

Visioning, Needs Assessment and Master Plan for the Wheaton Public Library



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Introduction

It has been nearly 7 years since StudioGC worked with the Wheaton Public Library and the community to prepare the January 2015 Visioning and Master Planning report. Libraries are evolving rapidly and much has changed in the meantime for both libraries and the world. Political uncertainty, the growing impact of climate change and a global pandemic have all left their marks on society. Even without these changes, after 7 years it would be time to review the visioning plan, assess what has been done to date and update it, taking advantage of this opportunity to rework the plan to meet new needs and to reflect current conditions.

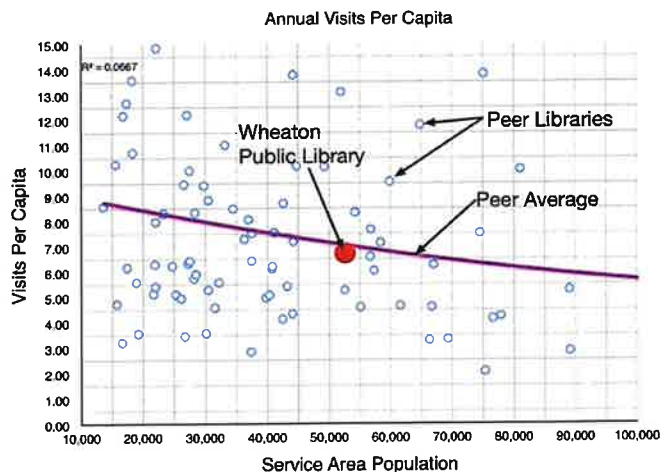
This document is envisioned as an amendment to the 2015 plan. For the sake of brevity, we will not reiterate the background and general library design philosophy expressed in that document.

Selected Operational Statistics - Revisiting the Numbers

The way in which we evaluate library operational statistics has evolved since the original study in 2015. We now use a much larger data set for peer comparisons. The following are selected metrics that give us an insight into how the Wheaton public library is performing compared to approximately 80 public libraries that serve communities of similar demographics and/or similar size. The intent of this exercise is to give a quick indication of how the library is operating compared to similar libraries and to look for data that may have an impact on space planning. It is not intended to imply that the library should strive to be “average”. This data is from 2019. Due to Covid 19, 2020 data is judged not to be relevant in terms of planning.

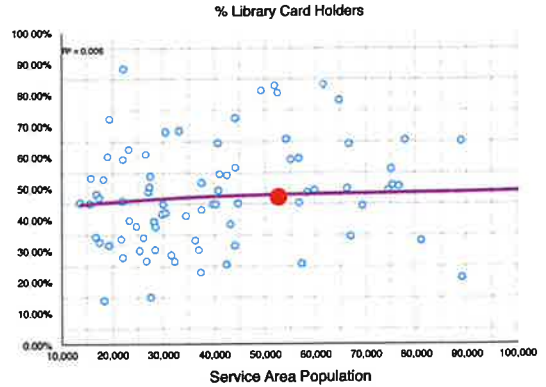
Visits Per capita

Wheaton Public Library is holding its own with respect to the number of people coming to the library. As the library improves existing services and expands the range of services it provides, we anticipate that this metric will improve.



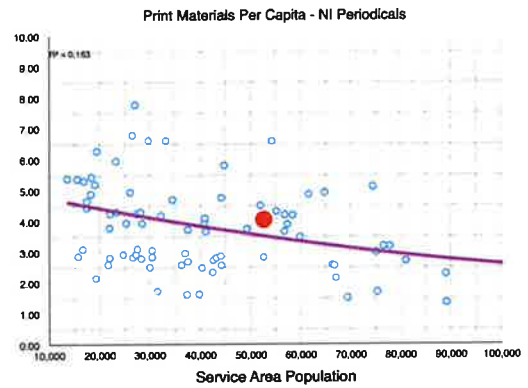
Number of Card Holders

The number of active library cards is around average for a community of this size. Providing and promoting new services that resonate with the community's changing needs is the best way to boost this metric.



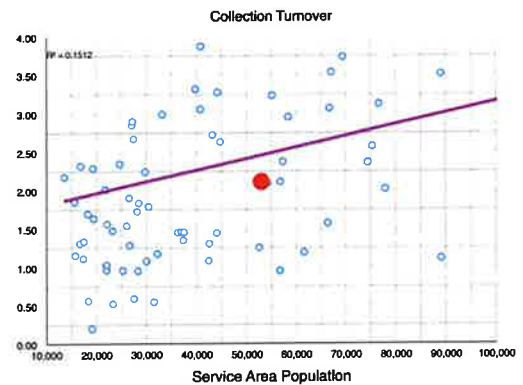
Print Materials per Capita

When we began working with the library in 2015 WPL had a collection of nearly 9 volumes per capita; a large collection where many of the books were rarely used. Since that time WPL has aggressively weeded the collection to bring it in line with contemporary library practice and now has a collection size that is just slightly above average. The square footage freed up is being used to provide new services.



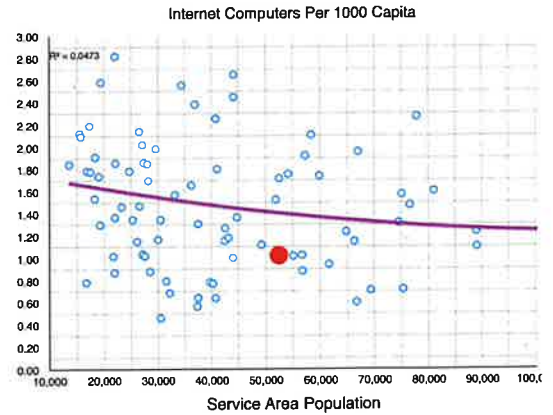
Collection Turnover

Collection Turnover is a measure of how often the average book in the collection is used. While slightly below average, WPL's collection turnover is in an acceptable range, indicating that the collection is approximately right sized for the community and that the staff are choosing materials that are in demand.



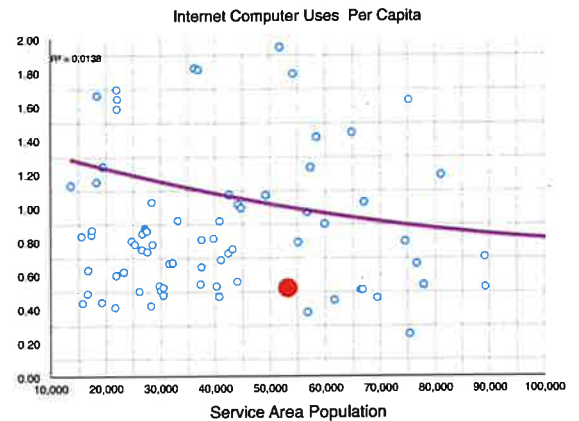
Internet Computers Per Capita

The number of internet-enabled computers in the library is well below average. This reflects community demographics in that many people in the community can afford personal computing and do not need to rely on the library for internet access.



