

# BAINBRIDGE ISLAND REVIEW

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Photo courtesy of Bainbridge Public Library and Weinstein A + U

Architectural design depicting the renovated meeting room at the Bainbridge Public Library.

## Bainbridge Public Library begins remodel

BY NICK TWIETMEYER

*Kitsap News Group*

Bainbridge Public Library is beginning a new chapter with a major remodel and is encouraging the community to check it out.

Seriously, check it out. The library staff is hoping residents will check out books — by the dozens, no less — to help clear shelves and space for the renovation.

The \$1.2 million renovation project at the Bainbridge Public Library is now underway. The renovation is being funded entirely through library reserves and key grants from the Rotary Club of Bainbridge, the Bainbridge Community Foundation, Kitsap Community Foundation and Friends of the Library.

For Eric Petersen, the president of Bainbridge Public Library, libraries are not only a wonderful place to find a good book, they're also a key element in supporting the core values of our nation.

"I think libraries support democracy. An

informed electorate is important, libraries help to provide that information. They don't do that all alone, but it's an important part of supporting our system of democracy," Petersen said.

Petersen says the remodel is necessary for the library to stay relevant and keep up with the changing times.

"You could say that the role of libraries in our community is changing," Petersen said.

"We wanted to do a building project which would make the building correspond more to those evolving community needs," he added.

Rebecca Judd is the Bainbridge Island branch manager for Kitsap Regional Library and she said that the changes are going to bring a breath of fresh air to the space.

"A main part of the project is to put in a sliding glass wall that separates the meeting room from the main part of the library. The reason we love this idea is that you can open up the whole wall when the meeting room is not being used," Judd said.

Judd said that creating a community meeting space is a key element for the library remodel.

"One of the pieces of the project was to maintain and also expand places for people to meet, one-on-one. The public library is one of the only free places where you can go and have a meeting, meet with your neighbors, discuss a community project, hang out with the free WiFi," Judd said.

The new meeting room will also bring more space for patrons and students to read, study and work on homework.

"After school we have lots of middle school students who come in to study and we don't have enough tables for them to sit at, so we can set up a study area in that meeting room but still be able to see into the room," Judd said.

The remodel will also free up space by allowing the staff to essentially open a wall to the meeting room from the main library for

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hosting larger events.

“If we have programs that are bigger, we can open up the glass door and put chairs out into the main part of the library,” Judd said.

Petersen said the library needs to be a dynamic space, due in large part because libraries aren't just about the books anymore.

“There's maybe a historical belief that libraries are about books, but there's so much more today,” Petersen said.

“It's books and programs, places for people to come use the computer, places for people to write their next book. I can't tell you how many writers have spent time in our study carrels, putting together their manuscripts,” Judd added.

Petersen said it was important to create an invit-

ing space for patrons who are taking advantage of the services the library provides. In order to accomplish that goal, designs were selected that would create intimate and welcoming spaces for individuals and groups meeting at the library; a task which required no small amount of deliberation.

“The library did a lot of research, community input and so on, a couple of years

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ago. It took us awhile to sort through a number of options of how we would meet the evolving needs of the community," Petersen said.

"On the east wall will be

several sound booths which are new meeting spaces that will look sort of like a cafe table with benches on two sides, a table in the middle and then a sound dome that comes down above, so that you could have a private conversation not overheard by other people," he said.

"We have a lot of volun-

teer tutors, ESL tutors, other people who meet one-on-one, volunteers who help students after school, and those sound booths will be perfect for them," Judd said.

It's not just going to be adults and teens who will benefit from the revamped library, though. Downstairs, the children's area remodel

will also be creating spaces where youngsters can discover the joys of reading, tucked into the specially designed reading nooks.

Construction on the meeting room began at the end of March and has had little impact on services so far.

In mid-May construction is set to begin on the upstairs portion of the library, which is expected to have a slightly larger impact, but the library will remain open.

Community members are encouraged to offer their assistance by purchasing

the library's old furniture or by checking out up to 100 library books at once through the Check Out to Help Out program.

The project is expected to be completed by late September.