

# A Building Program for the Des Plaines Valley Public Library District

November 27, 2007 Fred Schlipf

## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### I-A. The Des Plaines Valley Public Library District

This *Building Program for the Des Plaines Valley Public Library District* is intended to convert the service needs of the library district to architectural space needs. The purpose of the *Program* is to guide the architect selected by the library's Board of Trustees in the development of designs for three library branches, each serving one of the district's three municipalities—Lockport, Romeoville, and Crest Hill. The branches in Lockport and Romeoville will be new, while the one in Crest Hill will be either a new building or an expansion and remodeling of an existing branch.

The *Program* was developed and edited in a series of meetings with the board of trustees and staff of the Des Plaines Valley Public Library District during August, September, and October 2007. In addition to information provided by the board and staff, the *Program* also includes information drawn from Illinois state standards for public libraries and from the author's experience as a library building consultant.

For each of the three branches, the *Program* includes descriptions of the nature of each space in the building, the size of contents of that space, and its physical relationship to other spaces in the building.

The *Program* is designed to provide a space needs analysis that can be used as a yardstick to evaluate the suitability both of new construction and of expansion and remodeling.

The Des Plaines Valley Public Library District serves primarily Lockport Township in Will County, Illinois, in the southwest Chicago suburbs. The township is divided into eastern and western sections by the mile-wide flood plain of the Des Plaines River valley. The City of Lockport is located on the east side of the river, and the City of Crest Hill and the Village of Romeoville on the west side of the river. The area is further divided by a large state prison, which lies between Romeoville and Crest Hill.

Because the District's three municipalities are located on the fringes of the district, with the river valley and large areas of undeveloped land between them, the towns have no population center and no commonly shared vision of their history and future.

For this reason, the Board of Trustees has decided to explore construction of three relatively identical branches, with additional space for central administrative services in one of the branches.

The library district lies in one of the fastest-growing suburban areas in the nation.

While the district's population will continue to grow, it is unlikely to gain additional land, since it is completely surrounded by other library service areas. At the same time, it is unlikely to lose land to adjacent municipal libraries, which has happened in other areas of Illinois.

Planning is complicated by the fact that portions of Lockport and Romeoville lie outside the boundaries of the Des Plaines Valley Public Library District.

The current population of the district is about 60,000 people, and population projections suggest that in 20 years, district population may grow to about 90,000. The Board of Trustees assumes that when all areas within the district have been developed, population may be as high as 150,000.

The Des Plaines Valley Public Library District was established as a tax-supported public library in 1929. Its two current branches were built in Lockport in 1965 and Crest Hill in 1969. The district has no branch in Romeoville, but part of Romeoville is in the Fountaindale Public Library District, which maintains a branch in north Romeoville.

Both branches have served about 40 years without serious remodeling. Both are severely overcrowded and far too small for the communities they serve.

After reviewing the present and future development of the library district, the Board of Trustees has predicted that the best library service will be achieved not through a central library in the middle of undeveloped land but rather through three branch libraries, one in each community served. Because the communities are of roughly similar size, the branches will be nearly identical in size, with the exception of additional space for central administrative functions at one of the branches.

In order to provide an attractive package for voters, the library will fund all three branches through a single referendum, possibly as early as November 2008.

## I-B. The current library buildings

**The district's Lockport branch is a 16,500-square-foot building located a block east of Lockport's historic main street. It was constructed in 1965.**

The Lockport branch has a number of strengths:

- Convenient, central location
- Parking lot across the street from the library
- Solid, modular construction without bearing walls to impede expansion
- First floor accessible by means of a ramp to the front door, with power-operated doors.
- Bright, energy-efficient lighting provided by a recent grant.
- Very limited seating, but some pleasant reading areas for adults and children.
- Modular service desks that are easy to rearrange as needs change.
- Good quality steel shelving.
- An attractive meeting room, accessible when the rest of the building is closed.

The Lockport branch also has a number of serious weaknesses:

- Because the library completely occupies its site, it cannot be expanded without purchasing and demolishing the bank next door.

