



JEFFERSON PUBLIC LIBRARY

EXPANSION PROJECT



You are invited to a special presentation!

Library, City of Jefferson officials, and community representatives have been meeting with architects from Studio MELEE for the past few months to design a new addition to the Jefferson Public Library. This committee of dedicated individuals provided a great amount of input to the architects, who have created a concept design for our new library.

We are excited to now present this design to the public!

Please join us for a public presentation by Studio MELEE on

MONDAY, APRIL 13

5:30 PM AT JEFFERSON CITY HALL

2ND FLOOR, CITY COUNCIL ROOM

***The presentation will be livestreamed through the
City of Jefferson Facebook Page and Youtube channel.***

It will also be recorded for later viewing.

Summary of Architect's Presentation on Monday, April 13th, 2026 at Jefferson City Hall.

Jane's Introduction

Jane Millard, Director of the Jefferson Public Library, opened by thanking everyone present — those in the room, those watching online, and future viewers of the recording — describing the evening as an exciting milestone representing **years of planning and community input**.

She introduced the architects from Studio Melee: **Curtis Ehler, Chris Wernimont, and Sophia Memmer**, noting that when they first visited the library the previous year, they stated that getting to know the community would guide the design of the new addition. Jane said she believed the audience would agree they had done exactly that.

She then acknowledged the many groups and individuals in the room, including the **Library Board of Trustees**, the newly formed **Jefferson Public Library Foundation and its steering committee**, the **Friends of the Library Board of Directors**, city administration staff, and the librarians themselves (noting the library had been closed that evening so staff could attend). She also recognized those who had volunteered on earlier studies: the space needs assessment, architectural feasibility study, and financial readiness committee, as well as those who had participated in library tours of other Iowa communities.

Jane specifically introduced the **Library Building Team** by name - the most recent group of community representatives who had been meeting with the architects since September including Sarah Erickson, Nick Foster, Gary Hauptert, RYanne Hommer, Scott Kingery, Mason Lehman, Scott Peterson, Hollie Roberts, Ginny Showman, Wendy Taylor, Nancy Teusch, Bailey Mount, and herself. She thanked them for representing the community well throughout the process.

She closed her introduction with a reflection on legacy, comparing those involved in the project to the community members who built the Carnegie building in 1904 and added on to it in 1966 - saying "now it's our turn and our privilege to do this work."

She wrapped up with a few housekeeping notes: questions would be taken at the end with a roving microphone (so online viewers could hear), the Friends of the Library had provided cookies, the regular monthly board meeting would follow, design boards would be on display at the library and City Hall after the meeting, the recording would be available on the city's YouTube channel, and the library website had full background on all the steps taken toward expansion. She also briefly acknowledged two engineers, Robert and James, who were involved but not present that evening.

The Architects' Presentation

Who Presented

Architect **Curtis Ehler** led the opening remarks, with architect **Chris Wernimont** walking through the design renderings and cost details. Industrial designer **Sophia Memmer** assisted with visuals. The team from Studio Melee had been working with Jefferson since the previous summer — visiting the library in June, proposing in July, being hired in August, and holding monthly building committee meetings from September through March.

Design Process Recap

Curtis opened by walking through how the team arrived at the final concept. Their approach was notably community-first: rather than designing first and budgeting later, they **started with a cost target and worked backward**, letting the different program needs "wrestle for square footage." They conducted over 27 surveys with input from library staff, city staff, patrons, board members, friends of the library, and volunteers to prioritize what mattered most.

Top priorities that emerged from that process were:

- Site access, parking, drop-off, and wayfinding
- Accessibility (ADA compliance throughout)
- Updated computers and technology
- Adequate meeting and program rooms, especially for children's and adult events
- Staff work areas and service desks
- Collections for children, teens, and adults (with teens getting their own dedicated space)
- Historical sensitivity and respect for the Carnegie building
- Updated restrooms

Lower-priority "nice to haves" included a lounge space, coffee area, public display space for artwork, and loading/delivery functions.

They explored several layout concepts — an **L-shape** behind the Carnegie, a **stack** (adding a second floor to the '60s wing), and an **enclosure** option that would have wrapped the Carnegie. The enclosure was quickly rejected by the committee. They ultimately settled on a **"Z concept"** — a hybrid of the L and stack approaches — which placed the new addition primarily to the **north**, over and connected to the 1960s building, while keeping the Carnegie's front façade fully visible from Lincoln Way.

