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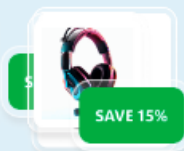
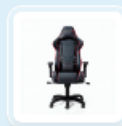
FEATURED

Defiance Public Library also received a gift 120 years ago

Nov 22, 2023

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In 1903, Andrew Carnegie gave \$22,000 to the City of Defiance to build the Defiance Public Library. One hundred twenty years later, in 2023, the library received a gift of two parcels of land across from the Carnegie building on Fort Street to construct an annex.

This gift enables the Defiance Public Library to expand while preserving the main library, which generations of Defiance residents have used and enjoyed.

The Defiance Public Library System (DPLS) Board of Trustees has discussed an annex or branch library in Defiance for many years. When I joined the library system in early 2020, I immediately realized Defiance Public Library needed a large, dedicated meeting room for library programming, quiet study rooms, office space for an adult literacy coordinator, office space for administration, more department space and storage space.

In spring 2020, the board began looking at spaces on and off Clinton Street, but struggled to find the right fit. We wanted a location within walking distance of DPL and enough room to meet the library and community's needs. The 1918 building was considered, but the cost of renovating it into a library space and maintaining it was beyond what the library could manage.

In May 2023, a Cincinnati resident who owns a home across the street from the fortgrounds, Anthony Sansalone, approached the library. He offered to donate two parcels next to his house, across the street from DPL, for the library to build an annex.

In late October 2023, the library board accepted the gift of two parcels from Mr. Sansalone and purchased a third parcel abutting them. The three parcels together create a property on which an annex could be built while preserving green space. The gifts and property purchase are very exciting, as the first step in a construction project is to secure the land!

With the land secured, the library will create a building plan and a fundraising campaign this winter. The library will involve the community in the planning and fundraising process. We are starting this project with some savings towards the annex, but grants, donations, and a ballot issue would cover most of the cost. The earliest a funding issue would appear on the ballot is November 2024. Once funding is secured, then the project can start.

The cost of the building is yet to be determined, as it will depend on the building plan. It's estimated that the annex would have a footprint of 4,600 square feet; the library wants basement storage, a ground floor and a second floor. The estimated building cost per square foot, multiplied by the estimated amount of square feet, comes to roughly \$4 million.



The annex exterior will reflect the exterior of the Carnegie building without overwhelming the surrounding properties. Possible functions for the annex include a large meeting room with a kitchenette for library programming, which would also be available at no cost to local government and nonprofits, a used bookstore run by the Friends of the Library, office space for an adult literacy coordinator who would arrange one-on-one tutoring, the library's makerspace, possibly another library department, a small coffee bar and comfortable seating.

For more information about the project, visit the library's website (defiancelibrary.org), which lists board members, contact emails, meeting dates, minutes, FAQs, and press releases. All board meetings are open so residents can weigh in on the project.

Just two years after Carnegie's donation, in 1905, Defiance Public Library opened its doors to the public. This property donation has opened new doors, but much work lies ahead. As we look to the future through the lens of DPLS' rich history, it's exciting to imagine patrons continuing to gather – with plenty of space for everyone – at the confluence to read, connect, and grow for another 120 years.

Cara Potter is the director of the Defiance Public Library System.