Internet Computer Usage

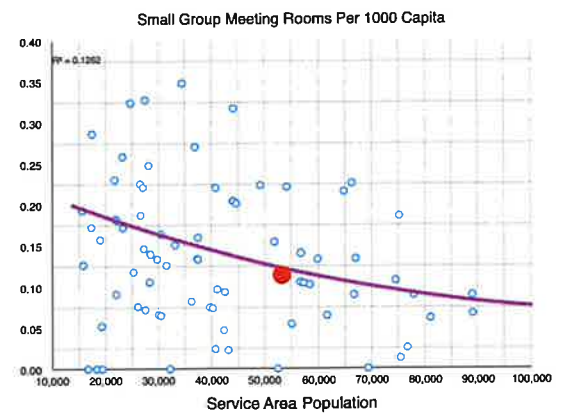
Unsurprisingly, usage of the internet computers parallels the number of units that are on-offer. In terms of planning, these numbers indicate that WPL should not devote additional square footage to desktop computing. Despite this, we must remember that there are segments of the community that rely exclusively on WPL for internet access and that a certain number of fixed computers will need to be provided to serve this need.



Small Group Meeting Rooms / Study Rooms

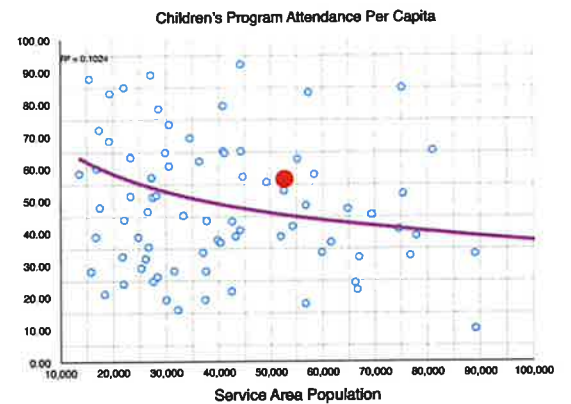
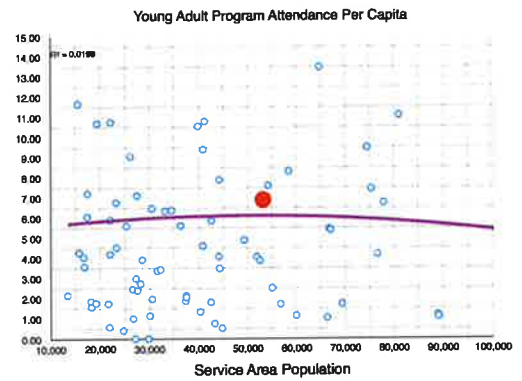
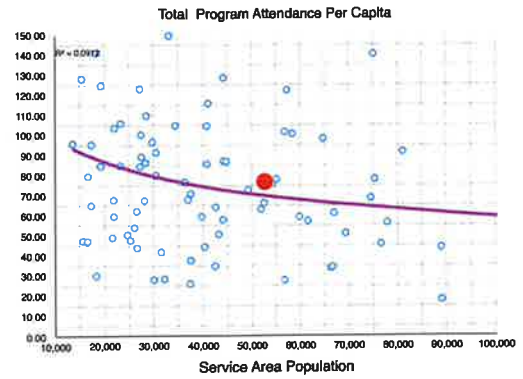
The number one item that our library clients request is more small group meeting rooms. They are being used for quiet study, private meetings, parental visits, group study and a host of other uses.

The data suggests that there is an average number of small group meeting rooms available at WPL. Given the intense use of these rooms, more can always added, we will continue to look for opportunities to boost this number.



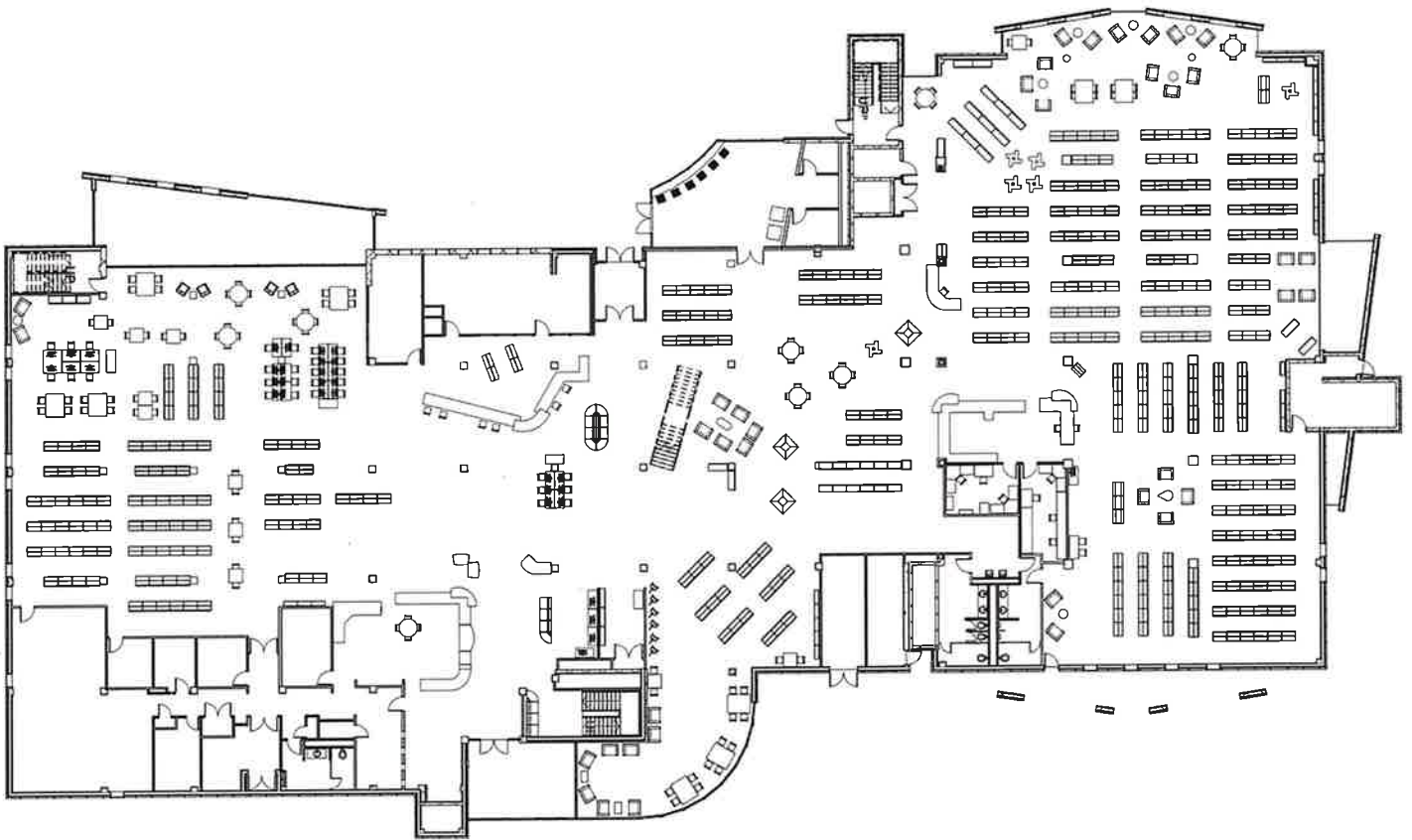
Programming

Programming has quickly become one of the most important services offered by public libraries. Successful programming requires different venues depending upon the program's goals and content. We are always looking for ways to make program spaces more flexible and for ways to utilize general library space for programming. Overall program attendance at WPL is above average.

