

Haverford library celebrates story book ending of \$22 million renovation

Mill Road location in a Depression-era bank is the same, but the inside is immersed in the 21st century.

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The Haverford Free Library on Mill Road has reopened after a nearly \$22 million modernization overhaul, bringing the facility into the 21st century. (PETE BANNAN-DAILY TIMES)

It's a story book ending for the [Haverford library](#), which [after years of uncertainty](#), reopened Thursday following a nearly \$22 million renovation and expansion.

At Thursday's ribbon cutting, interim library Director Susan Sternberg called the redesigned building "an extraordinary accomplishment" that took years and needed many people; she particularly credited the staff and volunteers.



It might look old from the front on the outside, but the Haverford Free Library on Mill Road is fully 21st century on the inside. (PETE BANNAN -DAILY TIMES)

Library board member Phil Goldsmith, who was instrumental in keeping the project moving forward over 10 years, compared it to Homer's "Odyssey."

"Years and decades in the making, with our own versions of cyclops and sirens," Goldsmith said.

Those cyclops included a zoning board decision requiring more parking and the COVID-19 pandemic, which saw costs balloon, while a siren was a possible move to a new location such as the old Brookline School.

Eventually commissioners voted to keep the township-supported library on Mill Road and once the project was given the go-ahead in 2023, it stayed on time and on budget, said Commissioner Sheryl Forste-Grupp.

A number of grants, including \$3 million from the federal American Rescue Plan Act funds, \$1 million from the Pennsylvania Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program, a Keystone Grant of \$750,000 and a federal government appropriations grant of \$2 million offset the cost to the township.

The library is contributing \$1 million and is fundraising for additional money.

Haverford's \$21 plus million library reconstruction is complete and on Thursday officials held a ribbon cutting. (PETE BANNAN-DAILY TIMES)



During the construction the library opened a temporary facility at Manoa Shopping Center to house a portion of their collection. It also utilized an old SEPTA bus as a bookmobile.

“When all is said and done, we will forget how long it took to get the job done. Instead we will bask in the warmth of our wonderful modern library that will serve our residents,” Goldsmith said.

Following the morning ribbon cutting, the library held events throughout the day highlighting programs and new technology. The library is housed in a Depression-era bank building. In the 1970s an addition was built, with some improvements added in the 1990s.

This newest renovation solves long running heating and air conditioning issues and increases the public space.

Designers built a cantilever addition off the second floor which also allowed keeping 17 parking spots.

The township also bought a home across the street and demolished it, adding 24 additional spots to overcome zoning concerns.



The cantilevered second floor allows for 17 parking spaces to go along with 24 spots in a new lot across the street. (PETE BANNAN-DAILY TIMES)

The new building infrastructure provides completely new and upgraded HVAC systems and a new elevator.

On the first floor, the new facility keeps much the same style. However, it has been updated with a Living Room with a fireplace, perfect for quiet moments and reading, fulfilling the requests of senior patrons, officials said.



The Living Room seen from above includes a fireplace, perfect for quiet moments and reading, fulfilling the requests of senior patrons.(PETE BANNAN-DAILY TIMES)

Additional meeting rooms have been added for community gatherings and study rooms for small groups and collaboration, all supported with technology.



An original window, bars included, from when the building was a bank. (PETE BANNANDAILY TIMES)

The first floor also retains some of the distinctive features of the 1926 bank, including the analog clock and on one side wall an original window with bars.

Other improvements include increased public computer access including tech zones, laptop bars, ample charging outlets, and robust Wi-Fi coverage.

The second floor is where improvements are most visible.

The new teen room includes three large monitors, gaming consoles and tables for hanging out or playing board and puzzle games.

The new teen room includes gaming consoles and tables for hanging out. The library sits just blocks from the middle and high school and attracts as many as 100 students after school. (PETE BANNAN-DAILY



TIMES)

The library sits just blocks from the middle and high school and attracts students from both schools.

Teen services librarian Celia Adams, said at least 100 students come in every day.

“A lot of them just want a place to hang out with their friends. That’s why we try to make it a comfortable place, but some are studying and doing homework,” she said. “A good number attend our after-school programs.”

She said programs include “Dungeons and Dragons” and “out@library,” an LGBT social club.

Adams said the space gets kids off their phones.

“They are engaged. They like having alternate stuff to do than just being on their phones,” she said.

An innovation zone includes a makerspace with 3D printers with plans for a digital art corner with a green screen area, laser cutter and programs for those tools.

Mandy Folwell, the reference and technology librarian, said they want to involve not just kids, but teens and adults.

“We really want to create a space where people can come in and experiment with STEM-centered objects and concepts,” Folwell said.

Business manager Donna Reeves, who has been at the Haverford library for 22 years, said the opening is the right time for this to happen.

The second floor includes separate spaces for young children, tweens, and teens.(PETE BANNAN-DAILY TIMES)

“There are familiar spots but we have expanded about 5,000



square feet off the second floor, that made a big difference for our children's library," she said.

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“I’m beyond excited and so thrilled, I’m so happy, not just for the staff but for the community, it’s been a long time coming,” Reeves said. “I can’t wait to see the looks on everyone’s face as they come through for the first time, as well as the second and third times.”