

Waukesha Public Library renovations coming in spring

Renovations include lobby expansions, 'Makers Room'

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WAUKESHA – Readers, history buffs and many more community members and Waukesha residents can expect some changes in the spring to a city building they may often frequent — the Waukesha Public Library.

The building will have four main renovations, including more open space in the lobby, a new art room, an expanded meeting room and a cozy historical/genealogical room.

Waukesha Public Library Executive Director Bruce Gay said the construction, budgeted for about \$4.45 million, is tentatively scheduled for May. The renovations are in areas on the first floor.

Engberg Anderson, a Milwaukee-based architectural firm that previously designed the second-floor children's section of the library, was selected to spearhead the renovations.

"The first area that will change is the lobby," Gay said. "What we're going to do is move a wall over in the lobby to make it a bigger space."

Gay said new books will be moved to the lobby area and service desks will be immediately positioned in front of the doors in order to better assist the public when they enter the building.

"Sometimes we have people come in and they don't know where things are, they don't know where to go," Gay said. "So we're trying to fix that by opening that space up."

The library will also see an expansion to the meeting room, which currently seats about 60 people. The meeting room will be expanded to seat about 150



Courtesy of city documents

A rendering shows the renovated lobby of the Waukesha Public Library, 321 Wisconsin Ave.

people. The room will also have walls that can close in order to prevent disruptions to the rest of the library.

"That's really a good size (meeting room) for a city the size of Waukesha," Gay said.

He said the library will also have a "Maker's Space" is dedicated to arts, crafts and technology devices. Gay said they don't know exactly what will be in the room quite yet, but ideas include a 3D printer or a small recording studio for video and audio recording. He said the goal is to have staff help teach the public how to use the devices.

"People could have an instruction on how to use the (audio) equipment and then could make a podcast in there, that's what we're looking for," he said.

The Waukesha Public Library was founded in 1896 as a house on Carroll Street. The house was later replaced with a building constructed with the help of philanthropist Andrew Carnegie in 1904.

"If you are coming across Cutler Park towards the library, you'll see that there's a part of the building that looks much older. That's the original 1904 Carnegie Library," Gay said.

That room will be renovated to be more of a community room for things like author events or book groups, and make it a lot more inviting for people to relax there.

Currently, the Carnegie part of the building stores magazines and has a few seats. Gay said once renovations are completed, that area of the library will instead house their local history and genealogy section.

"That 1904 part of the library, it's been renovated a number of times over the



A rendering shows renovations in the Carnegie side of the library.



A rendering shows the soon-to-be "Maker Room" or creative room at the Waukesha Public Library.



A rendering shows the renovated meeting room at the Waukesha Public Library.

last 115 years so it doesn't look anything like what it did back then," he said.

Gay said the renovations will make that part feel like a warm, old part of a library with a little more of the classic feel it once had.

Gay said the Cutler Park bathrooms will be renovated as well — spearheaded by

the Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department.

"As part of this project, it made sense for Parks to bring those bathrooms up to code and make improvements on those at the same time, because it will be less expensive to do it now with our project going on at the same time," he said.