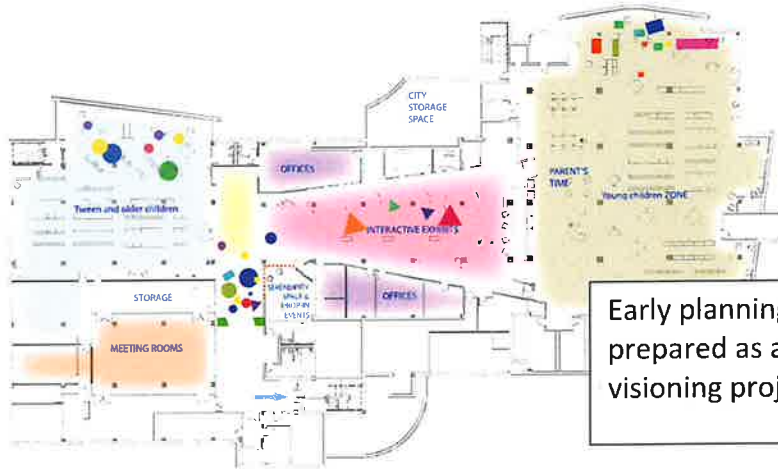


Design – Work Since 2014

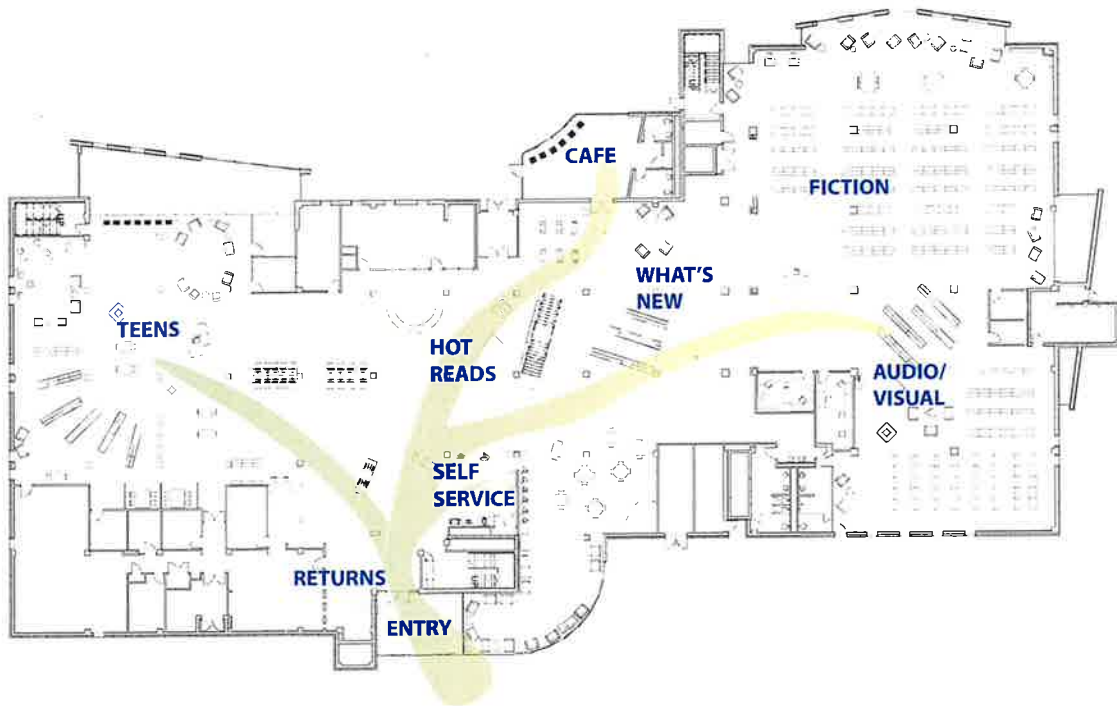
Wheaton Public Library was originally very collection-centered with little emphasis placed on younger users and collaborative activities. The illustration below shows the grade level of the library before SGC began working with administration to update their operations. The illustration shows a densely utilized floor plan with large service points.



In 2014 StudioGC began planning studies with library administration and staff. In general, the goals were to reduce the top-heavy collection, create a livelier atmosphere while still preserving some quiet spots, improve teen services and to provide more venues for creative and social activities.

