

# Watchung Borough Library

Council Presentation

November 20, 2017

# History of library building

- Built by Harlan Pratt as primary residence
- Two phases of construction:
  - Original building 1946
  - Single story addition housing reading stacks and children's reading area
- Library moved from what is now Watchung Arts Center in 1975 to current location

# Current state of the library building

- ~8,400 sq. ft. of gross floor space
  - Basement - ~1,488 sq. ft. (6.5'-7.0' ceilings)
  - Main floor - ~3,450 sq. ft.
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> floor - ~2,600 sq. ft.
  - Attic - ~850 sq. ft.
- ~4,000 sq. ft. of net usable square footage
- About 40% of the library is storage, restrooms, staff offices, etc.
- Condition of the library continues to age and deteriorate without major and expensive repairs/replacements that would simply do that: repair and replace in a building that continues to get older and is not efficient for use as a public library

# Limitations on existing library building

- Space is non-contiguous and not efficient for the management of books/people and other library functions
  - Limited space restricts expansion/contraction of book stacks or technology centers or accommodation of community/meeting space as needs change
  - As a former home, room layout is not consistent for use as a library, e.g, placement of support beams can not be moved without jeopardizing building integrity.
- Building (doorways, bathrooms, elevator, etc.) is not ADA compliant
- Lacks modern fire suppression/alarm technologies
- Lacks efficient heating/cooling systems
- Electrical and plumbing systems antiquated

# What has the Borough done to date?

- Library debate has been ongoing for ~15 years
  - 2002 SSP Architectural Group report noted many of the same deficiencies as exist today
  - 2006 resident workshops and creation of Library Study Committee (“LSC”)
  - May 2007 – LSC recommended retention of architect to prepare preliminary designs for renovated library (resulted in Foreman Group being retained)
  - May/June 2012 – preliminary design for a 17,000 sq. ft., ~\$4.2M library/community center was presented by the Foreman Group
  - August 2012 – Mayor & Council approve a non-binding public referendum to ascertain resident sentiment on proposed library design
  - November 2012 – referendum fails with 54% of residents who voted on this issue saying no to the proposed 17,000 sq. ft., ~\$4.2M library/community center proposal
  - July 2014 – Resolution passed by majority of Council appropriating up to \$1.5M toward the renovation of the existing library building or reconstructing same if the former was not a viable option
  - December 2014 – Structural report submitted by Lortech, Inc. recommending upgrade to structural components if library was to continue serving as a library
    - Upgrades would trigger additional obligations to bring entire building up to code and ADA-compliant

# Watchung library statistics

- Watchung residents borrowed **almost 49,000** items in 2016
- Watchung library is the second smallest library building in Somerset County (Peapack-Gladstone is smallest)
- Watchung library has the highest circulation per square foot of any SCLS branch
- The cost of all materials used by Watchung residents and provided by the SCLS is roughly \$1M
- In 2016, Watchung hosted:
  - 198 Children's Programs, attended by 4,389 kids
  - 8 Young Adult Programs, attended by 44 kids
  - 206 Adult Programs, attended by 1,715 adults
  - 393 meetings

