

NEWS

New North Branch library reopens after 5 months of renovations

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CANTON – The 59-year-old North Branch of the Stark County District Library reopens today after five months of renovations.

Patrons will find shelving, walls and furniture that's rearranged to give the feeling of more space.

The shelves are more spread out and 2 feet shorter to provide visitors a better line of sight while also maximizing the natural light coming through the large windows.

"You can actually see into the back of the building and it kind of invites you into the space," said Stephanie Cargill, the district's director of communications.

Amenities

The branch at 189 25th St. NW now has two additional small study rooms that each seat four. Patrons will find more power outlets in tables and charging stations by chairs to charge laptops and smartphones.

Patrons can check out the changes during an open house today from noon to 3 p.m.

Branch hours will be 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Hours Tuesday will be 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. The branch will be closed on Sundays.

The \$1.5 million in renovations are part of the district library's \$6.5 million renovations of at least six its branches as part of its Re | Imagine campaign.

The funding was made possible by the \$3.2 million a year in additional revenue made possibly by voters' approval of an additional levy in May 2019, library officials said.

The work on the North Branch, which is about 10,000 square feet and near Malone University, did not make any changes to the exterior walls or structure of the building.

The opening of the branch in Jackson Township last July was considered its own project separate the renovations of the other branches.

Derek Gordon, the library district's director of special projects, gave a tour of the branch on Thursday.

Among the highlights:

- Desks, tables and book displays are now on wheels and can easily be moved.

- Grey and beige flooring and carpeting with colored highlights with berry and blue colors, especially in the children's and teen area.

- The large, fixed checkout desk has been replaced by a smaller service desk on wheels that can be moved out of the way.

- Relocating the children's area to the southern end so the area by one of the meeting rooms is quieter and will become an adult reading area.

- Large community meeting room in the basement.

- Renovated restrooms with new fixtures.

- A digital games table in the children's area.

North Branch's seven employees have received training on how to use the new equipment, library officials say.

Design of the North Branch library

June Kucalaba, brand and identity manager for Stark Library, talked about the authors' quotes on the walls.

For example, a quote on the branch's northern wall attributed to the late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg says, "Reading shaped my dreams, and more reading helped me make my dreams come true."

Another by the meeting room attributed to author Ann Lebowitz says, "Think before you speak. Read before you think."

"The quotes that you see all around the building are from the community and from staff as well," Kucalaba said. "It's their favorite authors. It's their favorite figures. They're all

formatted in a way with special fonts to make the space more cohesive and enjoyable to be in. Because it's all about the community. The library is part of the community."

Kucalaba oversaw the redesign of the library district's logo in 2019 that suggested the image of a book or door. The colors of the logo match the furnishings and walls of the new North Branch.

From around Feb. 8 to this month, the North Branch was closed for the renovations. The pandemic delayed the start of the project from last August. The Stark Library District parked a bookmobile in the parking lot to distribute materials requested by patrons.

The district says 95,140 patrons visited North Branch in 2019, about 8.5% of the entire district. And more than 195,000 items were circulated through the branch.

The construction manager and contractor for the renovations is Fred Olivieri Construction Co. And the architect and designer was HBM Architects, which specializes in designing libraries.

The contractors have begun renovations at the district's East Canton branch, which is set to reopen this fall. The Madge Youtz branch will close Aug. 16 for its renovations and reopen sometime this winter. A renovation timeline has not yet been established for the Perry, DeHoff and Lake branches in 2022.

The district says it will perform unspecified updates to its Plain branch this summer. And add automatic doors, update plumbing and flooring and make aesthetic improvements at its main Canton location. It said it's still deciding what to do with its Sandy Valley location.

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