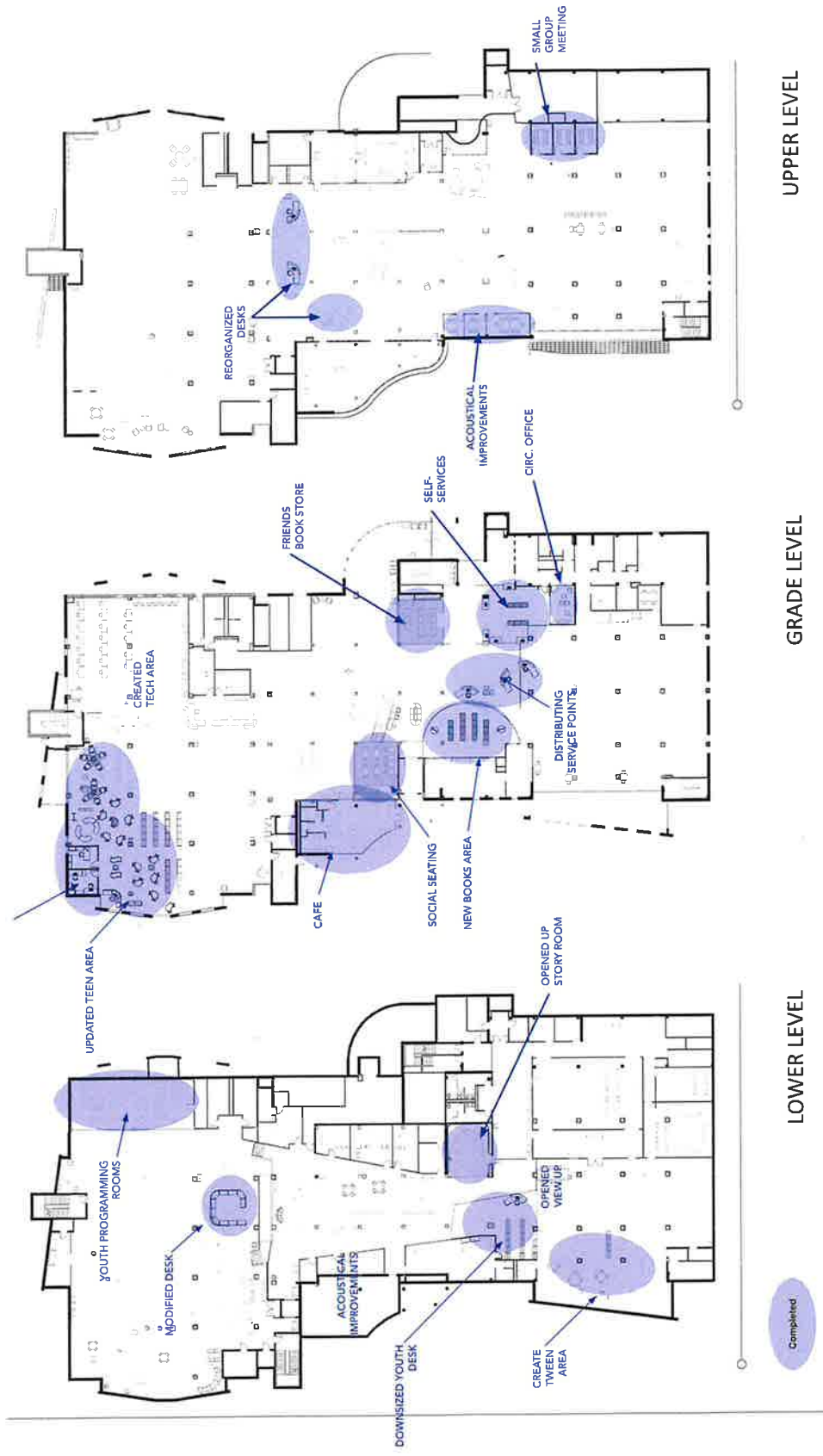


Early planning studies that were prepared as a part of the initial visioning project.

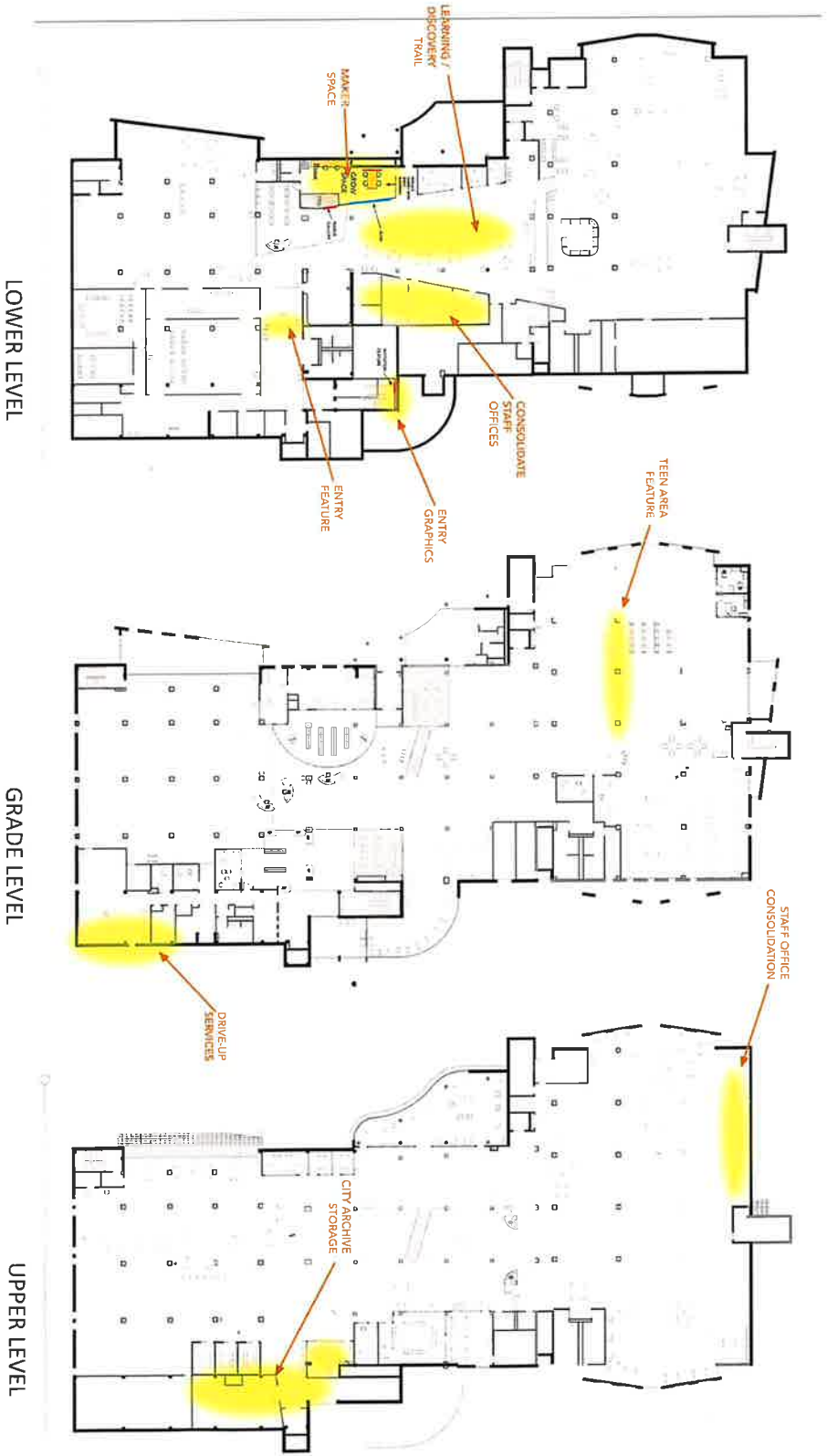


Completed Projects as of Summer 2021 – Visioning Phase I and Covid-19 responses.

Since 2015, the library has undertaken many smaller scale projects in response to the original vision plan as well as responses to Covid 19. The shaded areas indicate the work that has been done to date.



Planned Projects – Visioning Phase II
The original projects envisioned for Phase II are identified below. They are mostly geared toward better service for children & teens as well as managing the technology that is increasingly important in public libraries.



Visioning Phase II Improvements

Planned improvements can be divided into several categories:

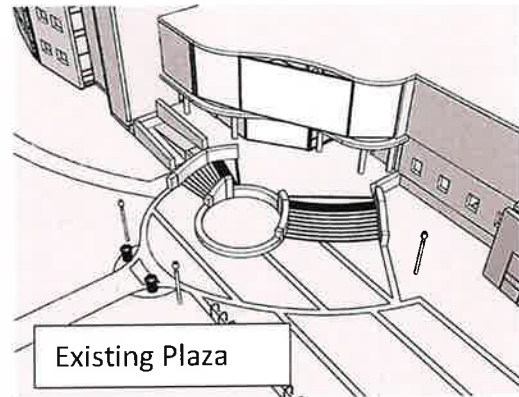
Exterior Elements

Exterior plaza upgrades

The plaza separating the library from Adams Park is in need of general maintenance and restoration. Some concrete and limestone elements will need to be repaired and replaced.

While the above work is underway, we are proposing to enlarge the upper plaza to allow a greater variety of exterior events to take place directly outside of, and on the same level as, the library café. We are envisioning this space as a stage for outside productions that face either towards Adams park or south along the lower library plaza.

Between events, an enlarged upper plaza can function as a fair-weather extension of the coffee shop and as an exterior reading and social area. To maximize the flexibility of the space, a seasonal sun shading system may be incorporated to provide a more temperate environment for summer activities. A conceptual design study is shown below.

