

## **Sycamore Public Library Building Program**

**2011-2014**

### **Information about the City of Sycamore**

Sycamore was established in 1835 and by 1850 there were 350 residents. In 1869, Sycamore became a city and by 1900 the population had grown to 3,300 people. According to the 1980 census Sycamore had 9,219 residents and only grew to 9,708 residents over the next ten years. Since the 1990 census, the City of Sycamore has almost doubled in size. A special census in 2005 recorded the population at 14,866. As the population changes and grows, the families who have lived and worked in Sycamore for many generations have questioned the benefits and detriments to growth. The City manager, Mayor and aldermen have responded to resident concerns by forming an ad hoc committee on growth which included a voice from the Sycamore Public Library. They completed a fiscal impact study in 2005, a housing analysis in 2007, and a new comprehensive plan in 2008. One benefit from the growth in the community has been a partnership between the City and Transvac, a transportation service offered through the Voluntary Action Center, which started a public bus line that connects people to local businesses, social service agencies, and the Sycamore Public Library. This is the first public transportation available to Sycamore residents. We have also seen an increase in industrial business coming to the City which helps to spread property taxes between business and residential. Agreements have been made with neighboring communities regarding city borders. Based on Sycamore's planning and borders when all houses, condos, and apartments are built over the next 25 to 50 years, the population of Sycamore would be between 25,000 and 28,000 people. While there was a 23% growth spurt in the early 2000's, the economic downturn has slowed population growth to almost nothing in 2009.

### **History of the Sycamore Public Library**

Although the Sycamore Public Library was not legally established by the City until 1891, we can trace its roots back to 1875 when a chapter of the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle, the oldest continuous book club in the United States, was formed in Sycamore. Once members had completed the literary course, they established the Athena Literary Society in order to form a public library. Over the course of three years they raised \$700 and in 1891 asked the city council to appropriate money for books and that the mayor appoint a board of directors.

On July 12, 1892, the Sycamore Public Library opened in Hoyt and Rogers' Store, on the second floor, in the back room. This building now is occupied by P.J.'s Courthouse Tavern and Grille and Marlyn's Majorettes. The City Council appropriated \$800 to purchase books. The Athena Literary Society assisted with funding the library for the first two years. Miss Flora Jeannette Dow, a member of Athena, was made the first librarian.

In 1902, Andrew Carnegie offered the City of Sycamore \$10,000 for the construction of a library provided an acceptable site could be secured and that the Sycamore City Council would annually appropriate at least 10% of his donation for maintaining the building. Mr. Frederick B. Townsend donated the property where the library stands today.

Miss Dow received the honor of placing the first trowel of mortar on the cornerstone on May 24, 1905. While she was still named the Head Librarian, she was very ill and did not live to see the library completed. Gertrude West took over as Librarian when the new Carnegie Library opened on Thanksgiving Day 1905.

Over the next 90 years, several renovations and remodeling projects took place and then on October 14, 1995, a new era of growth began with the groundbreaking ceremony for a 21,000 square foot library expansion. A \$250,000 construction grant from the State of Illinois and many donations from community members, businesses, local organizations, and a bank loan funded the \$4,000,000 project. The original plan for the expansion was to complete the project in two phases. All services except for the meeting rooms would be located on the second floor and later the first floor would be completed and the Youth Services Department and Circulation Services would move to the first floor. During construction, the plan was reviewed and it was recommended to the Library Board that there would be long term cost savings if both floors were finished all at one time. The Board agreed and a modified plan was created installing circulation desks on both levels of the building as well as leaving the wall in place that originally led to an empty section of the building. Thirteen years have passed since the addition opened to the public. While the added construction costs of finishing the first floor were controversial, it is a blessing that the work was done as the community has grown by 53% between 1990 census (pop. 9,709) and the 2005 special census (14,866).

### **Our Vision**

The Sycamore Public Library is a destination for many residents of Sycamore. Our vision is that the Library will be a dynamic essential destination for every resident of Sycamore. We seek to strengthen and expand each resident's opportunity for discovery, learning and community interaction. The Library is housed in an historic building in the heart of Sycamore's vital downtown; our physical location represents our place in the center of the community.

Our Long-Range Plan that ran from 2004 – 2007 looked at services and library operations, but lacked a clear picture of capital and operational financial needs because the 21,000 sq. ft. addition was only six years old. The community has changed dramatically due to rapid growth throughout DeKalb County. The Library has kept pace with these changes by offering creative and responsive programming and enhancing community awareness. As a result, more than 11,500 (76% of our population) Sycamore residents have library cards.

A strong, vibrant public Library is a sign of a strong, vibrant community, and is a measure of how that community values its residents. Commitment and investment by community stakeholders will help ensure a continued dynamic Library for all residents of the City of Sycamore. We encourage the City and the community to work together with us to support our Vision and to meet our goals.

### **Our Core Assets**

- Historic well-preserved building in a central location
- Diverse well-rounded collections for all ages and abilities
- Dedicated Director, Board, and Staff
- A Community that supports and uses the library
- Technological infrastructure including a wireless network, computerized catalog and databases, and computers for use by the public

## **Our Mission**

The Sycamore Public Library provides a comfortable, safe place to satisfy curiosity and stimulate the imagination.

