

## **“The Dodgeville Public Library – A look back before moving forward”**

The Dodgeville Public Library is looking toward the future, not just for the library, but for the City of Dodgeville. With your help, we hope to expand your library to fill a variety of needs for this building and our town.

The Dodgeville Public Library started out in 1900, in a single room of the original Dodgeville City Hall, with an annual budget of \$400, and was open four hours each week. By 1923, the library was open three days a week and had a single full time librarian. A dedicated library building was finally built in 1951, at 111 West Merrimac Street, site of the current police department, thanks in part to a generous \$10,000 donation by Mattie Utting.

Due to the high volume of users and a growing library collection, the library moved into its current location in 1988 when the city built a new city hall and library building. At that time, the building was set up to be used 77.5% by the library, with the city hall using the remaining 22.5%. Initially, the upper half of the building, 6724 square feet, was plenty for the library and a number of years passed before the library needed room to grow. By 2000, when the library was reaching its full capacity, the City of Dodgeville had grown along with it and City Hall offices and meeting chambers had utilized much of the lower level. In 2004, Head Librarian Krista Ross stated that the library was out of space and the city should consider building a new library. There was still room available downstairs for library meetings and occasional programming, but not for the library to have the constant storage and occupancy space that it needed. Due to necessary increases in staff by City Hall the library no longer is able to utilize the full building footprint assigned to it in 1988.

In 1990, the library collection stood at 15,000 items, mostly books, newspapers, and magazines. The library’s 2018 collection numbered over 51,000 items. With each new book purchased or donated, a different one must be removed.

In 1990, the library held about 100 various programs through the year and served an area population of 10,000. In 2018, it held 250 programs attended by over 5,700 people of all ages and served nearly 12,500 residents. Hundreds of area children take part in the summer reading program and occasionally will be seen lining up before the library opens for their chance at reading prizes offered by generous area businesses. St. Joseph’s school brings 40 to 50 students to the library each week during the school year. Programs for both youth and adults routinely need to take place in the City Hall chambers due to popularity and lack of library space.

In 1990, there were no public computers. By 2018, the library had 21 public use computers and allows patrons access to over 152,000 e-books and downloadable files while maintaining 65 on-line database resources through its website. Over 6,300 people used these computers in 2018 to find work, take classes, get information and stay in touch with loved ones. Thousands more use the free high-speed Wi-Fi to get online using their own devices.

The library received less than 33,000 visits from all patrons in 1990. In 2018, there were more than 58,000 visits; a nearly 2 fold increase – while still occupying the same building.

In 2009, the library board issued a public survey asking what people liked, did not like, and wanted from their library. We received hundreds of replies and what they most revealed is that people want even more from this library: more books and room to browse in the aisles; more periodicals and areas to read them in; more technology, more computers and the room to use them; more programs and meeting spaces for them. More room - more space – more library.

The Library is now looking to serve the City of Dodgeville and its surrounding communities in a new location in a new building. This February 18, the City of Dodgeville will feature a referendum to build a new library on the Southwest corner of the Springgate Mall property. With this location, the library will finally be able to expand its physical footprint to match the service footprint it has provided for decades. Closer to the public schools, yet still convenient to the downtown, this \$7-million-dollar building will be an incredible addition to the City of Dodgeville. With public spaces able to accommodate large events and meetings after-hours, a greatly expanded children’s section, dedicated teen and adult reading spaces, new study/meeting rooms, and room for expanded collections, the new library is a building that will serve as a City and community anchor for decades into the future.

The Dodgeville Public Library Board of Trustees will be contributing \$1-million-dollars to this worthy project. We encourage you to vote “YES” to building a truly great library in our great community on Tuesday, February 18, 2020.

*– The Dodgeville Public Library Board of Trustees*