

# EAST GRAND RAPIDS LIBRARY

## 1957 - 2006

**October 1957**

### **A Community Library in East Grand Rapids?**

The idea of a community library was proposed by Mrs. John Martin, East Grand Rapids PTA president in the October edition of East Highlights, East Grand Rapids' Board of Education newsletter.

**February 1958**

### **Friends of the East Grand Rapids Library Organize**

Mrs. Craig Booher, Mrs. George Branston, Mrs. Luther Carpenter and Mrs. Irving Folger, library supporters, established the Friends of the Library organization. They mounted a *successful* campaign to build a community library that included:

- ... a two month door-to-door membership drive which successfully rounded up 400 Friends members!
- ... printing and distribution of literature discussing the need and justification for a community library
- ... public and private community meetings with the mayor, city manager, city commissioners, supervisors, school officials, county supervisors and county library board members to discuss needs for a library

**1958**

### **Friends of the East Grand Rapids Library Campaign Successful!**

It was concluded that a branch of the Kent County Library System should be established in East Grand Rapids.

**August 1958**

### **The Kent County Library Board voted to support the opening of the East Grand Rapids Library.**



**February 28, 1959**

### **East Grand Rapids Library, a new branch of the Kent County Library System, opens its doors!**

... **First librarian was Betty Garver, Kent County Library System. She was assisted by one page that shelved books and helped at the circulation desk.**

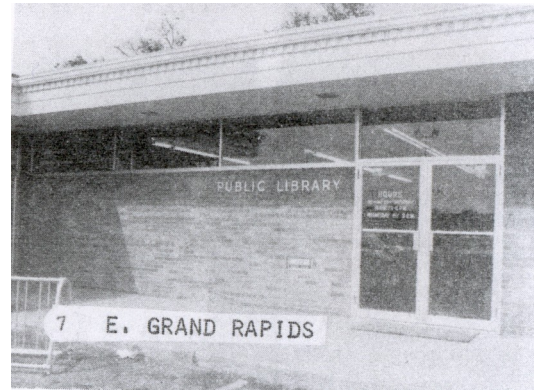
... The new library was located at 2168 Wealthy Street, SE. This site was originally a private home, but has housed the following businesses: The Bagpiper, Molesta Real Estate and Coldwell Realtors.

... It consisted of 700 square feet.

... The initial collection of books consisted of 1,700 Kent County Library books a loan of 1,100 books from the Michigan State Library in Lansing and books purchased by the Friends of the East Grand Rapids Library.

... Library hours 1:30 to 6pm and 6:30 to 9pm Wednesday and Friday and from 10:30am to 12:30pm and 1:30 to 5:30pm Saturday.

... Books and staff are supplied by the Kent County Library System, paid through county revenues. The city of EGR is responsible for maintaining the building and its contents. The city also pays into a County library fund.



**1960**

### **Library Moves to a New Location!**

More space is needed! The library relocates across the street to a space in the Ramona Shopping Center, 2154 Wealthy. This is where D & W is currently located.

... The library now has 1,200 square feet of floor space, leased on a month-to-month basis.  
... the library serves mainly as a circulating library.

**1962**

### **The Library ... the popular place to be!**

... Approximately 5,000 people are registered library users!  
... Circulation is about 5,000 books per month.  
... The library is open twenty-three hours a week.  
... the library serves mainly as a circulating library. A need is seen to increase the adult and children's reference collection to support the growing community.  
... It is clear that community library usage is growing!

**1962 - 1964**

### **New Librarian Eunice VanderVeen**

... stepped in as branch librarian when Betty Garver went to work at KCL headquarters.

... Eunice had been very involved in the organization and set-up of the original library as book stocker and substitute librarian.

**1965 - 1968**

### **New Librarian Dorothy "Dottie" Doten**

... Dottie fondly remembers the many children's story hours.

