East Lake Community Library
Public Library Construction Grant
Prepared by: Anne Marie Nurnberger, MLIS – Assistant Director

A narrative description of the construction project prepared by a professional Librarian functioning as the building consultant. The narrative must describe:

a. How the building will function in a currently established multicounty, county or municipal library.

The East Lake Community Library serves the unincorporated area of north Pinellas County. As an independent organization, the library relies on limited tax revenues provided through the Palm Harbor Community Services Agency, Inc (PHSCA), support by the Pinellas Public Library Cooperative, and the generosity of its patrons. It is an entity of the Palm Harbor Community Services Agency, Inc (PHSCA) and a member of the Pinellas Public Library Cooperative. The Palm Harbor Community Services Agency was created in 1985 by a Pinellas County Ordinance to provide library and recreations services to the residents of the Palm Harbor Community Services District. PHSCA is governed by an eight-member board of directors, each appointment to a renewable two-year term. The Agency is responsible for the management of all library and recreation department funds and hired the directors of the Palm Harbor Library, East Lake Community Library, East Lake Recreation Services and Palm Harbor Parks and Recreation (CSA).

East Lake Community Library is an active member of the Pinellas Public Library Cooperative (PPLC) which consists of 15 member libraries throughout Pinellas County. PPLC was established by referendum in March 1989 at which time the citizens of the unincorporated county areas voted to levy up to .5 mils for library service. The member cities/libraries and the Pinellas County Commission signed an inter-local agreement to provide library services to the residents of the unincorporated county areas, member cities and contracting communities. PPLC is a not-for-profit established by Florida statutes and it is managed by a nine-member board representing various geographical areas of the county eligible for PPLC library services. The Cooperative allows member libraries to share programs, resources and talents. Library directors meet monthly and share committee work, planning work and concerns.

The original 4,500 square foot building for East Lake Community Library was built and opened to the public in 1999. To keep abreast of community development, the library needed to expand merely to maintain services in 2011, by adding community rooms and staff areas (1,900 square feet). In December 2018, a construction project funded by a state budget appropriation, BP funds and the libraries' capital reserves resulted in a desperately needed 2,500 square foot addition. The highlights of this expansion included:

- A larger Community Room with divider wall, kitchen facilities, and AV equipment for presentations, etc.
- Two new ADA-compliant restrooms
- New book drops directly into the building
- Additional office space and work areas for staff and volunteers, including a Friend's workroom to sort and price donated materials.
- Larger enclosed Children's Rooms with age-appropriate furniture computers, and an Early Childhood Corner
- Designated Teen Room

In 2019, following the addition of a Community Room, an expanded children's area, and a dedicated teen room, the East Lake Community Library was able to significantly broaden its programs and services. These included a Sunday Concert Series hosted by the Friends of the Library, preschool STREAM programs, free Medicare assistance and workshops, yoga classes, teen and middle school advisory boards, summer reading initiatives, book clubs, art classes, and much more. To further expand services to the community, the library became a Passport Acceptance Facility in 2021 and, in 2024, began offering fingerprinting services.

b. How the Construction Project Will Contribute to New and Improved Services in the Area It Will Serve

As the only public building in the East Lake area, the East Lake Community Library has naturally grown into more than just a place to borrow books and materials-it now serves as a vital community center, cultural hub, and educational institution along the East Lake Road corridor. With no central downtown and neighborhoods primarily made up of families and retirees, the library has become a key destination for programs, services, special events, and resources.

Since the completion of our 2019 expansion, the library has been a vibrant hub of activity. It offers the only free meeting space available to local nonprofits and service organizations. However, the sole meeting room we added has a maximum capacity of

70 people. This limitation forces us to turn away groups and restrict the size of programs and events we can host.

Additionally, the library lacks study rooms, which is a significant challenge given our proximity to East Lake High School. We welcome a large number of teens daily, yet they have no dedicated study rooms that would allow them to sit, study and collaborate. We also have no small meeting rooms to accommodate groups who wish to use the library to meet.

Other pressing challenges include:

- Accessibility: The building lacks adequate stroller and wheelchair access and is not ADA compliant.
- Energy Efficiency: Outdated infrastructure and equipment contribute to high energy costs and inefficiency.
- Staff Workspace: Our growing team faces a shortage of workstations-some staff members do not have access to a desk or cubicle.
- Shelving and Layout: Materials are packed in and stored on high and low shelves, making them difficult to reach for patrons with mobility issues. A lack of room means we can never increase the size of our collection.
- Safety: The building lacks a fire suppression system and is grandfathered into outdated building codes.

This construction project will directly address the challenges we face and allow us to expand and enhance our services to meet the needs of our growing community. By adding more square footage, we will be able to:

- Establish an **enlarged Adult Services Department** with expanded collections and increased seating
- **Add more workspace for staff,** ensuring that each employee has access to a dedicated desk or cubicle to support productivity and collaboration
- Create **dedicated rooms** for study, meetings, and quiet reading - spaces we currently lack
- Establish a spacious **new Children's Department** with interactive activity centers and expanded collections
- Expand our C**ommunity Room** to host more events, programs, and larger audiences
- Develop an **expanded computer lab and business center** to support digital literacy and workforce development
- Introduce a **second programming room**, primarily for children's programming, allowing us to host simultaneous events
- Include a **museum corner and exhibit space** to showcase local history and culture
- Build a **spacious, enclosed Friends of the Library bookstore**, enhancing fundraising and community engagement.

c. The effects of staffing, maintenance and costs of operating the proposed facility.

Currently, the East Lake Community Library employs 21 staff members, including 10 full-time employees. Our dedicated team is further supported by 96 adult and teen volunteers who contribute their time and talents to help us serve the community. One of the key benefits of this construction project is that it will allow us to expand public services without the immediate need to increase staffing levels. Consideration of a mobile communications system will result in immediate response times for patrons and staff and provide an extra layer of safety and security.

Maintenance

Recent amendments to the lease agreement with Pinellas County have resulted in coverage by the county of the envelope of the building – i.e. replacement of roof, HVAC systems, and exterior doors and windows. However, it is the responsibility of the library to service and maintain all these components as well as any interior needs (electrical, plumbing, etc.). The remaining building maintenance is contracted out. Current contracted services include:

- Electrical repairs and maintenance
- Pest control
- Lawn and landscape maintenance
- Plumbing repairs and maintenance
- Roof repairs and maintenance
- Waste pickup
- HVAC repair and maintenance

In addition, the library employs a part-time Building Maintenance Manager who handles all other routine maintenance tasks and minor repairs.

As the construction project will result in a larger facility, we anticipate an increase in maintenance needs. Existing service contracts will be reviewed and expanded as necessary to ensure the continued upkeep and safety of the building.

Operations:

All current and future operational needs of the East Lake Community Library are supported through a combination of municipal, county, and state funding—including annual allocations from county ad valorem taxes. In addition, the library generates revenue by operating as a U.S. Passport Acceptance Facility. Financial support is also provided by the Friends of East Lake Community Library, the East Lake Community Library Foundation, and various fundraising efforts. The proposed initiative will not result in any substantial increase to the library’s operational costs.