- People who park in the library's parking lot cross the street in mid-block without signals.
- Probably contains asbestos.
- Severely overcrowded building far too small for a community the size of Lockport.
- Outside of the first floor, inaccessible to users with disabilities.
- Electric heat, which is extremely expensive to operate.
- Exposed waffle-slab ceiling, with suspended air ducts wrapped in battered acoustic tile.
- Light fixtures installed parallel to stack aisles. Some are centered over aisles, but others are over the shelving and provide poor light.
- Too little wiring for a modern library.
- Two public entrances, which is one too many. Like other libraries with multiple entrances, Lockport has security problems.
- Not have enough reader seating or computers, and no place to put more.
- Unpleasant acoustics. Sounds carry too well throughout the library.
- Small and crowded staff workspaces.
- A meeting room without storage closets, which all libraries need.
- Many stack aisles with dead ends—a security problem, because people can be trapped in the aisles.
- Shelving painted in some odd colors. Unfortunately, steel shelving cannot be successfully repainted.
- Book return slots outside the library that lead to unprotected bins inside the building, placing the library at risk of arson.
- No book-theft detection system
- No sprinkler system.
- Virtually no storage space.
- No elevator and a poorly designed staircase.

### **The Crest Hill branch was built in 1969 and includes 7,600 square feet**

The branch has a number of strengths:

- Prominent location on Theodore Street, near the main intersection in town and the city hall.
- Limited expansion space on its site, and some available adjacent land.
- Parking lot adjacent to the library.
- Pleasant main floor, with many windows and good lighting.
- Ramp to the main entrance on the upper level, and automatic entry doors.
- Recent improvements to wiring.
- Pleasant seating for adults.
- High-quality steel book shelving.
- Basement meeting room large enough for about 60 adults.

It also has some serious problems:

- Structural configuration that will make expansion very difficult.
- Sloped site, also making expansion difficult.
- Undersize parking lot.
- Overflow staff parking does not belong to the library and is very dark at night.
- Low ceilings on much of the main floor.
- Probably contains asbestos.
- Branch size of 7,600 square feet is far too small to meet needs of community, and building is very crowded.

- Accessible main floor, but requires using a ramp 135 feet long. Inaccessible basement meeting room.
- Problems with overly bright sun through windows on west, south and east.
- Inadequate wiring, despite some recent upgrades.
- Unpleasant acoustics. Sound carries too well between the adult and children's areas.
- Small and overcrowded staff workspaces.
- Windowless staff break room in basement is depressing and almost never used.
- No storerooms or kitchenette in meeting room.
- Meeting room cold and damp.
- Book return slots outside the library that lead to unprotected bins inside the building, placing the library at risk of arson.
- Virtually no storage space.
- Building clearly not designed with expansion in mind.

## I-C. Options for expansion and for new construction

The basic structural requirements of public libraries include:

- Extremely strong floors.
- Ceilings high enough for reflected uplighting—a minimum of 10 feet.
- Adequate space above ceilings for modern mechanical equipment.
- Large open spaces for efficient space use and staff supervision.
- Single public entrances with space for theft-detection gates.
- Extensive networks of 110-volt service and data conduit in both walls and floor slabs.
- Restrooms and program rooms adjacent to entry foyers, to enable programs to take place when the rest of the library is closed.
- Level entrances, with all sections of the building accessible to users with disabilities.

The potential for expanding both branches is very limited:

- The Lockport branch fills its site, and there is no adjacent vacant land.
- The odd shape of the Crest Hill branch makes it hard to expand. Land may be available next door, but the site will be long and thin and very sloped.
- Inadequate ceiling heights cannot be changed.
- Both branches will need extensive new HVAC equipment, much improved wiring, and asbestos remediation.

Very occasionally, libraries have found existing buildings that can be converted to libraries, but the challenges are great, costs surprisingly high, and the outcome often compromised by existing characteristics of the building.

New construction appears to be by far the best option for all three communities served.

