

Thomas Memorial Library Frequently Asked Questions:

1. What's wrong with the library as it is?

A team of architectural and engineering professionals (Himmel and Wilson and Cassacio Associates) has identified over one hundred deficiencies in the existing facility. ADA /handicap accessibility code violations, air quality and mold concerns, inadequate and inefficient electrical and heating systems, and concerns about the building's structural integrity have been targeted as the most pressing issues requiring significant system upgrades and replacements. The team determined that reprogramming the existing building to address these concerns would leave the Thomas Memorial Library and the Historical Society with inadequate adult and children's programming space, limited access for computer users, and insufficient community meeting space. The proposed renovation will better address all of these concerns at a roughly comparable construction cost.

2. Does the library need more space?

The staff of the Thomas Memorial Library has used every inch of space brilliantly, lining the hallways with books, creating office space under staircases, making rooms in the cramped basement more inviting with a cheery color. The charming historical building, however, comes with problems that cannot be fixed with paint and reorganizing. Several sets of stairs and a lift that is unreliable leaves many citizens unable to navigate the facility. The library is a vibrant hub in our community, and the staff has made every effort to welcome and accommodate nearly 2,000 patrons a week.

3. I love the current buildings. Can't we just fix them up and do necessary repairs?

Anyone who has renovated an old house knows that renovating is usually more expensive than building something new. The newest rendering from the architect preserves the Pond Cove School and the green space in the front on Scott Dyer Road. The building will be renovated and a new two-story wing will be added to the back. This approach has been well received and is a good compromise between old and new, retaining the historical sensibility while bringing the building into the next generation.

4. Doesn't new technology like eBooks mean the library won't need so much space for books?

This is an emerging trend and the library is already on board, allowing patrons to check out eBooks with their library card. eBooks represented 6.4% of all publishing in 2010, so it isn't yet a major force in the industry. The way that publishers sell eBooks to libraries is in flux, and will probably not settle down for a few years. Most older books are not available as eBooks, and likely never will be. So while the TML does and will continue to support eBooks, the format is not likely to replace paper books any time soon.

5. It might be nice to have a new library, but in this economy, we just can't afford it. Why are we trying to do this now?

The cost of building now is lower now than in a better economy. There many structural deficiencies in the existing facility that will be costly to address. To simply address these would not be an effective use of taxpayer dollars, due to the inadequacies of the existing layout.

The Thomas Memorial Library is at the very core of our community, providing a place for people to gather, to study, tutor, and discuss. Tough economic times can be very isolating, and the Library is a place for people to reconnect. An improved building will allow the Library to better satisfy these needs.

Libraries have seen an increase in usage since the recession. In tough times the Library is there to provide resources including traditional and new media to people trimming their personal expenses. Studies done by other public libraries have demonstrated a 500% ROI to their communities for every dollar invested.