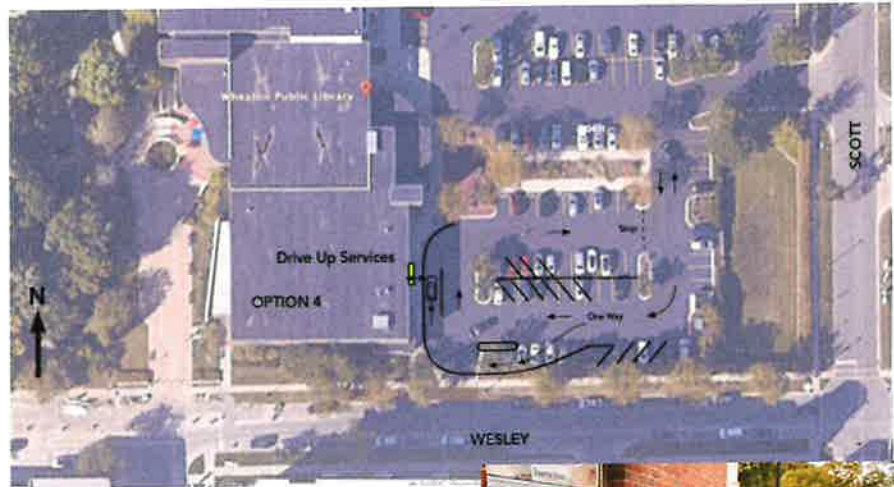


Drive-Up Services

Most libraries the size of the Wheaton Public Library feature drive-up services. Drive-up services are convenient, improve services for those with mobility issues and offer a safer way to distribute materials during public health emergencies.

The adjacent image is a conceptual design illustrating how a drive-up window could work for Wheaton Public Library. This would take the form of a staffed transaction window as well as a simple drop-off for off-hours services. The proposed location is appropriate, being at the existing circulation / technical services spaces.

The general layout of the proposed traffic flow and window location was discussed with the City planning department which offered comments and general support for this design concept.



Interior Upgrades

Lower Level / Youth Services

There are several specific goals for the lower-level youth services department. These include:

- Better signage and graphics at the stairs near the primary library entry to indicate that youth services is on the lower level.
- An entry feature on the lower level that sets the entry to the youth area apart from the entry to the lower-level meeting rooms
- A youth maker space – entitled “Grow Space”
- Consolidation of staff offices on the lower level.
- A better and more interesting way of utilizing the central corridor area that connects the north and south wings of the library.



Design Concepts – note that these are not developed design proposals but are intended to illustrate ways to address goals that have been identified during the visioning process and to provide enough information for initial cost estimates. Detailed designs will be produced as these projects are undertaken.

Stairway Graphics

The stair leading from the entry area to the youth area is understated and comparatively dim – especially compared with the light windows in the background. Existing signage is easy to miss.

We propose an edge-lit panel that would provide an interesting source of illumination with colors that could be adjusted to reflect current events or seasons. A surface-mount digital screen would provide information for meeting room events and a children’s “trail” sets a theme that would lead children to their area in youth services.



THEMED SCULPTURE

EDGE LIT PANEL

MEETING ROOM
INFO SCREEN

CHILDREN'S
"TRAIL"



Children's Entry Feature

Upon arriving at the bottom of the stairway, visitors go either directly into the lower-level meeting rooms or turn right to enter the youth library. We propose a feature to define the entry to the youth library and that builds upon themes established at the stairway and already in use in youth services.

The children's "trail" theme, in this case a leafy vine, leads down the hallway and towards the children's library. Edge lit panels could echo the color theme set at the stairway feature and provide an element that can change from one library visit to the next.



**BUTTERFLY & VINE
THEME LEADS YOUNG
VISITORS TO THE
CHILDREN'S LIBRARY**



Children's Discovery Trail: The Marsh Story Room

To create a space that is educational as well as fun we propose integrating sound as well as light into the Marsh story time room. We propose a unique, directional audio system that focuses sound on specific locations. This "audio spotlight" technology is often used in museum and galleries to provide an audio experience that does not impact those nearby. It is relatively inexpensive, and the audio content is easily reprogrammed.

To increase the flexibility of the space we propose removing the existing riser and replacing it with a flush, wood-look vinyl floor to simulate a pier. Ceiling-mounted audio spotlight speakers would beam marsh sounds to selected spots on the pier that are only audible at those specific locations. Children standing on the pier will receive a surprise immersive audio experience that will enhance the lovely mural.



AUDIO SPOTLIGHTS ARE OFTEN USED IN MUSEUMS TO PROVIDE INDIVIDUALIZED CONTENT FOR VISITORS

THE MARSH STORY TIME ROOM



OVERHEAD AUDIO SPOTLIGHT SPEAKERS PROVIDE NATURE SOUNDS TO SELECTED SPOTS ON THE "PIER"

REPLACE RAISED RISER WITH FLUSH WOOD-LOOK FLOORING TO SIMULATE A PIER

Children's Discovery Trail: Butterfly Lane

The connection between the north and south portions of the library is an underutilized, transitional space that could be doing more than functioning as a wide hallway. Although there are tables and chairs along the path, it is relatively uninviting. We envision an area that stands on its own as an active, environment that engages the senses and provides changing opportunities for parent/child interaction and serendipitous discovery along the way.



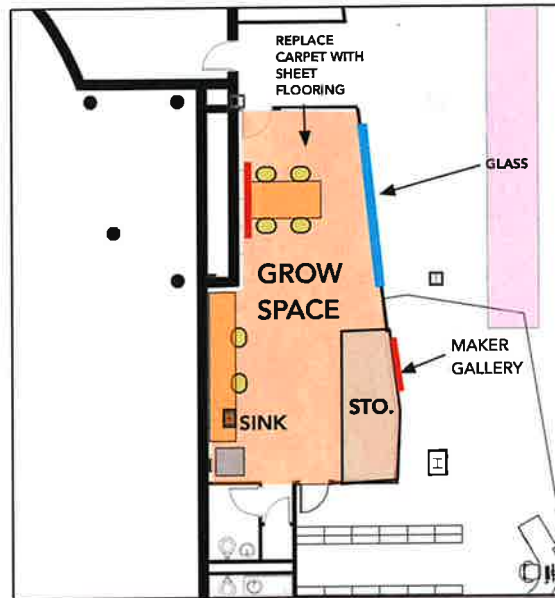
We call this concept "Butterfly Lane". It will pick up on the butterfly theme that is developed elsewhere and is envisioned as painted surfaces with two dimensional as well as suspended 3-D butterflies. For economy's sake, the overhead could be a multicolor sponge-painted surface that suggests a tree canopy rather than the more literal style of the story room mural.

A winding street form defined by a change in the carpet color or material defines the "lane" and could be used as a feature for children's activities or imaginative play.



Grow Space

We are proposing a youth-oriented version of a maker space in the space that was formally behind the large children's desk. This space will feature easy-to-clean flooring, a sink, and the ability to share a screen. The grow space will allow younger library users to engage in creative craft-based activities and show off their creations on a maker gallery wall.



