



Frequently Asked Questions - FAQs

1. Why does Delavan need a renovated and expanded library in this digital age?

When the Internet revolution started in the 1990's, many wondered how it would impact libraries. Would they still be relevant?

We now know the answer. As technology evolves and expands – perhaps *because* technology is expanding— **people use libraries more, not less.**

Libraries continue to do what they've always done – connect people to the information they want and need. But now, they also accomplish this through technology. Beyond their traditional role as a repository of books, multimedia, and research sources, today's public libraries are community technology hubs that millions of Americans rely on for their first and often only choice for Internet access in an increasingly digital world.

Modern libraries strive to provide reliable internet access for their communities which for many people is a lifeline in today's digital world. It is necessary to learning about, and how to use, the available resources for employment, continuing education, discovering information, and e-government. This technology is particularly valuable when knowledgeable library staff are on hand to guide inexperienced users through their short-term needs and also teach digital literacy to enhance their long-term success.

People rely on libraries for technology, but libraries are also gathering spaces and community centers, repositories of books, multimedia, and research resources. Libraries also serve as gateways to local, national and international art and culture. In an age of unprecedented global communication empowered by new technologies, libraries are more relevant than ever in keeping people connected to their world.

2. What is the purpose of this project?

Libraries no longer function as mere repositories of the written word; instead, they have become true community centers offering spaces for people to meet; access technology from computers and printers to modern innovations like 3D printers and drones; lifelong learning opportunities with programming from babies to seniors and everyone in between. Office services like printing, copying, scanning, and faxing are well utilized; resources, such as specialized databases, downloadable ebooks, eaudiobooks, and magazines, and online learning from Gale Courses and Linked-in learning provide 24/7 access to information even when the library is closed.

Delavan needs a larger library building. The Needs Assessment Study completed in November 2018 concluded that more resources and services are crowded into the current building than it can contain, and services that could be offered cannot be due to lack of space. These conclusions are based on comparisons to similar sized communities, Wisconsin library standards, input from the community via surveys and focus groups, and future growth projections.

Population growth estimates anticipate our service population reaching 16,300 by 2040. Long term space needs are projected to be 24,000 sq. ft., twice the size of the current building. Focus groups and surveys determined that bilingual services are needed, the library needs to remain in the downtown area, more community meeting rooms, and individual study rooms are requested, quiet work areas are difficult to find, more parking is needed, mobile services (bookmobile) would be welcome.

2a. How much will the new addition add to the existing library?

The 1908 original Aram Library had 5,024 square feet. An addition in 1991, expanded the library to its present 12,112 square feet. The new renovation will add 23,162 square feet of net space.

3. What specific issues, problems, or needs will this project solve or meet?

Meeting space is priority number one. Building codes restrict the one current meeting room to a maximum of 35 people. Many programs, especially in the summer months draw up to 200 attendees. There are daily requests for meeting spaces from tutors, community businesses, state and local government officials, and members of the public. For example, in a six-month period from January through July 2019, there were 52 uses of the one meeting space we have by the community (not counting use for library functions) and 231 unaccommodated requests for meeting space.

Additional space is required for materials, seating, and technology. Shelves are at capacity and vigorous “weeding” is necessary to make space for new materials. For example, every item in the youth area has been utilized at least once in the previous two years; anything not recently used must be removed. Seating space is also at a premium. Standards indicate a service population of our size should provide 90 seats; currently we have 30. The present building is also sorely lacking in power outlets, especially near tables where patrons need to plug in their devices. There is no space available for quiet study; nor are we adequately equipped to allow visitors to utilize electronic devices in convenient or comfortable locations.

Additionally, some space in the expanded building will be allocated for community partners. An example might be the Delavan Historical Society. Our missions align well and having researchers’ needs met in one location will be a boon to residents and visitors alike.

Finally, the expanded library will also address building inadequacies identified in the 2018 Needs Assessment. Upgrades will bring the existing building up to code, provide compliance with ADA requirements, increase safety and comfort of users, increase off-street parking spaces, and allow access to meeting room space outside of library hours.

