



I have always imagined that Paradise
will be a kind of library.
~ Jorge Luis Borges

In November 2009, the Common Council decides Mayor Cieslewicz's 2010 Capital Budget, which includes funding for a new Central Library.

Following are some basic facts about the Central Library. For more detail and updates, please see the library's web site at www.madisonpubliclibrary.org/central

Q. Why does Madison need a new Central Library?

A. The current Central Library is 45 years old and there are economic and functional reasons why replacing the library is necessary and supportable.

The building needs replacements for costly mechanical systems. The roof, elevators, front doors, HVAC system, and security system all need to be replaced. Many mechanical systems are original to the 1965 building and replacement parts (or even persons who know how to fix the mechanicals) are hard to find. Repairs to the building, its mechanicals, and lighting and electricity are frequent and costly.

The building was not designed for computers. In 1965 it was not envisioned that the library would be the public hub of computer use that it has become. This requires modern data cabling, yet the building's design ensures that re-cabling is an expensive and laborious process each time it is necessary. In addition, much of the public space formerly dedicated to reading, seating, and working/researching is now dedicated to 34 public computers. Usage data shows that more computers (and the wiring and space to support them) are needed at the Central Library.

The building is cramped. Of Madison Public Library's 1.1 million print and media holdings, more than 524,000 are housed at the Central Library. The collection outgrew the building's capacity years ago and there is no room for expansion, so the library is forced to make challenging decisions regarding the withdrawing books and other materials to make room for new books and formats. 40% of the Central Library's collection is in storage and not available for the public to browse.

The building is heavily used. The Central Library receives over 450,000 visits per year (20% of all Madison library visits). Central library visitors check out 900,000 items (19% of all check outs) and log nearly 200,000 public computer sessions (30% of all computer use). Meeting room use has increased despite the lack of space and condition of the current rooms.

For a complete description of the physical concerns and reasons they can't be cost-effectively fixed, see documents on the library's web site at www.madisonpubliclibrary.org/central including the Facility Report for Madison Public Library and the Report on Deferred Maintenance

Q. What would I find at a new Central Library?

A. A new central library will be part of a planned development for an entire city block. The library will offer:

- ▶ An iconic building at a prominent location, featuring additional visibility from the heavily-traveled West Washington Avenue location
- ▶ A vibrant and well-organized community space full of natural light, rotating art exhibits, and programming for all ages
- ▶ Increased access to library collections, including specialized archival materials, unique local materials, popular materials in multiple formats
- ▶ Staff who provide free, specialized research assistance to help residents make a variety of well-informed life choices
- ▶ Dedicated "quiet" and "busy" spaces for youth programming, group projects, tutoring, larger meetings and quiet reading and study
- ▶ Large meeting spaces with updated sound systems, video and computer projection equipment, and independent after-hours access
- ▶ Increased access to free computers with high speed internet, popular software, small office capabilities, and expert staff assistance
- ▶ A safe and welcoming atmosphere reflecting and celebrating Madison's diversity.

Q. Will there be parking and easy access to public transit at the new Central Library?

A. The new Central Library will have adequate public parking, and be near public transit. There are two public parking ramps within two blocks of the library, and the library will be on several bus routes. Additional parking is planned as part of the Block 66 redevelopment.

Q. How much will a new Central Library cost?

A. Mayor Cieslewicz has included \$37 million in the 2010 Capital Budget for the Fiore-Irgens proposal that would include a new library on the corner of West Washington Avenue and Henry Street, and redevelopment of the entire block. A breakdown of the \$37 million includes \$17 million borrowed by taxpayers, \$6 million from New Markets Tax Credits, \$4 million from sale of the land, and \$10 million from private fundraising. A complete budget breakdown and different "scenarios" are available on the library's web site.