The Conceptual Design

Chris then presented the concept renderings. Key features of the design:

Exterior & Approach

- The addition is positioned to the **north**, so the Carnegie remains the visual centerpiece from Lincoln Way. The new structure acts as a backdrop, not a focal point.
- The 1960s building gets modest exterior modifications to better harmonize with the historic character, including opening up the east end to expose the library's interior to passersby on Lincoln Way — "not hidden and concealed, but rather exposed and full of enlightenment."
- The **original Carnegie front entry** (closed off since the '60s addition) is being reopened. This restores historic character and also provides a secondary after-hours entrance to isolate the Carnegie for evening events.
- A **wider front staircase** at the Carnegie creates an outdoor gathering spot — staff can perch on the steps for outdoor story times while kids sit on the grass.
- A small **outdoor patio** is created between the Carnegie and the '60s building as a happy byproduct of stepping the addition back.
- Existing **artwork outside the south wall** is preserved and will be visible from both inside and outside.

Interior Layout (by floor)

Basement: Primarily back-of-house — mechanical systems, storage, and the expanded **Genealogy/Local History room** (growing by ~50%, moving to the full southwest corner of the Carnegie). The basement gets a proper restroom and elevator access. Not intended as primary public space.

Main Level (Entry/Adult): Patrons enter through a new **vestibule** from the north parking lot. The main foyer includes adult computer stations, printing, and a Kodak machine. Shelving is slightly shorter than current to allow staff visibility over the tops and to bring more daylight into the space. Study rooms, local history seating, and restrooms are on the southwest side. A larger **staff work area**, bigger **circulation desk**, and a dedicated **director's office** are in the back.

Carnegie Level (half-flight up): The Carnegie interior is largely **opened up** to restore its original sense of spaciousness. It will primarily serve as a **large library program room/public meeting room**, with book sale space, restrooms, catering-style storage and sink space, and buffet-style cabinetry for events.

Upper Level (Youth & Teen): The new addition sits above the '60s building on the north end. This is a bright, colorful, window-filled space housing the **children's collection and activity room**, a dedicated **teen reading and computer area** in the northeast corner, a **youth services desk**, with the youth librarian's office directly behind it. The floor-to-ceiling heights were maximized to bring in as much daylight as possible. Color-coding and signage are used throughout to differentiate program areas.

Circulation & Accessibility

- A **double-sided elevator** serves all four levels and is positioned in the connector between the buildings — deliberately placed outside either existing structure to avoid costly structural modifications.
- Staff have a dedicated **back stair** so youth staff can move between the break room and the upper floor without being intercepted on the main floor.
- All restrooms are **single-occupancy** (seven total), all ADA compliant, all with baby changing stations planned.

Cost Estimate

Chris walked through a cost opinion prepared with engineering firm RCE:

Item	Estimated Cost
Construction	~\$4,100,000
FF&E (furniture, fixtures, equipment)	~\$375,000
Contingency	~\$200,000
Design fees (~8% of construction)	~\$325,000
Total	~\$5,000,000

Curtis noted that the original RFP had targeted closer to \$4M all-in, and earlier proposals from other firms had come in around \$9M each, so \$5M was framed as a meaningful achievement. He also explained that cost-per-square-foot is higher on smaller projects due to fixed contractor costs, so cutting the scope too aggressively would have lost disproportionately more program than budget. The team felt the current scope "checked a lot of boxes."

The addition brings the library from roughly **8,000 square feet** (the '60s building + Carnegie combined) to approximately **12,000–13,000 square feet** — an increase of about 50%.

Curtis closed the presentation by reiterating the team's goal: to deliver not just an attractive design, but a **feasible and buildable one** — something the community could actually use to fundraise, with drawings that reflect genuine care and achievability.

Summarized transcript from the Joint City Council & Library Trustees Meeting with presentation by Studio Melee on April 13th, 2026.

Overview

This is a ~1 hour 20 minute joint meeting of the **Jefferson City Council and Jefferson Public Library Board of Trustees** in Jefferson, Iowa on April 13th, 2026. The main purpose was the first public unveiling of a concept design for a new addition to the **Jefferson Public Library**, presented by architects **Curtis Ehler, Chris Wernimont, and Sophia Memmer of Studio Melee**. Library Director **Jane Millard** hosted and introduced the team. This is the culmination of several years of different planning phases and the building team committee has been meeting with the architects since September 2025.

The proposed addition is roughly a "**Z-shaped**" design built primarily to the north of the existing building, connecting the historic Carnegie building (built 1904) and the 1966 addition. The estimated project cost is **\$5 million** (down from earlier proposals around \$9 million).

Q&A Summary

Accessibility & ADA Compliance

Q: Where will the elevator and wheelchair ramps be?

A: There will be no traditional ramps as the north side will be regraded for flush, level entry. A **double-sided elevator** will serve all four levels (basement, main, Carnegie, and new youth floor). The elevator is placed in the connector between buildings rather than inside existing structures to avoid costly structural work.

Outdoor Lighting

Q: Will outside lighting be low wattage and shielded?

A: All new lighting will be **LED**. It will likely have cutoffs to prevent light from spreading beyond the property line and will meet city zoning requirements.