4. Why is Aram Library uniquely suited to solve or meet these community issues, problems and needs?

It is apparent the community desires what Aram Public Library offers. Usage of the library building, services and materials continues to increase. The library is the institution uniquely situated within the city to adapt to changing needs. No longer is lending of books our primary purpose; instead, we aim to provide a space for community connections: offering spaces, equipment, and activities to support technological, educational, and literacy needs of our community. Rural communities face challenges in providing spaces and activities for youngsters and seniors; the library is uniquely poised to fulfill those needs as a place that welcomes everyone, charges nothing for its services and materials, and offers services on evening, weekend, and after-school hours.

Expanding and updating the historic library building maintains ties to our history, provides a cultural anchor in the city downtown and provides convenient, centralized access to residents.

5. Why is now the right time to move forward with this project?

Today in 2021, Delavan needs a modern, contemporary library facility complete with updated technology to meet current and projected needs of our community. Funds raised from the private sector will combine with budgeted expenditures from the city to provide enough to design and build a facility that will have something to offer to all in the community.

6. What are the expected outcomes of this project?

An upgraded library is a critical community need. Our plan to renovate and expand the existing historic building will not only be a stunning addition to downtown, it also will offer the most requested and needed community services and resources:

- Renovate the existing space of 12,116 square feet and add an additional 23,162 square feet of net space
- A new main entrance on 4th Street with a second entrance off the east-side parking lot
- Multiple rooms for events, workshops, and meetings including study rooms and a kitchen demo area
- A discovery/exploration area and Makerspace
- Designated space for teen/young adults
- Larger, modern children's department with flexible programming areas including bilingual and ASL events
- Remote workspace and centralized tech area with plenty of power outlets for devices
- Access to meeting rooms outside library hours
- Additional adult program areas for various size audiences
- Safe, attractive, and functional space for all visitors
- New opportunities for community partnerships and involvement
- User-friendly and cost-efficient one-story design for staff and patrons
- And, additional parking

7. What are the consequences of not undertaking this project now?

Investments have already been made in studies evaluating current and future needs, and in gathering community feedback and support that can be capitalized on. Even now, community

members regularly inquire about the expansion progress. Forward momentum is key! Delay will dampen the current enthusiasm for this project and may lead to increased costs.

8. How much will this project cost?

On August 17, 2021, the Delavan Common Council approved a resolution authorizing design and construction to expand the Aram Public Library at an estimated cost of \$9 million.

The community will be invited to financially support the project. A campaign will include naming opportunities for public areas and various giving levels. In addition, grants and funds from partner agencies will be sought to offset some of the expense.

9. What is the timeline for this project? Capital campaign from 2021-2022, detailed design completed in 2023 and construction to begin in 2024.

10. What if fundraising exceeds the goal? How will the extra funds be used?

The City of Delavan and the Library Board have been planning to build a new library for many years. The community has been extremely supportive of this effort and it's possible we will raise funds beyond our goal. If this happens, we will work with the city to make sure public resources are used appropriately to help expedite completion of the facility and minimize debt.

In addition, we will work with the donors and Library Board to assure that private gifts are used responsibly and effectively to cover costs of other capital items in the building that otherwise would not be possible.

At this point, we are working on meeting our goal. Having some excess, unrestricted private funds for the library project would give us the added flexibility to allocate funds as needed to complete the project on time and within the budget.

11. How will a transformed library building change the library's annual operating budget?

The library's annual operating budget will increase somewhat with the move to an expanded building. The new library will be about 35,000 square feet, or three times the size of the current building. As part of the move to an expanded building, the library will seek to add additional professional positions to continue to ensure exceptional customer service in the new, larger space and to provide new services and programs for the community.

12. Why should we make a gift in support of a government-owned building?

While the Aram Public Library is owned by the city, Aram Library, like many other libraries, is a valuable community resource. A hub of learning and community interaction, the library is much more than a place to check out books. As we look around our community and the facilities and resources we offer, the current configuration and lack of space falls short.

In order to offer the services we want in an environment that will attract students of all ages now and for years to come, we want to transform our library into a quality facility that will continue to serve as a downtown hub serving our residents, and offering services comparable to what other strong communities already experience – libraries are the foundation of strong communities.

To offer the features and furnishings we want, we will need community support and funds beyond what can be allocated through tax dollars. Your investment will make this the kind of learning resource all of us in Delavan expect.

