



# **New Richmond Library Site Master Plan**

**Approved October 2021**



## **Background**

The School District of New Richmond conveyed the property located at 421 S Green Avenue (referred to hereafter as the Site) to the City of New Richmond in the fall of 2017, following approval of a master plan that identified intended uses for the Site and broadly described the City’s vision for the development of the Site.



In 2017, the City planned to construct a traditional stand-alone public library building, to be paid for via a combination of capital campaign contributions and borrowed funds. Given the size of the Site and its location in the heart of the community, and the School District’s investment in razing the old middle school building, the School District sought to ensure that the City would be responsible stewards of their gift of the Site, and use it for the intended purpose of a public library, rather than re-selling the property or constructing some other government facility. Thus, the original master plan agreement included conditions prohibiting residential development or additional commercial enterprises outside of the Library building on the property.

In 2021, the School District and City recognize that constructing a traditional stand-alone public library may not be financially feasible, and a multi-purpose development is more appropriate in today’s environment. With that being said, the School District and City, through this document, are striking and replacing the original master plan for the Site in an effort to remove potential barriers to a mixed-use development, while still ensuring that a 21<sup>st</sup> Century library is the primary focus and the Site is developed through a transparent and participative process. The final facilities will reflect the character of the nearby neighborhood and serve the needs of all residents in the School District of New Richmond as a vibrant gathering space for people in the New Richmond area to learn, explore, and connect for decades to come.

## **Public-Private Partnership**

A public-private partnership is a collaboration between a government agency and a private sector entity. It is becoming an increasingly common method to finance, build, and operate projects.

The City and School District are committed to forming a public-private partnership in order to create a mixed-use development that meets additional needs of the growing community. This approach could utilize the strengths, expertise, efficiencies, and resources of other parties and sectors to create facilities that far exceed what any one partner could achieve independently.

The City issued a competitive request for qualifications (RFQ) in the spring of 2021 to determine possible interest from private individuals, firms, or teams in forming a public-private partnership, and to better understand what types of land use and ownership structures would be of interest. Several responses were submitted from high-quality professionals. A diligent vetting and interview process was conducted over many months. The City looks forward to selecting a partner and introducing them to the community in the near future.

## **Vision and Uses for the Site**

Multiple public meetings and a community survey were conducted in 2019 to better understand “What do we want the library to do?” Approximately 260 community members participated in the survey; 54% were City residents and 46% were township/village residents. Some of the most requested uses and common themes included:

- **Seating** for every need, from quiet study and individual work, to collaborate projects and group activities
- **Drive-up services** to enhance accessibility and convenience for library patrons
- **Semi-private small group and study rooms** to be used for quiet reading, studying, homework, collaboration, tutoring, and small business services
- **Group meeting rooms** to accommodate classes, workshops, recitals, lectures, films, culinary arts demonstrations, and organizational meetings
- **Children’s space** to encourage exploration, discovery, and play for children of all ages
- **Creativity lab** to support activities like 3-D printing, laser cutting, video creation, video editing, virtual reality, music creation, and arts and crafts projects
- **Outdoor gathering space** to be used for outdoor classes, festivals, recreation, summer reading program activities, public art, outdoor story time, gardens, and walking paths
- **Sustainable design** to minimize the environmental impact of the building and reduce long-term operating costs while serving as a valuable teaching tool for the community
- **Computers and a variety of materials** including books, videos, eBooks, audio books, audio visual equipment, and more
- **Teen and tween spaces** to provide a safe environment suitable for creative activities, individual and group study, test preparation, and socializing
- **Senior space** for programs and services to meet the needs of multi-generations of older adults and their families
- **Sensory-friendly design** for those sensitive to sound or light
- **Flexible space** that can be quickly reconfigured for a multitude of uses and events
- **Off-street public parking** to accommodate community growth and more people coming to the library after the new facilities are constructed

Public feedback will help inform and guide decisions regarding the library and design and what amenities and services will be offered, however, it's important to recognize that not every idea will be reflected in the end due to feasibility and limited financial resources.

As a mixed-use project, the Site is expected to include additional compatible uses that meet other needs of the New Richmond community and assist with the financial feasibility of constructing a library. Additional uses shall be compatible with the library and surrounding neighborhood, and shall be determined to be feasible according to market research. The library shall always remain the focus point of the Site. Additional uses may include one or a combination of the following:

- Owner-occupied residential dwellings
- Upscale apartments
- Childcare facility
- Satellite clinic or specialty care clinic
- Commercial space for non-profit organization(s) or small business(es), to provide additional goods or services to library patrons and financially support the project

Additional uses must still comply with all local ordinances, including but not limited to those pertaining to green space, building height, parking, outdoor lighting, and landscaping.



*Photo Example: Mixed-Use Library, Cornelius, OR*

The School District and City recognize that a mixed-use development is very different than a traditional, stand-alone public library. This new approach will require research and analysis, extensive public outreach and education, and a relationship with a private partner who has a strong reputation and proven track record of successfully owning and managing properties and partnering with local municipalities.

## **Design Process**

Conceptual plans will be developed that incorporate feedback from the local community. The final plans will follow all applicable building codes and local ordinances, and create a public library that aesthetically and functionally fits within the context of the surrounding neighborhood. The final plans will be reviewed by the City's Development Review Committee (DRC) in a consistent manner with all private developments in the City of New Richmond, including a thorough review of project components such as utilities, traffic circulation, bicyclist and pedestrian safety, parking, stormwater, landscaping, setbacks, etc. The project will require approval from the Plan Commission and City Council.

## **Public Engagement**

The School District and City are committed to ensuring transparency at every stage of the project, and providing multiple opportunities for public feedback in a variety of methods. Specifically, the public engagement process will include a centralized project website, frequently asked questions (FAQ) pages, a combination of in-person and virtual community meetings and presentations, and updates on social media platforms. Every effort will be made to incorporate feedback from the community into the final design to ensure that the final facilities reflect the community's desires and values, and fit in with the surrounding neighborhood.

## **Shared Commitment**

The School District of New Richmond and City of New Richmond are committed to working collaboratively to construct a 21st Century library at the property located at 421 Green Avenue. We believe that a modern and functional facility that fits in aesthetically with the surrounding neighborhood has the potential to serve as a vibrant gathering space for people in the New Richmond area to learn, explore, and connect for decades to come.

We also recognize that constructing a traditional, stand-alone public library may not be financially feasible, and a multi-purpose development is more appropriate in today's environment. We are committed to forming a public-private partnership in order to create a mixed-use development that meets additional needs of our growing community. This approach could utilize the strengths, expertise, efficiencies, and resources of other parties and sectors to create facilities that far exceed what any one partner could achieve independently.

We are committed to ensuring transparency throughout this process and providing multiple opportunities for public feedback in a variety of methods. We will listen and work closely with local stakeholders to assess and understand community needs and identify viable partners and/or uses that would be compatible with a library, assist with the financial feasibility of constructing a library, reflect the character of the nearby neighborhood, and serve the needs of all residents in the School District of New Richmond.

We are excited to work together in good faith in this endeavor and make a new library a reality.