



Facilities Master Plan

Request for Qualifications

DECEMBER 2025



REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ)

FOR ARCHITECTURAL AND PLANNING SERVICES

Elkhart Public Library

300 South Second Street • Elkhart, IN 46516

myepl.org

OVERVIEW

Contact Person

Kristen Edson

Executive Director

Elkhart Public Library

300 South Second Street • Elkhart, IN 46516

Email: kedson@myepl.org

Date of Issue: December 17, 2025

Due Date: January 30, 2026

Submit proposals electronically (PDF) via the upload link on the library's website:

<https://www.myepl.org/facilitiesrfp/> Hard copies may also be mailed or delivered to the address above.

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. This RFQ and any addenda will be available on myepl.org.
 2. Questions must be submitted in writing to kedson@myepl.org no later than January 12, 2026 with the subject line *Facilities Master Plan RFQ – Question*.
 3. Respondents are responsible for checking for addenda or clarifications prior to submission.
 4. All costs of preparing proposals are the sole responsibility of the respondent.
 5. Proposals remain binding for 90 days after submission.
 6. The Library reserves the right to accept or reject any submission and to negotiate terms in its best interest.
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PURPOSE

The Elkhart Public Library (EPL) serves as a cornerstone for lifelong learning, connection, and creativity in Elkhart, Indiana. The system includes four branch locations and a flagship Downtown Library at 300 South Second Street. Although the branches have received renovations in recent years, a comprehensive Facilities Master Plan is needed to guide the system's growth and modernization over the next 5-20 years.

EPL also owns a storage facility on Anderson Street and a large property at the Dunlap Branch, which offers potential for a new Facilities Operations Building. The selected firm will evaluate whether to retain, renovate, sell, or replace these properties and advise on fiscally responsible options that support the Library's service goals.

BACKGROUND

For nearly 125 years, the Elkhart Public Library has been shaped by community visionaries. Helen and Andrew “Hub” Beardsley led the charge in the early 1900s, bringing the Andrew Carnegie library movement to Elkhart and establishing a tradition of bold civic investment in literacy, access, and community life.

Today, Elkhart Public Library is a five-location system — supported by an auxiliary storage facility — serving a population of more than 96,000 residents across north-central Indiana. EPL is a vibrant hub of activity, welcoming nearly 50,000 program attendees each year, experiencing growing demand for children’s spaces and hands-on play environments, and continually adapting to meet the evolving needs of a 21st-century community.

The Library’s origin traces back to 1901, when Hub Beardsley secured a \$37,000 Carnegie gift, supplemented by local support, to build the first public library at Second and High streets. When the Carnegie building reached the end of its useful life, the Library moved in 1963 to its current site — made possible by the philanthropy of Esther and Ross Martin of NIBCO, Inc.

The Downtown Library, expanded in the mid-1990s through acquisition of the adjoining former bank building, now encompasses approximately 88,000 square feet including basement areas. It houses the system’s largest collections, a robust local history archive, public art including the celebrated Ted Drake mural, and workspaces for about 60 staff. It also continues to serve as a cultural anchor through rotating exhibits, historical markers, and community programming.

EPL’s four neighborhood branches — each between 5,000 and 7,000 square feet — opened beginning in 1975. These locations received updates between 2020 and 2022 through a \$4.5 million renovation project, resulting in fresh spaces for children’s events, improved browsing areas, and more welcoming environments for study, collaboration, and neighborhood engagement.

Now, with strong public use, aging facilities, and the need for modern, flexible, community-centered spaces, EPL is poised to undertake a comprehensive facilities master planning process to prepare the system for the next generation of service.



PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The Facilities Master Plan will:

- Assess major building systems, parking, staff workspaces/storage and site conditions for all EPL locations.
- Recommend space utilization and design improvements aligned with community needs.
- Identify strategic phasing and budget options for implementation.
- Integrate accessibility, sustainability, and modern service standards throughout the system.

Evaluate demand, infrastructure, and placement for service enhancements. The selected firm will receive all documents related to the most recent branch renovations, assessments of the Downtown location, and the Young People's Services (YPS) Feasibility Study. These materials provide critical context for understanding previous planning efforts, community feedback, and space priorities.



FOCUS AREA: DOWNTOWN LIBRARY

The Downtown Library is the priority focus of this project, and EPL is evaluating all possible paths forward — including redevelopment of the current site or relocation to a new site within the downtown area. The Library seeks the selected firm's assistance in identifying and assessing potential parcels of land that could accommodate a library of comparable or larger size than the existing 88,000 square-foot facility. This includes evaluating site capacity, accessibility, zoning considerations, parking enhancements, and alignment with the Library's long-term service and spatial goals.