Q. Why build now, in the middle of a recession? How will the project be financed?

A. Mayor Cieslewicz explains the reasoning behind building now rather than waiting for the economy to improve:

"After many years of planning, this budget includes funding over the next three years for a new Central Library. Since I have been in office, we have made significant investments in our branch libraries. In today's economic climate we can take advantage of the lowest bid process in decades to now invest in our Central Library. This project also opens up the entire block for further development and further tax revenue for the city. With a combination of private fundraising, New Markets Tax Credits and the new tax revenue generated by further development of the block, the City is able to build a new library for the same net cost over 15 years as renovation of the existing library. We also estimate the project will also create 200 to 300 good paying construction jobs." - Mayor Cieslewicz, 2010 Capital Budget, Budget Narrative

Q. How would a new central library help the city?

A. The entire Block 66 redevelopment project will generate economic benefits in the form of direct and indirect employment, and significant direct property taxes, sales taxes, and room taxes for the City of Madison. The construction project will create 200-300 jobs, the proposed hotel will employ 82 full-time equivalent employees, and "indirect" jobs would be created/sustained in the local economy. Total new property taxes and room taxes to the City from Block 66 have been estimated by the City Assessor at \$1,023,000 (and by extension \$1,383,000 if a TID is created).

Research, including a 2008 study of Wisconsin libraries by NorthStar Economics, indicates that public libraries return four dollars to the community for every one dollar of taxpayer support. In addition, libraries attract many visitors, and this foot traffic provides support for local retail and service businesses. Finally, the "return" on public libraries include other intangibles such as workforce development, improved early literacy and school readiness, small business support, educated citizens, and many others. Libraries may well be one of the most productive investments that the public can make.

Q. How does the Central Library support branch libraries in Madison?

A. The Central Library, while a "branch" for the 38,000 people who live in the Isthmus area and the many others who work downtown, is also a resource library for all Madison branch libraries and all the public libraries in the seven-county South Central Library system. As a resource library, the Central Library houses services, staff, and special collections that serve all Madisonians and Dane County residents. Centralized support services include: city-wide outreach through a traveling Readmobile and home delivery; system- and state-wide borrowing of special materials from other libraries; email and chat reference; computer, network and web site maintenance; and administrative, budgeting and personnel functions. Maintaining these services in one location maximizes public space in branch libraries and creates operational efficiency throughout the system.

Q. Will a new Central Library divert usage or funds from branch libraries?

A. In the past two decades, Madison has spent \$14 million dollars upgrading and expanding its heavily-used eight branch libraries. Another \$7.45 million in branch library improvements or additions is included in the Capital Improvement Program budget estimates for 2011-2015. Each time a branch has been added or expanded, usage at that location increases without a noticeable decrease in use at other Madison libraries.

Q. Doesn't the internet make the library obsolete?

A. Libraries and the internet complement each other. At the onset of the technology revolution, many observers (including librarians) worried about the relevancy of the public library and wondered whether it would have a meaningful purpose in the future. During the 15 years or so since these concerns were raised, the public library has proven to have an even greater and more far-reaching role to play in our community.

Librarians help transform data into knowledge. Librarians are experts at finding quality information, and this high quality content is often not free. Public libraries provide access to important and costly research and informational databases, at no cost to the library user. Public libraries also serve to provide an important cultural destination. Today's library, more than ever before, is an active community space where meetings take place, ideas are exchanged and debated, and where events and programs occur. And of course, public libraries maintain their historic role as a depository of books, multimedia, and vital research resources for the general public's use. This is a powerful community asset that serves people of every socioeconomic group. By the sharing of these resources, library patrons obtain real economic value. In addition, libraries are finding themselves in a new role: computer and internet providers for the roughly 24% of Americans who don't have internet access through home or work. Public libraries are a free source of connection to an increasingly online world.

Technology has transformed the library in obvious and positive ways. But technology has also created an even greater need for face-to-face interactions and opportunities for connecting and collaborating in a welcoming environment. Public libraries provide this environment and are more relevant today than perhaps any time in their existence.

Q. What will the building look like?

A. The new library will be six-floor standalone structure as part of a planned block development. The Central Library design will include natural light and attractive interior and exterior design. Conceptual images of the proposed new Central Library are available on the Fiore-Irgens project web site. Once approved, the design will be fine-tuned with extensive input from the public and library staff.

Q. How can I participate in the discussion?

A. Contact your alderperson or the Library Board with your comments and questions before the Common Council meets in November to vote on the 2010 Capital Budget. Contact information is available on the library's web site at www.madisonpubliclibrary.org/central.