At some point in the *Rooted In Our Community, Growing For Our Future Campaign*, we will be asking everyone in the community to join in supporting this important effort that will create a valuable asset for the Delavan area community.

13. How long has the Delavan library been in existence and what is its history of service?

Our historic library’s beginnings rest with James and Susan Aram, Delavan residents, who in 1897 bequeathed \$20,000 to the city in honor of their 3 deceased daughters to establish and maintain a public library and reading room to be named the Aram Public Library. Architect Claude Starck of Madison was selected to design the building and the grand opening took place on July 8, 1908.

Over the years, as the city population expanded, space for library materials and activities became insufficient. Plans for a major expansion of Aram Public Library were unveiled in December 1986. The library would become accessible to the handicapped and its size would more than double. Construction of the new addition was completed by June 1991, and it boasted a large meeting room space on the lower level; however, after a few years this space had to be repurposed as the youth department.

City population and usage of the library continued to grow and in the 21st century space is once again proving inadequate for the community’s needs. The chart below illustrates growth over 20 years which roughly corresponds to the Delavan area’s population increase over that period.

Comparative Data	1999	2019
City of Delavan population	7,309	8,368
Service population	15,089	14,836
Number of books owned	33,888	57,040
Number audios owned	805	4,481
Number of videos (DVDs) owned	1,084	11,232
Public computer workstations	8	15
Circulation total	104,957	114,447
Registered Borrowers	8,275	8,018
Library Visits	97,542	69,657
Adult programs: Number/Attendance	98/782	197/1,210
Youth programs: Number/Attendance	75/2,800	441/9,862

14. Who does our library serve?

Aram Public Library’s serves a City of Delavan population of 8,505 (2020 Census) and additional Walworth County residents numbering 7,554 for a **total service population of more than 16,000**. Through its membership in the Lakeshores Library System (Racine and Walworth Counties) and the

SHARE consortium (Kenosha and Rock counties) resources are shared throughout southeastern Wisconsin. Robust programming, particularly for youth, attracts thousands of visitors each year.

Aram Public Library supports area schools by hosting class visits to the library; maintaining close ties with teachers at in-services while also providing requested materials to teachers to augment their resources; participating in outreach activities at all public and parochial schools by providing monthly story times at preschool and kindergarten classrooms, activities at afterschool programs, library card signup competitions, and collaborating on special events. Currently, four library trustees affiliated with the schools further cement our strong library-school partnership.

15. What makes this library unique?

Users say the one thing that makes Aram Library stand out is its exceptional service. Compliments are regularly received, with one typical example being, “We loved it! Thank you for all you do! We are having a blast with the summer reading program too” (recent user messaged after attending *Baby to Three, Come Wiggle With Me*).

Beyond that, a great mix of materials (*Did you know you can check out a telescope?*) and programs that combine education and FUN are offered all year around; our summer reading program is particularly popular and serves to keep the community reading and active. Computer workstations with internet access and office productivity software are available to any member of the public at no charge, and assistance is offered to those not familiar with technology. Faxing, scanning, and copying services are available as well. Meeting space for community groups and Walworth Literacy Council tutors and students is in high demand. Aram Public Library is also home to a unique collection of artwork from a productive period of an art colony that flourished in Delavan near the turn of the last century. Additionally, each winter Aram Public Library provides a warm space during the day for residents of the county homeless shelter.

Aram Public Library is third in Walworth County in circulation and programming. It has recently been awarded the following grants: *Grow with Google*, *BeanStack’s Black Voices microgrant* and a University of Wisconsin-Madison’s Center for East Asian Studies (CEAS) grant.

This year, Aram Public Library was nominated and received the Wisconsin Library Association’s Programming Innovation award through the Summer Storyteller Series! Our community listens to stories read by local business owners and civic and community leaders via the library’s Facebook page. Picture books were selected based on business and personality focus, reader interest and copyright clearance. This is just one way Aram Public Library collaborates and partners with local businesses and nonprofit organizations. Our work to connect is one of our many strengths.

Aram Public Library provides needed tech assistance for our community, especially those relating to job hunting, hospital and medical forms, tax filing, and educational applications as well as setting up video conferencing meetings such as doctor appointments and job interviews.

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