



A sketch of the proposed Kilton Public Library in West Lebanon is shown. Main Street is on the left and Tracy Street is on the right.

COURTESY TAPPE ASSOCIATES INC.

Library Plans Advance in West Lebanon

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library.

The new facility was made possible by a \$1.3 million gift from the estate of James and Willena Kilton, the former owners of the Red Cross Pharmacy on Main Street, who both died in 1998.

The library hopes to finance the rest of the \$3 million to \$4 million project with private contributions, and will launch a fund-raising campaign in early 2006 that will target city residents and businesses. (Large piles of dirt that have recently accumulated on the new library site are not related to any library construction, Ungarelli said. That is from the repaving of Tracy Street.)

However, Library Director Lou Ungarelli said he may turn to the city council for additional funds if the capital campaign falls short.

"It's something you have to think about," he said. "It is a city building; it would be wonderful if the city can help us out."

Later this year, the library will begin interviewing residents to gauge their willingness to make donations, Ungarelli said. Using that information, library officials will design the campaign and craft a more firm construction schedule.

Officials declined to provide an estimated completion date, but the opening of the new library will present city officials with another project — what to do with the existing building.

City staffers recently began brainstorming options, Farrell said, and have broached the idea of converting the building into a drop-in center for teenagers, or perhaps a city museum. However, any talk is very preliminary, and selling the building is an option, he said.

Farrell added that if Lebanon kept the facility for public use, it would have to pay for costly renovations to make the 1909 building compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act and other building codes.

The city council would have the final decision on the use of the existing library building.

The new library project's principal architect said it is rare for a New England town to build a library from scratch.

Jeff Hoover from the Boston firm Tappe Associates Inc. said his company has planned about 75 library projects, and all but ten were renovations or additions to existing buildings.

Hoover said the new Lebanon building is designed so that it will blend in with the residential streets immediately behind it, but draw the attention of drivers on the commercial Main Street.

"It needs to be friendly to the neighborhood in scale, but prominent on the street," Hoover said. "Architecture is all about resolving that conflict."

At one point, Mascoma Savings Bank proposed

building their administrative offices in the area. But outcry from local residents concerned the project would tarnish the residential area helped kill that plan, and the bank instead built offices in White River Junction. A Rite Aid pharmacy had also once been proposed for the lot the new library will be built on.

Library officials are hoping their project will more than blend in with the neighborhood — they envision it as a new anchor in West Lebanon that will help draw residents to surrounding businesses and boost the former commercial heart that has slipped in prominence as Route 12A has exploded with activity.

Mark Short, a library trustee and head of the committee that has helped craft the building plans, said he wants the library to help, "make West Lebanon a place where people stop, as opposed to a place people drive through." Short, who lives in West Lebanon, is the operations technician for the *Valley News*.

The new building will allow an expansion of services and require an increase in staff employed by the city.

The West Lebanon Library currently is open 32 hours a week, while the city's main branch off Colburn Park is open 54 hours. The new West Lebanon building also will be open 54 hours, Ungarelli said, necessitating additional staff members.

Currently, Ungarelli said, both libraries combined have 117,000 visits annually.

The city needs to think about what to do with the current West Lebanon library building.