



## East Lake Community Library Building Expansion Plan

### I. A Brief Overview of the Library Including a Historical Perspective, Mission, and Goals (or Roles) of the Library

#### Historical Perspective

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##### **HISTORY**

The East Lake Community Library (ELCL) is the result of a community initiative that began in 1989. Following a failed referendum in 1990, the community organized a volunteer/donation driven library. The original ELCL opened in rent-free space in the Shoppes at Boot Ranch on May 1, 1993 with 8,000 books. Six months later the Library lost its rent-free space and relocated to Woodlands Square. By 1996 its collection had grown to 25,000 books and videos. Due to another lost lease, the collection was placed in storage as community and legislative leaders Senator Jack Latvala and Representative "Sandy" Safely worked to create a plan for a permanent library.

Finally in April 1997, the Pinellas County Commission approved the purchase of 9 acres of land for a library. With a \$350,000 state library construction grant, another \$350,000 of matching funds from the County, \$100,000 contributed by PPLC for architect's fees & equipment, and an additional \$150,000 from PPLC for the library's first year of operation, and an agreement with Palm Harbor Library to oversee it, a permanent library for East Lake was finally in sight. The Friends of the Library's contribution was a pledge of \$100,000 which would pay for all of the furnishings and the opening day collection.

The East Lake Community Library opened its permanent home on November 1, 1999. The 4,500 square foot library was inadequate from the day it was built, but it immediately became an important element of the East Lake community. The staff has maintained a continuous improvement program to adapt the interior space utilization to meet the evolving needs of the population that it serves.

The library is well respected among its peers for its focus on its patrons and their needs. The staff and volunteer corps provide excellent service notwithstanding the fact that they are literally sitting in each other's laps. Virtually every inch of space and shelving is in use at all times. The library is simply too small.

As a result of the intense pressure placed upon the building and the staff, the ELCL had an Expansion Study performed in 2010 by Toppe Consultants, Inc., a highly respected library specialist planning firm. This effort resulted in the funding of a small expansion that added a Community Meeting Room, several staff offices and included a reorganization of the

library's interior space to improve staff efficiency and patron services. The project was funded in part by a \$200,000 grant from the Pinellas Public Library Cooperative, \$60,000 collected by Friends of the East Lake Community Library and \$150,000 from the library's capital expansion fund.

The 2011 addition added 1,900 square feet and brought the library up to 6,400 square feet, still woefully below even the minimum state standard for public libraries. This first expansion created a single Multi-purpose Community Room that provides space for Children's programming, teen and adult activities and use by local non-profit organizations.

The East Lake Community Library became an independent library on September 30, 2014. It is an entity of the Palm Harbor Community Services Agency, Inc. (PHCSA) and a member of the Pinellas Public Library Cooperative.

East Lake Community Library's Mission Statement is: *Strengthening our community through inspiration, enrichment, and education.*

East Lake Community Library's Vision Statement is: *The East Lake Community Library aspires to be the center of information and discovery in the community. Through innovative programming, relevant collections and responsive services, we support lifelong learning and the joy of reading, and to provide cultural and recreational opportunities for residents of all ages.*

## **II. A Description of How Library Functions Relate to Each Other in Terms of Space, Including a Description of Patron Use and Work Flow Patterns**

East Lake Community Library originally began as a traditional small town community library in 1999 offering basic services such as books, magazines and children's story times. Over the subsequent twenty years, the community has soared to over 30,000 people, technology has advanced dramatically and a perceived societal shift in attitude has more patrons demanding more services at an escalating rate. During all this time, two important changes did not occur. The first is that the community did not become incorporated so that residents could receive basic city services and the library was not able to maintain an adequate physical structure to respond appropriately to growing community needs.

Although the library was not fully prepared to fill the void between community demands and library resources, through necessity it redefined its goals and adapted itself to becoming more of a community center than just a distribution point for books and magazines. Currently on any typical day, patrons will find a heavily used computer area, numerous inquiries at the member services desk, a plethora of preschool and school age story times and programs in the Community Room, tutors and students gathering for their literacy instruction, a Teen Council meeting, a line to check-out materials, patrons perusing the Best Seller section and frustrated library lovers who were not able to find a quiet corner or place to sit. The physical limitations have prevented this library from offering further services and a modern and comfortable ambiance.

The lack of space has also created a somewhat disjointed, crowded, and unproductive work environment for staff members. Staff and volunteers often share desks to complete their tasks and must work in open areas where conversations intrude on their concentration. Hallways are packed with carts, bins, and bookcases of donations, materials from other libraries and boxes of supplies. A temporary "fix" has been the leasing of a modular building on the library' property to alleviate the overcrowding.

To improve patron flow and staff productivity, the following changes are planned:

Phase I – a 2,500 square foot addition on the rear of the existing building to include a large Community Room with a movable wall to create smaller spaces; separate bathroom facilities to permit after-hours programs without impacting the main library; work areas, including shipping and receiving, technical services, check-in (circulation), administration, and automation.

Phase II – A modest renovation and reallocation of space in the existing 6,400 square foot building as funds allow. This phase includes additional open areas in the Adult Services area for seating; a larger enclosed Children's Room with its own family bathroom; a separate Teen Room; small meeting room and additional study rooms; more room for expanding collections; renovation of the existing restrooms; replacement of all carpeting.

This plan has been flexibly designed to accommodate public needs before staff requirements while incorporating renovations that are needed now but which could seamlessly merge with the balance of the building project further on. This includes window walls in the new addition that could easily be removed if funds become available for a larger addition at some future date.

### III. Projection of Future Needs Based on Anticipated Future Demographics

The library's service area population is approximately 32,000. Florida State Library standards recommend a minimum of 0.6 square foot per capita, or 19,200 square feet in order to provide the Essential Service Level. At a ratio of 0.18, the East Lake Community Library is one of only two in Pinellas County that do not meet or exceed these long-accepted state guidelines. As a matter of fact, 7 of the 12 libraries or library systems in Pinellas County exceed the state standard, meeting the Enhanced (0.8 square foot per capita) or Exemplary (1.0 square foot per capita) level of service.

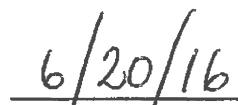
The East Lake Community Library needs to grow by an additional 12,800 square feet, at a minimum, in order to rise to the lowest level of Essential Services. An expansion of this magnitude would require about \$5,700,000. ELCL has developed a phased approach that would allow development of a detailed Master Expansion Plan and the immediate design and construction of a 2,500 square foot addition and related interior renovations.

The East Lake Community Library has always been too small. The 2011 addition project included reconfiguration of the existing public library and work areas. The new Multi- purpose Community Room has allowed the library to expand its role as a community meeting place. The reorganized public areas have allowed for additional public computers and work stations. Reallocation of existing space helped to create a more functional, albeit undersized, Children's Area and more seating for patrons. Although the library has streamlined the print and video collections, the lack of shelf space prevents purchase of additional copies of bestsellers, etc., leaving library members to wait for their materials from other county libraries.

An expanded East Lake Community Library will be able to provide enhanced services to the residents of the greater East Lake area with added and reorganized library space and additional Community Meeting facilities. As an all-inclusive library with a "family-centered" philosophy, it is necessary to strive for excellent service to all age groups and resources that meet the needs and interests of all residents. This is an important part of staying relevant in an age of technology.



Lois Eannel, Director  
East Lake Community Library



Date