# How does Watchung's library compare to other municipalities?

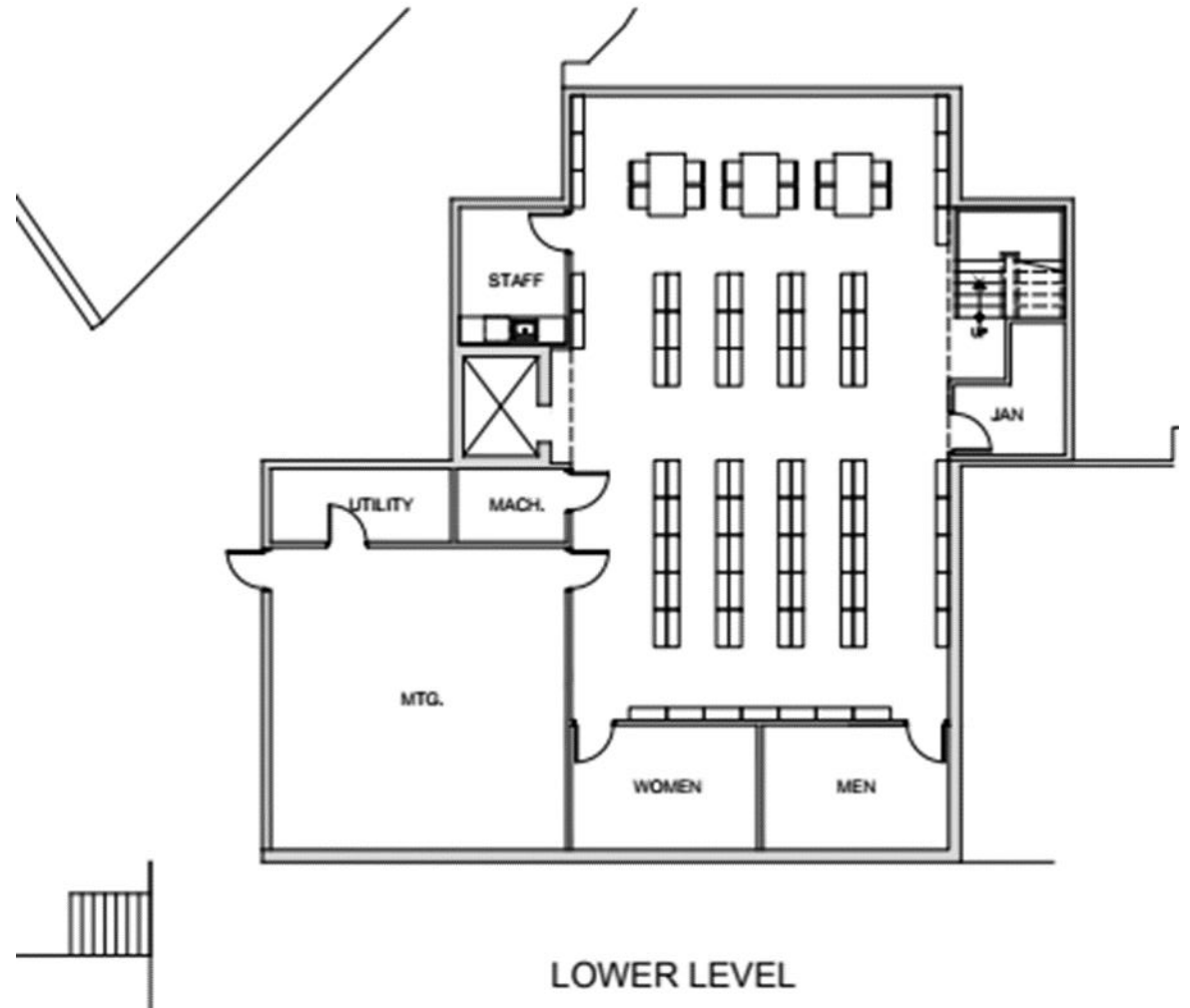
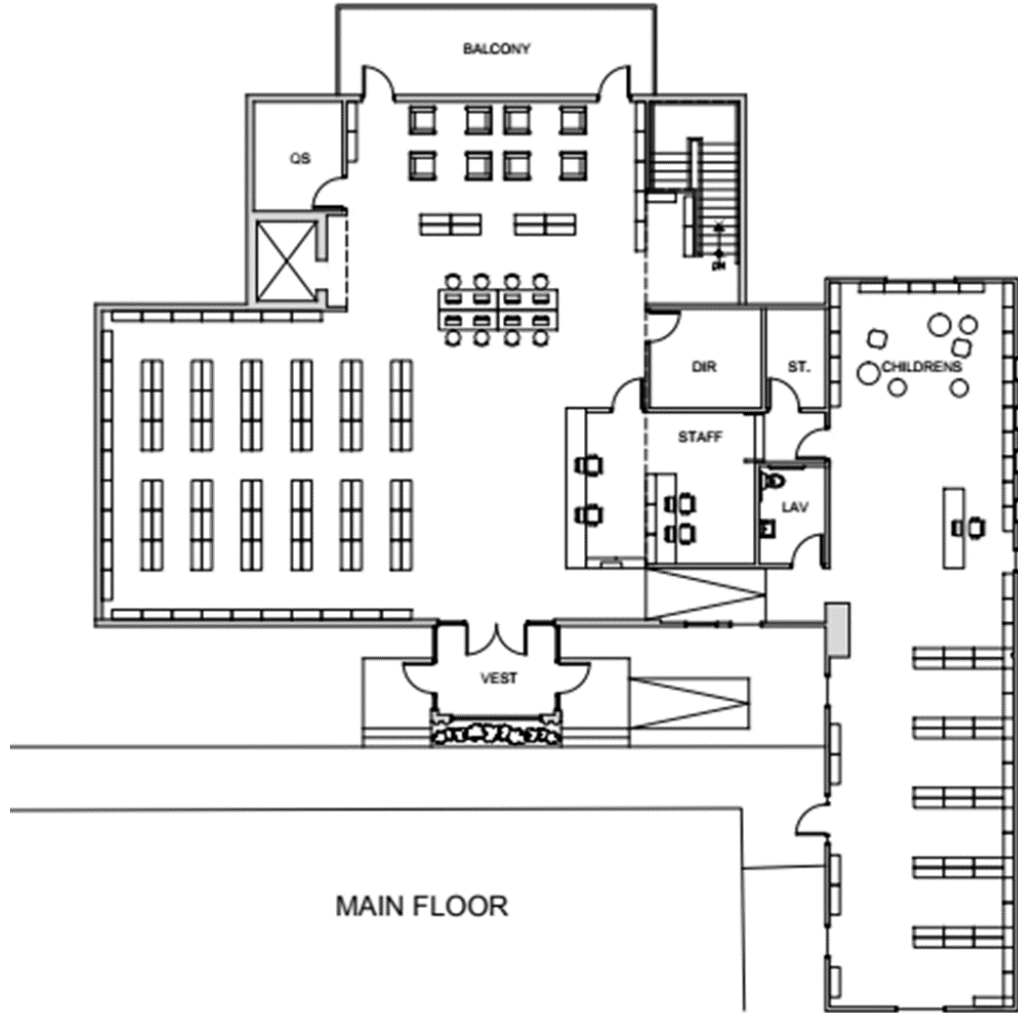
LOCATION	SQFT	CIRCULATION PER SQFT	POPULATION
Bound Brook	12,600	6.1	10,497
Bridgewater	51,000	12.2	45,198
Hillsborough	27,200	13.9	39,821
Mary Jacobs	20,574	11.9	23,739
Manville	8,299	9.7	10,429
North Plainfield	11,000	10.6	22,140
Peapack-Gladstone	2,363	13.6	2,602
Somerville	8,200	9.6	12,202
Warren	21,600	8.8	15,955
<b>WATCHUNG</b>	<b>3,997</b>	<b>16.0</b>	<b>5,916</b>