Young Children's Library

Several improvements are planned for the young children's area in the north half of the lower level. The existing carpet is due for replacement, and we are evaluating the potential of replacing it with resilient flooring.

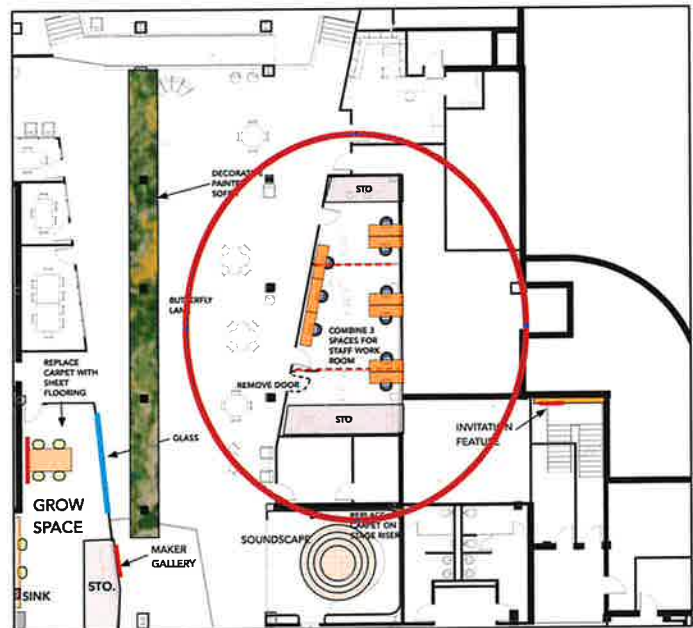
Resilient flooring does not offer the same degree of noise control offered by carpeting, but a special acoustic backing can be specified to improve its sound performance. It is easy to clean and makes it easier for the staff to reposition rolling stacks and furniture. Wheeled stacks are becoming common and play a key role in maximizing the flexibility of library spaces.

To increase the flexibility of the activity room we are proposing to provide doors and windows to give it greater noise separation from the adjacent youth area. A sink with overhead storage is also planned to facilitate crafts and aid clean-up.



Staff Office Consolidation

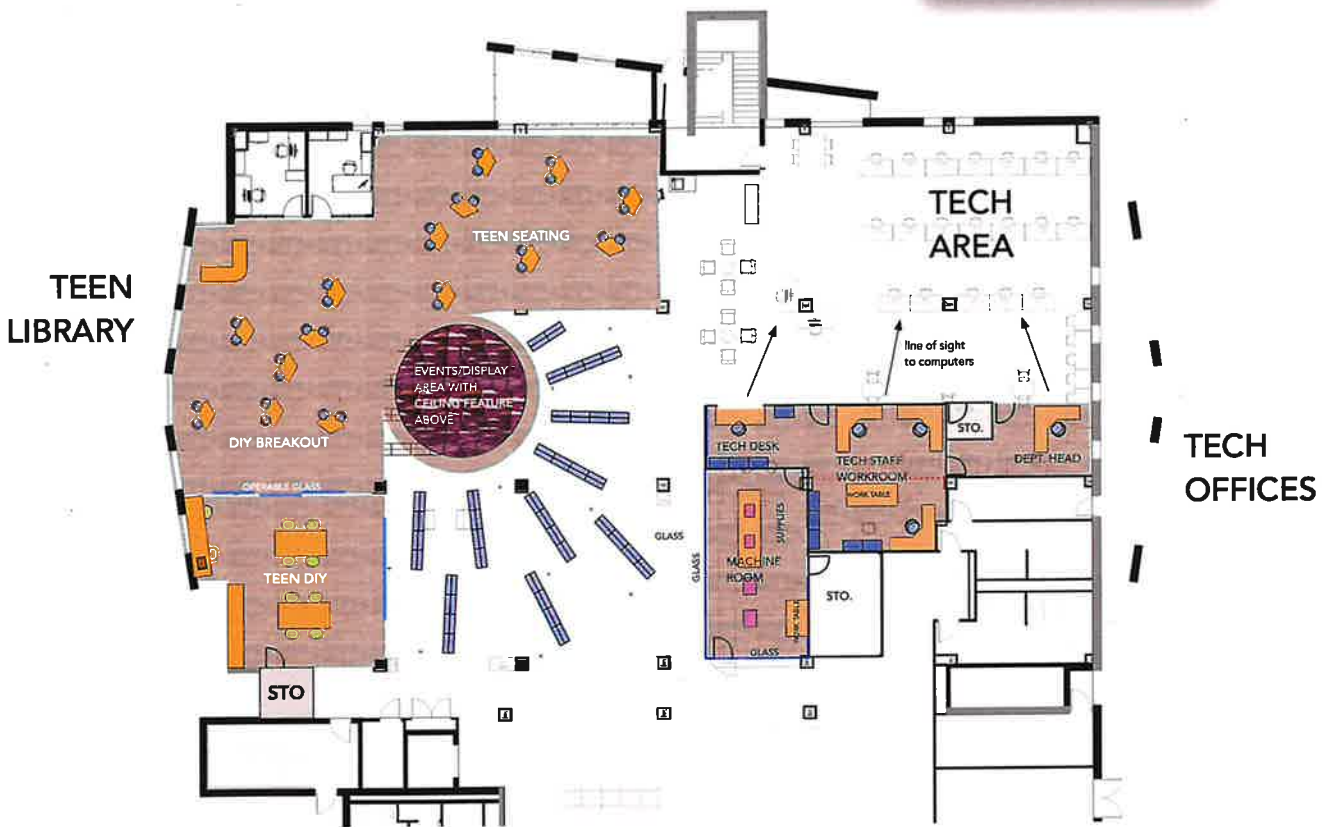
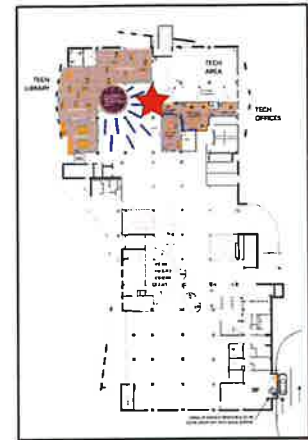
In the years since the library was designed, staff numbers as well as staff responsibilities have changed significantly. To accommodate these changes and boost efficiency, we will be consolidating the lower-level staff in an enlarged open office staff space. This arrangement will allow staff to work collaboratively and make the most efficient use of library resources.



Ground Floor – Teen Library and Technology Services

Teens have never been provided with sufficient space at Wheaton Public Library. The re-imagined north half of the ground floor will take advantage of the natural affinity between tech and teens and give both teens and tech users an environment adapted to their needs.

First, we will replace the ageing carpet with resilient flooring to define the limits of the teen area. To increase its visibility, we are proposing that the teen book stacks be repositioned in a radial pattern to give a direct line-of-sight between the teen area and the entry.



We also propose that there be a special events zone with an overhead ceiling feature that will create a visual marker that will advertise this space. The overhead feature will be compressed felt system that comes in many colors, attaches magnetically to the ceiling grid, and offers good sound absorption.