**1965**

### **"EGR Envisions Municipal Complex: may cost \$480,000." Grand Rapids Press, November 30, 1965.**

... people of East Grand Rapids see the proposed plans for a new city complex consisting of a "library, general office building and a police-fire building."

... City Manager Fred Tholen claims that "[The library] is really just a book dispensing factory. The space is so limited, [1,200 square feet] and children often sit on the floor during reading hours."

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**1967**

### **New Library in New City Complex Proposed and Confirmed!**

... The current library is open 54 hours a week. Doubling hours!  
... Circulation is approximately 10,000 books per month!  
... Demand for library services from the community is strong!  
... space is limited!  
... **Time for a new library building!**  
... Marvin DeWinter Associates was the architectural firm chosen to design the new city complex.  
... Friends of the Library and the East Grand Rapids Library Commission submit their "Report on the Joint Committee on Building and Sites" proposing that 6,000 square feet be provided for the library.

**1968**

### **New Librarian Sally Godin**

... takes over when Dottie Doten becomes HQ reference librarian.



**June 1969**

### **New Library Opens!**

... new location 750 Lakeside Drive, SE., a two story complex. The library is housed on the upper level only.  
... 5,500 square feet of library space  
... Circulation increased 43% the first month!  
... more space, more services provided...including programs for children and adults.  
... Mrs. Sally Godin, head librarian and Mrs. George Branston, assistant librarian  
... New attractions include: copy machine, study carrels and an area for meetings .  
... The library is now open 57 hours per week to meet increased demand.

**September 21, 1969**

### **East Grand Rapids New Municipal Complex Open House**

... The collection is growing there are now 16,204 books on the shelves, compared to 13,141 in January.  
... The lower portion of the library is unfinished, with sand for the floor. It was suggested by city manager Fred Tholen that teenagers use the place for dances, clubs or a teen center.

**1973**

### **Marian Branston Dies**

... one of the original founders and supporters of the East Grand Rapids Library, Friends of the Library and also one of its first librarians  
... A memorial fund was initiated upon her death to honor all that she has done for the library. This fund is used to purchase books on travel.

**1981**

### **Gail DeYoung becomes Library Manager**

... Sally Godin relocates to Wyoming Library, Kent County Library System.  
... Gail faces the task of a future library expansion to the lower level of the library.

**November 5, 1984**

### **Library Facility Expansion Proposed - Special Report Presented to City Commission**

... a recommendation to expand the East Grand Rapids Library was presented by Gail DeYoung, Library Manager and members of the Library Commission.  
... recommendations, comparisons of libraries and future needs were presented.

**February 1985**

### **City Commissioners Approve Library Expansion**

... The expansion project was estimated at \$330,000  
... DeWinter and Associates architects were selected.

**June -July 1986**

### **Library Expansion Project Planning Gets Underway**

... LSCA Title II Construction grants were applied for and awarded.  
... Library use deems the need for expansion to the lower level.  
... Circulation has increased 65% since 1980.  
... EGR Library ranks third after Wyoming and Kentwood Libraries in circulation. These libraries have twice the size floor space as East.  
... collection is growing, with no place to go!

**July 9, 1986**

### **Friends of the East Grand Rapids Library – Capital Campaign Gets Underway for Library Expansion**

... Friends pledge to raise \$150,000.00.  
Of that total, \$90,000 will go towards furnishings, \$30,000 for equipment and \$30,000 for an endowment fund.  
... Friends mount public campaign...telephone, media and distributed printed informational materials.  
... Friends Committee includes Kyle Irwin, Mary Ford, Mary Kretschman, Connie Christenson, Debbie Weaver, Dave Chamberlain.

**July 1986**

### **Friends of the Library Endowment Fund Proposed**

... initial investment of 30,000 from the capital fund drive is proposed  
... it is proposed to "attract private gifts to support books, supplies and equipment for the library from the fund's principal." (Friend's notes)

**January- June 1987**

### **Library Expansion**

... The library staff faced tough, cold working conditions!