The Library also requires a cost and timeline comparison of constructing a completely new building site versus rebuilding on the current site. Including options that preserve select elements of the 1962 building such as the woodwork in the atrium and the Ted Drake mural in the Children's Area while re-envisioning every other aspect of the facility. EPL is not committed to retaining the current structure and is seeking expert guidance to determine the most economical, efficient, and time-sensitive path forward. Design considerations should include:

- A prominent, dynamic and expanded Young People's Services area, drawing inspiration from the Spokane Public Library's children's play spaces.
- Dedicated zones for quiet study, collaboration, outdoor activities, and active play.
- Flexible meeting and program rooms with after-hours access and in-demand technology.
- Functional and flexible café/kiosk refreshment space.
- Dedicated spaces for local history and genealogy.
- A welcoming look and feel that embodies the Library's role as a community hub.
- Study implications of rehousing the Facilities department to either the existing Anderson garage or a new building on property owned by the library.
- Temporary service location planning to ensure continuity during construction.
- Potential space for a second-hand prose book/gift store.



BRANCH ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES

Although branch buildings have been updated and refreshed, they should be evaluated to:

- Ensure a similar look and feel that aligns the new Downtown Library with the current branch experience.
- Identify the need for growth of existing program space and community gathering areas.
- Evaluate parking needs, major systems, accessibility, and future growth capacity.

Since the branch renovations were completed, other local and regional economic development and infrastructure projects have been completed or are planned in the near future. The Library expects that the impacts of these projects be considered by the selected firm when making any recommendations that pertain to the branch locations.



FUNDING MODEL EXPECTATIONS

EPL has reserve funds to initiate master planning and design development but expects to undertake a major capital fundraising campaign and mitigate the need for a public bond initiative to complete construction. Firms must demonstrate:

- Proven experience with projects funded through combined public and private sources (e.g., capital campaigns and bond referenda).
- Ability to create high-quality renderings and visuals for donor engagement and public communication.
- Familiarity with community presentation requirements for publicly funded projects.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

EPL expects a robust, inclusive process that involves:

- Staff and Board workshops at key milestones.
- Convening of a diverse steering committee that includes constituents from library staff, library board, community members, local philanthropists, leaders from non-profit, religious and government partners.
- Public surveys, visioning sessions and open houses to gather community input.
- Ongoing presentations to the Library Board of Trustees and other interested parties as the project advances.
- Coordination with marketing, Executive Director and board to align messaging for the capital campaign and alternative funding proposals.



SCOPE OF WORK

The selected firm will:

1. Conduct system-wide conditions and needs assessment.
2. Lead visioning sessions with staff, trustees, and community partners.
3. Develop concept designs and site recommendations for the Downtown Library and recommend phased plans for branches.
4. Provide cost estimates, timelines, and implementation strategies.
5. Deliver campaign-ready graphics and visualizations.
6. Ensure compliance with ADA, universal design, and sustainability standards.
7. Advise on temporary library operations during construction.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Proposals will be judged on:

1. Experience with public library master plans and capital projects.
2. Demonstrated understanding of EPL's mission and vision.
3. Success with projects involving capital campaigns and/or bond funding.
4. Quality of approach, methodology, and public engagement plan.
5. Portfolio of renderings, visuals, and community-facing materials.
6. Qualifications and availability of key personnel.
7. References for similar projects.
8. Compatibility with EPL's collaborative work culture.

SELECTION PROCESS

Proposals will be judged on:

- Written submissions reviewed by the Executive Director, key members of Library Leadership and select members of the Library Board.
- Short-listed firms invited for in person interviews and site tours.
- References checked before final selection.
- EPL reserves the right to negotiate scope, timeline, and fees prior to award.

SITE VISITS

Optional site visits will be available on January 7 & 8, 2026. To schedule, contact Kevin Kilmer at kkilmer@myepl.org.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Responses (30 pages max., excluding cover and resumes) must include:

1. **Cover Letter** – Firm information and summary of interest.
2. **Project Understanding & Approach** – Including community engagement and funding model experience.
3. **Firm Profile** – Ownership, structure, organization history and key personnel that would be working on the project.
4. **Relevant Experience** – 3–5 comparable projects with references and photos.
5. **Project Timeline & Deliverables** – Proposed completion date and timeline of project.
6. **Supplemental Materials** – Visual campaign samples (optional).

Submit one **PDF copy by January 30, 2026 by 5pm via the upload link on the library's website:**
<https://www.myepi.org/facilitiesrfp/> or send print copies to:

Attn: Kristen Edson, Executive Director
Elkhart Public Library
300 South Second Street • Elkhart, IN 46516

ANTICIPATED TIMELINE

| Milestone | Date |
|--|------------------------|
| RFQ Issued | December 17, 2025 |
| Site Visits (Optional) | January 7 & 8, 2026 |
| Responses Due | January 30, 2026 |
| Finalists Interviews (Mandatory On-site) | February 10 & 11, 2026 |
| Selection & Notification | February 20, 2026 |
| Contract Negotiation Complete | March 6, 2026 |
| Target Start date | March 30, 2026 |

NOTE

The selected firm will receive all documents related to the most recent branch renovations, assessments of the Downtown location, and the Young People’s Services (YPS) Feasibility Study. These materials provide critical context for understanding previous planning efforts, community feedback, and space priorities. These documents will serve as foundational references to inform planning, costing, and design consistency throughout the Facilities Master Plan process.

Elkhart Public Library
Explore. Play. Learn.

