

# Library committee considers expansion Bloomfield

Steven Goode Hartford Courant . Hartford Courant ; Hartford, Conn. [Hartford, Conn]19 Mar 2021: B.3.

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## FULL TEXT

BLOOMFIELD - The details are still being worked out and the public is still invited to weigh in, but the Bloomfield Library Committee appears to have settled on one thing: both the Prosser and McMahon-Wintonbury branches will be expanded and modernized.

Those proposed expansions are subject to a referendum vote expected in November, but the committee announced recently that the plan is to increase the size of both branches by about 50% at their current locations instead of building new at another site.

The Prosser Library was built in 1965 and could see its size increase to about 30,000 square feet. The McMahon-Wintonbury branch was built in 1972 and would see its size increased to about 8,000 square feet.

Both buildings have outdated electrical, ventilation and information technology systems, as well as space constraints.

The lower level of the Prosser Library has also flooded several times in recent years during heavy rain due to its proximity to the Wash Brook.

Bloomfield Library Director Elizabeth Lane said Wednesday that they are looking forward to a future without size limitations, accessibility obstacles, and overall building health and HVAC issues.

"Modernized library facilities will allow us to more fully deliver access to comprehensive services, amazing programming, expansive print and electronic resources, technology, and expert assistance from a caring and responsive staff," Lane said. "Bloomfield residents deserve a 21st century library system and we look forward to moving this project forward."

The town also bought the closed Riley Lumber property just to the west in anticipation of a renovation and expansion that would require additional parking off site if the library were to expand north and lose some parking spaces.

Nancy Haynes, co-finance director and a member of the library building committee, said Wednesday that plans are preliminary and that the architect has also included an option to build a new Prosser Library on its current site.

The most recent estimates for the work are \$22.5 million for a new building at Prosser, or \$23.1 for renovation and expansion and \$5.8 million for the McMahon-Wintonbury branch, Haynes said.

The 16-member committee and its architect are likely to use a resident survey to help guide them into the specifics of the expansion and renovation project.

According to Bloomfield officials, more than 1,600 residents responded to the survey, which represents a response rate of about 17 percent.

The top requested features for the two branches were: a cafe', meeting rooms and group workspace; study spaces; and teen space.

In 2016 an effort was made to build a new library attached to town hall, but that effort was ultimately rejected by the town council, which voted instead to build a new human services center to serve the town's senior and recreation programs.

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