**June 1987**

### **Library Expansion Complete**

**June 20, 1991 – October 2, 1991**

### **New District Library?**

Kent County Board of Commissioner's Special Library Study Committee vote to recommend that the Kent County Library System become a district library system. Approved by the Commission on October 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**March 9, 1992**

### **District Library Proposed**

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**Spring 1992**

**Gail Haebich Becomes Assistant Library Manager**

...already a long time member of the team, Gail steps up to assume a new title.

**August 25, 1992**

**Sally Godin, EGR Library Manager From 1968 – 1981, Dies**

**July 1, 1994**

**Kent County Library System Becomes Kent District Library System**

...Michigan's 96<sup>th</sup> district library

**November 8, 1994**

**District Library Millage**

...East Grand Rapids Citizens along with other Kent County Communities vote in favor of the millage to support the district libraries!

**November 1995**

**Gail Haebich, Assistant Library Manager, Retires**

**December 1995**

**Gail O. DeYoung Retires as East Grand Rapids Library Manager**

...25 years of Kent District Library System service in various capacities, adult services librarian, youth librarian and coordinator of the system's youth services.

...14 ½ years as EGR branch manager.

...Thanks Gail!

**January 1996**

**Pamela VanderPloeg Becomes Library Manager  
Jacque Miller, Assistant Manager**

**November 1998**

**Library Expansion Feasibility Study Presented to the EGR City Commission**

**1998**

**The Library Circulates 280,791 items!**

**December 1998**

**Jacque Miller, Assistant Manager, Retires**

**January 1999**

**First Drawings for Proposed Expansion Presented to the City Commission**

**February 1999**

**Dawn Lewis Becomes Assistant Branch Manager**

...takes over for Jacque Miller, who retired in December 1998

**February/March 1999**

**City Commission Accepts Library Expansion Feasibility Study**

**November 6, 1999**

**East Grand Rapids Library Celebrates Its 40<sup>th</sup> Birthday**

...community event held

...past librarians, Friends members, city officials invited

...special programs presented

**January 12, 2000**

**Pamela VanderPloeg Steps Down as Manager of the Library**

...Becomes an Assistant Director at KDL

**February 23, 2000**

**Kent District Library Millage Increase Request Defeated at the Polls**

...0.93 mills for 6 years had been requested

**March 2000**

**EGR City Officials Approve a Feasibility Study to Finance a \$9.25 Million Expansion of the Library and City Complex.**

**May 2000**

**EGR Library Learns That It Will House a New Computer Training Lab Valued at \$38, 179.**

...Kent District Library Receives a Grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

**June 2000**

**Cathy Clair Becomes the New Manager of the EGR Library**

...Cathy has been with the Library system since 1977 and most recently spent a six-year stint as the manager of the Krause Memorial Library in Rockford.

**August 8, 2000**

**Voters Say YES! To Kent District Library Millage Renewal and Increase**

...asking for 0.77 mills to continue current operations and 0.11 additional mills to expand hours, programs and resources

**August 23, 2000**

**EGR City Commissioners Begin Discussing Bond Proposal Costs for Expansion of the City Complex**

...estimated costs between \$9 to \$11 million

**September 2000**

**Literature Published for EGR Residents Explaining the Proposed EGR Community Center**

...explanation of the expansion of the Library, Recreation Department and City Hall.

**September 19, 2000**

**Bonds for Expansion of City Complex and Renovation of Wealthy Pool Are Proposed**

...voters will go to the polls in April 2001

**October 19, 2000**

**Gate's Computer Lab Established on the Lower Level of the EGR Library**

...11 computers will be used for instruction and general use.

**October 2000**

**TWO for You Committee Formed**

...the goal of this group is to get the word out to citizens about the upcoming city complex expansion election in the spring.

**November 2000**

**East Grand Rapids Foundation Established**

...this non-profit group will handle donations dedicated to the Library, Recreation Department and City Hall expansion.