# Alternatives to having our own library building

- Construct new ~9,000 sq. ft. library with community/meeting space
- Close existing library building and utilize other SCLS branch locations
  - Watchung residents would still be required to pay ~\$800K library tax
  - Other branch locations may not be able to accommodate Watchung residents in popular programs, etc. due to space or other limitations
- Exit SCLS altogether
  - N.J.S.A. 40:33-13b
    - Watchung must approve the withdrawal by public referendum by majority of the voters
    - Watchung must remain a member of the SCLS for 2 years (and pay the library tax)
    - Watchung must provide a free public library (and all materials, equipment) to replace it

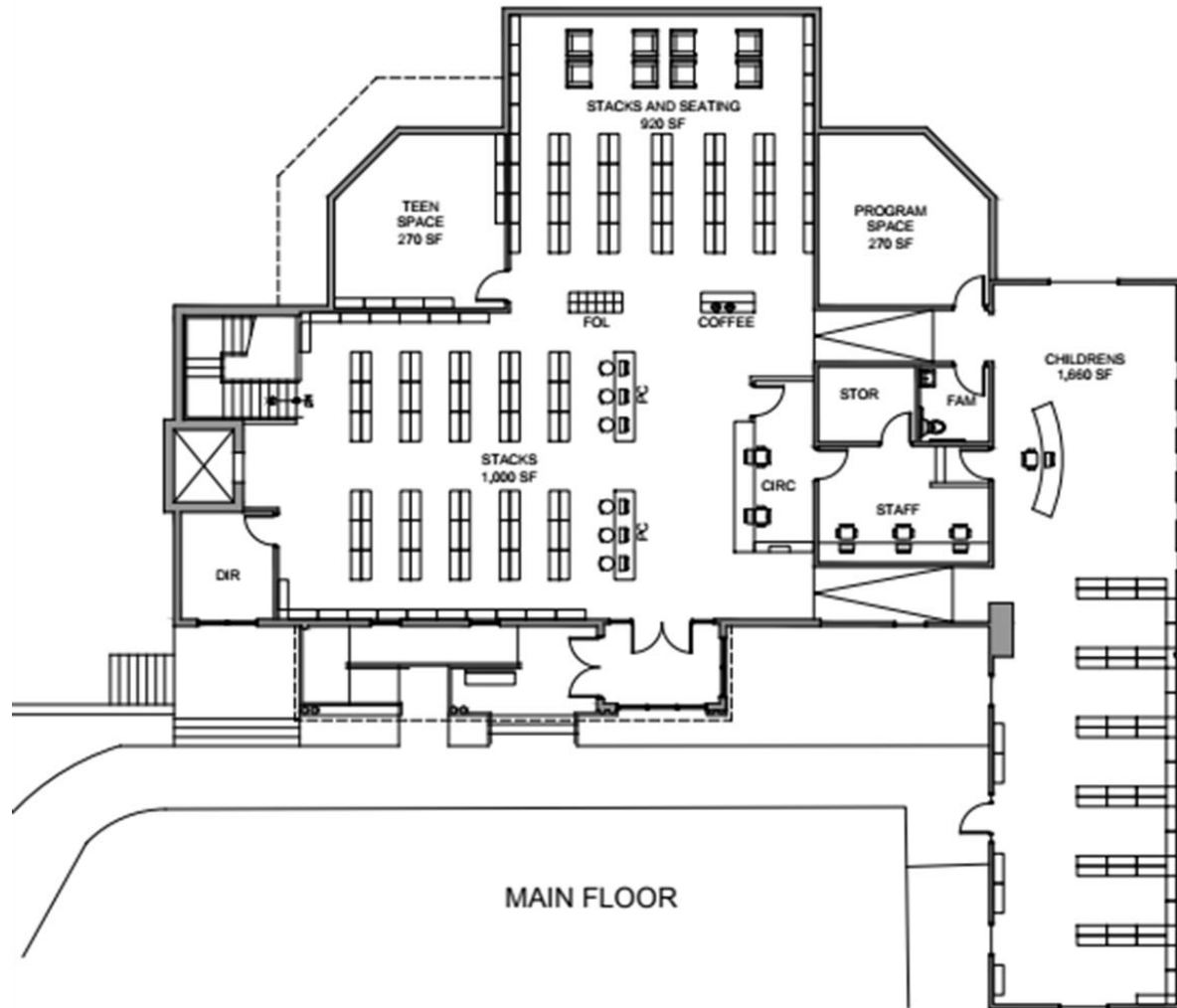


# Proposed Designs

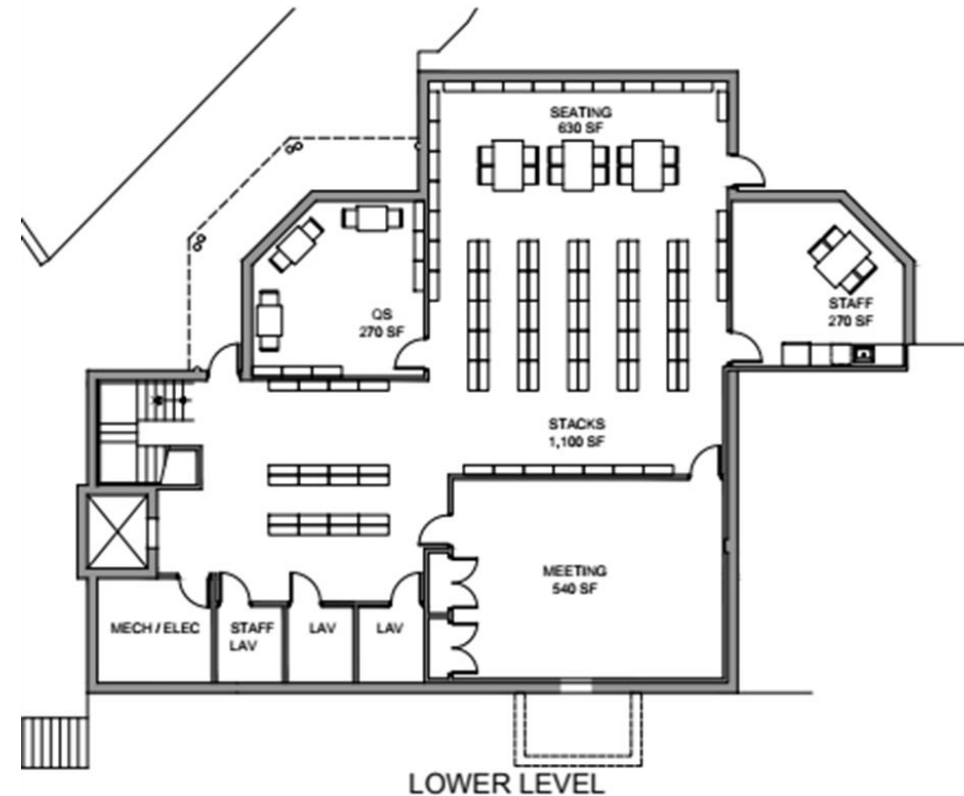


FLOOR AREAS	
MAIN FLOOR:	4,963 SF
LOWER LEVEL:	3,158 SF
TOTAL:	8,121 SF
PREVIOUS TOTAL:	9,420 SF
SF REDUCTION:	1,299 SF

# Proposed Designs



MAIN FLOOR



LOWER LEVEL

FLOOR AREAS	
MAIN FLOOR:	5,740 SF (5630+110)
LOWER LEVEL:	3,680 SF
TOTAL:	9,420 SF

# Expected benefits of a new library building

- **The people benefit.** Provides important resources for school-aged children, but it also benefits the area's workforce and businesses by serving as an entry point for new technology users and allowing job seekers to search and apply for jobs online. Provides new technology, tutoring areas, expanded librarian navigation services and access to databases not available in the home
