$35 MILLION CAPITAL CAMPAIGN FOR LIBRARY BUILDINGS

Imagine that the Illinois Valley library has a dedicated teen space, sufficient space for accessing information through technology, and a separate meeting room that’s accessible after hours.

Imagine that the Williams library not only finally has a bathroom and running water, but is also large enough to host the right number of books, computers, and meeting space to properly serve the growing Williams community.

Imagine that the Grants Pass library is centrally located in the downtown core with dedicated teen area, a dedicated technology area, a multi-purpose meeting room, and a bookstore, along with sufficient parking spaces and a public plaza for community events.

Imagine the libraries in Josephine County being true community centers, meeting the diverse information and community gathering needs of all our residents.

THE PROBLEM WITH LIBRARY BUILDINGS IN JOSEPHINE COUNTY

Immediately after the problem of stable funding for libraries was solved by the formation of the Josephine Community Library District in May 2017, community members from various quarters turned their attention to the state of the existing library buildings, especially in Grants Pass, Williams, and Illinois Valley. The following are the core of the concerns:

- The Grants Pass library hasn’t been updated since it was built in 1959, except for the addition of the bookstore near the rear of the building. The footprint for the current site isn’t large enough for even a multi-floor building or the parking that would be required. The level of community use of this library has
outgrown the current building and site. Remodeling and renovating to the level needed would be cost-prohibitive.

- The Illinois Valley library was built in 1959 and has not been updated since 1974.
- The Williams branch is a temporary mobile unit constructed in 1977. It has no meeting space and limited room for computers or furniture. It doesn’t even have running water or bathrooms for staff or patrons.
- All three buildings are in states of disrepair because of severely limited resources in recent years. Insufficient parking or unsafe parking situations cause difficult access for patrons.
- All three buildings are overcrowded, with inadequate space for books and other materials, computers, storytimes, programs, customer service, and quiet spaces. Insufficient meeting or collaboration areas for the sizes their communities need prevent the ability to provide the programs and services the community expects.

PROVIDING ADEQUATE LIBRARY SERVICES FOR OUR COMMUNITY’S NEEDS

In response to the groundswell of community interest and concerns about the buildings, the library district partnered with the library foundation to create a Facilities Master Plan that would demonstrate what it would take to solve these library building problems in the most cost-effective manner possible.

In developing this plan, professional library planners conducted public meetings in Grants Pass, Illinois Valley, and Williams to learn from residents what they want and need from their libraries and for their communities. Architects took the results of the library program plan, assessed the current buildings, and developed preliminary concepts for the three buildings. Although these concepts are likely to change during the design phase, they represent the starting point for solving the problem of providing adequate services and programs to our community.

The following is a summary of each of the three building projects.

- **Grants Pass.** Given the needs of the programs and services the community wants the library to provide, a new two-story, 36,909-square-foot building is proposed. Although no specific site has been purchased, the concept design is based on a location closer to the downtown core, making the library more accessible to everyone and being a more visible and available resource to the whole community. It would be a main street wood and brick building that’s
pedestrian-friendly and open and welcoming to community members as they walk and drive by. The simple design will be cost-effective and efficient. The interior provides warm, light-filled spaces that are flexible for future library programming changes. Both floors feature secure access to outdoor spaces and views of the mountains.

There would be 77 parking spaces and sufficient bicycle parking as well as a civic plaza that would be a welcoming entry to the library and a community gathering place for Grants Pass residents. The cost would be about $27.02 million for the building, parking, and plaza, plus $2 million to purchase the land.

- **Williams.** To meet current library standards, an all-new 5,568-square-foot building on the site of the current library is proposed. The design takes inspiration for its form and materials from historic wooden buildings in the area. It includes a meeting room that is accessible after hours, a large light-filled reading room, a separate children’s area, a teen nook, and a study room for four people.

  In addition to the building, which would solve the problem of the lack of a bathroom or running water, the design proposes eight new parking spaces, a new entry plaza and a relocated community garden. The estimated cost for this new library is $4.32 million.

- **Illinois Valley.** The concept for the IV branch expansion, from 4,264 to 5,164 square feet, reflects what community member input, in terms of a separate meeting space, safety and security enhancements, added technology including adequate Internet access, space for more programs for larger groups and multi-age programs, new furniture and shelving, a teen space that’s set aside yet safely monitored, energy-efficient fixtures, upgraded mechanical systems, and more.

  The design also proposed a reconfiguration of the parking lot as well as a new courtyard and community garden. There might be an opportunity to expand the teen space during the design phase at a later date. The estimated cost is $2.22 million.

The total cost for the three building projects is estimated at $35 million.
WHY NOW?
The Grants Pass, Williams, and Illinois Valley library buildings are old, inadequate, and in a state of disrepair from years of deferred maintenance. Constant efforts to maintain the aging and broken-down buildings are siphoning more money with each passing year on “bandage fixes” at best. Instead, we need long-term cost-effective solutions that adequately meet our community’s needs. Doing nothing is not an option.

We need to start planning changes to the three libraries now so that we can have the solutions in place within the next decade. These projects will ensure that local residents have access to quality library services at all stages of their lives, for generations to come.

WHAT YOU CAN DO
Josephine Community Library Foundation has sponsored a feasibility study to gather information from the community about the three proposed library building projects. The next step will be to launch the capital campaign to raise $35 million for the three library building projects.

The foundation is seeking a leader in the community willing to step up and make a major lead gift to propel the building campaign with momentum and excitement in the community. Members of the library foundation board themselves have collectively pledged nearly $500,000.

We invite you to consider what libraries mean to you as an essential service in a healthy, economically vital community, and to think about the need for these library building projects and the difference they can make in the lives of our residents.

For more information about the building projects and ways to get involved, please visit the Josephine Community Library Foundation website at jclfoundation.org. Contact Josephine Community Library Foundation at info@jclfoundation.org or 541-476-0571.

Together, we can create welcoming spaces for a wide range of audiences and purposes, including reading, learning, creating, conducting business, and connecting with friends and neighbors as well as with the world.