## I-D. Features of the new or expanded library branches

After reviewing citizen requests for collections and services and all relevant State standards, the Board of Trustees has determined that each branch will be large enough to hold up to 130,000 books, 360 magazine and newspaper subscriptions and 19,000 video and audio recordings. This represents about 50 percent more books than in each of the current branches, about twice the number of recordings, and about three times the number of subscriptions.

Each branch will have seating for up to about 190 people (if every seat at every table is taken) and 54 computer workstations.

The buildings will be designed to be efficient in terms of energy usage and staffing. They will have bright, low-glare lighting, extensive wiring, acoustics that provide quiet for readers, modern HVAC systems, durable construction materials, and modular furnishings for easy rearrangement.

The buildings will be in full compliance with all building codes, including the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Illinois Accessibility Code.

### **The spaces in each of the three branches will include:**

#### Entry foyer

- Level entrance, with no steps or ramps
- Access to meeting rooms and rest rooms, allowing meetings to take place when the rest of the library branch is closed
- Public bulletin boards
- Benches for people waiting to be picked up
- Porte cochère, allowing people to stay dry when they are dropped off in the rain
- Automatic doors

#### Lending Services

- Space for up to 6 staff, allowing fast checkout, even at busy times
- A plasma panel for library announcements and (in times of crisis) news feeds
- Drive up and walk up exterior book returns
- An after-hours book pickup unit, for people who can't come to the library when it's open
- Public photocopier and fax machines
- An alcove for a permanent book sale

#### Adult Services

- A "gathering area" with armchairs, café tables, self-service coffee, exhibit space, new book displays, and a standup e-mail workstation, brochure racks, and space for tax forms.
- Reference desk and collection, with space for users to sit when talking with librarians, reference books, study tables, and microfilm equipment.
- Fifteen computer workstations, plus 15 more in a computer classroom. Classroom computers will be available for general use when classes are not taking place
- Six study tables, eight armchairs, and four carrels.
- Shelving for adult books, audio books, CDs, DVDs, magazines, and newspapers.
- Wide shelving aisles with good lighting.
- Public shelving for recently returned books.
- Three study rooms for student project groups, small meetings, quiet study, tutoring, and test taking. Two rooms will seat 4 each, and one will seat 10.
- Separate space for young adults, including fun seating and age-appropriate books and magazines.
- Staff workspaces and storage spaces.

### Children's Services

- A reference desk and collection designed to be particularly easy for children and parents to use.
- A section for younger children, including seating for parents and children, special areas for toddlers, shelving for picture books and recordings, and computers with educational games.
- A section for older children, including comfortable and fun places to read, shelving for books and magazines and recordings, and 12 computers
- A separate section of non-fiction books for children of all ages.
- Display cases at child height, coat storage, and a space to park strollers.
- A story and craft room for a wide variety of children's programs
- A family restroom, for use by people assisting someone of the opposite sex.
- Children's restrooms.
- Staff workspaces and storage spaces.

### Program and meeting spaces

- A large program room for library programs and meetings of community groups, with seating for up to 150 adults on chairs or 300 children on the floor.
- A conference room for library and community meetings, with seating for 10 at a conference table plus 12 observers, or seating for 32 people auditorium style.

### Modern public restrooms

**One of the branches will also include the district's central administrative workrooms and central services.**

**If the district decides to provide bookmobile service, the bookmobile will be housed in the branch with the district's administrative offices.**

### **Estimated square footages necessary for three adequate branches include:**

Foyer .....	unassigned space
Lending Services.....	2,650
Adult Services .....	15,675
Children's Services.....	9,125
Meeting rooms.....	3,150
Information technology.....	350
Restrooms.....	unassigned space
Staff spaces .....	525
Loading and receiving .....	125
Storage.....	1,000
Custodial spaces .....	<u>325</u>
Total net assigned space .....	33,150
Total gross space .....	42,000 square feet

Gross space includes additional space required for foyers, restrooms, hallways, staircases, elevators, HVAC (heating, ventilating, and air conditioning), custodial closets, etc.

Additional space will be provided at one of the branches for centralized services and administration.