Teen DIY Space

The teen DIY space is envisioned as a maker space and a venue for collaborative work and projects. The DIY space is separated from the teen seating area with glass sliding doors that can be opened to allow larger events to spill out on to the seating area and create a DIY breakout space. Features like the sliding doors will enhance the flexibility of the space and allow it to fulfill many different roles.

The DIY space will also have built in cabinetry, a sink and mobile work surfaces that will promote collaborative projects.

Amenities like the Teen DIY space are emblematic of where libraries are going; they illustrate what 21st century libraries are doing to maximize flexibility and to provide services that are relevant to the community's changing needs.



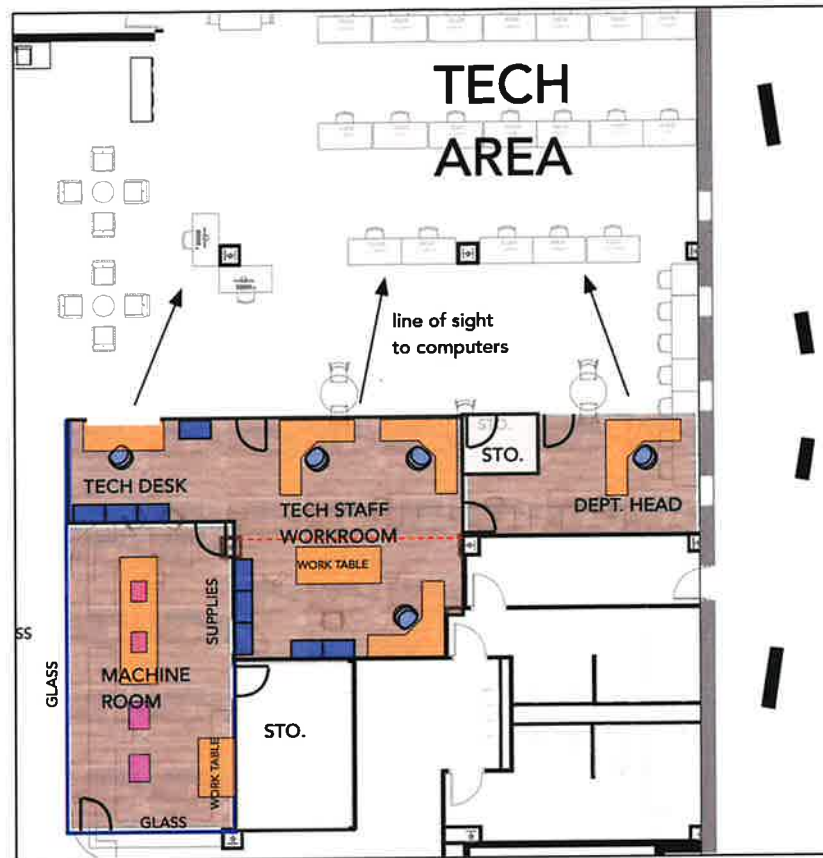
Mobile Supply Carts with Work Surfaces

Technical Staff Offices

WPL's technical staff are responsible for managing the public computers and other technology. The tech staff need to have a direct line of sight to the library's fixed computers to address the many technical questions that arise during the day. As the library increases the scope of services like 3-D printing, laser cutters and other high-tech creative resources, the tech staff will increasingly manage these services.

Patrons that want to take advantage of these resources will submit their requests to the tech desk / service window. From there, library staff will input the customer's information in the appropriate equipment and manage the production of the customer's item. When complete, customers can pick up their completed projects at the service window.

The production equipment will be in a secured machine room that will be provided with windows that will allow the public to see the machines at work. At this time, we are planning that tech staff will be the interface between the public and the production equipment. Should that change in the future, a second door to the machine room will be provided that could allow direct access to the public floor.

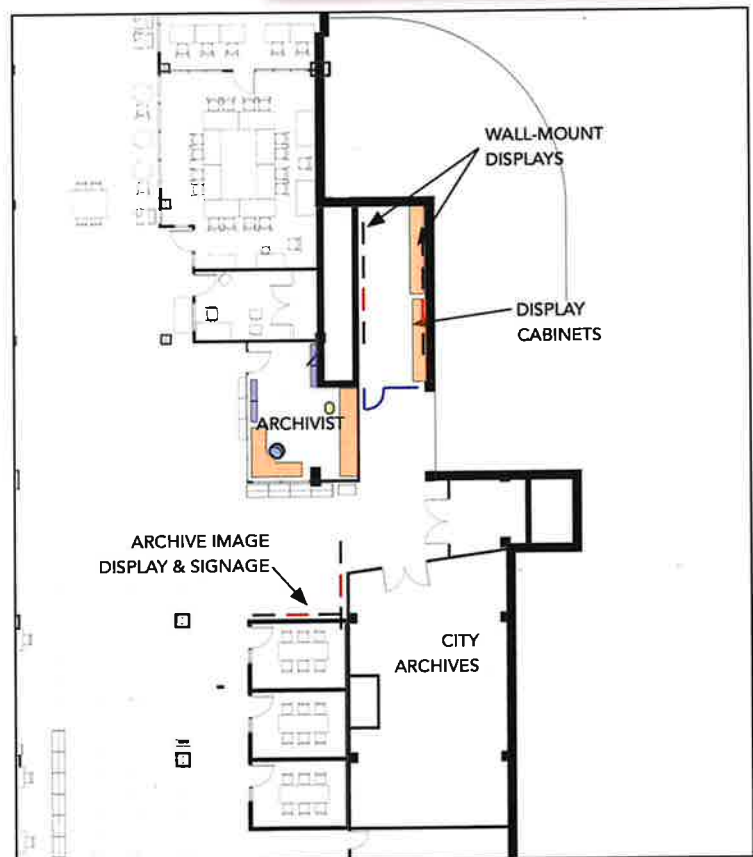
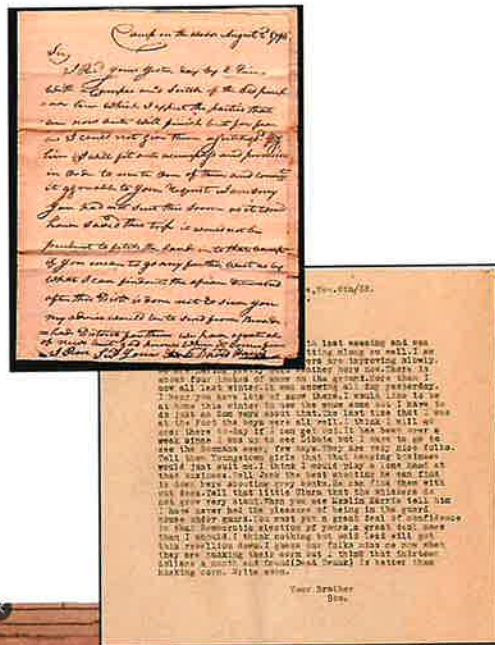
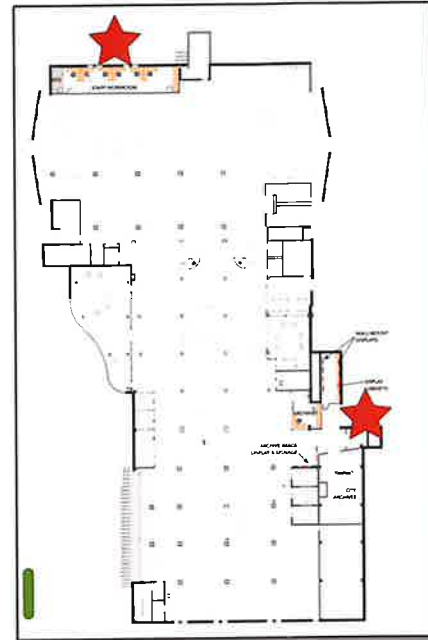


Second Floor Improvements

Second floor work in this phase is limited to some housekeeping improvements. As with the lower level, we are combining some staff offices into a combined open office space to increase efficiency and promote collaborative work.