Parking

Q: Will there be more parking?

A: The design intentionally avoids taking away any existing parking. There is discussion about the city or library possibly acquiring a nearby house to the north, which could become additional parking. Future parking expansion is expected to grow northward.

Collection Size

Q: With the youth and teen departments combining, will the space be able to handle the same collection size?

A: Yes, the architects measured all existing collections by linear shelf footage and accounted for them. The goal is not to grow collections but to add **functional, usable space** around collections, and definitely not to reduce them.

More Computers, Fewer Books?

Q: Are there going to be more computers and fewer actual books?

A: No, roughly the same number of public computers are planned. A lot of times, people bring in their own devices, so at this time, there are no plans for additional public computers. The focus is adding space for **people and community to gather**. Computer areas will be separated by age group (adult, children's, and a teen pod) to reduce noise conflicts.

Library Closure During Construction

Q: Will the library have to close during construction?

A: Not for an extended period if possible. Options include a temporary off-site location, a scaled-down on-site operation during phased construction, or a short closure (a week or two) just to facilitate moving. A full closure would be avoided to maintain community engagement. Phasing is still being worked out and depends partly on the status of the property to the north.

Study Rooms & Meeting Space

Q: Where are the study rooms, and is the Carnegie meeting room open to the public?

A: Two dedicated study rooms are planned in the adult department of the 1960s building (with a possible operable partition to combine them). These can accommodate one person studying alone or up to groups of ~6. The new meeting room (replacing the inadequate basement space) will be available for both library programs and public reservation — similar to current practice, just larger ~40-50 people (current basement meeting room accommodates ~15-20).

Operating Budget Impact

Q: Will the operating budget increase?

A: Likely a slight increase due to added square footage, but offset by modern, more energy-efficient systems (better insulation, glazing, HVAC). The goal is to keep operating costs as close to current as possible. Solar panels were also discussed as a future option.

Construction Timeline

Q: How long will construction take?

A: Roughly **10–12 months** if done all at once. If phased (done in stages to keep the library partially open), it could potentially **double** to ~2 years. The schedule will also try to avoid disrupting the summer reading program.

Funding Plan

Q: What's the funding plan and what will the city contribute?

A: Primary funding will come from **private donations and fundraising**, led by the newly formed Jefferson Public Library Foundation. Grants will also be pursued. Some city assistance is considered likely but no specific numbers have been discussed yet. (An earlier comment noted early proposals were ~\$9M each; getting to \$5M was considered a significant cost savings.)

Q: Is there any money coming from the casino?

A: Not directly addressed — Jane stated that all funding opportunities will be explored, with intentional priority given to seeking private donations and grants first.

Restrooms / Baby Changing Tables

Q: Will there be family-style restrooms with baby changing tables, especially for dads?

A: All restrooms are planned as **single-occupancy** (seven total), and **baby changing stations** are planned in them. Current restrooms are not ADA compliant (some are described as "like closets"); the new design will be fully accessible on every floor.

Staff Workspace

Q: Will there be adequate staff workspace?

A: More staff workspace was specifically requested as a priority. The library director expressed hope that the design will solve the current cramped conditions, though she acknowledged it's hard to fully visualize until built.

Natural Light in Study Rooms

Q: Will the study rooms have windows?

A: The study rooms face west (toward the alley/book drop) and were intentionally kept more private on that side. However, they are designed with **glass doors and interior windows** facing the collections, giving them borrowed light from the south-facing glass.

Genealogy Room

Q: Where will the Genealogy Reference Room go?

A: It will remain in the **basement** but will grow by ~50% and move to the entire southwest corner of the Carnegie. The basement will be significantly improved — better lit, elevator-accessible, with an accessible restroom.

Drive-Up Book Pickup

Q: Will there be a drive-up window for book pickup like during COVID?

A: No — the concept only includes a **book drop**, not a staffed drive-through pickup. The idea was considered but rejected due to staffing requirements and traffic concerns. There will be both an exterior book drop and an interior drops at the circulation desks.

UV Damage from Increased Windows

Q: Could more glass windows cause UV damage to books?

A: Modern low-e glass coatings significantly reduce UV. The design also includes exterior shading overhangs and interior manual shades. Materials nearest the south glass will likely be periodicals or other less irreplaceable materials.

Environmental Controls for Historical Materials

Q: What environmental controls are planned for the genealogy/archival materials?

A: The new HVAC system will be **zoned properly** to avoid the current problem of heating one area while trying to cool another. Improved **dehumidification** and proper fresh air exchange are key features of the new system.

The meeting ended with applause and thanks to the architects, and the library director closed by noting that — just as the 1904 builders didn't know what would be needed in 1966 — the design intentionally uses flexible spaces to adapt to whatever libraries of the future may look like.