standing height work surface of xx square feet and it needs to be near a loading dock or service entrance.

- **What has this planning process cost?**

The Space Needs Analysis and Building Program contract with Library Planning Associates is \$24,940. The Site Feasibility Study conducted by Healy Bender Architects cost \$24,750. The cost of the schematic design of the building is a percentage of the total cost of the project, with the percentage on a sliding scale according to the square footage of the design. Renovation of the existing facility is charged at a higher percentage than design of a new building, with addition to a new building falling between the two. The Telephone Town Hall meeting cost \$2,108.00.

- **Who has been involved in planning for expanded library facilities?**

The process began with the results of a community survey conducted in 2006. Since that time, library board and staff, park district staff, Village officials and staff, community members, and professional consultants have all participated in the process.

- **How does our library district’s funding compare to neighboring communities?**

The Plainfield Public Library District ranks in the bottom third for funding per capita statewide. Libraries in the suburban Chicago area spend an average of \$7.34 per resident per month on library service.

Library District	Spending Per Resident Per Month
Fountaindale (Bolingbrook)	\$6.72
New Lenox	\$5.56
Homer Township	\$5.17
Plainfield	\$4.23
Des Plaines Valley	\$2.95

- **Are monies spent on libraries a good investment?**

It is estimated that for every \$1 invested in our library, residents receive at least \$3 in services. Modern libraries provide books, magazines, newspapers, DVDs, CDs, audiobooks, downloadable audio and video, Internet access, online subscription databases, meeting places, programs, computer classes and much more.

- **When will the library board make a decision on placing a building bond question and operating rate question on the ballot in April 2009?**

The Board will decide in January 2009 if the question or questions will appear on the April 2009 ballot, following additional community input.

The Board is committed to developing a plan that includes well-built facilities that meet the core needs of our residents and businesses for years to come. Feedback from staff, input from our architect and professional consultants, and community input gathered at public meetings both in-person and via a telephone town hall meeting will guide creation of the final plan.

- **Are you expanding the building itself, or building a branch?**

Yes, both. The Space Needs Analysis and Site Feasibility Study show that the full space needs of the district cannot be met at the current location. Geographic size of the district and the limitations of the downtown site dictate that at least one other facility will be needed.

- **Where can I get more information?**

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