The second space will be existing office space that will be repurposed for use by the City for an archivist and a storage space that will be made available to house the archives.

As there may be some items of historic interest, we are providing wall space where historic images can be placed for public view and a lockable room with display cabinets for additional displays. The display area would also be an appropriate place for showing other items of local interest.

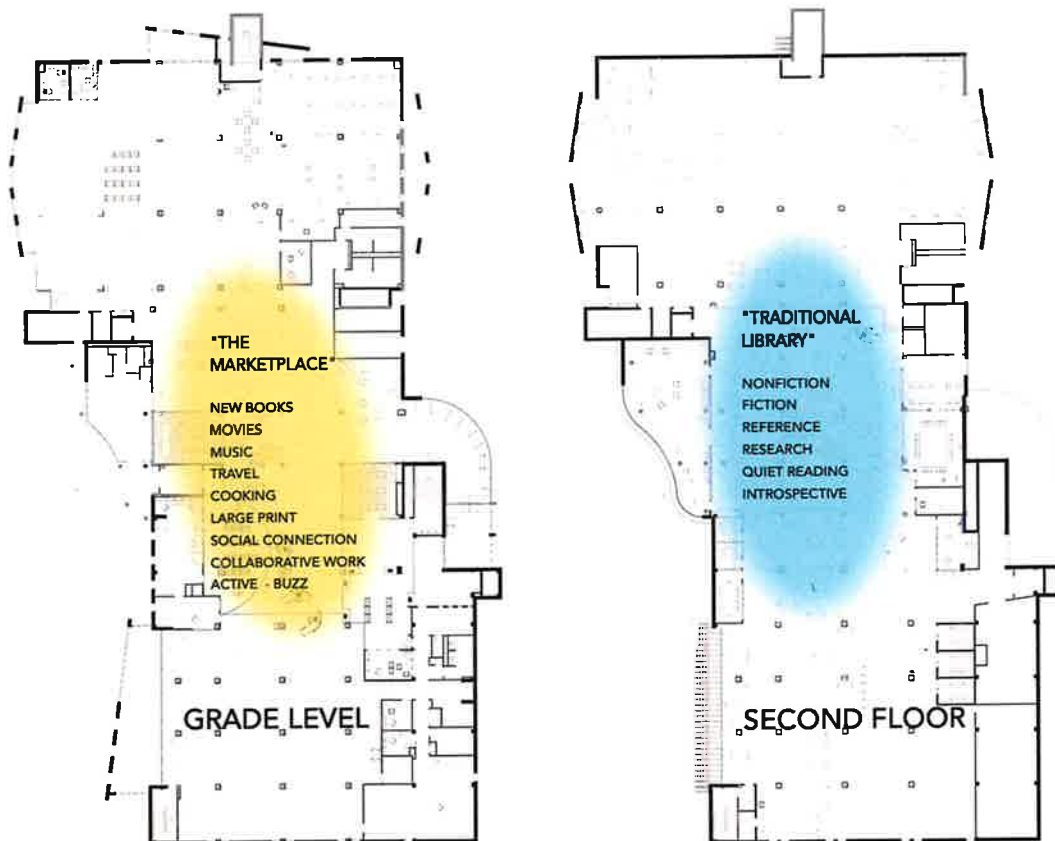


What's Next? Visioning Phase III?

Preliminary discussions are underway for the next phase in the long-term evolution of the Wheaton Public Library. Initial thinking goes back to some of the goals of our earliest visioning exercises and involves differentiating the first and second floors, allowing community members to choose which kind of library experience they want and what kinds of services they are seeking.


In this concept, the grade level will be an active marketplace for new materials, the latest movies, popular collections like cooking and travel and social interaction. The second floor will be “traditional” library – a quieter environment for study and research. If this phase is undertaken, it would represent the logical conclusion to the original goals of the 2015 visioning study and will make Wheaton Public Library an example of what a 21st-century library can, and should, be.

Conceptual Organization – Visioning Phase 3



Anticipated Costs

The StudioGC Library Team looked at the projects that were described in this Phase II Visioning document and divided them into groups that would form discrete projects. We then generated conceptual estimates for each of the defined projects. Due to the ongoing pandemic, inflation, and supply chain issues it can be difficult to estimate project costs. These numbers are intended to be conservative (on the “high” side) and include fees and anticipated inflation through mid 2023.

Wheaton Public Library							
Project Cost Projections							
March 3, 2022							
Location	Construction Cost Estimate	10% contingency	Escalation of 5% per year	OH&P @10%	Estimated A/E Fees	Total	
Exterior							
Plaza - Repairs only	\$435,000.00	included	N/A	included	\$34,800	\$469,800.00	
Phase 1 - Plaza Improvements and Repairs (this option includes the repairs noted above)	\$795,000.00	included	N/A	included	\$63,600	\$1,123,200.00	
Phase 2 - Plaza Improvements - Exterior Sign and Banners	\$125,000.00	included	N/A	included	\$10,000		
Phase 3 - Plaza Improvements - Shade Structure	\$120,000.00	included	N/A	included	\$9,600		
Lower Level - Youth * Assumes work being completed within the next three years							
Phase 1 - Entry Features; Butterfly Lane	\$330,104.00	\$33,010	\$54,467	\$41,758	\$50,527	\$509,867	
Phase 2 - Grow Space (Maker Room); Staff Offices							
Phase 3 - Replace Flooring in Early Childhood Area; add doors and modifications to the Programming Room							
Main Floor - Teen and Tech * Assumes work being completed within the next three years							
Teen Area							
Phase 1 - Review Space and DIY Room (Maker Room)	\$325,419.50	\$32,542	\$53,694	\$41,166	\$49,810	\$502,632	
Phase 2 - Added Lighting and Ceiling Features							
Tech Area							
Phase 1 - Remove existing service desk; Add Maker Space Room; Department Head Office and Tech Storage Space							
Second Level - Adult Floor * Assumes work being completed within the next three years							
Phase 1 - Reorganize Non-Fiction Shelving and Staff Offices	\$103,175.00	\$10,318	\$17,024	\$13,052	\$15,792	\$159,360	
Phase 2 - Wheaton History Storage and Archivist Office							
Drive Up Window * Assumes work being completed within the next three years							
Phase 1 - Drive Up Window (Does not include Book Sorter)	\$267,109.01		\$40,066		Already included	\$307,175	