**November 12, 2000**

**Open House for the New Gate's Computer Lab in EGR Library**

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**November 23, 2000**

### **Opposition to Proposed Expansion of the City Complex Comes Forth at City Commission Meeting**

...the "Gateway" group discusses its plans to bulldoze the existing complex and build a new one.

**In 2000 the EGR Library Circulates 324,430 items!**

**February 20, 2001**

### **The City Complex Renovation & Expansion Election is Moved to June 11, 2001**

...extra time is given so that citizens may voice their opinion on the expansion.

**February 2001**

### **Friends of the East Grand Rapids Library Pledge \$75,000 to the Library Expansion**

**March 29, 2001**

### **Library and Community Center Campaign Established**

...\$70,000 is paid to fund-raising consultants to work with an EGR volunteer fundraising committee. The goal is to raise \$3 million.

**May 2001**

### **\$1,229,230 raised so far by the East Grand Rapids Fund-Raising Committee**

**May 10, 2001**

### **Opposition roars.**

...Local Resident Suggests the City Purchase the Boston SE church Property for the Parks and Recreation Department.

**June 11, 2001**

### **Library & City Complex Proposal Defeated**

...1,382 in favor  
...2,074 against

**September 2001**

### **Citizens Task Force Established**

...44 citizens have joined forces to determine what type of facility would be best for the Library, Recreation Department and City Hall.

**January 2002**

### **Dawn Lewis, Assistant Manager, takes the Assistant Manager Position at the Wyoming Library**

**February 2002**

### **Kelly McGee Becomes Assistant Manager at EGR Library**

**March 2002**

### **The Citizens Task Force Has Narrowed Plans for the Library and City Complex Renovation and Expansion Down to Three Options**

\$9.6 million	29,640 sq. foot library
\$5.6 million	23,975 sq. foot library
\$8.29 million	27,940 sq. foot library

**March 2002**

### **Citizens Task Force Focus Group Meetings**

...Select people from the Citizens Task Force held private meetings without the majority of the Task Force present to independently decide that the Recreation Department should move off the current site.

A new place for the Parks and Recreation Department will have to be located.

**May 6, 2002**

### **Citizen's Task Force Recommendations for Library, Recreation Department and City Hall Are Presented to the City Commission.**

**August 2002 Jacobson's Closes**

...developers interested

**August 2002**

### **East Grand Rapids History Room Receives \$8,000 Grant**

...Urban Cooperation Board grant allows for collection, preservation, storage and display of East Grand Rapids' unique history.

**September 2002**

### **Jade Pig Ventures purchases Jacobson's complex for \$3.75 million**

**September 23, 2002**

### **City Commissioners Determine Recreation Department Relocation Too Costly**

**October 6, 2002**

### **Mr. Peter Wege Donates Steamship Major Watson Sign to the East Grand Rapids History Room**

...sign valued at \$2,000.

**October 14, 2002**

### **"Jade Pig Wants the Library at Jacobson's"**

(*Cadence*, October 16, 2002, p. 1)

...developer Brian Devries, in a surprise visit to the city commission meeting, declares that the library should move into the Jacobson's building. No costs were given.

...City commissioners vote to give Jade Pig 60 days to come up with a proposal to move the library to the Jacobson's site.

**November 20, 2002**

### **Jade Pig Presents Plans for Gaslight Village to EGR Citizens**

**December 2002**

### **Various City Commissions Meet in Work session to Discuss Jade Pig Proposal**

**December 2002**

### **Cathy Clair Steps Down As Manager of the EGR Library- Great job, Cathy!!**

...Kelly McGee becomes interim Manager

**January 2003**

### **City Commission Has Closed-Sessions Negotiations With Jade Pig over Proposal and Price**

**February 2003**

### **City Commissioners Discuss the Various Library & City Complex Scenarios, Including the Jacobson's Site**

**March 2003**

### **Recreation Department Determines that it should be placed in the Old Water Tank.**

**March 2003**

### **Dawn Lewis Becomes the New Manager of the EGR Library**

**April 13, 2003**

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### **City Hires PR Firm To Help Explain Library Options to the Citizens**