- **The community benefits.** The books, DVDs, computers, internet access and programs benefit Watchung in many obvious ways, but libraries play another powerful role that is not as apparent. Because Watchung is not generally connected via a traditional downtown (Summit, Westfield, Montclair, Somerville), a new library building with meeting/community space can provide a much-needed venue where the community can come together

# Expected costs of a new library building

- Estimates are based on interest rates the Borough recently received on its most recent bond issuance (with slight increase in future to account for rates changing)
- Projections assume a flat payment schedule (same amount of principal each year) over a 20 year term
- Projections assume average household value increasing 2% per year and the overall assessed value of the town increasing 2% per year
- Analysis indicates an average bond service payment of \$73,000 per year per \$1 million borrowed
- This equates to approximately \$29.25 for the average household valued at \$715,000 in 2018

Amount Borrowed	Payment Per Average Household
\$1 Million	\$29.25
\$1.5 Million	\$43.75
\$2 Million	\$58.25
\$3 Million	\$87.45

# Opportunities to offset expected costs

- NJ residents just approved referendum that allows the state to issue \$125M in bonds to assist in the construction/upgrade of public library facilities across the state
- Up to 50% capital costs may be covered
- We expect fierce competition from other communities who we know are looking to build or renovate their own library facilities
- We assume communities with appropriate approvals and designs in hand will be first in line to receive grant monies and receive priority consideration
- Watchung must not lose this opportunity to receive state funds to offset library building costs (last round of funding occurred 17 years ago)