## **Long Range Plan**

During the planning process, the Board discussed the long term future of the library and decided that every effort would be made to keep the library in its current location. Sycamore's growth pattern spreads evenly north and south keeping the downtown the center of the community.

The Sycamore Public Library Long Range Plan for 2008 -2011 included the following building objective and activities.

**Objective 2:** Ensure a safe and welcoming infrastructure and presence in the community; continue to maintain and improve physical infrastructure; address security concerns and needs; accommodate and anticipate future expansion needs.

**Activity 2a:** Improve entrance for better security and air flow.

*There were three major concerns regarding the entrance. The airflow into the building during the winter would reduce the temperature in the lobby by 15 – 20 degrees, the wood structure was rotting from years of standing snow and water, and the locks did not work properly. The new construction has resolved the three problems by constructing a longer steel and glass entry, staggering the doors, and replacing the hardware. This construction project began November 5, 2008 and the new entrance opened to the public in February, 2009.*

**Activity 2b:** Expand Youth Services Department to allow room to expand collections and provide more seating and study areas.

**Activity 2c:** Relocate Circulation Services to the first floor and provide all circulation services at one desk.

**Activity 2d:** Reorganize second floor to accommodate staffing changes from circulation relocation and provide better service to teens and computer users.

The Sycamore Public Library Board has determined that a long range and capital plan for the future of the current library building needs to be developed. The board has begun focusing on the following four projects:

1. To remodel the building to improve layout of services for patrons and staff.
2. To hire professionals to inspect the building and plan for remediation needs.
3. To develop a long term building maintenance plan.
4. To develop a professional energy audit and long term plan for replacement and improvement of heating, air conditioning, and lighting.

## **Remodeling Program Description**

The current lobby to the library is an open two story area with no functional space. There is no service point at the entrance of the library and the circulation sequence is unclear. Patrons view a solid wall with a single door to the Youth Services department. The Circulation services are located at the top of the open stairway on the second floor. A second circulation desk is located in the Youth Services department. The building program for the library will move all circulation functions to the first floor lobby so that patrons are greeted by staff, spatial functions are clear, and staff can easily monitor the entrance. In addition to providing better customer service, having the circulation desk near the entrance will improve safety and security. In the past, a young man was regularly coming into the library, picking up 5 -7 DVDs and when staff was busy, he would walk downstairs and out the door with the DVDs that had not been checked out. We also have some teens who get rowdy in the entryway because there is no one nearby to control the situation. By having staff so close to the entrance, we will be able to better monitor and deal with people coming and going.

The remodel provides patrons with a new Circulation service desk where they will be greeted upon entering the building. The children's collection is growing, and shelf space as well as seating space must be increased. The new program eliminates an infrequently used large conference space to provide more room for these functions as well as room for the circulation desk and workroom. The original Carnegie portion of the building is well recognized on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. However, on the first floor, the view is blocked by a cumbersome narrow ramp which is difficult to maneuver and creates a disconnected space. Therefore, this area is rarely used. The new plan eliminates this ramp, provides a stage and reading steps for children, and adds an elevator lift for accessibility. This lift is in addition to the elevator near the main entrance that provides access to the second floor of the building. The Carnegie area will house the Board room and the children's activity room. Storytelling and other children's performances will take place at the top of the stage with the classical brick wall for a very theatrical setting. A new study room will be provided for tutoring and quiet study purposes. This will be a new function that is currently not provided because no space is available.

The new children's space will be divided into distinct areas for preschoolers and grade school children. The preschool section will utilize moveable shelving and seating so that this area may be used for children's entertainment and programming for large groups that were previously held in the big meeting room. The Youth area will include increased computer stations, various seating types, and increased shelving.

The second floor is being reorganized due to the relocation of the circulation functions and to provide clear wayfinding through the collection. A new 2- person service desk will be placed at the top of the stairs so that patrons are greeted by staff. More computers in close to proximity to staff members will be added. Collections are reorganized into distinct groups. An expanded and staffed teen area will be located in the Carnegie area of the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. They are currently in a corner of the adult collection. The Carnegie offers a unique space for teens and provides space to add an office for the Young Adult Librarian. She currently shares an office with the Youth Services Librarian on the first floor. Minor changes to staff spaces on the second floor include separating IT services and technical services into separate offices and providing an adult services

office directly adjacent to the collection. The library has very few closets and storage areas and there are none available for office supplies and technical services supplies. As part of the office remodeling, we will add two closets in the administrative area.

In addition, for employees and working toward a more environmentally friendly building, we will add a staff bathroom and shower to the staff room. This will make it possible for library employees to ride their bicycles or walk to work and shower before starting their work day. An employee who lives 4 miles from work and rides his/her bicycle just during the summer months could ride 520 miles which is healthy for the body and the environment. The shower also makes it possible for an employee to exercise on their lunch break even during the hottest days of summer since they can take a quick shower and get refreshed. Research shows that people who exercise get more oxygen to their brain which leads to an uptick in alertness.