

OPEN HOUSE

Brainerd Memorial Library

4-6 April 6

Toward Tomorrow: Library Interior Renovation Begins

Big changes are coming to the Brainerd Memorial Library, starting the first week in April. Come sneak a peek at our Open House on Saturday, April 6, from 4 to 6 p.m., while enjoying great food and drink (including a signature cocktail developed especially for the occasion). The party's on us, and all adults are welcome.

Before the party, though, we have to clear the decks. We will be CLOSED Monday, April 1, to allow the movers space to work safely. Then the project unfolds:

It's not your mother's library! Modern libraries are so much more than just books. They're the places where lifelong learning joins forces with community activity, and the best libraries provide both. A few years ago we realized that the Library was no longer meeting our patrons' needs as well as we'd like. So we asked for your ideas and then set to work.

Phase One included a new parking area, complete with future EV charging access: an ADA compliant entrance off the parking lot: ADA compliant rest rooms and a child-sized restroom in the Children's area.

Phase Two concentrates on upgrading our facility to accommodate improved technology and flexibility to grow with ever-changing technological needs, allowing us to meet the needs of people who use the library for more than borrowing books and ensuring our younger patrons – children and teens – have an area best suited to their interests.

Of course, almost thirty years after the last renovation, fresh paint and finishes are needed, as are furniture and carpeting. The real challenge was rethinking ways to make our beautiful building, which is undersized for the population it serves, most adaptable to a variety of uses. Compared to some other libraries in the area, Brainerd has higher traffic for 'core' library uses—books, online searches, periodicals, and other media. We're very proud of that, and want it to remain a valued resource far into the future. It's also in very high demand as a meeting space for a wide variety of purposes, hosting dozens of community groups and several hundred programs every year. Teens need a place to gather; families need child-friendly facilities; adults want a range of lectures and entertainment; students, business people, and clubs need private spaces.

THE PLAN

We think we've managed to fit all these upgrades into the project. The plan is to divide the year-long project into two phases, one floor at a time, starting upstairs. A smaller, ADA-friendly circulation desk will free up more lobby space to display new books or explore current topics of interest. Two partially glass-walled rooms will be built, one at each end of the back section. These enclosed spaces will help keep the noise out for those needing to work or study, and prevent group conversations from disturbing other patrons. The History and Reading Rooms, pride of our library, will be painted, refinished, and generally restored to their original glory.

While work takes place upstairs, much of the upstairs collection will be packed up and stored at HES. But don't worry: we'll move computers, copiers, and a core selection of books downstairs. If you can't find the book you want, our friendly staff members are experts at ordering it from interlibrary loan.

Once the main floor is completed, the work will continue downstairs. A new wall between the Teen Room and the Community Room will allow each room to be used without regard to what's happening in the other, and since we already added a separate back entrance in Phase One, the Community Room will be available even after closing time. The Children's Area will be redesigned with child-sized shelving, easy-to-clean flooring replacing thirty-year-old carpet (imagine!), and an often-requested quiet room for nursing mothers or over-stimulated youngsters. The best of the children's collection will move upstairs, with the rest stored at HES for the duration.

The project is financed, in part, by generous grants from the State Library Division of Library Development (\$650,000) and the Town of Haddam (\$377,500). Thanks to the hard work of Representative Christine Palm, we recently received additional funding (\$380,000) through the State Bond Commission. Still, construction costs have risen steeply in the last few years, and your help is needed to fill the gap. Please consider donating at the library or online at <https://brainerdlibrary.org/support-bml/>.