**May 2003**

### **Jade Pig Venture's Proposal Would Cost Citizens \$14.5 Million.**

**May 15, 2003**

### **City Commission Public Work Session**

...2 proposals presented:

1. \$8.3 million to keep the Library and City Complex on lake
2. \$14.5 million to move the Library to the Jacobson's site

**August 2003**

### **City Commissioners have reduced the size of the proposed library to 22,000 sq. feet. The cost of the proposal on the lake would be \$6.8 million dollars**

**August 2, 2003**

### **City Commissioners Vote to Keep the Library on the Lake**

...Jade Pig Ventures need to come down in price

**August 25, 2003**

### **City Commissioners Plan to Survey Residents to Determine the Plans for a 22,000 Square Foot Library**

### **East Grand Rapids Community Concept Team Formed 12/2003 – 3/2004**

Members of the EGR community are appointed by Mayor Cindy Bartman to be on the team to evaluate plans for the expansion and renovation of the East Grand Rapids library and city complex. Task was to determine what plans would best serve the community and why the last election failed. Met with Cox, Medendorp and Olson architects and representatives of the community to prepare a plan to take to the people.

**Fall 2004**

### **Michelle Boisvenue-Fox Becomes Assistant Manager**

**March 2004 – May 2004**

Many city commission meetings were held to bring these plans for the East Grand Rapids City Center to the public.

### **East Grand Rapids Library and City Complex Millage Election Campaign, March – June 2004**

This group developed marketing flyers, ran a postcard signing campaign to the registered voters of East Grand Rapids and held a phone calling campaign and did poll watching.

**June 14, 2004 Ballot Proposals**

"East Grand Rapids voters will face four tax questions on the June 14 ballot, one for public schools' recreation programs and three for expansion of the library and City Hall. If all were approved, voters would pay 2.21 mills in additional

property tax -- about \$221 a year for an owner of a house with a market value of \$200,000.

City Proposal 1 would levy .64 mills for 30 years -- \$64 a year for the owner of a \$200,000 home. The proposal would create a complex that would combine the library with the now separately housed recreation department and city government. Nearly 35 percent of the total square footage in the new building would be devoted to shared space.

Proposals 2 and 3 for the community center would levy .095 mills and .076 mills respectively. Together, they would cost the owner of a \$200,000 home \$17 a year for 30 years.

Proposal 2 would pay for shoreline boardwalks and docks as well as new streetlights and other adornments. Proposal 3 would pay for an additional 4,000 square feet of library space and a local history room."

*Source Citation: "East GR tax proposals; Only one of four millage requests deserves support.(Editorial)(Editorial)." The Grand Rapids Press (Grand Rapids, MI) (June 2, 2004): A10. Grand Rapids Press. Thomson Gale. Kent District Library. 11 Nov. 2006*

**June 14, 2004**

### **Voters Support 4 Proposals Which Allows \$9.5 Million Dollar Renovation and Expansion of the Library and City Hall.**

### **Library Circulation Hits 367,217 in 2004!**

**January 15, 2005**

Friends of the East Grand Rapids Library present a check to the City Commission for \$100,000 for the new library.

**May 2005**

The new library and city complex began construction in Completion date is set for late 2006.

**May 2005**

Library Moves to a Temporary Location During Expansion and Renovation. Approximately 2,000 square feet of popular space!



644 Lovett, SE. East Grand Rapids.

**August 12, 2006**

### **Grand Re-opening of the East Grand Rapids Library: Library expands from 10,500 to 27,700 square feet.**



Dersch, Mary T. Chronology of the East Grand Rapids Library  
East Grand Rapids History Room, 2006.

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