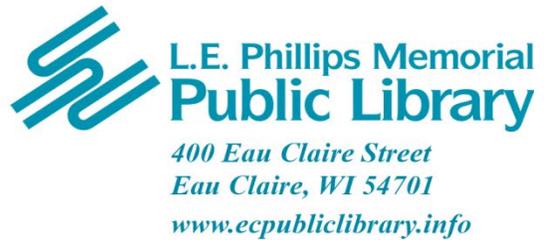


News Release

For Immediate Release



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Eau Claire Library Launches Construction Phase of Expansion

The L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library and its Story Builder expansion campaign held a media event at the library's Eau Claire Street facility on Wednesday morning, April 28 to officially launch the construction phase of its expansion project. At the event, library staff and campaign officials discussed important redesign features, funding updates, and news about the library's temporary location.

Library Deputy Director Shelly Collins-Fuerbringer has coordinated many aspects of the expansion project over the past year. She says, "We've been drawing and re-drawing expansion plans for so long, it's just so exciting to have construction about to begin. But the truly exciting part is in how this project will impact the community and how much more value we'll be able to provide. And on top of that, I'm just in awe over how much work we've done to make this happen. We moved the whole library, and it took a great team to do that."

Construction Begins Soon

Excitement is building as crews prepare to begin their work in just a few days. The library plans to share ongoing updates online as the work progresses, but one major announcement shared at the April 28 event is that Eau Claire's own Market & Johnson has been selected as the project's contractor. Market and Johnson joins the library's other major partners, architects MSR Design and philanthropic partner the Eau Claire Community Foundation.

The expansion is designed to enhance core services while meeting the ever-growing demands of Eau Claire's evolving population. For example, an all-new third-floor event room will

double community engagement space, offering expanded programming for all ages. The library's Dabble Box hands-on makerspace will be greatly expanded to offer countless learning opportunities in science, technology, engineering, the arts, and math. Modernized study rooms will help individuals and groups to work, study, and meet. Redesigned shelving and display space will offer unprecedented physical access. And a new drive-up window will ease materials pickup.

These amenities and many more will be available when the Eau Claire Street facility reopens in the Fall of 2022.

Temporary Location to Open with In-Person Services

Also at the media event, Library Deputy Director Kimberly Hennings shared updates on the library's temporary location at 2725 Mall Drive. All of the library's books, materials, computers, and equipment have been moved to the new facility and staff is currently setting up the space. In a major announcement, Hennings shared that when the Mall Drive location opens in mid-May, staff will reinstate most of the library's normal services (with safety modifications), including appointment-free walk-in visits. More reopening details will be announced in May.

Fundraising Enters Final Stretch

The library expansion project is made possible through a combination of public and private funding. The City of Eau Claire is investing \$11.5 Million to renovate the building and repair a number of its failing mechanical systems. Meanwhile, the Story Builder capital campaign has been collecting private donations, with a goal of \$7 Million to expand the library's physical space. At the media event, Story Builder campaign co-chair and Library Board President Bob Eierman shared that, between the public funding (\$11.5M) and the Story Builder campaign (currently at \$6,343,226), the project has reached 96.5% of its total goal of \$18.5 Million.

Private donations have ranged from a few precious dollars given by local kids to \$1.5 Million from the L. E. Phillips Family Foundation. In total, the campaign has seen over 600 donations from local individuals and organizations. Fundraising for the remaining \$651,773 is moving forward, and those interested in donating to the campaign can visit www.ecpubliclibrary.info/storybuilder to learn more.

Gratitude for Overwhelming Support

During the event, officials extended their heartfelt thanks to the Story Builder campaign's many volunteers and to library staff. (A special event was held at the library in early April to honor the hard work and dedication of these generous individuals with specially made t-shirts.)

On April 28, officials also recognized the campaign's co-chairs: Heidi Atkins, Carol Gabler, and Bob Eierman.

Finally, library officials expressed gratitude to the campaign's amazing donors and supporters, mentioning what a feat it's been to drive fundraising to near completion during a global pandemic. This tremendous support speaks to the library's place in the Eau Claire community.

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